



CJS ANNUAL REVIEW

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WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES?

The Center for Jewish Studies serves as an umbrella organization, encompassing and coordinating the many academic and extra-curricular programs in Jewish studies at Harvard University. We sponsor and co-sponsor conferences, lectures and seminars; host visiting faculty and research scholars; and support undergraduate and graduate student research and study in the field of Jewish studies, language programs in Hebrew (both classical and modern), Yiddish, and Ladino, and a number of other special projects.

In addition to running our own conferences, lectures and seminars, we co-sponsor seminars and lectures with departments across the Harvard campus, including series with the Center for European Studies, the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, the Department of Classics, the Committee on Medieval Studies, the Al-Waleed Islamic Studies Program and the Mahindra Center for the Humanities.

Every year, the Center also brings Visiting Professors to Harvard to supplement our regular course offerings in Jewish studies and hosts visiting scholars who come to Harvard from around the world to conduct independent research in the many fields of Jewish studies. These include our Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica, Alan M. Stroock Fellows, and Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow, all of whom participate in a weekly research seminar held in the spring semester every year on a given theme or period of Jewish history.

We support undergraduate and graduate student research and supplemental study over the summer and J-term (January), and we work closely with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) to provide funding to graduate students during the academic year. We support a Jewish studies graduate student exchange program with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, an undergraduate journal of Jewish studies (Emet), and a Jewish studies reading room in Widener Library.

Faculty, courses, and other academic programs in Jewish studies at the University are hosted across Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard Law School, and Harvard Divinity School. The Judaica Division at Widener Library boasts one of the world's greatest library collections. Taken together, Harvard offers students and scholars resources in Jewish studies with few peers anywhere in the world.



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PHOTOGRAPHY: By Ilene Perlman, CJS staff and students, also as submitted from featured individuals

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ON THE COVER: Students at the CJS Fall Reception; left to right: Elke Bentley, Ariel Mekonen, Jonathan Zait, Cameron Hollenbeck, David Hannan.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The last year has been difficult for Harvard. Amidst threats to Harvard's funding and enrollment of international students, and debates about the limits of free speech in our community, it has been more vital than ever to keep sight of our university's primary goal: to, in the words of a 2024 Harvard Working Group report, "enable students to pursue lives of reflection, curiosity, deliberation, and civic engagement."

Albert Einstein once said, "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious."

Harvard's students and faculty have a mission to passionately pursue knowledge, foster individual and collective growth, and range outside of their intellectual and emotional comfort zones. We must engage with and respect differing values and beliefs.

The Center for Jewish Studies has a crucial role to play in fulfilling Harvard's mission. Jewish civilization is small but has had a vast impact on humanity. Jewish religious belief and practice provided underpinnings of Christianity and Islam. The position of Jews in a society is indicative of its flexibility and stability, or its weaknesses and failings. Jews are, in the words of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, "good to think with." The CJS provides abundant ways for Harvard students to learn about Jews, and thereby to think about the world.

This year's report documents the extraordinary range of our course offerings, programming, and other activities related to Jewish studies. Our courses cover the gamut of Jewish civilization, and our students come from many faith traditions. Our outstanding faculty bring into the classroom cutting-edge research on Judaism, Jewish thought and history, and Jewish languages and literatures. Our classes on Israel/Palestine — a subject on which people often have strong passions but limited knowledge — demand and achieve rigor, deep engagement, and respect for diverse points of view.

There are no simple answers to the multiple crises facing the Jewish world today. At the CJS we confront our educational mission with humility as well as commitment. But we take seriously our obligation to be a center in both meanings of the word — an institutional unit and the prime address at Harvard for the study of Judaism and the Jews.

The recommendations of the Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias, which I had the honor of co-chairing, urged the expansion of teaching on Jewish civilization, Israel/Palestine, and antisemitism. To that end, CJS offerings this year include new courses on antisemitism, the Holocaust, Jewish law, American Judaism, Yiddish literature, and the history of the Jews of the Middle East and North Africa.

Harvard faces a bumpy road of indeterminate length. Working together, our students, faculty, and supporters from within and beyond our alumni community can ensure that we model fundamental Jewish values of resolve, love of learning, and compassion for *kol yoshvei tevel* — all who dwell on Earth.

Derek J. Penslar

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History

FACULTY NEWS

FROM THE DESK OF



DAVID STERN

Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Professor of Comparative Literature, Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

The high point of David Stern's year was the publication and presentation of a *Festschrift* in his honor, *Beloved David—Advisor, Man of Understanding, and Writer* (Judaic Studies, Brown University), edited by Naftali S. Cohen and Katrin Kogman-Appel, to which thirty-three former students and colleagues contributed chapters. This honor was presented to Stern at a celebration in September, sponsored by the CJS, which included tributes from both editors and Professor Annette Yoshiko Reed (*Photos on page 18*).

In June 2024, Stern delivered two lectures in Germany—the keynote at a conference entitled “Creating Holiness: Books, Scrolls and Icons as Carriers of Sacredness” in Mainz, and another paper at a conference on “Transformations of Traditions through Interreligious Encounters” at the University of Potsdam in Berlin. He also published an article, “Burning the Talmud Before and After Print,” in *Premodern Jewish Books, Their Makers and Readers, in an Era of Media Change*, ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Ilona Steimann; and a lengthy review of the medieval translation of the Talmud, *Extractiones de Talmud*, in *Speculum*. Stern's essay, “Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Literary Theory,” was translated and published in Chinese in *Hebrew Classics: A Collection of Criticism*.

A chapter from his book *The Jewish Bible: A Material History* was translated into Polish and published as the lead essay in a catalogue for an exhibit, “Sacred Masterpiece: Torah Scroll as Object and Symbol” held at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. During the year, he also received two subvention grants for the translation and publication of *The Jewish Bible* for a Russian edition to be published by the Academic Studies Press.

In Fall 2024, he co-organized and moderated a one-day conference, “Sign of the Times: Marking Jewish Identity in the Medieval and Early Modern World,” cosponsored by Harvard's CJS, Mahindra Humanities Center, and Committee on Medieval Studies. In Spring 2025, he served as one of the co-hosts of the Starr Seminars and delivered a paper, “Imperial Narrative.” Stern is currently revising the third volume of his collected essays, *Jewish Literary Cultures: The Modern and Contemporary Periods*. He also received a Resnick Family Research Fellowship to work at the National Library of Israel this summer on another book-in-progress, *An Unsystematic History of the Jewish Book*. ■

JULIA RHYDER

Associate Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations, Harvard University

In the spring semester, Julia Rhyder enjoyed parental leave after giving birth to a baby girl, Vivian Jean Rhyder, on December 24, 2024. Before her leave began, Julia gave several talks at Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Annual Meeting of ASOR (American Society of Overseas Research), in which she presented parts of her current book project on calendars and war commemoration in the Hebrew Bible. She also published two journal articles, one of which was co-written with her Harvard colleague, Céline Debourse, and offers a new comparison of the ritual texts of the Pentateuch and Late Babylonian Priestly Literature.

■ Articles

- “[Ritual Textualization in the Priestly Traditions of the Hebrew Bible and Late Babylonian Priestly Literature](#)” (co-authored with Céline Debourse), *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 24 (2024): 1–36.
- “Blood, War, and Ritual Meals: Transgressive Consumption in 1 Sam 14:31–35,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 86 (2024): 639–58.



JULIA RHYDER



ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED

■ Presentations

- “Response to Andrew Danielson: Edom in Judah: Trade, Migration, and Kinship in the Late Iron Age Southern Levant” (Cambridge University Press, 2024), Harvard NELC Department book launch, May 2025.
- “Annual Festivals and War Commemoration in the Ancient Near East,” ASOR Annual Meeting, Boston, November 2024.
- “Response to Nathan MacDonald: The Making of the Tabernacle and the Construction of Priestly Hegemony,” Online book launch, University of Oxford, November 2024.
- “Calendrical Festivals and War Commemoration in the Ancient Near East,” Harvard History and Archaeology of the Ancient Near East Workshop, October 2024.
- “The Ark at War and Peace,” University of Pennsylvania, October 2024.
- “Ritual Textualization in the Priestly Traditions of the Hebrew Bible and Late Babylonian Priestly Literature” (with Céline Debourse), Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean Workshop, September 2024.
- “Was There a Festival of the Ark? Calendars and War Commemoration in the Biblical Ark Traditions,” Harvard Hebrew Bible Workshop, September 2024. ■

ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED

Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Harvard Divinity School

Together with Paul Kosmin and David Stern, Annette Yoshiko Reed was one of the faculty conveners of the 2024–2025 CJS Starr Seminars on “Jews in and against Empires,” at which she workshopped one chapter of her current book project on *Forgetting*. Inspired by these Starr Seminar discussions, she also gave a talk on “Empire and Epistemicide: Historical Perspectives on the Rhetoric of Peace and its Erasures” for an HDS webinar series

in February 2025. A revised version has been published in the [Harvard Divinity Bulletin](#) (Spring/Summer 2025), which also includes a feature on her fall 2024 HDS seminar on “[Time in Ancient Judaism and Christianity](#).”

Other talks this year included “As (Jewish) Others Saw Jesus: From Joseph Jacobs to Harry Austryn Wolfson,” for the Boston Patristics Group, and a presentation at a Princeton event in honor of Prof. Elaine Pagels’ retirement.

Her publications that appeared in 2024–25 include: “Scribes, Scrolls, and Stars in the Aramaic Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: New Insights on Ancient Texts*, ed. Alex Jassen and Lawrence Schiffman; “Demonology beyond Dualism,” in *New Paths in Jewish and Religious Studies: Essays in Honor of Professor Elliot R. Wolfson*, ed. Glenn Dynner, Susannah Heschel and Shaul Magid; and “Pseudepigrapha, Authorship, and the Anthological Temper in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Beloved David—Advisor, Man of Understanding, and Writer: A Festschrift in Honor of David Stern*, ed. N. S. Cohn and K. Kogman-Appel, together with Reed’s introduction, annotations, and notes with Liane Feldman on the Wisdom of ben Sira/Ecclesiasticus in *The Westminster Study Bible*. Reed’s 2003 edited volume with Adam H. Becker, *The Ways that Never Parted*, came out in French translation with Cerf Publications in 2024: *Judaïsme et christianisme: Point de rupture?* (trans. Françoise Michaut).

Reed has been awarded a 2025 Guggenheim Fellowship and will be on leave in 2025–2026. ■



JON D. LEVENSON



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STEPHEN GREENBLATT

JON D. LEVENSON

Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies,
Harvard Divinity School

■ Review Essay

“[Marilynne Robinson Promises Her Reading of Genesis Is Faithful to the Text. Is It?](#)” *Mosaic*, September 19, 2024.

■ Presentations

“Abraham between Torah and Gospel,” *The Salon*, an initiative cosponsored by the Program on Biblical Law and Christian Legal Studies, Harvard Law School, and Harvard’s Christianity and the Common Good, Cambridge, MA, April 29, 2025.

A discussion of *Israel’s Day of Light and Joy and Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel* with the biblical/theological reading group of Chesterton House at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (by video-conferencing), April 24, 2025.

“Is Christian Supersessionism Inherently Antisemitic?” MEOR Harvard, Cambridge, MA, March 10, 2025.

“Abraham: Faith, Works, Both, or Neither?” Harvard Jewish-Christian Bible Study group, Cambridge, MA, November 20, 2024.

“The Binding of Isaac and the Drama of Reading,” Intellectual Foundations Program, University of Austin, Austin, TX (by video-conferencing), November 13, 2024.

“How Classical Christian Antisemitism Informs Contemporary Anti-Israelism,” MEOR Harvard, Cambridge, MA, September 30, 2024.

■ Podcasts, Videos, and Interviews

“[A Very Special \(and Mysterious\) Day](#),” interview with *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, spring/summer 2025.

“[The Sabbath](#),” conversations with Pastor Cliff (Pholoso Ministries, South Africa), May 6, 2025.

“[The Sabbath: Its Ancient Origins and Evolution](#),” Biblical Time Machine Podcast, February 24, 2025.

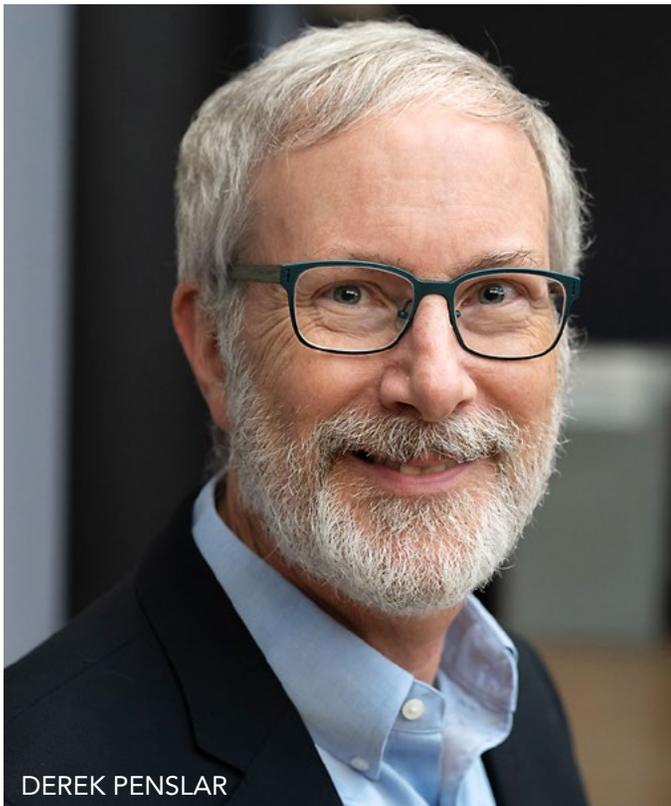
“Child Sacrifice in the Bible,” *The Bible for Normal People*, September 23, 2024. [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#). ■

STEPHEN GREENBLATT

John Cogan University Professor of the Humanities,
Department of English, Harvard University

In 2024, *Second Chances: Shakespeare and Freud* (Yale University Press), co-authored by Stephen Greenblatt and Adam Phillips, was published.

In June 2024, Professor Greenblatt was honored by the German Bundesrepublik, and elected to the Order Pour le Mérite. He received two medals: *Der Orden Pour le Mérite für Wissenschaften und Künste* (The Order Pour le Mérite for Sciences and Arts) and *Der Grosse Verdienstkreuz mit Stern* (The Grand Cross of Merit with Star). Election to the Order Pour le Mérite is one of the highest honors that can be conferred on scholars and artists in Germany. ■



DEREK PENSLAR

DEREK PENSLAR

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History,
Department of History; Director of the Center for
Jewish Studies, Harvard University

Derek Penslar continued serving as Director of the Center for Jewish Studies and as Co-Chair of Harvard’s Presidential Task Force on Combating Antisemitism and Anti-Israeli Bias, whose [report](#) was released at the end of April. He was a 2024 Walter Channing Cabot Fellow at Harvard and awarded a fellowship for the winter and spring of 2026 from the American Academy in Berlin for his current book project, *The War for Palestine, 1947–1949: A Global History*. Professor Penslar published “[Ambivalence, Amity, and Enmity in Israel/Palestine](#),” in *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* and “[Passion and Palestine](#),” in *Aeon: A World of Ideas*. He delivered the keynote address at conferences on the history of Jewish emotions at Midreshet Ben-Gurion in Israel and the University of Cologne. Professor Penslar gave in-person invited talks at Bar-Ilan University, Brown, Central European University, Cornell, Dartmouth, the University of California at Davis, Middlebury College, Tel Aviv University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the University of Toronto, and the University of Vermont, and remote talks at Birkbeck College, the University of Cape Town, the University of Konstanz, The Ohio State University, and the University of California at Santa Cruz. ■

OTHER FACULTY NEWS



HANNAH MARCUS AWARDED THE DAN DAVID PRIZE

Hannah Marcus is Professor of the History of Science in the Department of the History of Science, Director of the Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments at Harvard University, and a member of the CJS Executive Committee. Her research focuses on the scientific culture of early modern Europe between 1400 and 1700. She is especially fascinated by Italian archives and the many stories and voices that emerge from them.

Professor Marcus won this year’s Dan David Prize, the world’s largest history prize, awarding \$300,000 to each recipient. It recognizes the work of early- and mid-career historians, art historians, archaeologists, digital humanists, curators, documentary filmmakers and all those who deepen our knowledge and understanding of the past. Working across a broad chronological and geographical range, the nine 2025 winners use original methodologies, technologies

and sources, ask pressing questions, and produce compelling stories about the past which engage wide audiences. Read more about Professor Marcus’ work in the [Harvard Gazette](#). ■



PAUL KOSMIN NAMED WALTER CHANNING CABOT FELLOW

[Paul Kosmin](#) is Philip J. King Professor of Ancient History in the Department of the Classics at Harvard University, and a member of the CJS Executive Committee. He has been named Cabot Fellow for his book, *The Ancient Shore* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2024).

The annual awards honor faculty members for their accomplishments in the areas of literature, history, or art, particularly for publications and scholarly work that has made an impact in their fields. ■

HONORING PROFESSOR SHAYE J. D. COHEN UPON HIS RETIREMENT

On September 27, 2024, the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard invited colleagues, friends, and family to honor Shaye J. D. Cohen, Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, at his retirement.

Professor Cohen's colleagues, Professors David Stern, Peter Machinist, and Jay Harris, and his former students Professors Matthew Hass and Yoni Miller each presented remarks. A message was read on behalf of family friend Dr. Irit Aharony. (See photos opposite.)

We thank Professor Cohen for all his contributions to the Center and our students and extend our heartfelt wishes to Shaye for a long, healthy, and fulfilling retirement.



FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS JULY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Jay M. Harris, Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies

On June 30, 2025, Shaye J. D. Cohen retired as the Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy after a fifty-year career — half spent at Harvard. Now a century old, the Littauer chair is the oldest chair in Jewish studies in North America and Cohen is the third person to occupy it. Like his predecessors, Harry Wolfson and Isadore Twersky, Cohen's research is characterized by incisive questions, philological rigor, and remarkable clarity of presentation. He brings command of all the relevant languages — Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, and Latin—to his studies on ancient Jewish history and culture (and, at times, treating later periods as well).

He has literally written the book on ancient Jewish history; I refer to his remarkable *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, now in its third edition. It is a work used by scholars while also serving the needs of students at all levels. Like all his studies, it is remarkably judicious; in each chapter, Cohen lays out evidence carefully, explains how he understands it, notes possible counter-arguments, and leads readers to decide for themselves. I've frequently used it in my teaching, and it always meets the mark beautifully.

While it is a challenge to briefly characterize his highly influential corpus, it is clear that two areas of Jewish life and culture are recurring interests. The first revolves around questions of Jewish identity: his *The Beginnings of Jewishness* (1999) addresses a range of questions, including: What makes a Jew a Jew, and what makes a non-Jew a non-Jew? Can a non-Jew become a Jew, and can a Jew become a non-Jew? How does the Jewish boundary between Jew and non-Jew compare with the Jewish boundary between male Jew and female Jew? The last question led to his study of circumcision and gender, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?* (2005). On this and other sets of questions Cohen has written or edited ten books, and has published well over sixty articles. His other recurring interest is the Mishnah. He recently edited a volume entitled *What Is the Mishnah?* and also served as an editor of a remarkable new translation of the Mishnah, accompanied by commentaries on each tractate. It is a true labor of love, and will surely be the definitive edition of the Mishnah in English for the foreseeable future.



SHAYE COHEN, MIRIAM MAY AND FAMILY



SHAYE COHEN & LUIS GIRÓN NEGRÓN

HONORING SHAYE J. D. COHEN

SEPTEMBER 27, 2024



SHAYE J. D. COHEN



DAVID STERN



YONI MILLER



DEREK PENSLAR



SHAYE COHEN & PETER MACHINIST



JAY M. HARRIS

SHAUL MAGID



Congratulations to Shaul Magid on his appointment as Professor of Modern Jewish Studies in Residence at Harvard Divinity School, a new five-year, renewable position. Professor Magid received rabbinical ordination in 1984, earned a master's degree in Jewish thought from The Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and a Ph.D. in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies from Brandeis University. Prof. Magid has published eight books and over a hundred scholarly articles and essays on a range of topics, including Hasidism, Jewish thought, and Jewish mysticism. He has held professorships at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Indiana University, a research fellowship at the Shalom Hartman Institute, and taught at Dartmouth College before coming to Harvard. ■



SAUL ZARITT AWARDED BERLIN PRIZE

Congratulations to Professor Saul Zaritt for having been awarded the Berlin Prize by The American Academy in Berlin, Germany. The Berlin Prize is awarded annually to US-based scholars, writers, composers, and artists who represent the highest standards of excellence in their fields. It provides recipients with the time and resources to advance important scholarly and artistic projects, free from the constraints of other professional obligations. As a fall 2025 Fellow, Saul will continue his work on *Yiddish Trash: A History of Popular Culture*, a study of popular Yiddish fiction of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Saul Zaritt joins The Ohio State University as Assistant Professor of Yiddish Language and Ashkenazic Culture this fall.

In May, a group of Yiddish students and Yiddish preceptor Dr. Sara Feldman joined Saul — in person and by Zoom — to celebrate his years as Associate Professor of Yiddish Literature



ANNETTE
YOSHIKO REED

ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED WINS GUGGENHEIM FELLOWSHIP

Annette Yoshiko Reed, Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity and CJS Executive Committee member, was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship along with two other Harvard professors: Christopher Muller, Professor of Sociology, and Katarina Burin, Associate Lecturer in the Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies.

The Guggenheim Foundation offers merit-based Fellowships to exceptional individuals in pursuit of scholarship in any field of knowledge and creation in any art form under the “freest possible conditions.”

Professor Reed [plans to use the awarded fellowship to complete her latest book](#) exploring the cultural power of forgetting — overwriting, fragmentation, and erasure of ancient Jewish literary heritage that was recovered during the mid-twentieth century with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. ■

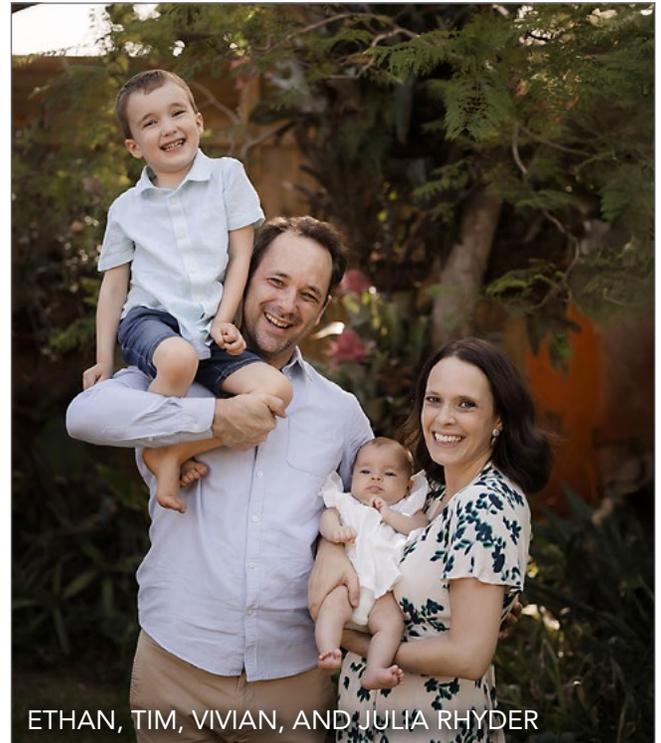


SAUL ZARITT
FAREWELL
GATHERING

in the departments of Comparative Literature and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. They shared remarks about his teaching, research, and mentorship. They presented him with a framed, stylized copy of his Yiddish-language *Taytsh Manifesto*, and a card decorated with the logo from his website Shund.org. *Shund* is a database of Yiddish popular fiction, collecting and analyzing works of entertainment literature written in Yiddish and published as books and pamphlets and serialized in the Yiddish press. ■

MAZEL TOV TO JULIA RHYDER AND HER FAMILY

On July 1, 2025, Julia Rhyder was promoted to Associate Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Congratulations also go to the whole family on the birth of Vivian Jean in 2024, with best wishes for joy and good health. ■



ETHAN, TIM, VIVIAN, AND JULIA RHYDER

STAFF NEWS



RACHEL ROCKENMACHER

RACHEL ROCKENMACHER HARVARD HERO

In June, our Executive Director, Rachel Rockenmacher, was honored as a 2025 Harvard Hero. The Harvard Heroes program celebrates the accomplishments of Harvard staff whose work supports the mission of Harvard at the highest levels of contribution, impact, and excellence.

“Rachel Rockenmacher is the epitome of a Harvard Hero. For decades she has been the most important source of administrative guidance and institutional memory within the Center for Jewish Studies. Rachel is a tireless, selfless colleague—generous with her time, unfailingly helpful, and possessed of enormous intelligence and common sense. I cannot imagine directing the CJS without Rachel as my most trusted lieutenant, and I know that all former directors of the CJS feel exactly the same way.”

—Director Derek Penslar

Well deserved, Rachel! Congratulations! ■

VISITOR NEWS



STARR SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS: UZI LEIBNER, AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAC, NOMI SCHNECK, RABBI BENJAMIN GOLDENHERSH, ELYASHIV CHERLOW

2024–2025 ACADEMIC VISITORS

THE CJS ANNUALLY HOSTS outstanding scholars in Jewish studies as visiting faculty, researchers, fellows, and associates.

Starr Fellows

Theme: Ancient Jews in and against Empires

Elyashiv Cherlow, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow (academic year),

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Simcha Gross, Honorary Starr Visiting Scholar (spring),

University of Pennsylvania

Agata Grzybowska-Wiatrak, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow (academic year), University of Warsaw, Poland

Nomi Schneck, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow (spring), Princeton University

Uzi Leibner, Starr Visiting Scholar (spring),

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Ishay Rosen-Zvi, Starr Visiting Scholar (academic year, part-time), Tel Aviv University, Israel

Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow

Rabbi Benjamin Goldenhersh (spring), Kehilat Bar-Lev, Mazkeret Batya, Israel

Visiting Professors

Ishay Rosen-Zvi (academic year, part time), Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations; Tel Aviv University, Israel

Yael Sternhell (spring), Joseph Engel Visiting Associate Professor of Jewish Studies, Department of History; Tel Aviv University, Israel

Visiting Scholars

Svenja Bethke (spring–summer), University of Leicester, United Kingdom

Oded Haklai (academic year), Queen's University, Canada

Fellows

Anita Christensen (fall), Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Norway

Romy Neumark (academic year), Teaching Assistant in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

Postdoctoral Fellow

Matan Boord (academic year), Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellow, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

Associates

Dotan Greenvald (academic year), Boston University
Aviram Shahal (academic year), Independent scholar

VISITING PROFESSORS & LECTURERS

THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES WELCOMES VISITING FACULTY TO HARVARD EACH YEAR from outside the University. Visiting Professors and Visiting Lecturers cover courses for our faculty who are on sabbatical and teach courses in areas of Jewish studies that are not covered by our regular faculty members. We are extremely grateful to the Weinstock family for establishing the Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professorship in Jewish Studies, which we have been able to use every year. We deeply appreciate the generosity of the Rohr family for the George Rohr Fund, which supports visiting faculty in the study of modern Israel. We thank friends and family of Joseph Engel for establishing the Joseph Engel Fund, which allows us to occasionally bring visiting faculty in American Jewish studies.



ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI



Yael STERNHELL

ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

GERARD WEINSTOCK VISITING PROFESSOR

Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harry Starr Fellow in Judaica, CJS, Harvard University; Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University, Israel

My year at Harvard offered a rare and rewarding combination of intensive teaching and attentive listening — two seemingly opposing exercises of the mind that found a remarkable harmony in this extraordinary environment.

I taught two courses to engaged and thoughtful students: The Birth of *Halakha* and The Idea of Chosenness (the latter co-taught with Shaul Magid). I also delivered a series of lectures — on Midrash, Jewish and Roman law, and Rabbinic concepts of ethnicity and conversion, among others — and offered responses in various academic settings. Each of these engagements demanded careful, rigorous preparation.

Listening to seminar presentations nourished me intellectually — offering fresh perspectives, diverse methodologies, and deep

knowledge drawn from Harvard's unparalleled academic wealth. I greatly enjoyed the Language Learning in Pre-Modern Cultures seminar in the Department of Classics, Professor Noah Feldman's Advanced Topics in Jewish Law: Gender and Jewish Law seminar at the Harvard Law School (HLS), the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean seminar at the Harvard Divinity School (HDS), and additional seminars in Classics, NELC, and the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at HLS.

I am profoundly thankful for this year of learning; it has been an exceptional intellectual privilege. ■

Yael STERNHELL

JOSEPH ENGEL VISITING ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF JEWISH STUDIES

Department of History, Harvard University; Department of History, Department of English and American Studies, Tel Aviv University, Israel

HISTORY 16I – Refugees in the United States in the 20th Century explored the history of refugees coming into the United States, starting from the Huguenots fleeing the 17th-century wars of religion, through Jews attempting to escape the

growing dangers of interwar Europe, to Syrians getting away from the civil war in recent times. Asking what distinguishes the experience of refugees compared to other migrants, and what distinguishes the United States as a place of refuge for the world's displaced masses, we delved into a wide array of historical studies examining different facets of state action and non-state actors, like the United Nations and the Joint Distribution Committee. We examined theoretical frameworks like critical refugee studies and global history and read from the personal memoirs of Edward Said, Hannah Arendt, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Peter Balakian, Atina Grossman, and Joseph Berger. In their research papers, one student discovered a forgotten humanitarian organization active

in World War II, another uncovered the story of her great grandmother who fled Eastern Europe, and still another wrote a play about refugees in the Civil War South. Taking place at a moment in which American refugee policy regularly dominated the news, the course allowed us to situate events in a much longer context of U.S. history. ■

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER FELLOWSHIP

RABBI BENJAMIN GOLDENHERSH

Kehilat Bar-Lev, Mazkeret Batya, Israel

IN THE SPRING OF 2025, we hosted Benjamin Goldenhersh, the rabbi at Kehilat Bar-Lev, Mazkeret Batya, Israel, as our thirty-first Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow. This fellowship was established in memory of Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver '48 to enable an active congregational chaplain who has demonstrated exceptional intellectual and academic interest, originality and energy to engage in full-time research at Harvard for a semester.

I am truly grateful for the rare opportunity the Silver Fellowship provided to pause the race of life — both my congregational rabbinical duties and clinical work — and immerse myself in the world of thought and spirit.

It was a privilege to take part in the Starr Seminars. Professors Annette Yoshiko Reed, Paul Kosmin, and David Stern led rigorous and unbiased discussions. Presentations on the theme of “Ancient Jews in and against Empires,” included topics spanning history, art, rabbinic literature, and archaeology.

Beyond the fascinating content, the methodology and intellectual approaches greatly enriched my thinking and scholarship. As a Starr Fellow noted, we are used to discourse and scholarship on different literary corpora, or in my case, Judaism and psychoanalysis. However, when we shift our perspective to examine broader themes, the academic discourse transforms. Our discussions about historiography and meta-issues enriched my research on



RABBI BENJAMIN GOLDENHERSH

the genealogy of confession from Mesopotamia through the Bible and the Sages to psychoanalysis.

I am profoundly grateful to the Silver family for establishing this fellowship, and to the Center for Jewish Studies for this transformative opportunity. The warmth and hospitality I experienced were exceptional, from the intellectual engagement to the personal connections formed. Dr. Rachel Rockenmacher, Sandy Cantave Vil, Maura Kohl Gould, Osnat Aharoni and the entire CJS staff created a welcoming environment that truly felt like a second home. The weekly seminars and informal gatherings fostered not only scholarly growth but meaningful relationships that will endure beyond my time at Harvard. The fellowship provided the precious gift of time and space, which allowed me to make significant progress in my research, and to be nourished by the vibrant intellectual community. For this extraordinary semester of growth and discovery, I offer my heartfelt thanks. *Toda Raba!* ■

HARRY STARR FELLOWSHIP IN JUDAICA SEMINARS SPRING 2025

ANCIENT JEWS IN AND AGAINST EMPIRES

FACULTY HOSTS: PAUL KOSMIN, ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED, AND DAVID STERN, WITH ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

THE HARRY STARR FELLOWSHIP IN JUDAICA supports a group of scholars from around the world to gather at Harvard to engage in full-time research in Jewish studies. This research fellowship was founded with a generous bequest from the estate of Harry Starr '21, former president of the Lucius Littauer Foundation.

The Starr Fellowship is open to scholars at different stages of their academic careers. From a record number of applicants, we selected five **Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica** and one **Honorary Starr Visiting Scholar** for 2024–25. We invited a group of three Postdoctoral Fellows and three Visiting Scholars

whose work investigates the complicated dynamics of Jewish life under Roman, Christian, Sasanian, early Islamic, Hellenistic, Ptolemaic and Seleucid imperial cultures. Their work examined questions of ancient Jews and Judaism in relation to these imperial cultures through the standpoint of history, literature, law, art, practice, material culture, and/or ritual and temple cultures. Starr Fellows presented their works in progress at the Starr Seminars, weekly meetings during the spring semester. These presentations often elicited lively discussions between the Fellows and others in attendance including visiting scholars, and faculty and students from Harvard and other area universities.

JANUARY 29

ORIENTATION MEETING

Paul Kosmin, Philip J. King Professor of Ancient History, Harvard University, and **Annette Yoshiko Reed**, Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Harvard Divinity School

FEBRUARY 5

Simcha Gross, Honorary Starr Visiting Scholar, University of Pennsylvania

"The Conversion of Adiabene in the Context of First-Century Frontier Kingdoms: Claiming the Middle Ground"

FEBRUARY 12

Paul Kosmin, Philip J. King Professor of Ancient History, Harvard University

"Carian Conspiracies"

FEBRUARY 19

Ishay Rosen-Zvi, Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, Starr Visiting Scholar, Harvard University; Tel Aviv University, Israel

"Between Midrash and Reality: Rereading Rabbi's Three Conversion Rituals"

FEBRUARY 26

Dean Emma Dench, McLean Professor of Ancient and Modern History and of the Classics; Dean of the Harvard Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

"The Roman Empire: A World Full of Gods?"

MARCH 5

Uzi Leibner, Starr Visiting Scholar, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

"Mass Pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple during the Second Temple period: History and Archaeology"

MARCH 12

Rabbi Benjamin Goldenhersh, Silver Fellow, Kehilat Bar-Lev, Mazkeret Batya, Israel

"The Dual Nature of Confessional Praxis: Ars and Scientia Confessionis in Jewish Tradition and Psychoanalysis"

MARCH 26

David Stern, Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

"Imperial Narrative"

APRIL 2

Nomi Schneck, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow, Princeton University

"Disordered Order and Visual Juxtaposition in the House of Dionysos"

APRIL 23

Elyashiv Cherlow, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

"A Rabbinic Lex Aquilia?"

APRIL 30

Agata Grzybowska-Wiatrak, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Warsaw, Poland

"Two Gods and a King: Rethinking the Use of the Dionysian Myth in 3 Maccabees"

MAY 7

WRAP-UP SESSION

Annette Yoshiko Reed, Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Harvard Divinity School

"Periodization and Compression: Did the Rabbis Forget (Second Temple) History?" rough draft of chapter five of Forgetting Ancient Judaism: The Second Temple Past and its Jewish Receptions (book in-progress)

NOTES FROM THE 2024–25 STARR FELLOWS



UZI LEIBNER

UZI LEIBNER

Associate Professor, Classical Archeology Department,
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

My semester-long stay at the Center for Jewish Studies as a Starr Fellow was both stimulating and productive. The excellent and vibrant research group, led by Harvard Professors Annette Yoshiko Reed, Paul Kosmin, and David Stern, brought together scholars from the fields of History, Classics, Religious Studies, Rabbinic Literature, Art History, and Archaeology. I thoroughly enjoyed the thought-provoking and multifaceted discussions.

My main research project focused on the origins and motivations behind mass pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the Second Temple period. This work is part of a larger project entitled *The Archaeology of Pilgrimage*, which aims to shed light on this major component of ancient Judaism through archaeological methods and tools. The insights and feedback from the research cohort helped me refine my arguments and reconsider some of my initial assumptions.

During my stay, I was also fortunate to complete the manuscript of a forthcoming book (co-authored with Roi Sabar), which presents the results of a previous archaeological project on Hellenistic-period Galilee. Based on a field survey of dozens of sites across the region — and especially on large-scale excavations at a key site, *Khirbet el-'Eika*, in the eastern Lower Galilee — the project seeks to illuminate the material culture, settlement patterns, economy, and ethnic identity of the local population during a period for which we have almost no historical sources.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity afforded to me by the CJS and would like to thank each and every member of the



NOMI SCHNECK

NOMI SCHNECK

Princeton University

During my time as a Starr Fellow, I worked on a book project that explores visual storytelling in the late antique Levant in relation to the broader Mediterranean world. Specifically, I analyzed how biblical narratives that were embedded in the mosaic floors of synagogues actively shaped communal values regarding a) engagement with Scripture, b) a relationship with sacred space and the no-longer standing Jerusalem Temple, and c) participation in a divinely orchestrated cosmos. The artistic techniques of the mosaic floors, such as orientation, arrangement of visual content, choice of scene, compositional details, and inscriptions, demonstrate a unique comparison between the late antique *triclinium* (dining room in a Roman building) and the synagogue as spaces with complex structural layouts that elicit dialogue, whether through educated dinner conversation or Torah study. Just like images of myths in the *triclinia* could lead to higher philosophical discussions, the biblical mosaics partake in a broader exegetical phenomenon within late antique Jewish life and learning, and rely on the importance of Scripture as a moral compass. A combined study of scenic compositions, spatial experiences, and literary comparisons reconstructs how the floor formed engaging, site-specific messages. Through this integrated approach, my project aims to demonstrate how floor mosaics, embedded in lived spaces, present the complex social identity of Jews in the Levant under the late-Roman empire. ■



SIMCHA GROSS

Assistant Professor of Ancient Rabbinics, University of Pennsylvania

Thanks to the generous support of the Starr Fellowship, in Spring 2025, I made significant headway on two major research projects examining the intersection of imperial politics, local identity, and frontier dynamics in late antiquity and the early Roman East. My book project, *Between the Borders: Communities and Empire on the Roman-Sasanian Frontier*, advanced considerably, especially in clarifying how Jews and others navigated life in this volatile and strategically crucial region. My research centers on the lived experiences of communities on the frontiers of empires; how they actively negotiated, resisted, and leveraged imperial power. Jews appear not merely as victims of geopolitical conflict but also as actors who used their position on the frontier and across both empires to assert influence and protect their communities under both Roman and Sasanian rule.

At the same time, I've worked to situate Jewish experience within a broader, comparative framework. Patterns such as the politicization of identity, the role of religious figures in diplomacy, and texts as tools of political negotiation cross confessional and ethnic lines. These dynamics were not exclusive to Jewish communities but were fundamental features of frontier life. By highlighting such shared experiences, my goal is to develop a more integrated and intercommunal account of the late antique Near East. What emerges from this research is a picture of frontier identities as fluid and strategic — constantly shaped, weaponized, and repurposed by empires, neighbors, and local actors alike.

In addition to the book project, I developed a chapter that serves as a prelude to the book, exploring what motivated the ruling dynasty of the Northern Mesopotamian kingdom of Adiabene to foster connections with Jews and Judaism in the first century CE. I argue that Jewishness served not only a pious function but also a politically adaptive one — allowing frontier kings to navigate



ELYASHIV CHERLOW

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

During my time as a Starr Fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies, I pursued a project on the development of Jewish law under the Roman Empire. My research focused on the consolidation of rabbinic civil law, particularly the laws of damages in *Tractate Neziqin*, and their interaction with surrounding legal traditions. As part of the Fellowship, I gave a seminar presentation on this topic, highlighting new perspectives on how rabbinic law evolved in dialogue with its broader cultural and legal environment. The CJS has provided a stimulating and collegial setting for this work, with access to outstanding resources and opportunities for exchange with scholars in related fields. I am grateful for the time, space, and support to deepen and share my research. ■

AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAC

University of Warsaw, Poland

As a Starr Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard during the 2024–2025 academic year, I had the privilege of engaging with the University's vibrant intellectual life and benefiting from its exceptional scholarly resources. My research, situated at the intersection of Classics, Jewish studies, and Biblical studies, advanced substantially over the year, supported by opportunities to explore each of these fields in depth.

I participated regularly in a wide range of talks, seminars, and workshops, including the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean Workshop, the Comparative Approaches to Language Learning Workshop, and the Hebrew Bible Workshop. I also took part in events organized by Ancient Studies at Harvard. As an



AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAC

“As a Starr Postdoctoral Fellow... I had the privilege of engaging with the University’s vibrant intellectual life and benefiting from its exceptional scholarly resources.”

— Agata Grzybowska-Wiatrak

auditor, I joined several courses that left a lasting impact on my work: Time in Ancient Judaism and Christianity with Professor Annette Yoshiko Reed, Invention and Development of Jewish Law (*Halakhah*) with Visiting Professor Ishay Rosen-Zvi, and The Literatures of Medieval Iberia: Approaches to Translation in their Comparative Study with Professor Luis Girón-Negrón.

During the fellowship, I completed a chapter titled “Esther’s People in Context: Law, Community, and Separation in the Diaspora between Esther and 3 Maccabees,” forthcoming in the 2025 volume *Esther: Themes and Issues*. I presented this chapter at the Hebrew Bible Workshop, where I received valuable and stimulating feedback. The discussion of my Starr Seminar presentation on the use of the Dionysian myth in 3 Maccabees offered crucial insights that will inform its revision for journal submission. I also shared my work at the Jewish Studies Workshop and at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Diego.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the fellowship was the opportunity to engage with the other CJS visitors in this year’s Starr cohort. These conversations, both within and beyond the Starr Seminar, were instrumental in shaping my book project, which examines representations of authority — kings, biblical leaders, and priests — in Greek-Jewish texts from Ptolemaic



ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

Egypt. Thanks to these exchanges, the project now rests on a firmer foundation and reflects a broader understanding of ancient imperial contexts, including the Ptolemaic, Seleucid, and Roman empires.

I am especially grateful to Paul Kosmin, Ashley Bacchi, and Ishay Rosen-Zvi for their time, insight, and generous advice on my book project and related work. I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies staff — Sandy, Rachel, Osnat, Maura, and Heather — for their warmth, support, and dedication in ensuring that the program ran smoothly and fostering a welcoming, collegial environment. ■

ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

Professor, Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University, Israel

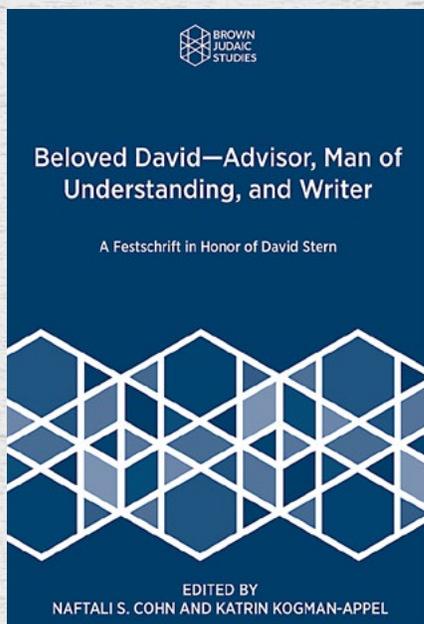
The Spring 2025 Harry Starr Fellowship in Judaica Seminars centered on the topic of Ancient Jews in and against Empires. It was a pleasure to work with Harvard faculty professors Paul Kosmin, Annette Yoshiko Reed, and David Stern, in hosting the series. The highlight of the fellowship, the Starr Seminars integrated two modes of scholarly thought — teaching and listening — into vibrant dialogue. Taking an active part in the sessions demanded both preparation and presentation, while the richness of perspectives and the depth of knowledge brought by fellow participants turned each meeting into a genuine celebration of learning. I am deeply grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for this rare intellectual opportunity. ■

LECTURES & EVENTS



KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL LECTURE

FALL SEMESTER 2024



SEPTEMBER 9, 2024 — PHOTOS ON PAGE 28

CJS Fall Welcome Reception

SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 — PHOTOS ON NEXT PAGE

Festschrift in Honor of David Stern

DEREK PENSLAR William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History; Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University

ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity and Professor of New Testament and Early Christianity, Harvard Divinity School

Reading about Writing with David Stern

KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL Alexander von Humboldt Professor of Jewish Studies, University of Münster, Germany

NAFTALI COHN Professor, Religions and Cultures, Concordia University, Canada

DAVID STERN Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

Josephine and Martin Gang Memorial Fund



NAFTALI COHN, DAVID STERN, ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED, KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL

FESTSCHRIFT PRESENTATION IN HONOR OF **DAVID STERN**

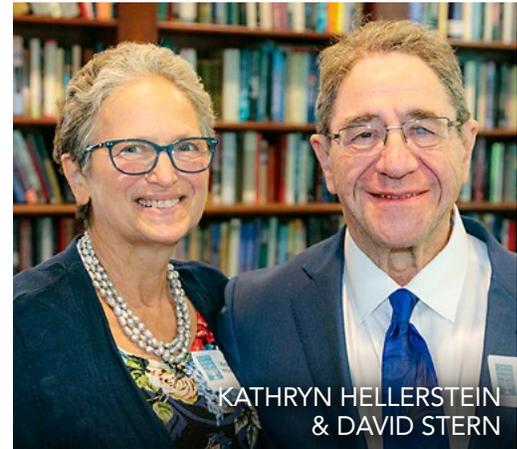
SEPTEMBER 16, 2024



DAVID STERN



HEDDY & RAFI STERN



KATHRYN HELLERSTEIN
& DAVID STERN



DAVID STERN, DEREK PENSLAR



KIMBERLEY PATTON, JONATHAN SARNA, JONATHAN DECKER, PETER MACHINIST





NOAH FELDMAN
AND DEREK PENSLAR



 KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL



SHAYE J. D. COHEN

SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

Jewish Printers and Christian Artists in Naples and Istanbul: An Illustrated Haggadah for Sefardi Refugees (1492–1505)

KATRIN KOGMAN-APPEL

Alexander von Humboldt Professor of Jewish Studies, University of Münster, Germany

Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund

SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

Student Dinner with the Director

DEREK PENSLAR

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History; Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University

Selma and Lewis H. Weinstein Fund for Jewish Studies



JEWIS AND ISRAEL A YEAR AFTER OCTOBER 7

SEPTEMBER 27, 2024 — PHOTOS PAGE 7

Honoring Shaye J. D. Cohen

Remarks By

DAVID STERN Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

JAY HARRIS Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies, Harvard University

IRIT AHARONY Senior Preceptor in Hebrew Emerita, Harvard University

MATTHEW HASS Assistant Professor of Rabbinics, Hebrew College

YONATAN MILLER Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, University of Connecticut

PETER MACHINIST Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages, Emeritus, Harvard University

SHAYE J. D. COHEN Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy, Harvard University

Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

OCTOBER 8, 2024

Jews and Israel a Year After October 7

NOAH FELDMAN

Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law; Director of the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law, Harvard Law School

DEREK PENSLAR

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History; Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law, Harvard Law School



DEREK PENSLAR, SHAUL MAGID, AND DAVID STERN

OCTOBER 9, 2024

The Meaning of October 7 for the Jewish Past, Present, and Future: Share and Learn with CJS Faculty — A Conversation

SHAUL MAGID

Visiting Professor of Modern Jewish Studies, Harvard Divinity School

DEREK PENSLAR

William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History; Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University

DAVID STERN

Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies

NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Series on Jewish-Muslim Interrelations

Jewish Muslims: How Christians Imagined Islam as the Enemy

DAVID FREIDENREICH

Pulver Family Professor of Jewish Studies, Colby College

Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Alwaleed Islamic Studies Program, Harvard University and the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School



DAVID FREIDENREICH

NOVEMBER 18, 2024 — PHOTOS ON OPPOSITE PAGE

Sign of the Times: Marking Jewish Identity in the Medieval and Early Modern World

Conveners:

DAVID STERN & SEAN GILSDORF Harvard University

Presenters:

- ANN MARIE RASMUSSEN** Duke University
- SONJA DRIMMER** University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- THOMAS RAINER** University of Basel, Switzerland
- FLORA CASSEN** Washington University, St. Louis
- ANN JONES** Smith College &
- PETER STALLYBRASS** University of Pennsylvania

Respondents:

STEPHEN GREENBLATT & JEFFREY HAMBURGER
Harvard University

Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Committee on Medieval Studies, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Jewish Cultures and Societies and History of the Book Seminars, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

DECEMBER 10, 2024 — PHOTOS PAGE 22

Antisemitism on Campuses: Reflections from Jewish Studies Faculty at Major North American Universities

Convener:

DEREK PENSLAR Harvard University

Panel 1: Perspectives on Current Campus Challenges

- MAURICE SAMUELS** Yale University
- ANNA SHTERNSHIS** University of Toronto
- REBECCA KOBRIN** Columbia University
- DOV WAXMAN** University of California, Los Angeles

Panel 2: Teaching in a Time of Crisis

- MAGDA TETER** Fordham University
- JONATHAN GRIBETZ** Princeton University
- ALEXANDER KAYE** Brandeis University
- ETHAN KATZ** University of California, Berkeley (on Zoom)

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies and Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica

CONFERENCE

SIGN OF THE TIMES

MARKING JEWISH IDENTITY IN THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN WORLD



PETER STALLYBRASS, STEPHEN GREENBLATT, SONJA DRIMMER, DAVID STERN, ANN JONES, JEFFREY HAMBURGER, ANN MARIE RASMUSSEN, FLORA CASSEN, THOMAS RAINER



DAVID STERN



NOVEMBER 18, 2024

Barker Center, Cambridge, MA

DAVID STERN, Harvard University
Opening Remarks



PETER STALLYBRASS, THOMAS RAINER



ANN MARIE RASMUSSEN

ANN MARIE RASMUSSEN, Duke University
Wearing or Bearing a Badge: Contextualizing Discriminatory Badges in the Medieval World of Visual Affiliative Signs

SONJA DRIMMER, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Marking Jewish Obsolescence: The Badge and the History of the Book

THOMAS RAINER, University of Basel, Switzerland
The Vanished Torah Scroll and the Jewish Coats of Arms: Flags to Represent Jewish Communities between Zurich and Constance in the 14th and 15th Centuries

FLORA CASSEN, Washington University in St. Louis
The Jewish Badge in Renaissance Italy: A Mark of Shame and Jewish Resistance Against It

ANN JONES, Smith College & PETER STALLYBRASS, University of Pennsylvania
A Renaissance Costume Book: Expelling the Jews?

RESPONDENTS

STEPHEN GREENBLATT, Harvard University
JEFFREY HAMBURGER, Harvard University



FLORA CASSEN, SONJA DRIMMER



ANN JONES



STEPHEN GREENBLATT



CONFERENCE RESPONDENT JEFFREY HAMBURGER



CONFERENCE

ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUSES

REFLECTIONS FROM JEWISH STUDIES FACULTY AT MAJOR NORTH AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES





HARVARD UNIVERSITY



Antisemitism on Campuses:
Reflections From Jewish Studies Faculty at Major North American Universities
Convener: Derek Penslar, Harvard University

<p>PANEL 1 1:00 - 3:00 PM</p>	<p>Perspectives on Current Campus Challenges MAURICE SAMUELS, Yale University ANNA SHTERNSHIS, University of Toronto REBECCA KOBRIN, Columbia University DOV WAXMAN, University of California, Los Angeles</p>
<p>PANEL 2 3:30 - 5:30 PM</p>	<p>Teaching in a Time of Crisis MAGDA TETER, Fordham University JONATHAN GRIBETZ, Princeton University ALEXANDER KAYE, Brandeis University ETHAN KATZ, University of California, Berkeley</p>

December 10, 2024
Fong Auditorium, 110 Boylston Hall, Harvard Yard

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
 Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica



JONATHAN GRIBETZ, DOV WAXMAN, DEREK PENSLAR, ANNA SHTERNSHIS, REBECCA KOBRIN, MAGDA TETER, MAURICE SAMUELS, ALEXANDER KAYE



400 MILES TO FREEDOM: A SCREENING AND DISCUSSION

SPRING SEMESTER 2025

FEBRUARY 3, 2025 — PHOTOS ON PAGES 28–29

CJS Spring Welcome Reception

FEBRUARY 10, 2025

Black and Jewish: A Talk Series

400 Miles to Freedom: A Screening and Discussion

AVISHAI MEKONEN & SHARI ROTHFARB MEKONEN

Filmmakers, Co-Directors/Producers, 400 Miles to Freedom

Moderator:

KAY KAUFMAN SHELEMAY

G. Gordon Watts Professor of Music and Professor of African & African American Studies, Harvard University

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 18, 2025

To Be or Not to Be Jewish and Hungarian: Dilemmas of Identity in the Films of István Szabó

SUSAN RUBIN SULEIMAN

C. Douglas Dillon Research Professor of the Civilization of France, Emerita, and Research Professor of Comparative Literature, Emerita, Harvard University

Leon I. Mirell Lecture Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 20, 2025

The Entanglement of Bodies and Texts in the Hebrew Bible

JACQUELINE VAYNTRUB

Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Yale University

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Hebrew Bible Workshop, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 24, 2025

Messianic Messages: Paratexts, Secondary Elites, and a New Narrative for the Coronation of Sabbatai Tsevi

DAVID SCLAR

Postdoctoral Research Associate and Lecturer with the Program in Judaic Studies, Princeton University; History Instructor, Librarian and Director of Student Research, The Frisch School, New Jersey

Edwin Lichtig, Jr. Research and Teaching Fund with the History of the Book Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University



AVISHAI MEKONEN, SHARI ROTHFARB MEKONEN



DAVID SCLAR



LILI ROSEN



RONIT IRSHAI & TANYA ZION-WALDOKS

FEBRUARY 24, 2025

How Roman is Rabbinic Halakah? A Debate

YAIR FURSTENBERG

Professor, Department of Talmud and Halakha, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Starr Visiting Scholar, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; Professor, Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Harry Edison Fund with Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean Workshop, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University; and the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School

MARCH 5, 2025

Holy Rebellion: Religious Feminism in Israel—Achievements and Backlash

RONIT IRSHAI

Associate Professor, Bar-Ilan University, Israel; Research Fellow, Shalom Hartman Institute, Israel

TANYA ZION-WALDOKS

Assistant Professor, Seymour Fox School of Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Women's Studies in Religion Program, Harvard Divinity School

MARCH 10, 2025

A Purim Masquerade: Trans Hasidic Edition

LILI ROSEN

Yiddish Translator and Cultural Consultant, Actress, Writer, and Producer

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund, Joseph Engel Fund with Theater, Dance & Media, and the Committee on Degrees in Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Harvard University

MARCH 26, 2025

Whither Are We Bound? Key Moments in the History of Jewish-Christian Relations

EDWARD KESSLER

Founder President, Woolf Institute; Fellow, St. Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Harvard Divinity School



EDWARD KESSLER



THE FAMILIES OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS ELFRIEDE SCHLOSS, PETER AND WERNER GOSSELS WITH LAURA HOBSON FAURE (FOURTH FROM RIGHT)



CAROLINE KAHLENBERG

MARCH 27, 2025

Jewish Suffering in the Global Humanitarian Imagination: The Camps of Unoccupied France

CAROLYN DEAN

Charles J. Stille Professor of History and French, Yale University

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Department of History; and the France and the World Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

MARCH 31, 2025

Who Will Rescue Us? The Lives of Jewish Children Who Fled to France and the U.S. During the Holocaust

LAURA HOBSON FAURE

Professor of Contemporary History, Panthéon-Sorbonne University, Paris, France

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

APRIL 2, 2025 — PHOTOS ON NEXT PAGE

Transmitting Indigenous, Vulnerable, and Endangered Languages: A Symposium

AMÉRICO MENDOZA-MORI Northeastern University

CHAYA NOVE Brown University

WILFRIED KUUGAURAO ZIBELL Oxford, United Kingdom

Moderator:

DR. SARA FELDMAN Harvard University

Isaac-Melech, Icla, and Zelman Rykles Memorial Fund; Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Harvard University Native American Program; Committee on Ethnicity, Migration, Rights; and the Jewish Cultures and Societies Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

APRIL 10, 2025

Series on Jewish-Muslim Interrelations

The Star of David and the Cedar Tree: Arab-Jewish Relations at the American University of Beirut (1900–1950)

CAROLINE KAHLENBERG

Assistant Professor of History and Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Virginia

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Alwaleed Islamic Studies Program, Harvard University

GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOPS 2024–2025 SEE PAGE 44

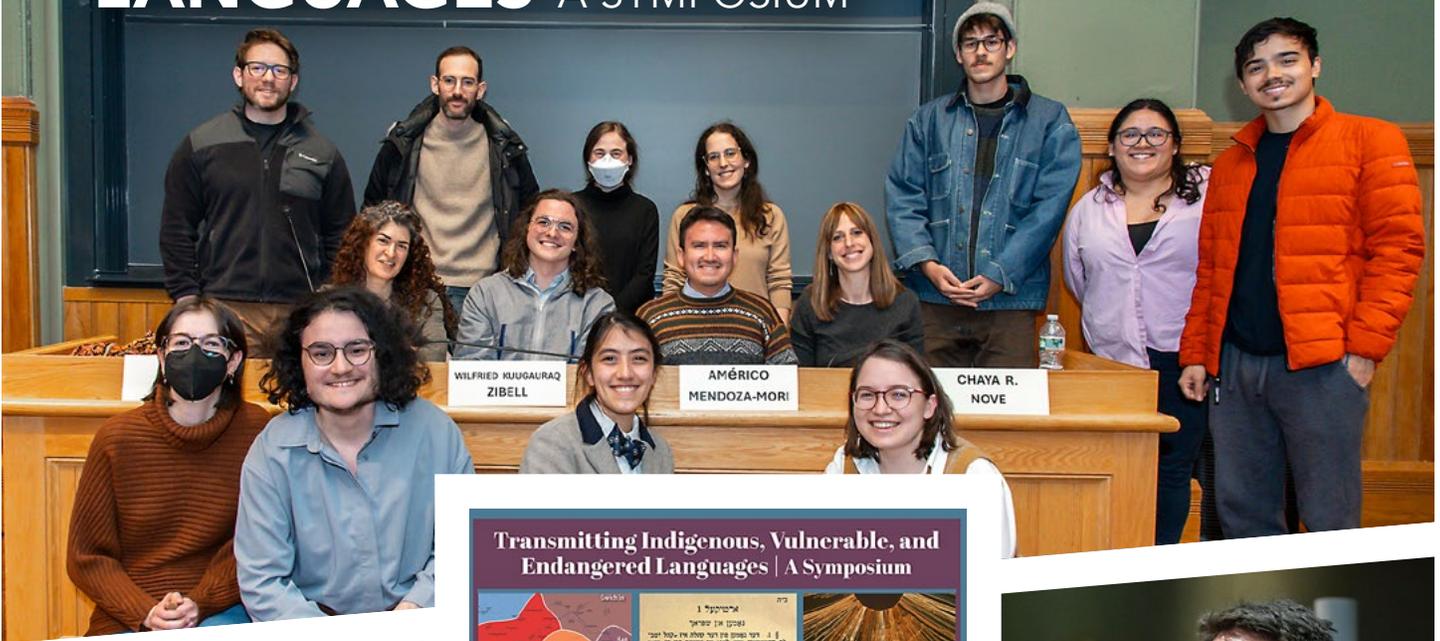
JEWISH STUDIES WORKSHOP MEETINGS

OCTOBER 29, NOVEMBER 11, FEBRUARY 6, FEBRUARY 27, MARCH 27, APRIL 24

HEBREW BIBLE WORKSHOP MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER 19, OCTOBER 10, NOVEMBER 7, NOVEMBER 19, FEBRUARY 20, MARCH 6, MARCH 27, APRIL 3, APRIL 10

TRANSMITTING INDIGENOUS, VULNERABLE, AND ENDANGERED LANGUAGES A SYMPOSIUM



Transmitting Indigenous, Vulnerable, and Endangered Languages | A Symposium

Wilfried Kuugauraq Zibell
Scholar of Yiddish and Indigenous Literature

Chaya R. Nove
Linguist specializing in Hasidic Yiddish, Brown University

Américo Mendoza-Mori
Interdisciplinary scholar and researcher

Moderator: Dr. Sara Feldman
Yiddish Preceptor, Harvard University

Wednesday, April 2, 6:00-8:00 PM
Sever Hall 113, Harvard Yard

HARVARD UNIVERSITY NATIVE AMERICAN PROGRAM
EMR Harvard University Ethnicity, Migration, Rights

MCJ HARVARD Jewish Studies and Judaic Studies Center

CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES
Jewish studies, Yiddish, and other Jewish studies center
Supports and cultivates interdisciplinary research that benefits the community



MODERATOR SARA FELDMAN, WILFRIED KUUGAURAQ ZIBELL, AMÉRICO MENDOZA-MORI, CHAYA NOVE



ELAD LAPIDOT



IRIS RACHAMIMOV



MIRIAM UDEL



THE STARR FELLOWS

APRIL 17, 2025

Emmanuel Levinas and Decolonial Jewish Thought

ELAD LAPIDOT

Full Professor for Hebraic Studies, University of Lille, France

Harry Edison Fund with the Harvard Divinity School

APRIL 21, 2025

“Crisis of Masculinity” and the Persecution of Trans People: Lessons from Israel in the 1970s and 1980s

IRIS RACHAMIMOV

Professor of History, Tel Aviv University, Israel; Fellow, Frankel Institute for Judaic Studies, University of Michigan

Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund with the Intellectual Vitality Initiatives, Harvard College

APRIL 22, 2025

Pluriformity and Compositional Practices in Ancient Jewish Text

HINDY NAJMAN

Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, Oriel College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Respondent:

ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI

Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Starr Visiting Scholar, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; Professor, Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Department of the Classics, Harvard University

APRIL 24, 2025

Umbrella Sky: Modern Jewish Worldmaking Through Yiddish Children’s Literature

MIRIAM UDEL

Judith London Evans Director of the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies; Associate Professor of German Studies, Emory University

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Jewish Studies Workshop, Harvard University

APRIL 29, 2025 — SEE PHOTOS ON PAGES 28–29

CJS End-of-Year Reception

MAY 7, 2025

Ancient Jews in and against Empires: The 2025 Starr Symposium

NOMI SCHNECK Postdoctoral Fellow, Princeton University

ELYASHIV CHERLOW Postdoctoral Fellow, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAC Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Warsaw, Poland

UZI LEIBNER Associate Professor of Classical Archaeology and Head of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Starr Visiting Scholar, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; Professor, Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University, Israel

Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica Fund



FALL RECEPTION



ANDREW DANIELSON

RECEPTIONS

SEPTEMBER 9, 2024
FEBRUARY 3, 2025
APRIL 29, 2025



DEREK PENSLAR, HARVARD VICE-PRESIDENT AND DEPUTY TO THE PRESIDENT PEGGY NEWELL, RABBI GETZEL DAVIS



OANA CAPATINA, GIO DIRUSSO



DAVID STERN, DEBORAH THOMPSON



SVENJA BETHKE



MAXIM SHRAYER, ANITA CHRISTENSEN



ISAAC MANSELL, ARI KOHN, SAGE LATTMAN, EMILY WILLRICH



AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAK, ASHLEY BACCHI, CÉLINE DEBOURSE, ANNA GLENN, VLADIMIR OLIVERO



DEAN SEAN KELLY, JAY HARRIS



ROY GINSBERG, PAMELA BRENNER, SARA FELDMAN, DALIA WOLFSON, URI SCHRETER, RAPHI HALFF, JONAH LUBIN



Yael STERNHELL, SUE KAHN



LIZ FLANAGAN, MERYEM DEMIR



ODED HAKLAI, IRV PLOTKIN, TAREK MASOUD



END-OF-YEAR RECEPTION

THE ISRAEL/PALESTINE RESEARCH FORUM

Dotan Greenvald, Associate, Boston University

The Israel/Palestine Research Forum at Harvard serves as an intellectual community dedicated to fostering productive dialogue, civil debate, and rigorous scholarship focusing on research and academic inquiry of Israel and Palestine. Recognizing the intense polarization often experienced within academia on this topic, the forum intentionally fosters an environment that encourages an academic exchange of differing viewpoints across a spectrum of political perspectives to transcend established assumptions and challenge prevailing narratives.

During the academic year 2024–25, our central theme was the interaction of scholarship and political activism, and the formation of the scholar-activist. We examined the relationship between inquiry and advocacy — where they must overlap, and where they encroach on each other. We explored why, when, and how scholars navigate the balance between

producing inquiry-based knowledge and advocating for social and political causes. Our sessions, structured around readings, discussions, and reviewing work-in-progress presentations, explored themes such as statecraft, academic freedom, gender identity politics, and historical and contemporary intersections of Israeli and Palestinian experiences in contexts of global wars and local struggles.

Through this thematic lens, the forum explored the ethical dimensions, institutional challenges, and political implications scholars face when their research intersects with activism. Ultimately, our goal has been to provide an intellectually robust platform that contributes meaningfully to campus-wide dialogues about civil discourse, intellectual freedom, and the evolving role of academics in broader societal debates. ■

FORUM MEETINGS

OCTOBER 8, 2024: Co-leaders **DOTAN GREENVALD**, Lecturer, Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies, Boston University; Associate, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, and **MATAN BOORD**, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Fellow, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, “Opening Discussion: Exploring Scholar-Activism and Defining its Limits, Challenges and Opportunities”

NOVEMBER 1, 2024: **MICHELLE SPEKTOR**, Postdoctoral Scholar, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, “Biometric Statecraft, Policing, and Fingerprint Technology in Palestine-Israel, 1920–1948”

NOVEMBER 8, 2024: **NOAH KASSIS**, Harvard College ’25, Joint Session with Undergraduate Group, “Forward-Thinking Jewish Union”

NOVEMBER 22, 2024: **MATAN BOORD**, MSCA Fellow, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University “Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression in the Field of Israel-Palestine between Neo-Liberal and Political Interventions”

DECEMBER 13, 2024: **DOTAN GREENVALD**, Lecturer, Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies, Boston University; Associate, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, “The Evolution of Legal Culture: Mock Public Trials in the Mandate Period and Early Israel”

JANUARY 28, 2025: **RAANAN REIN**, Elias Sourasky Professor of Latin American and Spanish History, Tel Aviv University, Israel, “Jewish Women Fighting for Social Justice on Both Sides of the Mediterranean: The Spanish Civil War and the Jewish - Palestinian Perspective”

FEBRUARY 18, 2025: **SVENJA BETHKE**, Associate Professor, University of Leicester, United Kingdom; Visiting Scholar, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, “How to Dress in Palestine? German Jewish Migrant Experiences between Nazi Persecution and Settlement in Mandatory Palestine”

MARCH 4, 2025: **LAUREN COHEN FISHER**, Lecturer in Jewish Studies and Director of Jewish Student Life, Colby College, “The Inquiry-Centered Model: An Approach to Teaching Israel-Palestine in the Classroom”

MARCH 25, 2025: **ADA GONZÁLES-TORRES**, Assistant Professor of Economics, Ben-Gurion University, Israel; Visiting Faculty, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, “War and Risk Preferences: A Joint Work with Professor Abigail Hurwitz, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel”

APRIL 9, 2025: **DEREK PENSLAR**, William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History and Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University, “Passion and Palestine: Why Does the World Have Such an Intense Stake in Israel-Palestine”

APRIL 22, 2025: **IRIS RACHAMIMOV**, Professor of History, Tel Aviv University, Israel; Fellow, Frankel Institute of Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, “Transgender Identity, Belonging, and Politics in the 1970’s: Reading through *Hahatakh* (The Cut)”



PROFESSOR MIRIAM UDEL TALK

ALUMNI NEWS



ALDO ARAGON

ALDO ARAGON

Harvard College '24

Although I am not Jewish myself, my sincere intellectual and cultural interest in learning more about one of the world's most complex traditions has ultimately helped me to become not just a better scholar, but also a better person

of faith, community member, friend, family member, and leader. Respectful cross-ideological and cross-cultural interaction — the kinds of which I found while at the CJS — is precisely what our divided world needs more of today.

With nearly a year having passed since my graduation, I have decided to defer my law school applications and attendance. I recently accepted a civilian-to-officer commission in the United States Air Force and will be committing to a four-year term of service. This summer, I will begin expedited training to become an Airfield Operations Officer. As I transition away from my undergraduate experience at Harvard and begin a military career, there are many friendships, mentorships, and fond memories that I carry with me from my time with the Center for Jewish Studies. ■

(The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of either the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government).



MATTHEW HASS

MATTHEW HASS

Ph.D. '24, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University

Matthew Hass '24 has accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Rabbinics at the Rabbinical School of Hebrew College in Newton, Massachusetts. Read more about Matthew's journey and areas of interest on the [Hebrew College's website](#). ■



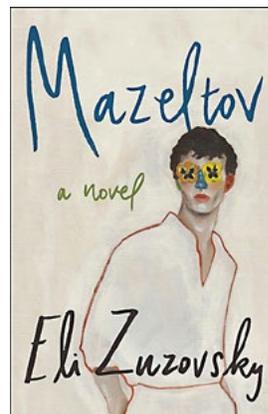
ELI ZUZOVSKY, CLAIRE MESSUD

ELI ZUZOVSKY

Harvard College '21

After graduating in 2021, I received a Master's degree in French and German literature and am currently pursuing a practice-led Ph.D. in fine art at Oxford — and I've just passed my viva (oral exams)! I've continued to work as a writer and director and produced award-winning short films presented at festivals, theaters, and museums. My play *Long Distance* was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

I recently published my debut novel *Mazeltov* (Macmillan, Henry Holt and Co, 2025). It is based on my undergraduate senior thesis film, which was short-listed for an Israeli Academy Award. The Harvard Book Store kindly selected the book for their New Voices in Fiction Club and invited me for a discussion with Claire Messud, my thesis advisor, who wrote:



"By turns hilarious and heartbreaking, Eli Zuzovsky's brilliantly observed novel offers a kaleidoscopic view of a young queer man's life, his family and his times, through the lens of his bar mitzvah. Mazeltov is an unforgettable, virtuosic debut."

I've spent the past few months at a residency, living alone at Albert Einstein's summer house in Germany — a surreal and wonderful experience. ■

ALUMNI NEWS CONTINUES ON PAGE 34

GIVE NOW

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The Center for Jewish Studies offers the convenience of online giving. To give by credit card, scan the QR code or go to cjs.fas.harvard.edu/giving for instructions and pledge options.

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Center for Jewish Studies
Harvard University
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Cambridge, MA 02138

Make checks payable to "Harvard University, Center for Jewish Studies."

BECOME A FRIEND OF THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

This fund provides an ongoing base of support for the Center and enables it to expand its present areas of activity. Annual support from the Friends helps shape the future of Jewish studies and sustains the Center as an influential, multifaceted enterprise at Harvard.

Projects supported by The Friends include:

- Student research and supplemental study fellowships
- Modern Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino language instruction
- Research-related expenses for visiting scholars
- Public lectures and class presentations
- Undergraduate publications
- Doctoral dissertation advising by specialized scholars from outside Harvard
- Graduate student workshop groups
- Jewish Studies at Harvard Timeline Project



Founded in 1984 by Peter J. Solomon (A.B. '60, M.B.A. '63), the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies is currently chaired by Stacy S. Dick (A.B. '78, Ph.D. '83).

NAMED FUNDS

Those pursuing Jewish studies at Harvard University may benefit from a number of funds established over the years. New funds are formed continuously; the following funds are currently supporting students and scholars in their pursuit for greater knowledge and achievement in this field. These also may support publications and events at the Center for Jewish Studies. For further information on establishing a named fund, or contributing to one, please contact our office at cjs@fas.harvard.edu.

NAMED STUDENT FELLOWSHIP AND PRIZE FUNDS, AND GRANTS

Mandell L. Berman Fellowship
Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund
Harry Edison Fund
Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
Suzanne and Dr. Lawrence Fishman Fellowship Fund
Leo Flax Fellowship
Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation Fund for Undergraduate and Graduate Travel to Israel
Hertog Undergraduate Study Abroad Fund
Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship
Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund
Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund
Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
Aaron and Clara Rabinowitz Trust Fellowship
Rudnick Family Fellowship
Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies
Nathan and Geraldine Snyder Fund for Jewish Studies
Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship
Sosland Family Fellowship
Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies
Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Family Fellowship for Advanced Research in Judaica Studies
Isadore Twersky Fellowship

NAMED TEACHING AND RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Joseph Engel Fund
Freed Research Fund in the Center for Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies Center for Hebrew Culture Foundation
Edwin Lichtig, Jr. Research and Teaching Fund
Esther Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies
George Rohr Fund
Isaac-Melech, Icla, and Zelman Rykles Memorial Fund
Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellowship
Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica Fund
Harry Starr Teaching and Research Fund
Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica
Selma and Lewis H. Weinstein Fund for Jewish Studies
Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professorship

NAMED LECTURE AND PUBLICATION FUNDS

Yigal Allon Memorial Fund
Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund
Alan and Elisabeth Doft Lecture and Publication Fund
Robert and Florence Dreben Lecture and Publication Fund
Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund
William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund
Leon I. Mirell Lecture Fund
Charles H. Revson Foundation Lecture Fund
Estelle and Howard Rubin Fund
Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund
Harry A. Wolfson Publication Fund
Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

OTHER NAMED FUNDS

Center for Jewish Studies Fund
Suzanne R. and Dr. Lawrence M. Fishman Endowed Fund for Jewish Studies
Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
Josephine and Martin Gang Memorial Fund
Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies
Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies

ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIPS IN JEWISH STUDIES

Dorot Professor of Archaeology of Israel
Lee M. Friedman Bibliographer in Judaica in the Harvard College Library
William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History
Hancock Professor of Hebrew and Other Oriental Languages
Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies
Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy
Martin Peretz Professor of Yiddish Literature and Comparative Literature
Jacob E. Safra Professor of Jewish History and Sephardic Civilization
Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature
Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies

Yiddish students Malka Himelhoch, Danny Mindich, and Rachel Landau, with guest presenter Gitty Jakubowicz; sponsored by the Harry Starr Teaching and Research Fund



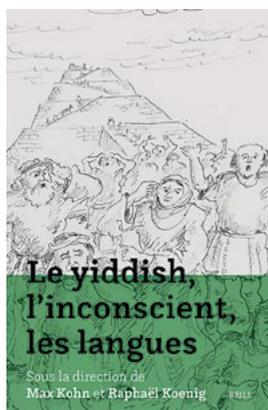


RAPHAEL D. KOENIG

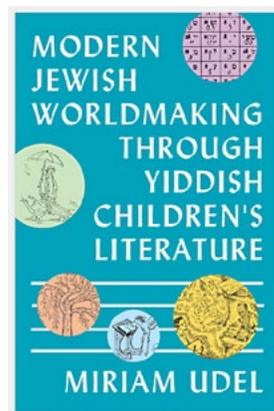
Ph.D. '18, Comparative Literature, Harvard University

Since completing his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at Harvard in 2018, Raphael Koenig has held the Leonard A. Lauder Fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and taught in both the U.S. and France. He

is currently Assistant Professor of French and Comparative Literature at the University of Connecticut, affiliated with the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life. His recent publications examine the intersections of art, literature, and mental health, including *Le Yiddish, l'inconscient, les langues* (Brill, 2024) and *Portals: The Visionary Architecture of Paul Goesch* co-authored with Robert Wiesenberger (Clark Art Institute and Yale University Press, 2023). He serves on the editorial board of *In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies* and lives in Connecticut with his wife and two children. ■



foreground a set of neglected yet essential primary texts, she selected and translated the nearly fifty Yiddish children's stories and poems collected in *Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children's Literature* (NYU Press, 2020), winner of the Judaica Reference Award of the Association of Jewish Libraries. Alongside this work of cultural curation, Udel authored a critical study of how children's literature can serve as a novel archive for interrogating the competing ideological movements of the Jewish twentieth century, *Modern Jewish Worldmaking Through Yiddish Children's Literature*, forthcoming from Princeton in October, 2025. Udel's translation efforts continue to flourish as well. In 2026, SUNY Press will publish *Labzik: Tales of a Clever Pup*, the beloved Depression-era collection of twelve stories by Chaver Paver about the adventures of a proletarian puppy and the loving Bronx family who adopt him.



During the tail end of a year spent at the Center for Jewish History as the Rifkind Senior Fellow and the Covenant Foundation's Family Education Fellow, Udel was pleased to return to Harvard and to share her research with current students as a guest of the Jewish Studies Workshop. ■



MIRIAM UDEL

AB '98, NELC; PhD '08, Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University

Professor Miriam Udel has taught Yiddish language, literature, and culture since 2007 at Emory University, where she currently serves as Judith London Evans Director of the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies.

Professor Udel's research focuses

on the Ashkenazi encounter with modernity and modes of cultural transmission across generations. Her first book, *Never Better! The Modern Jewish Picaresque* (University of Michigan Press, 2016), won the 2017 National Jewish Book Award for Modern Jewish Thought and Experience.

In 2013, she began exploring a new subfield in Yiddish studies: Yiddish children's literature and its political importance. To



YONI MILLER

Ph.D. '15, Ancient Judaism, Harvard University

After finishing my Ph.D. in Ancient Judaism in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in 2015, I enjoyed one last year at Harvard as a Harry Starr Fellow in Judaica. Then I set off with my family to the plains of northwest Ohio to take a job

at the University of Toledo, Ohio. What I thought would be a short-term position was upgraded to the tenure-track in 2019, and it was ultimately endowed by a local Jewish family as the Philip Markowicz Chair in Judaism and Jewish Biblical Studies. In 2023, I moved to the University of Connecticut, where I am now Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and Associate Director of the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life. ■

ACADEMICS



SELECTED COURSES IN JEWISH STUDIES

Jewish studies courses are offered in a broad array of academic departments and schools at Harvard, many with the support of the CJS. This includes instruction in the essential components of Jewish civilization from antiquity to the present: the Jewish textual canon; Jewish thought, literature and arts; and Jewish history and culture, including that of the state of Israel. We also support instruction in several Jewish languages, including: classical and modern Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino. The CJS compiles a list of all Jewish studies course offerings each semester on our website: <https://cjs.fas.harvard.edu/academics/courses/>.

Below is a brief description of a small sampling of the more than 30 courses in Jewish studies offered each semester (see the full list of courses on the following page).

HEBREW 218/HDS 1802 THE JOSEPH STORY AND THE BOOK OF ESTHER: SEMINAR

PROFESSOR JON LEVENSON

A close critical reading of Genesis 37–50 and the Book of Esther in Hebrew. Emphasis on literary design and religious messages and on the influence of the story of Joseph upon the Book of Esther.

JEWISHST 102 JEWS, JUDAISM, JEWISHNESS

PROFESSOR JAY HARRIS

This course seeks to provide a general introduction to classical Judaism and Jewish identity. It will focus on Judaism as a way of living and thinking throughout its various historical permutations, and on Jews as bearers of evolving identities. We will focus on four broadly defined periods: the biblical, second Temple, rabbinic and medieval. We will examine the diversity of Jewish religious and “ethnic” identities across these periods, and within them.

HIST 1008 ONE LAND, TWO PEOPLES: THE MODERN HISTORY OF ISRAEL/PALESTINE

PROFESSOR DEREK PENSLAR

This course studies the history of an area in western Asia, about as large as the state of Massachusetts, that is known by many names, including Palestine, Israel, the Holy Land, and the Land of Israel. It is home to one of the world’s most enduring conflicts and arguably the one that attracts the most attention. This course situates the history of Israel/Palestine within a broad chronological framework — from the mid-1800s to the present — and within the contexts of Middle Eastern, Western, Jewish, and Islamic history. Doing so demonstrates the inseparability of this small territory from the major political movements of the twentieth century, including nationalism (both secular and religious), colonialism, and anti-colonialism. A global approach also demonstrates the role of major states and of the Jewish and Arab diasporas in affecting Israel/Palestine’s fate over the past century. ■

COURSES IN JEWISH STUDIES

FALL 2024

FIRST YEAR SEMINARS

First Year Seminar 63L Memory Wars: Cultural Trauma and the Power of Literature

BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT

Ancient Near East 120A Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/
Old Testament 1: Pentateuch and Former Prophets

Ancient Near East 170 Food, Identity, and the Biblical World

Hebrew 218 The Joseph Story and the Book of Esther: Seminar

Hebrew 256 The Poetics of Biblical Composition:
Foundational Principles of Hebrew Narrative Art

Hebrew 258 The History of God: Evidence from the Psalms

Religion 1134 Genesis: Narrative Artistry and Theological Meanings

Religion 1301 Time in Ancient Judaism and Christianity

Semitic Philology 152 Introduction to Ugaritic

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 114 Mysticism and Literature

Comparative Literature 201X The Material Text and the History of the Book

Folklore and Mythology 140 Messages from beyond the Mountains of
Darkness: Introduction to Jewish Magic and Folklore

HDS 1648 Jewish Mysticism and Heresy: From Sabbateanism to Hasidism

Jewish History 102 Jews, Judaism, Jewishness

Jewish History 208 Invention and Development of Jewish Law (*Halakhah*)

MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 119 Mainstream Jews

Comparative Literature 224 Jew Theory

HDS 1646 Jewish Religion and Politics in the 20th Century:
Europe, America, and Israel

Jewish History 111 Encounters Between German and Jewish Thought

Modern Hebrew 241R Advanced Seminar in Modern Hebrew:
Israeli Cinema & Culture

HEBREW (CLASSICAL AND MODERN), YIDDISH, AND OTHER JEWISH LANGUAGES

Classical Hebrew AA Elementary Classical Hebrew I

Classical Hebrew 120A Intermediate Classical Hebrew I

Classical Hebrew 130AR Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew I: Former Prophets

Modern Hebrew BA Elementary Modern Hebrew I

Modern Hebrew 120A Intermediate Modern Hebrew I

Modern Hebrew 130A Advanced Modern Hebrew I

Yiddish AA Elementary Yiddish I

Yiddish BA Intermediate Yiddish I

Yiddish CA Advanced Yiddish I

JEWISH LAW (HARVARD LAW SCHOOL)

HLS 2437 Advanced Topics in Jewish Law: States of Consciousness in Jewish Law

ADDITIONAL COURSES RELEVANT TO JEWISH STUDIES

First Year Seminar 73C Race Science: A History

German 181 Walter Benjamin's Theory of Modernity:
History, Language, Technology, Catastrophe

Government 940F Law and Politics in Multicultural Democracies

History 80G Travelers to Byzantium

Slavic 175 Between East and West: A Critical Mapping of Polish Culture

Social Studies 98RI Religion in Politics: Origins, Dissent, and Disruptions

SPRING 2025

GENERAL EDUCATION

General Education 1090 What Is a Book? From the Clay Tablet to the Kindle

FIRST YEAR SEMINARS

First Year Seminar 23H Medicine in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust—
Anatomy as Example for Changes in Medical Science

BIBLICAL AND ANCIENT

Ancient Near East 120B Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/
Old Testament 2: Latter Prophets and Writings

Ancient Near East 211 Social Archaeology of Iron Age Ancient Israel

HDS 1508 Jewish-Christianity

HDS 2507 Fallen Angels

Hebrew 214 Studies in Biblical Law

Hebrew 257 The Book of Proverbs: Seminar

Semitic Philology 152 Introduction to Ugaritic

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

Comparative Literature 252 The Literatures of Medieval Iberia:
Approaches and Debates in their Comparative Study

Religion 1250 Judaism: Text and Tradition (also listed under Biblical and Ancient)

MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE

HDS 1680 The Jewish Jesus in Modernity

History 161 Refugees in the 20th-Century United States

History 1008 One Land, Two Peoples: The Modern History of Israel/Palestine

Jewish History 211 Israel's Chosenness: Ancient Roots and Modern Manifestations

Modern Hebrew 240R Advanced Studies in Modern

Hebrew: Israeli Media in Real Time

Yiddish 203 Yiddish Trash

HEBREW (CLASSICAL AND MODERN), YIDDISH, AND OTHER JEWISH LANGUAGES

Classical Hebrew AB Elementary Classical Hebrew II

Classical Hebrew 120B Intermediate Classical Hebrew II

Classical Hebrew 130BR Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew II

Ladino 16 Beginning Ladino

Modern Hebrew BB Elementary Modern Hebrew II

Modern Hebrew 120B Intermediate Modern Hebrew II

Modern Hebrew 130B Advanced Modern Hebrew II

Semitic Philology 154 Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic) Language and Texts

Yiddish AB Elementary Yiddish II

Yiddish BB Intermediate Yiddish II

JEWISH LAW (HARVARD LAW SCHOOL)

HLS 2437 Advanced Topics in Jewish Law: Gender and Jewish Law

HLS 3345 Antinomianism: Revolts Against Law in Judaism,
Christianity, and American Political Culture

HLS 3346 Psychedelics, Law & Religion

ADDITIONAL COURSES RELEVANT TO JEWISH STUDIES

Government 1705 The Politics of War and Peace in the Middle East

HDS 3335 Narratives of Displacement and Belonging in Israel/Palestine

HDS 3349 Before and After Muhammad: The Rise and

Rivalry of Monotheisms in Late Antiquity

History 1922 Varieties of Fascism: Histories, Theories, Controversies

Medieval Studies 250 At Cross Purposes: The Crusades in Material Culture

Modern Greek Studies 103 The Nazis and the Greeks



YIDDISH STUDENTS MALKA HIMELHOCH, RACHEL LANDAU
SPEAKER ANNIE SOMMER KAUFMAN, SARA FELDMAN

YIDDISH LANGUAGE NEWS

DR. SARA FELDMAN, *Preceptor in Yiddish*

Our Yiddish program has blossomed into a vibrant community of Yiddish speakers, united by a shared passion for Yiddish language and culture, and bustling with dynamic classes, inspiring guest speakers, lively social events, and special programming for our students. Our advanced class explored Polish Yiddish and contemporary Hasidic Yiddish. One class compared a century-old Polish Yiddish sports magazine with a recent Hasidic podcast about exercise and examined how Yiddish commentary on health and fitness reflected broader Jewish concerns of different eras. Students new to Yiddish analyzed recordings of Polish Yiddish for differences in pronunciation and created a fictional character over the course of the year, “Khane Rosenfeld,” and a creative project about her family. We welcomed a class visit from musician Gitty Jakubowicz, who shared contemporary Hasidic holiday songs.

We established *Leyenkrayz*, a Yiddish reading circle which met weekly throughout the year. A group of students, faculty and alumni gathered to read fiction and theatrical pieces and enjoyed the occasional Yiddish movie night.

We were proud to share in celebrating Dr. Uri Schreter’s contributions to the world of Yiddish music and klezmer with about 150 people, including klezmer luminaries from around the world, at his dissertation defense in a packed room and on Zoom. *Mazel tov* to Uri and all our graduating students!

We are very grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Esther Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies**, the **Joseph Engel Fund**, the **Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund**, the **Harry Starr Teaching and Research Fund**, and the **Isaac-Melech, Icla and Zelman Rykles Memorial Fund** for supporting the Yiddish Program. We thank the departments of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, and Theater, Dance and Media at Harvard, and the Open Gate Foundation for supporting a talk by Lili Rosen, acclaimed actress, writer, cultural consultant and translator. She spoke about

contemporary Yiddish culture and theater, shared her personal journey, and extensive experience in Hollywood, including her recent work on television series *Unorthodox* and movie *SHTTL*.

We hosted a symposium, *Transmitting Indigenous, Vulnerable, and Endangered Languages*, cosponsored by the Committee on Ethnicity, Migration, and Rights at Harvard. Our own Yiddishist Wilfried Zibell ’21 — also active in Iñupiat language work — joined Hasidic Yiddish linguist Dr. Chaya Nove (Brown University) and Quechua scholar Dr. Américo Mendoza-Mori (Northeastern University) and discussed the studies of Yiddish and Indigenous languages. We hope to continue this conversation with future events (see photos on page 26).

Additional events included an evening with Annie Sommer Kaufman, a Yiddish translator and teacher, in conversation with Dr. Sara Feldman about Kaufman’s newly published translation of Ben Gold’s *Your Comrade, Avreml Broide*, with the Mahindra Center’s Rethinking Translation Seminar. Kaufman also joined our Yiddish class, where students interviewed her in Yiddish and received *Avreml Broide* swag.

The Jewish Studies Workshop brought Yiddish scholar and translator Professor Miriam Udel (Emory University) for a fascinating lecture on the topic of her forthcoming book *Modern Jewish Worldmaking Through Yiddish Children’s Literature*. The Department of Comparative Literature hosted a panel on Professor Saul Zaritt’s new monograph, *A Taytsh Manifesto: Yiddish, Translation, and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture*. Yiddish professors Amelia Glaser (UC Davis) and Joshua Lambert (Wellesley) joined Harvard Professors Saul Zaritt and David Damrosch to discuss the book. The students, faculty, and alumni of Harvard Yiddish studies wish Saul the best in his new position, thank him for his guidance and promise to keep exploring Yiddish *shund* (trash) and “women’s reading” in class. ■



MODERN HEBREW CLASS AT THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY



ARTIST NETA WEINER LEADS MODERN HEBREW 130A STUDENTS ON A VIRTUAL TOUR OF JAFFA



ADRIAN MAYDANICH PRESENTS IN HEBREW

MODERN HEBREW LANGUAGE NEWS

HEBREW COMES TO LIFE AT HARVARD A YEAR OF LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

RAN BECHOR, *Preceptor in Modern Hebrew*

From scavenger hunts in Harvard Yard to podcast production in Hebrew — our students took language learning far beyond the classroom.

In 2024–25, the modern Hebrew program at Harvard offered eight courses: five taught by me, and three by Romy Neumark, Teaching Assistant. These courses covered several levels, from complete beginners to advanced students who created an original podcast in Hebrew. Alongside academic work and a strong focus on grammar and structure, students brought modern Hebrew to life through hands-on experiences and cultural immersion.

Our classes took field trips, played games, sang songs, gave presentations, and celebrated holidays. Beginners learned Hebrew animal names at the Museum of Natural History and ordered lunch in Hebrew at a local Israeli-owned restaurant. Intermediate classes enjoyed weekly karaoke sessions. One of the year’s highlights was a festive Mimouna celebration at the end of Passover — a Maghrebi Jewish tradition marking the return to eating *hametz* (leavened bread), which is forbidden throughout the week of Passover. The event was a huge success and attracted around a hundred students, faculty and other Harvard community members.

This summer, we are collaborating with the Harvard Bok Center to produce short videos featuring native Hebrew speakers. These videos are designed to help beginner-level students engage with Hebrew using the vocabulary they’ve already learned.

We are grateful to the **Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund; Harry Starr Teaching and Research Fund; Nathan and Geraldine Snyder Fund for Jewish Studies;**

Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies, and the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies for supporting these activities that help bring Hebrew to life for our students. ■

ADVANCED MODERN HEBREW SEMINARS FORGING A CREATIVE COMMUNITY

ROMY NEUMARK, *CJS Fellow; Teaching Assistant in Modern Hebrew*

Romy Neumark brought her experience as a journalist to teaching Harvard’s Advanced Modern Hebrew courses. Using documentary research, creative storytelling, and hands-on media projects, advanced students gained meaningful access to contemporary Hebrew, cultural dialogue, and some of the most urgent social and ethical questions of our time.

MODERN HEBREW 130A: PERSON AND PLACE

The richness of the Hebrew word *מקום* (*makom*) was at the heart of this fall semester seminar. While in English, *makom* simply translates to “place,” in Hebrew it carries a broad range of meanings—from physical and geographic to spiritual and even divine. *HaMakom* is one of the traditional names for God in Jewish texts. Students explored this multi-layered concept through questions of belonging, memory, and the boundaries between presence and absence. They toured the campus’s hidden pathways, interviewed professionals from diverse fields, and created projects examining space, literature, and art in contemporary Israeli culture. Israeli artist Neta Weiner led our students on a unique virtual tour of Jaffa held inside Harvard’s state-of-the-art 360-degree Visualization Lab: a “room within no place,” and led a discussion on presence, displacement, and what it means to be “in place.” For their final class project, students created an audio story in Hebrew about a personally meaningful place, applying

skills in research and narration to explore how *makom* resonates through identity and memory.

MODERN HEBREW 240R: ISRAELI MEDIA IN REAL TIME

With over two decades of journalistic experience, Neumark brought her “Classroom as a Newsroom” model to Harvard. Students became active reporters, creating a Hebrew-language news website. Throughout the semester, students engaged with real-time Israeli media by analyzing news articles and broadcasts. The vibrant classroom environment fostered teamwork, authentic expression, and personal voice, and developed students’ skills in writing, editing and publishing. Students created a broad range of content, including interviews and multimedia segments, all integrated into the class website. Students were thrilled at the opportunities to meet with accomplished Israeli journalists, and discuss practical insights and ethical challenges. The course concluded

with a Learning Lab workshop, where students created professional graphic explainers (explainer videos) in Hebrew.

MODERN HEBREW 241R: ISRAELI CINEMA AND CULTURE

With the Bok Center’s Learning Lab, students explored Israeli documentary films, analyzed their themes and practiced authentic expression in Hebrew. Each week, we held a live encounter with an influential figure from the Israeli creative landscape. Students then took turns leading interviews and building a “living dictionary,” and learned about podcasting and cinematic tools. As a final project, students created either a short film or documentary script, highlighting each student’s personal connection to Hebrew. ■

LADINO LANGUAGE NEWS

ADAM MAHLER, *Instructional Fellow and Ph.D. candidate, Romance Languages and Literatures*

For the second time since 2023, the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures offered a beginning course in Ladino language and literature (LADINO 16). Developed and taught by graduate student Adam Mahler, the course traces the origins of Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish, from the proto-Ladino Jewish sociolects of medieval Iberia to the flourishing Sephardic literary culture that arose in North Africa, the Low Countries, Italy, and across the Ottoman Empire.

The course drew a diverse group of students, with backgrounds in Ottoman history, Kabbalah, and Spanish linguistics. Through a combination of close reading of primary sources and formal grammar lessons tailor-made for this course, students gained exposure to more than five-hundred years of Judeo-Spanish cultural production. They mastered Rashi script, the traditional writing standard for Judeo-Spanish texts, as they engaged with seventeenth century *siddurim* published in Amsterdam and early twentieth-century periodicals printed in Sephardic cultural hubs like Istanbul and Salonika.

Archival visits to Harvard’s considerable holdings in Jewish culture marked major highlights of the semester. Judaica Collections librarian Vardit Samuels curated materials that provided students the opportunity to interact with Judeo-Spanish music, North American and Ottoman periodicals, and a variety of liturgical literature from the Sephardic world. Students also visited Harvard’s Houghton Library, where a number of Spanish bibles of Jewish authorship



were on display. One student, a doctoral candidate in History of Science, has begun developing original research on the affinities between Ladino and Turkish scientific journals in the late Ottoman period—to name just a single example of the groundbreaking scholarship to have emerged from the archival visits.

With financial and faculty support from the Center for Jewish Studies and Harvard’s Office for Undergraduate Course Innovation, Beginning Ladino has continued to shine a light on the intellectual and linguistic diversity of the Jewish diaspora. As one student wrote in her evaluation:

“Guided by the interest and pace of the students, this class feels both comprehensive and personal... I feel extremely lucky to be able to take a Ladino course—a once in a lifetime opportunity which in one semester covers the amazingly vast history of Ladino.” ■

MODERN HEBREW
STUDENTS CHARLIE COVIT,
YONA SPERLING-MILNER,
MIRIAM GOLDBERGER



GUEST SPEAKERS IN ADVANCED MODERN HEBREW COURSES

FALL 2024

MODERN HEBREW 241R ISRAELI CINEMA AND CULTURE

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024 — ZOOM

[Get the Land Back \(2024\)](#)

ELAD ORENSTEIN director and cinematographer
IRMY SHIK-BLUM director, comedian and journalist

SEPTEMBER 25, 2024 — IN PERSON

[Gaga dance class](#)

DORON PERK Gaga movement teacher, dancer and choreographer

OCTOBER 7, 2024 — ZOOM

[KAN 360: October 7th Digital Memorial Project](#)

BOAZ FREMDER Creative Director at KAN (Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation)

OCTOBER 16, 2024 — ZOOM

[Letter to a Pig \(2022\)](#)

TAL KANTOR animation filmmaker & visual artist

OCTOBER 28, 2024 — ZOOM

[Documentary soundtracks](#)

JONATHAN BAR GIORA composer and pianist

NOVEMBER 4, 2024 — HYBRID

[In Her Footsteps \(2017\)](#)

RANA ABU-FRAIHA Israel's first Bedouin female director; screenwriter, editor; instructor, School of Audio & Visual Arts, Sapir College, Israel

YASMEEN ABU-FRAIHA Critical Care Fellow, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center; Fellow, Middle East Initiative, Harvard Kennedy School

NOVEMBER 20, 2024 — ZOOM

[The One \(2023\)](#)

GILAD TOCATLY film and television director and producer

SPRING 2025

MODERN HEBREW 240R ISRAELI MEDIA IN REAL TIME

FEBRUARY 26, 2025 — IN PERSON

Media ethics during crises and the importance of maintaining editorial integrity in times of conflict

PROF. RAANAN REIN Elias Sourasky Professor of Latin American and Spanish History; former Vice President, Tel Aviv University, Israel; former news editor, *Hadashot* newspaper, Israel

MARCH 5, 2025 — IN PERSON

Reporting from Ukraine; investigative journalism techniques and social responsibility

YARDEN MICHAELI journalist, *Haaretz* newspaper, Israel; Knight Science Journalism Fellow, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MARCH 12, 2025 — IN PERSON

On being an IDF radio broadcaster during October 7th: Illuminating the challenges of reporting during war

IDAN KWELLER former political correspondent *Galatz* (IDF radio, Israel)

MARCH 24, 2025 — IN PERSON

The complexities and editorial decisions involved in covering the Israeli hostages and their families

YONATAN REGUER reporter, *Channel 12 News*, Israel

MARCH 26, 2025 — ZOOM

An honest discussion of satire and Israeli entertainment during times of conflict

IDO DAVID COHEN media reporter, *Haaretz* newspaper, Israel

APRIL 23, 2025 — ZOOM

Reflections on personal work and family experience during the Gaza hostage crisis.

MAYA ROMAN founder of Israel's independent feminist news outlet *Politically Correct*

THE CJS TIMELINE PROJECT

THE HISTORY OF JEWISH STUDIES AT HARVARD

Osnat Aharoni, CJS Communications Coordinator overseeing the project

Since 2024, an anonymous donor has generously given support to the CJS to fund the creation of a multimedia timeline to document the history of Jewish studies at Harvard. Several undergraduates have been working with the CJS staff to research and produce content for the project. They have been gathering primary sources in the University archives such as historical documents, photos, and audio-visual materials. The students have interviewed several alumni and faculty members about their experiences. As they pursue topics of personal interest, they also gain valuable research skills that will serve them in future endeavors.

Here are the reflections of two students on their research this year:



Isaac Mansell '26, concentrating in Economics, has been with us since the project's inception. This year, he researched Harvard's admissions policies, including quotas, in the 1920s.



Ariel Mekonen '27, studies Neuroscience and Government. He joined the team at the beginning of the 2024–25 academic year. He is currently building the Tapestry of Jewish Studies web page.

"The timeline project gave me a better understanding of how policies and decisions take shape in real time, often without the clarity we assume in retrospect. Instead of analyzing the period with the benefit of hindsight, the work focused on how debates unfolded at Harvard in the 1920s, which helped me see how institutions justify decisions under pressure, and how individuals responded at Harvard.

What the project really showed me is that history isn't just a set of outcomes; it's the sum of individual choices, many of them made quietly, in letters, meetings, or committee reports. Understanding that helped me appreciate how quickly ideas can turn into policy, and how important it is to pay attention not only to the decisions themselves, but to the justifications offered at the time."

"I focused on the contributions of Jews of color and individuals from diverse Jewish backgrounds, highlighting their experiences as they have shaped our campus today. Through archival research, interviews, and community engagement, I aim to ensure that the project reflects the full complexity of Jewish identity on campus. I am particularly interested in how race, ethnicity, and diaspora intersect with Jewish life at Harvard and how these stories have shaped the university's history.

This work is both personally and academically meaningful to me. The Timeline will serve as a lasting digital and educational resource that offers an inclusive account of Jewish presence at Harvard."

The Timeline Project is an ongoing and evolving undertaking. Through our research, we have encountered fascinating documentation about a student effort from the end of the 1930s to raise scholarship funds for Jewish students affected by Kristallnacht, Harvard's first professors of Jewish studies, the founding of the CJS,

and visits to campus by figures like Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin. We intend to make this work available as a digital public resource soon and hope it will serve as a tool for research, education, and institutional reflection, offering a comprehensive and accurate account of Jewish life and impact at Harvard.

We are excited to continue working with our current student researchers and welcome undergraduate students who are interested in Jewish studies at Harvard to join our team. ■

STUDENT NEWS

2025 HARRY AND CECILE STARR PRIZES IN JEWISH STUDIES

The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies. These prizes, established by Harry Starr, Harvard College class of 1921, LL.B. 1924, are eligible through nomination by a faculty member only. Prizes are awarded for two categories: best doctoral dissertation in Jewish and Hebrew studies and the best senior thesis in the field of Jewish and Hebrew studies prepared by an undergraduate.

BEST SENIOR THESES IN THE FIELD OF JEWISH AND HEBREW STUDIES PREPARED BY AN UNDERGRADUATE



SAGE LATTMAN '25

"Descent and Dissent: Interfaith Marriage and Reform Judaism's 1983 Resolution of Patrilineal Descent"

- Nominated by Professor Derek Penslar
- Winthrop House resident
- Concentration in History and a secondary in Computer Science



CHARLOTTE RITZ-JACK '25

"Homeland or Hindsight? Young Jewish Americans and the Israel Question"

- Nominated by Professor Melani Cammett
- Pforzheimer House resident
- Concentration in Social Studies (Honors), a secondary in Mind, Brain & Behavior, and a Language Citation in Modern Standard Arabic (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations)



MEREDITH ZIELONKA '25

"Fractured but Fortified: Harnessing Ideological and Ethnic Division for Resilient Peacebuilding in Israel/Palestine"

- Nominated by Professor Melani Cammett
- Mather House resident
- Joint concentration in Government and Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations



BEST DOCTORAL DISSERTATION IN JEWISH AND HEBREW STUDIES

URI SCHRETER PH.D. '25

"The Jewish Beat: Klezmer, Culture, and Community in Postwar America"

- Nominated by Professor Kay Kaufman Shelemay
- Completed his degree in the Department of Music

AWARDS

2025 SELMA AND LEWIS WEINSTEIN PRIZE IN JEWISH STUDIES

The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies. The Weinstein Prize, which is given to the Harvard University students who submit the best undergraduate essays in Jewish studies, was established by Lewis H. Weinstein, Harvard College class of 1927, LL.B. 1930.

BEST UNDERGRADUATE ESSAYS IN JEWISH STUDIES



**SAGE
LATTMAN '25**

"Descent and Dissent: Interfaith Marriage and Reform Judaism's 1983 Resolution of Patrilineal Descent"

- Winthrop House resident
- Concentration in History and a secondary in Computer Science



**HENRY
LEVENSON '28**

"'Wine Mingled with Water Is Pleasant': The Literary Structure of the Greek Additions to the Book of Esther"

- Straus Hall resident
- Concentration is undeclared



**CHARLOTTE
RITZ-JACK '25**

"Textbooks, Trips, and Transformation: How Israel Programming Shaped—and Shook—Jewish Identity"

- Pforzheimer House resident
- Concentration in Social Studies (Honors), a secondary in Mind, Brain & Behavior, and a Language Citation in Modern Standard Arabic (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations)

CENTER
for
JEWISH
STUDIES





THEODORE MOTZKIN PRESENTS AT A JOINT SESSION OF THE WORKSHOPS

GRADUATE STUDENT WORKSHOPS

HEBREW BIBLE WORKSHOP

The Hebrew Bible Workshop provides Harvard graduate students the opportunity to present their own work and receive professional developmental advice from faculty and peers. In the workshop meetings, Hebrew Bible scholars are invited to present their current research, provide feedback on each other's work and receive feedback on their own, and build academic relationships at Harvard and beyond. **David Hannan** (Ph.D. candidate, *see page 46*) coordinated the 2024–25 Hebrew Bible Workshop and Professors Jon Levenson, Julia Rhyder and Andrew Teeter served as faculty advisors. Our workshop group is thankful for the support of the Friends of the CJS and looks forward to continuing to cultivate community created around cutting-edge research on the Hebrew Bible in the coming academic year. ■

HEBREW BIBLE WORKSHOP MEETINGS

- SEPTEMBER 19: JULIA RHYDER**, Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, "Was There a Festival of the Ark? Calendar and Commemoration in the Biblical Ark Traditions."
- OCTOBER 10: MIGUEL CORREA**, Ph.D. candidate, Hebrew Bible, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, "The Re-Use of Blessing Formulae in the Priestly Blessing and Cyrus Cylinder."
- NOVEMBER 7: JESSICA PATEY**, Ph.D. candidate, Materiality of the Tabernacle, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University, "Lust for Luxury: Wealth and Seduction in Proverbs 7."
- NOVEMBER 19: DAVID SHEPHERD**, Professor, School of Religion, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, "The Curse of Kingship; Reflections on Gideon, Abimelech and David."
- FEBRUARY 20: JACQUELINE VAYNTRUB**, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Yale University, "The Entanglement of Bodies and Texts in the Hebrew Bible."
- MARCH 6: AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAC**, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow, CJS, Harvard University, "Law, Purity and Separation in the Diaspora between Esther and Three Maccabees."
- MARCH 27: THEODORE MOTZKIN**, Ph.D. candidate, Hebrew Bible, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University, "Manifesting a Fragrant God: Odor and Theurgy in the Incense Offering."
- APRIL 3: HANANEL SHAPIRA**, Postdoctoral Fellow, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, "The Divine Rite of Kings: P's Conversation with the Book of Kings."
- APRIL 10: ANDREW DANIELSON**, Assistant Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, "Beyond Borders: Edom and the Judahite Negev During the Late Iron Age."

JEWISH STUDIES WORKSHOP

The Jewish Studies Workshop hosts three to four workshops per semester, in which graduate students and scholars in the field of Jewish studies gather to discuss their dissertations in progress, academic papers, and conference presentations. This year's workshops included presentations on topics as wide-ranging as medieval Hebrew poetry, modern Yiddish literature, analyses of biblical and rabbinic phenomena, and research on the Yishuv and Israel. Each meeting provides a wonderful opportunity for graduate students and scholars to sharpen their work through discussion and feedback in a supportive environment. Our 2024–2025 Jewish Studies Workshop organizers, Ph.D. students **Pamela Brenner** and **Theodore Motzkin**, thank the Center for Jewish Studies for supporting our activities. ■

JEWISH STUDIES WORKSHOP MEETINGS

- OCTOBER 29: JONAH LUBIN**, Ph.D. candidate, Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University, "Yiddish Digital Humanities."
- NOVEMBER 11: DR. DOTAN GREENVALD**, Lecturer, the Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies, Boston University; Associate, CJS, Harvard University, "The Court and the Stage: Mass Education, Public Theater, and the Modeling of Legal Culture in the Yishuv."
- FEBRUARY 6: PROFESSOR ISHAY ROSEN-ZVI**, Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Starr Visiting Scholar, CJS, Harvard University; Professor, Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud, Tel Aviv University, Israel, "How to Study Midrash."
- FEBRUARY 27: AGATA GRZYBOWSKA-WIATRAC**, Starr Postdoctoral Fellow, CJS, Harvard University, "Blood, Biblical Allusions, and Body Bits: Biblical Imagery in Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Poetic Depiction of Ulcers."
- MARCH 27: THEODORE MOTZKIN**, Ph.D. candidate, Hebrew Bible, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University, "Manifesting a Fragrant God: Odor and Theurgy in the Incense Offering" (joint with Hebrew Bible Workshop.)
- APRIL 24: MIRIAM UDEL**, Associate Professor of German Studies and Judith London Evans Director of the Tam Institute of Jewish Studies, Emory University, "Umbrella Sky: Modern Jewish Worldmaking Through Yiddish Children's Literature."

PROFILES



DALIA WOLFSON

Ph.D. candidate, Department of Comparative Literature

Dalia Wolfson credits her abiding interest in languages to her trilingual upbringing. Her parents immigrated from Saint Petersburg, Russia to Israel, where Dalia was born. As a child, she moved to the Riverdale neighborhood of the Bronx where she learned English. There she attended Kinneret Day School, learning in Hebrew and began studying a fourth language, Yiddish, singing Yiddish songs and learning basic grammar.

After graduating from Hunter College High School, Dalia spent a gap year at the seminary Nishmat in Jerusalem. The educators there inspired Dalia's future studies, especially their approach to reading rabbinic texts using literary methods. She noted, "This allowed me to find my voice in those texts, both on a personal spiritual level as well as academically."

In college at the University of Pennsylvania, Dalia majored in Comparative Literature while finding herself drawn to Yiddish, eventually writing a senior thesis under Professor Kathryn Hellerstein's supervision. "I found taking classes and being part of the Yiddishist community to be very energizing: with nice people, lots of cultural life and great mentorship."

Graduating with honors, Dalia went on to "the Other Cambridge" in England, receiving a Master of Philosophy in Asian and Middle Eastern Studies with a focus on Medieval Hebrew poetry in the Cairo Geniza. She described what an amazing experience it was to work with this collection of discarded Jewish texts dating back hundreds of years.

"I found taking classes and being part of the Yiddishist community to be very energizing: with nice people, lots of cultural life and great mentorship."

—Dalia Wolfson

Dalia came to Harvard in 2019 to study Comparative Literature and found herself moving toward more modern literature. The first two years were difficult because of the pandemic. But this made her even more grateful for the years to follow including "the Jewish studies community, the Yiddish studies community and the CJS." She enjoyed taking literature classes with Professors **David Stern**, **Saul Zaritt** and **Marion Aptroot**, and Yiddish language classes with **Dr. Sara Feldman**. During her graduate years, Dalia taught Hebrew remotely at Oberlin College and Yiddish at the Yiddish Book Center and Boston Workers Circle. She felt supported at Harvard in her growth as an educator and language instructor. "When I had the opportunity to teach remote language courses during the pandemic, I remember saying to Dr. Feldman, 'How am I going to do this?' and she said, 'Don't worry' and then talked me through it. Her support for the Yiddish community, her pedagogy, and her commitment to her students has been really significant."

Dalia was delighted to attend The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, for a semester through the CJS exchange program as well as travel to New York City, Madison (Wisconsin), Philadelphia, Germany, Israel, Poland, and Lithuania on various research grants.

With her coursework and exams completed, Dalia is working on her dissertation. Currently titled "The Sentimental *Shrayberin*" (woman writer), Dalia is focused on the works of Yenta Serdatsky (1877–1962). Born in Lithuania, Serdatsky was married with three children when she began her literary career. This brought her to Warsaw, then Chicago, and in 1918, she became a columnist for the prominent Yiddish daily newspaper, the *Forward* (*Forverts*) in New York City.

As a writer herself, Dalia is focusing on Serdatsky's female writer protagonists, "How is Serdatsky portraying them in her short stories? What did they look like? What do they want to write? And how are they being treated by the world around them?" Dalia ponders, "These sorts of questions were not necessarily synonymous with her own experience. In fact, they could be quite far from her. So how does she choose to write them and what does this say about her and what people thought of women writers?"

Beyond her studies, Dalia serves as Translations Editor of the Yiddish Studies journal *In Geveb*. She is also co-executive producer of *Paraphrasis*, Harvard Comparative Literature's student-run

literary translation podcast. “We had two translators of Korean literature this season,” she notes. “One of the books was largely sci-fi. It was delightful and far beyond my usual reading lists.”

This reflects Dalia’s overall attitude and advice to incoming scholars, “Try to explore beyond your own studies. There have been points during my dissertation when I have felt like I’ve hit a wall. Then I’ll go to a talk that’s out of my discipline, my language, my comfort zone. And it just gives me a different perspective, a different idea.” Dalia’s openness, curiosity and competence have been great gifts to Harvard and will surely be beneficial wherever she finds herself next. ■



DAVID HANNAN

Ph.D. candidate, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

David Hannan grew up in St. Albans, West Virginia, immersed in the religious and cultural backdrop of the Bible Belt. He attributes watching the animated film *Prince of Egypt* to ultimately sparking his deeper interest in the academic study of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Egypt.

David explains that a class taught by Methodist minister Larry Bailey at Marshall University, *The Hebrew Prophets*, changed his life. This professor had an inspiring “knack for teaching the Hebrew Bible in a way that was provocative for college students, especially for white Evangelical Christians from the Bible Belt ... It generated a lot of questions for me, questions that ultimately led me to want to study the Hebrew Bible in its ancient Near Eastern context.”

At that time, David was also seeking a Christian community that encouraged more questioning of the biblical text. “I started leaning

into the Hebrew Bible to understand what and how it communicates. This helped shift my interpretations of the text. It revitalized my faith in ways that helped me recover from the loss of community I experienced and led me to a new Christian community in West Virginia that fostered my intellectual curiosity.”

In his senior year of college, David married his wife, Katelyn, and taught himself Hebrew. After graduating with a double major in Statistics (for job security) and Creative Writing (as an avid poet), he took a gap year, then pursued a Masters of Arts in Biblical Languages and Hebrew Bible at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) in Hamilton, MA. He is delighted to have just completed the third year of his Ph.D. program. David and Katelyn currently live in Dorchester, MA, where David plays guitar and sings in the Neighborhood Church of Dorchester music collaborative.

“I’ve experienced an intellectual freedom and a fostering of my curiosity from my advisors and professors that I have never experienced before. It is so refreshing and galvanizing to me as an aspiring scholar.”

—David Hannan

David shared that many people are surprised to learn that he enjoys horror movies and heavy metal music. “Horror has a way of addressing deep topics in ways that are visceral to the viewer. They engage your whole self because you are scared and on the edge of your seat and, thus, the message can be received differently,” he explained. “Similarly, metal music tends to go towards the extremes, but you get a lot of raw emotion expressed that other genres gloss over or can’t really engage because their sound isn’t as intense.”

David’s dissertation topic, “Plunder and Ritual Warfare in the Hebrew Bible,” explores the violence in 1 Samuel 4–7 and appears to reflect his interest in intense emotion. The first time he read this text in Hebrew, he was struck by “how out of place it seemed within my Christian framework — and that was pretty destabilizing for me in a good way.”

“In 1 Samuel 4–7, the Ark of God is taken by the Philistines and goes on a wild journey to make its way back to Israel. I was fascinated by why the Ark was involved in warfare and why the Philistines would take it and put it in their temple. All these questions drew me into looking at comparative evidence ... Then I zoomed out to look at plunder in other contexts in the Hebrew Bible.”

David serves as graduate student coordinator for the Hebrew Bible Workshop (see page 44). He feels honored to create a forum in which Harvard Ph.D. students, professors, and visiting scholars can share their methodologically diverse, cutting-edge research on the Hebrew Bible, the contexts that produced it, and

its reception. He hopes that his future career will allow him to continue these kinds of discussions.

While hard pressed to choose favorite classes or professors because he “loved them all,” “Professor **Jon Levenson** and his *Aqedah* course stands out as profoundly influential and memorable, not least because Prof. Levenson is also from West Virginia and enjoys joking with me about our shared history with the state, but also because the paper I wrote for that class became my first article in *Vetus Testamentum*.” His advisor, Professor **Julia Rhyder**, “is amazing and extremely supportive. Her courses on the history of biblical scholarship, Leviticus, and the history of God through the Psalms have been profoundly influential on my approach to the text.”

“While I think it’s important to be realistic about the job market in academia, it is still my hope to become a professor who teaches and researches the topics, languages, and texts I love... Were I to pursue a ministry job, it would have to be in an environment of intellectual openness and receptivity to asking difficult questions, incorporating ways that critical scholarship can impact faith communities.” David thanks the CJS and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations for being welcoming and supportive of his academic journey. “I’ve experienced an intellectual freedom and a fostering of my curiosity from my advisors and professors that I have never experienced before. It is so refreshing and galvanizing to me as an aspiring scholar. I love the diversity of backgrounds and identities represented at Harvard — being part of this learning community is truly special.” ■

ISAAC MANSELL

Harvard College '26

Isaac joined our Zoom interview after a group lunch with the former Irish Prime Minister, Leo Varadkar. At the event, he celebrated becoming a new Irish citizen, in addition to his Canadian citizenship. Raised in Toronto, Isaac speaks proudly about his global heritage and the journeys his grandparents took to emigrate from their homelands. His paternal grandparents — of Lithuanian and Irish descent — found a home in South Africa. His maternal Scottish grandfather was a doctor — whose medical degree was recognized in Canada but not in the U.S. — a twist of fate that led the family to settle there.

Isaac is a citizen of the world both literally and figuratively. His love of travel began with family trips to Israel, much of Europe, the Americas, and South Africa. Over spring break, he added Brazil and Argentina to the list through a campus Meor trip. “I think the rate at which you absorb information while traveling to new places is so much higher than in school,” he reflects.



“I’m very grateful to the Jewish community and Jewish leaders here at Harvard for being here to experience it with me, because it would have been much, much harder without them.”

—Isaac Mansell
*On the campus atmosphere
since October 7, 2023*

Before enrolling at Harvard, Isaac attended TannenbaumCHAT, a large, multid denominational Jewish high school in Toronto. Here he gained “a broad appreciation for the different ways in which people practice religion.” When it was time to apply to college, Isaac opted for schools in the U.S., preferring the flexibility of the liberal arts system to Canada’s more rigid, discipline-specific approach.

After a gap year in Israel, Isaac arrived at Harvard in 2022 planning to concentrate in biomedical engineering. “I was interested in it largely because of Marvel movies,” he said with a smile, and thought that an undergraduate degree in engineering would be practical. “I hadn’t done nearly as much reflecting as I should have before coming here and I had a moment of existential crisis the night before classes started. I just completely scrapped every [course] that I was in.”

One course he chose instead, Econ 50, inspired Isaac’s choice to concentrate in economics. This class, taught by Professor **Raj Chetty**, demonstrates how big data can be used to address social issues. Economics, Isaac says, has “both ... theory, and ... data science... I’m very interested in understanding the world. And I don’t think you can fully understand the world without economic analysis.”

Believing that understanding one’s old history is essential, Isaac became interested in learning more about Jewish history in his first year at Harvard.

In a First Year Seminar he wrote about Israel. In an Expository Writing class, he explored the concept of dual loyalty among Jewish-American soldiers during World War II and accusations of Jewish Americans who served in the U.S. military having an anti-American, hidden Jewish agenda. His research of a collection of wartime letters revealed, instead, that “military service was probably the single greatest tool at your disposal, if you’re a Jew in the 19th or 20th century, to dispel myths of dual loyalty — what is more patriotic than fighting for your country?”

Isaac has also studied Jewish literature, modern and biblical, and history. He found Prof. **Derek Penslar’s** class, *One Land, Two Peoples: The Modern History of Israel/Palestine*, deeply insightful and rewarding. “The sources are great — and I really appreciate all the Canadian references he chucks in.” Isaac has also been a major contributor to the Center for Jewish Studies Timeline Project (*see page 41*).

His commitment to understanding and engaging with Jewish identity — both historically and in the present — has been at the center of his Harvard experience. Isaac has also served on the Boards of both Chabad (currently) and Hillel (during his first year). When asked about the atmosphere on campus since October 7, 2023, he says, “I’m very grateful to the Jewish community and Jewish leaders here at Harvard for being here to experience it with me, because it would have been much, much harder without them.”

Isaac also serves as an opinion writer for *The Harvard Crimson*, where he writes mostly op-eds about current College news, but his favorite article is “[I’m Not an Alien. I’m Just Canadian](#),” a humorous Canadian perspective on relations between the U.S. and Canada.

Beyond academics, Isaac told me about his unusual collection of pets. “Oh gosh!” he laughed, “I don’t know if we should get into this. In Toronto I had a betta fish, two hermit crabs, seven crested geckos, two axolotls, and two ducks. They all lived in my room, much to my mother’s chagrin.” He points to a photo of the ducks and smiles proudly, “They’re really cute ... they thought I was their mother.” At Harvard, Isaac spends his free time playing squash, reading, and listening to podcasts and classic rock music. Irish folk music has become a study aid. “It’s either lyric-less, or it’s in Gaelic and I have no idea what they’re saying, so it’s very soothing.”

In the future, Isaac says that he hopes that his new Irish citizenship might expand work opportunities in the European Union. He is excited about his summer internship at a global asset management firm in New York and for the opportunity to experience all the city has to offer. “I look forward to museums, Central Park, and I’m excited to see all my friends, because I swear, all of Harvard lives in New York!” His plans after graduation, still uncertain, are not bound by geographical borders. “What I do depends on my career and my family. I don’t know what the

future will hold, but I could see myself living in Canada, maybe in the States, maybe in Israel, or the UK.” Having two passports will definitely help! ■

SAGE LATTMAN

Harvard College ’25

Sage Lattman grew up on New York’s Upper West Side and attended high school at Trinity School, after earlier years at Riverdale Country School. Sage developed an early passion for the humanities, especially history and English. As a high school intern at The New York Historical, she worked on the “Women March” exhibit, contributing research and biographies of 20th-century women activists — including a paper on Phyllis Schlafly that challenged her preconceived notions of activism.

She was drawn to Harvard by stories she heard from her father (Peter Lattman, AB ’92) and other acquaintances with Harvard connections. “Everyone really liked it, and it seemed like a great place for intellectual curiosity, and a place where students were genuinely involved and excited about learning.” She applied early and accepted without applying elsewhere.

Sage’s academic and personal interest in Jewish studies developed early. In high school, she wrote a paper on why Theodor Herzl became a Zionist. She began reading books by Jewish authors and literature on Jewish topics; some of her favorite writers are Philip Roth, Nathan Englander, and Taffy Brodesser-Akner. At Harvard, she sought opportunities to explore Jewish themes in classes on religion, nationalism, and Jewish history. A concentrator in History, with a focus on U.S. history, her main work “is at the Venn diagram convergence of languages I speak and places I’m interested in.”

In **Prof. Catherine Brekus’s** course, *Religion and Nationalism in the United States: A History*, Sage wrote a paper about Mary Antin, a Jewish immigrant to Boston in 1894 who authored a book portraying America as a promised land for Jews. She also praises Professor Derek Penslar’s *Jews in the Modern World*, for broadening her interest in Jewish studies. “I love learning about Jewish history as a way to better understand both myself and the world and communities in which I live and interact.”

Her senior thesis, titled *Descent and Dissent*, originated from an earlier paper on Birthright Israel and intermarriage in American Jewish life. In her thesis, Sage explored the Reform Movement’s decision to recognize patrilineal descent in the 1980s and the tension this created among Conservative and Orthodox communities. She found the Reform Movement’s pragmatic response to intermarriage fascinating and was surprised by the extent of backlash from other denominations, which feared the emergence



"I've really loved the people that I have met here. The students are super. My friends are engaged and curious about what they are learning and the world around them. There are so many people with whom I enjoy spending time and having interesting conversations. It's a very high density of great people."

—Sage Lattman
On the Harvard community

of incompatible Jewish identities. Sage was struck by the social divides within the Jewish community, noting how, despite growing up alongside Orthodox Jews in New York, she only began meaningful interactions with them in college. Her research illuminated these intra-communal boundaries and underscored the complexity of Jewish identity today. She concluded that while denominational splits have grown, the “cataclysmic divide” hasn’t materialized to the extreme some had predicted.

With funding from the Center for Jewish Studies, Sage traveled to Cincinnati to conduct archival research (see page 52). This project deepened her understanding of Jewish identity politics and institutional responses to cultural change, especially regarding intermarriage and Jewish continuity.

At Harvard, Sage has researched a wide range of historical periods and enjoys finding connections between her research and extracurricular work, especially through writing for *The Harvard Crimson*. Contributing mainly to the *Crimson’s* magazine section has bolstered her research and communication skills. She also co-authored a piece about a pickle-making workshop and wrote a freelance article for *Hey Alma* on using Shabbat as a digital detox.

Harvard Hillel has been a meaningful space for Sage’s Jewish community involvement, participating in events like holiday celebrations, bagel brunches, and a “Birthright and Beyond” trip to Israel during her sophomore year. She was also moved by a trip

to Poland, with support from Harvard Hillel and the CJS. In her senior year, she received two Jewish studies prizes: the Starr Prize for an outstanding senior thesis and the Weinstein Prize for the best undergraduate essay in Jewish studies (see pages 42–43).

Socially and personally, Sage found the community at Harvard to be enriching: “I’ve really loved the people that I have met here. The students are super. My friends are engaged and curious about what they are learning and the world around them. There are so many people with whom I enjoy spending time and having interesting conversations. It’s a very high density of great people.”

After graduation, Sage plans to attend the Schwarzman Scholars program in Beijing, a prestigious, fully-funded, one-year master’s program in global affairs that brings together an international cohort to study China’s role in the world. Sage, who does not speak Chinese, is excited to begin language study and participate in a curriculum that includes leadership and global politics, ending with a capstone project. Following the fellowship, Sage is considering a career in journalism. ■



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History and Literature; Secondary field in Folklore and Mythology

Sydney Bloch

Social Studies

Alicia Campbell

Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Zebulon Erdos

Joint concentration in English and Philosophy

Isabelle Goldstein

History & Literature

Shira Hoffer

Joint concentration in Social Studies and Religion

Sage Lattman

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Charlotte Ritz-Jack

Social Studies; Secondary field in Mind, Brain, and Behavior

Emily Willrich

History

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*Mazel Tov to all our
2024-2025 Grads!*

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- Tziporah Machlah Klapper** (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), *Isadore Twersky Fellowship*
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FROM THE CJS MAILBOX

STUDENT RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITIES MADE POSSIBLE BY NAMED FUNDS AND THE FRIENDS OF THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES



Thanks to the **Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies**, I traveled to the United Kingdom for a week in 2024 to study the works of an ascendant Jewish-American contemporary artist, Aliza Nisenbaum. This research allowed me to develop an academic paper I wrote for visiting Professor Josh Lambert's course, 21st-Century U.S. Jewish Culture. Alongside my senior thesis in the History Department, this CJS-funded research project was an amazing capstone to my senior year. It combined my interests in both American art history and Jewish studies that I have pursued throughout college. Last spring, I was honored to attend an evening celebrating Peter J. Solomon and his many contributions to the Center. I enjoyed speaking with members of the Solomon family about our shared interests in contemporary art. Thank you, CJS.

- Aldo Aragon
Harvard College '24



Over winter break, I traveled to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio to do archival research for my thesis, with support from the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**. Most people don't think of Cincinnati as a hub for Jewish life, but it is actually the city in which the first Reform Jewish Rabbinical Seminary, Hebrew Union College, was founded. Though the Hebrew Union College now operates out of New York City, Los Angeles, and Jerusalem, the college in Cincinnati still houses the Reform Movement's archives.

This visit was crucial for my thesis, which is about the Reform Movement's 1983 decision to accept patrilineal descent. In the archives, I found correspondence between rabbis, minutes from relevant committees, and non-digitized oral history interviews with key figures. The materials gave me invaluable insight into the decision-making process regarding the Movement's statement on patrilineal descent. I am so grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for helping me travel to the archives and visit Cincinnati!

- Sage Lattman
Harvard College '25



"I travelled to Vienna, Austria over the winter break to research the aesthetic, cultural, and religious environment which encircled Martin Buber in his early years as a student there."

Thanks to the **Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund**, I travelled to Vienna, Austria over the winter break to research the aesthetic, cultural, and religious environment which encircled Martin Buber in his early years as a student there. While my work particularly focused on the people, events, and communities with whom he would have had direct contact, I was also interested in studying this period in Jewish history more broadly. Simultaneously idealized as both an era hurtling towards disaster and a time of distinctive intellectual and cultural achievement, this period in Austria has come to be referred to as "Vienna circa 1900." Some of the museums and archives I visited, such as Leopoldstadt Museum's *Vienna 1900* exhibit, contained references to the "high density of Jewish intellectual talents," who were central to Viennese culture at this time. Yet there was scant inquiry into why this might have been. I left Vienna not only with a stronger sense of how Buber may have been reacting to (and against) *fin-de-siècle* Viennese inclinations in his emerging conceptualizations of Hasidism, dialogue, and Jewish cultural revival, but also a lingering desire to look further into why and how Jews played such a pronounced role in the legendary, short-lived phenomenon of Vienna circa 1900.

— Catherine Alam-Nist

M.T.S. candidate, Harvard Divinity School

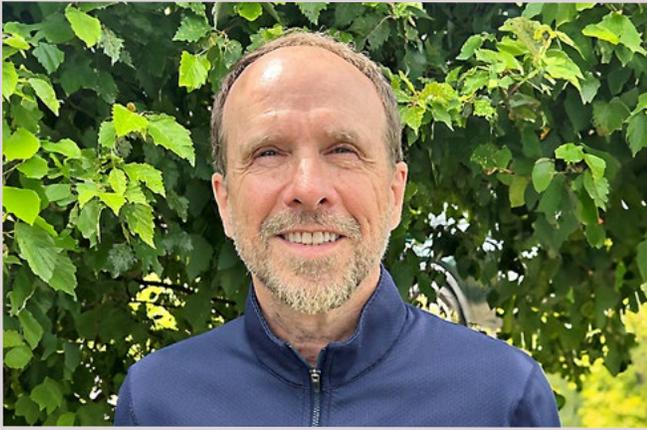


This winter, I received a grant from the CJS' **Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship** to study at the Hadar Institute in New York. My studies at Hadar focused on Talmud and *midrash*, alongside elective courses on topics ranging from gender and *halakhah* to Maimonides's views on anger. In addition to the typical joys of studying rabbinic texts, I appreciated the program's combination of Talmud study with *midrash*, which underscored the range of analytical tools that the rabbis creatively brought to bear on questions that mattered to them.

My studies at Hadar were an important supplement to my graduate work in modern Jewish thought. The modern thinkers whom I study are all concerned with the status and content of *halakhah* and engage rabbinic texts extensively in their writings. By broadening my knowledge of the *halakhic* corpus and bolstering my ability to read rabbinic texts, my time at Hadar enhanced my ability to evaluate their arguments and identify references in their texts. It also exposed me to important precedents for some of the questions I study; for instance, a class on collective and individual models of *halakhic* obligation in the Talmud gave me a new perspective on modern thinkers who sought to harmonize Judaism with a philosophical commitment to moral autonomy. I am grateful to the CJS and its supporters for making this experience possible.

— Joshua Moriarty

Ph.D. candidate,
Committee on the Study of Religion



Thanks to the generous support from the **Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund** and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard, I was able to spend J-term extending my research on medieval Hebrew poetic texts from the Cairo Geniza at the British Library in London. My primary focus was the book of Nahum and associated prophetic poetic texts with attention to visual layout, literary structure, and style. A great deal of work has been done in the study of the literary context of the Ancient Near East. However, none of the standard texts on biblical Hebrew poetry consider the literary and social context for the production of the text upon which most work in the field is based—the *Leningrad Codex*—which was created in 1008/9 CE in Cairo, Egypt. My project focuses on a visual sur-

vey of Hebrew and Aramaic materials from the 9th through 12th centuries with a goal of: (1) determining variations in visual presentation (e.g., text layout in prayer books vs. sacred poetry vs. secular poetry) and (2) identifying representative texts for more intensive study relevant to my dissertation. I am particularly interested in the discovery of ‘non-professional’ biblical texts, that is, those written in an amateur hand, unvocalized, usually in one or two columns to the page. These were probably copies made for personal study, revealing a rich area for further research into the way these texts were represented and understood within this medieval Jewish community.

Thanks to the generous support from the **Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund** and the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard, I was able to spend the 2025 summer break extending my research on medieval Hebrew poetic texts from the Cairo Geniza at the British Library in London and the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, England. As I move this year toward writing my dissertation on prophetic poetry, I remain appreciative of the support provided by the CJS.

—*Byron Russell*

*Ph.D. candidate,
Committee on the Study of Religion*



I was very grateful to have had the support of the **Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship** to continue my dissertation research on Yenta Serdatsky. Among my activities as part of this research, I wanted to highlight two very useful and interesting trips to Pennsylvania. One involved a long drive, on a very rainy day, to northeastern Pennsylva-

nia, where I met with Serdatsky’s great-grandson. I spent several hours speaking with him and his partner, learning about their history, hearing family lore about Serdatsky, and getting a sense of what relevant papers are held in the family archive. In Philadelphia, I visited the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts. During my time in that reading room, I was able to see dozens of letters from Serdatsky to the Yiddish journalist Benjamin Waife (better known by his pen name of Ben Zion Goldberg). It was especially exciting to access this correspondence, which a few months earlier had undergone significant processing (and updating of the finding aid) and was only recently made available for researcher use.

—*Dalia Wolfson*

*Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Comparative Literature*



I made tremendous progress on my dissertation this summer thanks to a grant from the CJS and the **Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund**. I spent several weeks in Kazakhstan, completing my work in the Central State Archives and Presidential Archives, and then visiting Kyrgyzstan for several more weeks to do a bit of comparative research in the archives of the capital city, Bishkek. The first and second chapters of my dissertation examine the involvement of European-trained ethnographers and musicians in the creation of distinct, standardized, national canons of Soviet Central Asian music (i.e., Kazakh and Kyrgyz music). This meant diving into the biographies of such figures as Evgenii Brusilovskii and Boris Erzakovich—two of the leading figures in the creation of Soviet Kazakhstan’s European-style classical music—and Mikhail Raukhverger, one of their best-known counterparts in neighboring Kyrgyzstan. Often obscured from musical histories of the region, however, is these individuals’ Jewish background. Somewhat paradoxically, the state often cast them as bearers of the “Russian musical tradition” because of their training at major Russian musical institutions. Yet I find it important to rectify the historical record and note the role of their Jewish background in their contributions to the music of Soviet Central Asia.

— *Leora Eisenberg*

Ph.D. candidate, Department of History



“This fieldwork culminated in a paper on ways that the Kaifeng Jewish community reinterpreted Jewish traditions through the lens of Confucian values, focusing on ritual commemorations such as memorial prayers and practices surrounding ancestor veneration.”

During the January term, I traveled to Kaifeng, China, to conduct research for my project “Bridging Chinese and Jewish Identities: Interpretations of the Kaifeng Stelae Inscriptions.” This project developed from my ongoing interest in Jewish-Confucian dialogue. I am exploring how the historical Kaifeng Jewish community integrated Confucian values into their Jewish identity, with particular attention to the themes of filial piety and ritual adaptation.

I visited key sites in Kaifeng, including the Kaifeng Municipal Museum; I also conducted archival research in local libraries and visited private exhibitions curated by descendants of Kaifeng Jews. This fieldwork culminated in a paper on ways that the Kaifeng Jewish community reinterpreted Jewish traditions through the lens of Confucian values, focusing on ritual commemorations such as memorial prayers and practices surrounding ancestor veneration. I later presented the research in Toronto at the Alwaleed/Emmanuel Symposium—Bridges and Boundaries: Religious Diversities in the 21st Century Classroom. My presentation addressed the broader implications of religious adaptation and cultural hybridity for interfaith and intercultural pedagogy.

I wish to thank the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies** for supporting this research. It has greatly enriched my understanding of Chinese-Jewish interactions and will contribute to my future studies in comparative theology.

— *Yan Chen Liu*

M.Div. candidate, Harvard Divinity School



Thanks to the generous support of the **Suzanne and Dr. Lawrence Fishman Fellowship Fund**, I was able to spend my J-Term researching Jewish memory in Buenos Aires for my capstone creative project. I visited the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) archives and learned about the preservation of cherished community papers and texts after the terrorist bombing of 1994. I became fascinated with the infrastructure of Jewish remembrance in the city, from sidewalk plaques to a subway exhibition. I was welcomed into the Jewish community and even attended a youth Shabbat service in the neighborhood of Belgrano.

“Nothing could have prepared me for the common experience of exile and assimilation I encountered around the dinner table at my Argentinian family’s home, which fundamentally reshaped my project and my connection to my own heritage.”

Far and away the most meaningful and generative experience that shaped my thinking was meeting twelve of my distant cousins, from whom I had been separated by war, diaspora, and language for two generations. We sat before heaping plates of lovingly prepared food and etched our family tree over and over on a piece of paper. Gripping the pencil, my cousin offered corrections for a misnamed aunt, and a recent birth. We discussed the preservation of Jewish community in the diaspora through the lens of our own stories. Nothing could have prepared me for the common experience of exile and assimilation I encountered around the dinner table at my Argentinian family’s home, which fundamentally reshaped my project and my connection to my own heritage. I extend my deepest gratitude to the CJS for making this utterly transformative experience possible.

– *Serena Jampel*

Harvard College '25



Thanks to the generous support of the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies** for a J-Term fellowship, I was able to spend a month living, working, and researching the Hasidic neighborhood of Borough Park, Brooklyn. While there, I interviewed

mothers, rabbis, seminary students, tzedakah collectors, librarians, unhoused individuals, and non-Jewish people living amongst the vast, vibrant Jewish community. I was privileged to attend *britot* (circumcisions), *chatunot* (weddings), and *levayot* (funerals). Every Friday night, I got to explore the *tischim* (gatherings around a table), *shurim* (lessons), and towering *shuls* (synagogues) nestled along every block. This experience forged long-lasting connections within the Hasidic

community and an appreciation for the lifestyle held precious in those 225 blocks. It inspired a personal understanding of the remnants and adaptations of shtetl life. From this experience, I hope to publish two works: one, an ethnography on the public library in Borough Park; and the other, a study on the culture of gendered third space (locations that are neither home nor school, which are shaped by gender norms and expectations) in the neighborhood. I am immensely grateful for the CJS’ support in my academic endeavors and am excited to continue thinking and collaborating with them!

– *Abigail Curtis*

Harvard College '26



With the generous support of the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**, I was able to spend the month of January in Berlin, visiting museums and researching the relationship between cultural memory and museum culture. I was interested in exploring the ways in which these museums have responded (and continue to respond) to the memory of the Holocaust. Initially, I was looking at how space was distributed in Berlin museums (i.e. which exhibitions are put forward, and whether Holocaust memory is a regular theme in their offerings). However, I found myself most intrigued with analyzing the labels of postwar German artworks. I tried to look at how works of art which clearly deal with the country's dark history are described by German museums, and what kind of vocabulary is used to either obscure or highlight their relationship with the Holocaust. I also looked at how museum guides and brochures described these works of art, as compared to their descriptions of paintings or sculptures from other eras and cultures. I was fascinated to see the country's ambivalent relationship with its history play out in the interpretations that museums attempt to impose on works of art. I have begun to draft a potential thesis on the vocabulary of art criticism. It was an amazing experience, which would not have been possible without the support of the Center for Jewish Studies. Thank you!

– *Ismail Assafi*
Harvard College '27



This J-Term, I was honored to receive the generous **Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies** to support my dissertation research. My work explores the aesthetics and politics of Jewish wedding music in postwar New York, and examines how music shaped identity and community. Beyond studying the repertoires and styles performed at weddings, I seek to understand their deeper significance – how this music was experienced, what it meant to those involved, and how it reflected broader cultural shifts. Because such perspectives on wedding music were rarely documented, my research relies on oral history interviews with postwar wedding musicians, as well as couples and individuals married in New York during this period. To date, I have conducted over 80 interviews, amassing more than 100 hours of recorded testimony. Transcribing these conversations is a crucial step in analyzing and citing them, but it is also a time-intensive process. Thanks to this fellowship, I was able to have many of my interviews transcribed externally, significantly advancing the process and allowing me to focus on analysis. I am deeply grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for its invaluable assistance and encouragement, which has been instrumental in advancing this research.

– *Uri Schreter*
Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Music



I was very lucky to receive a CJS fellowship with support from the **Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund** to spend a month in France last summer collecting archival materials for my project on the historical contact of the Jewish populations with the carceral state in France (1919-1940). I am primarily a scholar of the criminal legal system, and have previously studied minority populations' contact with the police in the 21st-century United States, and much of the quantitative research on the criminal legal system is presentist and largely focuses on the United States. In visiting archives in Marseille, Toulouse, Paris, and several suburbs, I was able to deepen my understanding of (1) what types of sources exist regarding contact with police, courts and prisons in France, (2) which of these sources list information that can plausibly identify Jews, and (3) which of these materials have been digitized and can be accessed at large scale from the archive. I am now in the process of working on transcribing parts of these records so that I can quantitatively study Jewish contact with the carceral state in this period. I am very grateful to the CJS for their support in this preliminary research.

— Michael Zanger-Tishler

*Ph.D. Candidate,
Department of Sociology*



With generous support of the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**, I spent nearly two weeks in January across Belgrade, Serbia and Sofia, Bulgaria studying local organizations' attempts to re-establish otherwise lost Jewish history. To conduct my research, I spent time in the synagogues, archives, and Jewish community centers of the two cities, analyzing how each nation's complicated, multilayered Jewish heritage (with distinct Romaniote, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi components) includes various homeland origins alongside a strong connection to Israel. I analyzed the maps of Jewish quarters and rhetoric about Jews during each nation's Communist period and spoke with an expert on Sofia's Jewish heritage. My trip enabled me to understand the strategies used by organizations like Shalom in Sofia to weave Jewish history into today's city fabric when much infrastructure was destroyed during World War II and replaced during the Communist period. One powerful example is a now-abandoned site of a concentration camp in the middle of Belgrade that currently serves as a parking lot. The city's Jewish community is in the process of turning it into a historical site. I will use interviews, sources, and anecdotes from this trip in my senior thesis. I feel very grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for supporting this stimulating and meaningful research.

— Charlotte Ritz-Jack

Harvard College '25



During my research trip to London, I conducted archival research at three major institutions to advance my study of the 1940 deportation and detainment of 1,500 Jewish refugees from Palestine to Mauritius. At the

Jewish Historical Society of England, I examined personal testimonies and correspondence that illuminated the lived experiences of internees during their nearly five-year imprisonment under British colonial authority. The Imperial War Museum Archives provided crucial contextual material on British wartime internment policies, and the British Library – recently reopened after a year-long cyber attack closure – offered access to their unparalleled collection of imperial periodicals and geographical surveys that revealed how British understanding of tropical environments shaped colonial policies toward displaced populations.

The most transformative aspect of this research trip, however, was the opportunity to engage with Jewish studies scholars at Cambridge University and University College London. These conversations fundamentally redirected my dissertation toward a deeper engagement with the history of Anglo-Jewish thought. Through discussions with leading scholars in the field, I discovered that the Mauritius case offers a unique lens for examining how Jewish intellectual traditions intersected with British imperial discourse during the wartime period. This scholarly engagement expanded my project beyond Holocaust studies in the Indian Ocean region to encompass broader questions about Jews within the British Empire, positioning my work to contribute to both Holocaust studies and Anglo-Jewish intellectual history. The archival materials I gathered now serve as the foundation for this more theoretically sophisticated approach to understanding Jewish experiences under British imperial authority. I am so grateful for the generous support of the **Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund** and the Center for Jewish Studies!

Oluwasey "Shae" Omonijo

Ph.D. candidate, Department of History



This summer, thanks to the CJS' support and the **Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund**, I had the opportunity to learn Arabic in Musrara, Jerusalem, a neighborhood in the western part of the city, that borders its eastern part. In an intensive course in the

unique school of antique languages, Polis – The Jerusalem Institute of Languages and Humanities, I took intensive Arabic classes that included reading, writing, and speaking skills in the Jerusalemite-Palestinian dialect. Each day, a language that I've always been surrounded by, gradually became increasingly familiar. Now, I aim to continue leveling up my language skills, using Arabic in my research, which examines nationalism and ultranationalist ties to family narratives through a comparative study of post-war Italian and Israeli literature.

The program enabled me to embark on a journey of Arabic study, incorporating Libyan perspectives on Italian fascism and colonialism in North Africa, as well as Palestinian perspectives on Israeli nationhood and occupation, into my research. CJS' support has helped me make a more nuanced and layered examination of Italian Antifascism and Israeli left-wing ideologies through the lenses of colonialism, occupation, and ultra-nationalist aspirations seeking a return to a historical Mediterranean past.

As a note, the initial idea of my summer program was to learn Arabic in an intensive course at Tel Aviv University. Unfortunately, on the first day of the war with Iran, I was informed that the course had been cancelled. Polis's course was the only intensive course I found that assured me that it would take place even if the war continued. Luckily, I found that their language pedagogy was deeply professionalized and provided the immersive Arabic experience I wanted.

– Yam Traiber

Ph.D. candidate, Department of Comparative Literature



During J-Term, I went to Riga and Daugavpils, Latvia, to investigate Baltic and Jewish culinary history. I spent over two weeks visiting archives, libraries, and restaurants in these beautiful cities. At the National Library of Latvia in Riga, I researched—and admired—collections of cookbooks and folkloric compendiums across languages. However, the highlight of the trip was in Daugavpils, where I gained access to the attic archive of the Jews in Daugavpils and Latgale Museum, housed in a synagogue. This museum has a trove of self-published cookbooks in its collections, revealing a remarkable and unexpected record of the late 20th-century Jewish community. I would not have been able to access these sources in Cambridge, Massachusetts, or anywhere else in the world.

A few weeks after my travels, I presented some of my findings at the Graduate Organization for the Study of Europe and Central Asia (GOSECA) conference at the University of Pittsburgh and discussed my research with other scholars interested in the region. I am immensely grateful to the CJS and the **Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund**, for the fellowship that made this work possible. Thank you!

—Rachel Landau

*Ph.D. candidate, Department of
Slavic Languages & Literatures*



“...I discovered that the Yiddish-speaking community that stretches across Berlin, São Paulo, Tel Aviv and New York, though small, is... filled with extraordinary people who, in these weeks, became a *mishpocha*.”

Thanks to the generous support of the **Edward H. Kavinsky Fellowship** and the Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to spend the summer in Paris, where I participated in an intensive three-week Yiddish course offered by the Maison de la Culture Yiddish. As a doctoral student specializing in Jewish intellectual history, I believe that proficiency in Yiddish is essential for any meaningful research on the modern European Jewish experience. Given my fluency in Hebrew and background in German, this course proved to be not merely a general introduction to the outlines of a new language, but a profound and fruitful journey into the heart of Yiddish language, culture and literature. Besides improving my language skills, over the course of these three weeks I discovered that the Yiddish-speaking community that stretches across Berlin, São Paulo, Tel Aviv and New York, though small, is anything but a relic of a dead culture confined to nostalgia, grief, or folklore. Rather, it is the proud citizenry of an international polity — a true Yiddishland, vibrant and inspiring, sustained by scholars, poets, and even chefs, and filled with extraordinary people who, in these weeks, became a *mishpocha*. For that, I will always be deeply grateful.

—Jonathan Zait

Ph.D. candidate, Department of History



My dissertation is an intellectual history of transnational Zionism in the first half of the twentieth century, working closely with affect as a method of reading. I explore the concept of entitlement as it relates to property, morality, sovereignty, and law. I argue that over the course of the twentieth century, Jewish attachment to land in Palestine accumulated sentimental and moral value, a process that was instrumental to the material practices of settlement, propertization, and dispossession. I analyze a variety of sources: economic surveys, policies, land deeds, memoirs, legal documents, correspondence; and literary works in Hebrew, English, French, German, and Arabic, drawn from archives, museums, and libraries across Israel/Palestine, Europe and the United States.

During the J-Term, thanks to the generous support from the **Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund** and the Center for Jewish Studies,

I was able to study modern Arabic intensively, and am now incorporating critical Arabic sources into my dissertation research pertaining to Palestinian perceptions of Jewish claims to land, property and security.

During the summer, thanks to generous support from the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund**, I was able to carry out archival research in London and Istanbul, as well as continue my study of modern standard Arabic. In London, I consulted material in the British Colonial and Foreign Office collections at the National Archives and in the London Metropolitan Archives. This allowed me to draft the third chapter of my dissertation which tells the story of 1930s Zionism by way of the elegiac writing of Yitzhak Baer and Uri Zvi Greenberg, against the backdrop of Mandate Palestine's colonial archive. In Istanbul, I consulted land deeds, records of land disputes, imperial correspondence, and newspaper coverage about Jewish persecution in Europe and settlement in Palestine between 1901-1945 at the Ottoman Archives of the Prime Minister's Office (BOA). I am very grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for providing me with the opportunity to advance my research.

– *Tsiona Lida*

*Ph.D. candidate,
Department of History*

Thanks to the generous support of the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**, I spent winter break in Buenos Aires working on a research project exploring the impact of the Jewish community on the city's culture and the role historical memory plays in shaping the community itself. I was particularly interested in the idea of memorial monuments and the ways public art brings together both Jewish and Argentine identity. I visited historical synagogues such as *Templo Libertad* and *Templo Paso* and explored *Once*, a predominantly Jewish neighborhood where bustling Jewish life blends into the broader fabric of the city. I also spent Shabbat with an Orthodox family in Once and visited a local Jewish youth group. One of the most powerful experiences was walking the memory lane - a memorial to the victims of the 1994 *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (AMIA) bombing that spans the surrounding neighborhood, with murals, plaques, and a moving installation in the AMIA subway stop. I came away with a deeper sense of how Jewish life in Buenos Aires has been shaped by generations of movement, resilience, and remembrance.



– *Sophie Goodman*

Harvard College '26



With the generous support of the **Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies**, I spent a large part of my summer conducting research on the Romaniote Jewish community of Ioannina, Greece. A once-thriving center for Greek-Jewish life in the mountainous northwest of the country, Ioannina counts only around 50 Jewish residents today. As it faces this demographic crisis, a consequence of the community's near-destruction during the Holocaust, Ioannina's Jewish community retains strong bonds with its diaspora, located mainly in the United States and Israel.

This summer, I sought to understand how Ioannina and its diaspora community in New York City navigate and negotiate the themes of identity, homeland, and preservation. As I conducted interviews and reviewed secondary literature, I found a wealth and diversity of views and narratives. I was lucky to spend much of my time in Ioannina with the community's oldest member, Isaak, a Romaniote Jew and New York native. I look forward to sharing his story and those of the others whom I interviewed with the Harvard community upon my return.

— *Cy Schwalbe*
Harvard College '27



Last summer, I spent seven weeks immersed in the Hebrew language, studying both Modern and Biblical Hebrew at the Middlebury Language School, and I would like to thank the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies** and the **Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund** for their generous funding of my learning and research.

Before going to Middlebury, I learned as much Hebrew as I could in one year. Thanks to a fantastic introductory Hebrew instructor, Ran Bechor, I learned the bones of the language. I got a taste of the vast sea that is Hebrew. At Middlebury, I was able to jump into that ocean. I was surrounded by Hebrew all day, every day. I began to understand what the language is beyond exams and grammar textbooks (though every language learner knows how important those resources are). I learned how Hebrew maps onto reality directly, providing words for original concepts rather than attempted translations for concepts that I thought about in English. In short, I started to think in Hebrew. This is a truly special experience for any non-native speaker interested in a better understanding of the matrix of Jewish thought in its original texts, not through the lens of translation.

— *Joseph Kauffman*
Harvard College '27



“The work I undertook this summer will inform not only my dissertation, but also future work in textual criticism in Jewish studies and the oceanic inheritance of Jewish thought.”

With generous support from the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund**, I spent summer 2025 conducting archival research on *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel* (Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel), the Portuguese writer Samuel Usque’s 16th-century chronicle of Sephardic exile. My work explores how this singular text reimagines Jewish diasporic experience in explicitly maritime terms, positioning itself against the triumphalist narratives of Portuguese empire. Traveling to Amsterdam, Lisbon, and other European reference libraries, I examined early printed editions of the *Consolação*—editions whose material variations and iconographic details shed light on Usque’s subtle engagement with the politics of race, displacement, and seafaring. This research forms the core of a chapter in my dissertation on early Iberian literature, ethnoracialization, and environmental thought. As a teacher in Harvard’s Ladino program, I’m especially grateful for the Center’s ongoing support of Sephardic and diasporic Jewish studies. The work I undertook this summer will inform not only my dissertation, but also future work in textual criticism in Jewish studies and the oceanic inheritance of Jewish thought.

—Adam Mahler

Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Romance Languages
and Literatures



Thanks to the generous support of the **Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship** and the Center for Jewish Studies, I spent last summer writing a dissertation chapter on incense and incense altars in the Hebrew Bible and the southern Levant. The chapter focuses on Exodus 30, which describes the incense altar and recipes, and asks how this text relates to archaeological finds of altars and incense burners from sites such as Arad, Lachish, and Ekron. While incense was an important ritual substance across the ancient Near East, my research shows that the biblical description does not simply mirror ritual practice. Instead, it reworks older altar forms into a new literary and theological vision that reflects the distinct concerns of the Persian period. By setting the text alongside archaeological evidence, I explore how Biblical authors used religious memory together with ritual objects to articulate claims about priestly legitimacy, sacred space, and community identity under imperial rule. Of particular importance is the way the text invests meaning in objects that are carefully described but never enacted, suggesting that description itself could generate religious value. By centering incense altars as both material artifacts and literary constructions, this chapter lays important groundwork for my larger dissertation on the intersections of ritual, memory, and material culture.

—Jessica Patey

Ph.D. candidate,
Committee on the Study of Religion



Thanks to the generosity of the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**, I traveled to northern California in January to interview and observe leaders, innovators, and community organizers devoted to the future of the American Jewish community. This research informed my (then) fledgling project on Judeofuturism, a methodological model of scholarship, culture, practice, and aesthetics through which American Jews can envision and build generative futures. Through relationship-building, interviews, and

participant observations in various settings of Jewish community and ritual, I was able to better understand the challenges and needs present in efforts to positively impact the community's future.

I met with nonprofit leaders anticipating how demographic shifts away from coastal cities will shape the changing needs of Jewish communities; scholars and clergy grappling with the implications of psychedelics on Jewish practices and laws; and community members exploring the use of art to help their communities form tangible visions of the future and process the grief that can sometimes accompany those visions. This research trip was essential in the ultimate launch of The Judeofuturism Project, a multidisciplinary initiative to build Jewish futures rooted in imagination, resilience, and collective vision, rather than trauma and fear. It was an unparalleled and powerful experience to get to explore these ideas firsthand, and it would not have been possible without the CJS. Thank you again for truly everything. I will continue to be a fan of the CJS and the work you support!

—Rebecca Leviss

M.T.S. candidate, Harvard Divinity School

I am so grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies and the **Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund** for supporting my research on Hannah Arendt's political theory towards my senior thesis in Social Studies and Philosophy. Thanks to the Center's generosity, I have been able to spend most of my summer reading Arendt's corpus as I attempt to untangle her often bizarre and highly original writing. The first part of my thesis focuses on Arendt's critique of totalitarian ideology, and why loneliness—which she calls an "antipolitical" force—plays such an important role in her understanding of the rise and horror of fascism. I put this idea in conversation with Arendt's critique of modern mass culture, and her similar description of love as "antipolitical." With this project, I hope to lay out a coherent understanding of Arendt's concept of alienation, both in its deadly, fascist form, and as a pervasive feature of the modern world. Thanks again to the Center for Jewish Studies—it's been such a gift to have this time to work on this project.



—Hannah Duane

Harvard College '26



Thanks to a J-term fellowship from the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**, I was able to spend a week conducting research in the Arthur Waskow Records held at the Center for Jewish History in New York. These records document Waskow's 1969 Freedom Seder, for which Jews and African Americans collaborated and drew from both groups'

histories of enslavement and liberation to create a Passover Haggadah and seder. This archival research served as the foundation for my final project at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, *Order(s) of Freedom(s) for Contested Time(s)*. Through archival research, participatory workshops, and co-designed ritual, *Order(s) of Freedom(s)* seeks to understand and re-imagine how Waskow's Freedom Seder continues to shape experiences of collective freedom.

Waskow's archives helped me understand that the Freedom Seder was more than a moment in time: it is a movement, a set of relations, and an ongoing practice. My project builds upon this legacy, creating opportunities for solidarity-building, embodiment, and co-design both throughout the project's lifecycle and through the artifacts and installation developed to share this work. At the project's final (for now!) installation at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, texts from The Arthur Waskow records are featured on cloth; the archive serves as the fabric of this project. Participant-viewers are invited to write on top of the table, adding their own understanding of expansive freedom to the archive and continuing the legacy of Waskow's Freedom Seder.

— Molly Brodsky

M.Des. candidate,
Harvard Graduate School of Design



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