

**The Latest:**

Jewish History on the Mall

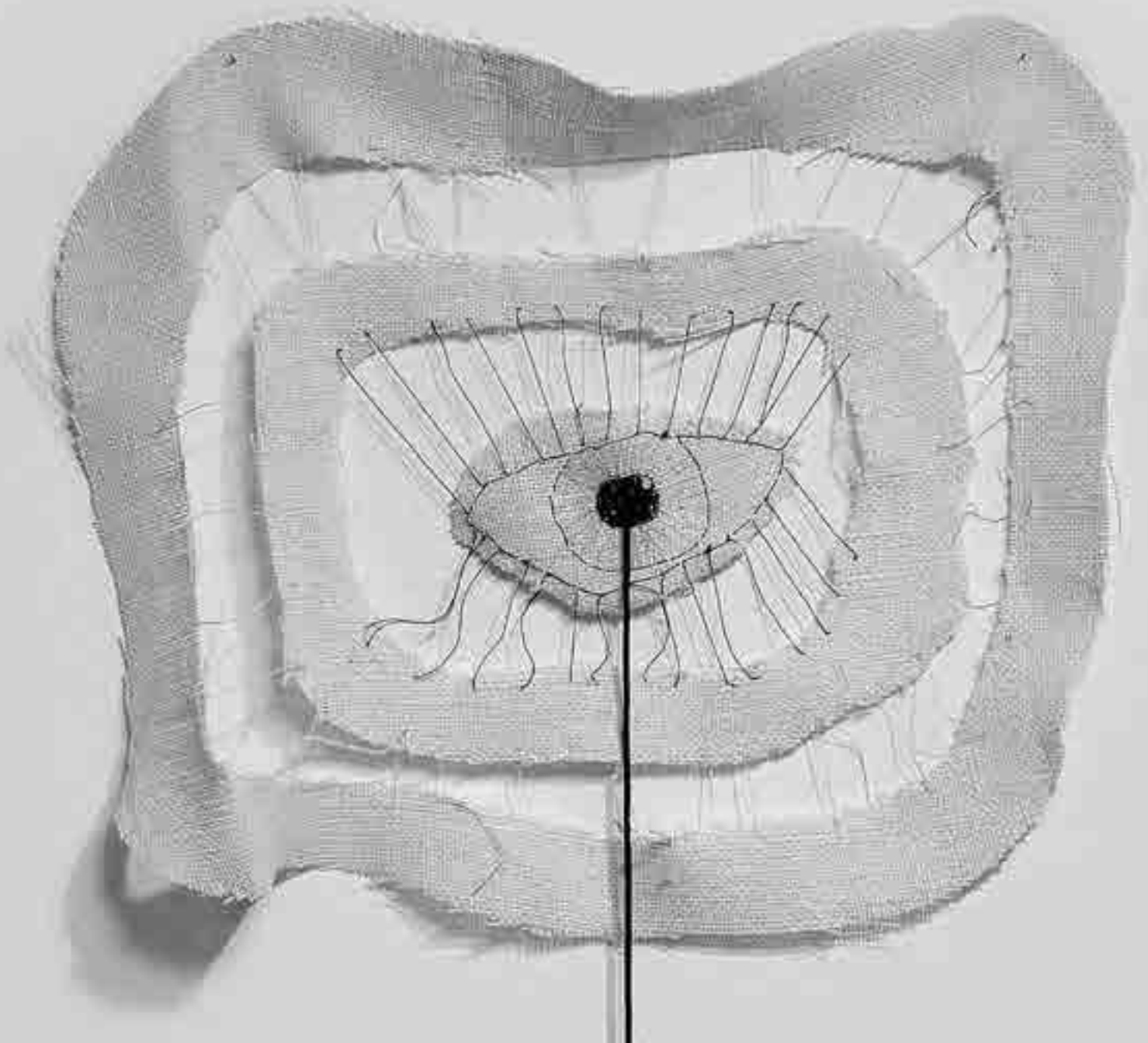
The New Jewish Food Movement and the Jewish Consumer

**The Questionnaire:**

What is the most and least successful course you have taught?

# AJS Perspectives

THE MAGAZINE OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES





# Table of Contents

From the Editors 3  
From the President 3  
From the Executive Director 4

## The Religious Issue

Religion and Its Discontents 6  
*Susannah Heschel*

Archeology of the Religious Imagination 10  
*Michael Fishbane*

Religion and Secularism: Together Forever 12  
*Jonathan Schorsch*

A Conversation about Religious Studies and Rabbinic Texts 16  
*Elizabeth Shanks Alexander and Beth Berkowitz*

Beyond the Hermetically Sealed Self 24  
*Mara Benjamin*

Rule of the Word versus Rule of the Image: Two Defining Moments 26  
*Brian Klug*

Religion and the Birth of Jewish Radical Politics 34  
*Adam Sutcliffe*

Hameyvin Yavin: Language and Super Jews 36  
*Sarah Benor*

Making Klal Yisrael Count: The Difficulties of Defining Black Jewish Communities 46  
*Janice Fernheimer*

Jewish Renewal and the Paradigm Shift: A Conversation with  
Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi 49  
*David Shneer*

The Latest  
Jewish History on the Mall 54  
*Deborah Dash Moore*

The New Jewish Food Movement and the Jewish Consumer 58  
*Andrea Lieber*

The Questionnaire  
What is the most and least successful course you have taught? 60

**AJS Perspectives:** *The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies*

### Editors

Matti Bunzl  
*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

Rachel Havrelock  
*University of Illinois at Chicago*

### Editorial Board

Allan Arkush  
*Binghamton University*

Carol Bakhos  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

Orit Bashkin  
*University of Chicago*

Sarah Benor  
*HUC-JIR, Los Angeles*

Michael Brenner  
*University of Munich*

Nathaniel Deutsch  
*University of California, Santa Cruz*

Todd Hasak-Lowy  
*University of Florida*

Ari Kelman  
*University of California, Davis*

Heidi Lerner  
*Stanford University*

Laura Levitt  
*Temple University*

Diana Lipton  
*King's College London*

Meira Polliack  
*Tel Aviv University*

Riv-Ellen Prell  
*University of Minnesota*

Jonathan Schorsch  
*Columbia University*

David Shneer  
*University of Colorado*

Dina Stein  
*University of Haifa*

Nadia Valman  
*Queen Mary University of London*

Yael Zerubavel  
*Rutgers University*

### Managing Editor

Karin Kugel

### Graphic Designer

Ellen Nygaard

### President

Marsha Rozenblit  
*University of Maryland*

### Vice President/Publications

Jeffrey Shandler  
*Rutgers University*

### Vice President/Program

Derek Penslar  
*University of Toronto*

### Vice President/Membership and Outreach

Anita Norich  
*University of Michigan*

### Secretary/Treasurer

Jonathan Sarna  
*Brandeis University*

### AJS Staff

Rona Sheramy  
*Executive Director*

Karen Terry  
*Program and Membership Coordinator*

Natasha Perlis  
*Project Manager*

Emma Barker  
*Conference and Program Associate*

Please direct correspondence to:  
**Association for Jewish Studies**  
Center for Jewish History  
15 West 16th Street  
New York, NY 10011

Voice: (917) 606-8249  
Fax: (917) 606-8222  
E-Mail: [ajs@ajs.cjh.org](mailto:ajs@ajs.cjh.org)  
Web Site: [www.ajsnet.org](http://www.ajsnet.org)

*AJS Perspectives* is published bi-annually by the Association for Jewish Studies.

The Association for Jewish Studies is an affiliate of the Center for Jewish History.

© Copyright 2011 Association for Jewish Studies ISSN 1529-6423

*AJS Perspectives* reserves the right to reject advertisements or other items not consonant with the goals and purposes of the organization. Copy may be condensed or rejected because of length or style. *AJS Perspectives* disclaims responsibility for statements made by advertisers and contributors.

**Front, Inside, and Back Covers:** Artwork by Mindy Rose Schwartz. Photo credit: James Prinz.



# From the Editors

## *Dear Colleagues,*

The Religious Issue proved too subjective for a joint text, so this letter comes to you from only one of the editors. Somehow, the personal nature of religion puts individual belief right on the line.

I have always believed that at moments of complete elation or deep suffering, one encounters God and that, the rest of the time, she can be sustained by these memories. This goes along with (or is caused by) belief in the God of Israel and the Jewish religion. I have not known doubt or experienced a radical change in my religious behavior. Some, with more antiquated ideas of denominationalism, would even call me religious.

At the same time, I have always had an innate aversion to piety. To me, pious words empty out religious ideas. Proscriptions equally trigger my resistance. This disregard for piety comes with an affinity for secular and atheist Jews. When a Jew says that he is an atheist, it is my instinct to respond, “How Jewish.” Such positions seem perfectly natural to me and to my sense of Judaism. This kind of Jewish doubt has led

to the sort of intellectual and theoretical movements that excite me.

Having treated genius and doubt in the Secular Issue, we here explore the Religious Issue and its meanings in the contemporary world. The result thrills as it explores what (or who) stands between the self and the divine. If indeed something distances or mediates between the self and the divine, then we must ask what defines the self and the divine. What rhetoric and practices shape them? What relevance do the categories of self and divine carry? What is the nature of Judaism in past and current historical moments?

Our authors ask all of the above as they look inward at religion and the self. Language, practice, definition, apostasy, race, gender, transcendence, and the very concept of Religious Studies all appear to impact the religious self.

**Rachel Havrelock**

*University of Illinois at Chicago*

# From the President

## *Dear Colleagues,*

When I first attended the AJS annual meetings as a graduate student in the mid-1970s, I could never have imagined that I would one day be president of that learned society. After all, the president of the AJS was a distinguished scholar, a major figure in the world of Jewish Studies, a person lauded for his (and later her) brilliance, insight, erudition. True, the AJS had been created by younger scholars upset with the American Academy for Jewish Research, whose mostly elderly members treated Jewish Studies as an “old boys’ club” of professors at Columbia, Harvard, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Hebrew Union College. The early presidents of AJS were young, energetic, and eager to place Jewish Studies on the academic map of North America. Yet we graduate students rightly regarded them as the leaders and we defined the cutting edge of Jewish Studies by scholarship on the Bible, rabbinics, Jewish history, and Hebrew and Yiddish literature.

I am still in awe of those men and women, most of whom are still productive scholars even in retirement. They wrote interesting and important books that many of us read even when they were far from our own fields of research. They provided us with role models of dispassionate scholarship, commitment to the highest standards of the academy, and confidence that the study of the Jews and Jewish culture was not a parochial concern but an integral part of a liberal arts curriculum. They paved the way for the entry of Jewish Studies into a wide array of universities, making it possible for the rest of us to find our places there. In the early twenty-first century, most major universities have significant Jewish Studies programs, whose faculty continue the scholarly traditions of the field.

Why did I hold these scholars in such awe? Was it their mastery of traditional Jewish texts? Was it their command of many languages? Was it their scholarly brilliance? I am sure it was all of the above,

combined with a good dose of graduate student insecurity about my own abilities. To be sure, I was well-trained in Jewish history at Columbia, required to master all of it from antiquity to the present, and I had successfully learned the craft of the historian. But could I be like the great scholars whose papers I heard at the AJS and whose books I read? Did the fact that I did not use traditional, Hebrew language sources in my own work but rather an array of Jewish and non-Jewish sources—all in German—preclude me from being one of the masters of Jewish Studies? To be sure, I considered myself an insider, and I hoped that the masters would accept me as one.

The field of Jewish Studies today has changed significantly since I was a graduate student. Scholars still study classical texts, and the traditional fields continue to flourish. What has changed is that many nontraditional fields—the Social Sciences, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Media Studies, Israel Studies—have come to be included in Jewish Studies, and many scholars in those fields have not received what was once considered the traditional training in Jewish Studies, which included a mastery of the classical Jewish texts and deep knowledge of the classical Jewish languages. The lack of traditional training raises eyebrows in some circles. Some wonder whether these new fields are “really” in Jewish Studies. My answer is simple: Of course they are in Jewish Studies. Anyone who studies Jews and Jewish culture is included in Jewish Studies. For some periods—especially antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the early modern period—mastery of traditional Jewish languages and sources is essential; for other periods it is less crucial. Personally I am a fan of maximal training. I think we should all learn many languages, especially Hebrew, and I think familiarity with traditional Jewish texts is a good background for everyone. Nevertheless, I am delighted that Jewish Studies has expanded beyond the

traditional fields into new arenas. These new arenas not only enrich Jewish Studies generally and make the conference lively and interesting, but they also alert those of us in the traditional fields about new trends in scholarship, new ways of looking at old subjects, and new areas to explore.

I feel deeply honored that I have been able to serve as president of the Association for Jewish Studies these past two years. I hope that I have followed in the footsteps of my predecessors. I hope that, like them, I have served as a model of good scholarship, commitment to

the highest standards of academic rigor, and devotion to Jewish Studies, which young scholars will continue to emulate. I hope that I have adequately represented the interests of Jewish Studies in the academy. Finally, I hope that my predecessors, all of whom had wide-ranging visions, would approve of the new directions that Jewish Studies in general and the AJS in particular have undertaken on my watch.

**Marsha Rozenblit**  
*University of Maryland*

## From the Executive Director

### *Dear Colleagues,*

Well before the economic downturn hit the academic job market, I occasionally received queries from Jewish Studies graduate students about careers outside of academia. Even under the best of circumstances, these students knew, not all PhDs could be guaranteed a tenure-track job. Add to that geographical limitations (not everyone could pick up and move to where a job was) or a feeling mid-doctoral program that a career in academia was not for them, and such students felt the need to consider other options.

These queries have certainly picked up over the past two years. Most graduate students and recent PhDs recognize that landing a full-time tenure-track job has become even more challenging than it was just a few years ago, and they want to know what alternatives exist if they don't land a professorship right out of school.

There are indeed several career options outside of the academy for people with doctorates. It is not always an easy transition to make—many have planned for a career in academia since their first undergraduate course—but that shouldn't discourage newly minted PhDs (or those about to graduate) from considering other professional opportunities. While not an exhaustive list, here are some arenas where humanities and social science PhDs have found much success:

**Nonprofit world:** There are numerous nonprofit organizations dedicated to higher education, the liberal arts, humanities, and social sciences: American Association of University Professors (AAUP), American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), Social Science Research Council (SSRC), American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Council of Independent Colleges (CIC), National Humanities Alliance (NHA), and Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), to name just a few. These organizations rely on staff with expert, inside understanding of the culture, issues, and concerns of faculty and students, and scholarly life, in general. Find out about job openings through the organizations' websites, as well as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, and other such publications. Jewish-communal organizations and Jewish-sponsored nonprofits also seek staff with expertise in Jewish history and culture, as well as the contemporary Jewish scene. These can be policy-oriented organizations, social justice organizations, as well as bodies dedicated to Jewish education (i.e. bureaus of Jewish education, adult/continuing education programs, etc.). JewishJobs.com and Idealist.org are the best resources for such positions. Idealist.org is also one of the most comprehensive websites for nonprofit jobs in general.

**Learned societies:** One specific arm of the nonprofit world, learned societies (such as AJS), draw staff heavily from academia. Larger learned societies such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), American Historical Association (AHA), American Academy of Religion (AAR), American Anthropological Association (AAA), etc., have quite sizable staffs, including numerous PhDs from an array of disciplinary backgrounds. Take a look at the staff pages of these organizations to see some positions they employ: directors of research, directors of teaching and digital media initiatives, directors of publications. Small to mid-sized learned societies often employ PhDs in leadership positions, although they tend to have smaller senior staffs. The best way to find out about positions within these organizations is to follow their websites and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

**Administrative positions within colleges and universities:** One of the most natural places for a PhD to find a job is within the college or university itself, in an administrative role. Depending upon the size of the institution, recent PhDs can get jobs directing programs, in deans' offices, admissions offices, and academic centers. Most institutions will require that academic deans have gone through the tenure process, and have a distinguished academic record. But deanships on the student service side, or certain assistant/associate deanships or positions in the provost's office may not require such experience and may also enable you to continue teaching one or two courses a year. Smaller, liberal arts colleges, especially those with a focus on teaching, may also be more flexible in terms of such criteria. Keep track of job announcements on college/university websites, as well as in *Inside Higher Ed* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

**Independent schools/day schools:** PhDs with a love for teaching are ideally suited to transition into the private school world, be it Jewish day schools or nonsectarian, independent schools. Indeed, many private school faculty members have MAs or PhDs in specific subject areas, serving in both teaching and administrative roles. Most private schools do not require a graduate degree in education or other formal teaching certification for employment, although they will want to see demonstrated excellence in the classroom, and ideally some teaching experience below the college level. Depending upon your teaching duties as a graduate student, the classroom schedule as a secondary school teacher can be more intensive—usually two to three preps a day—but many PhDs have found independent school teaching to be

a perfect match for their love of the subject matter, their dedication to and flair for teaching, and their desire to be in an academic community. Look for teaching and administrative jobs on the websites of specific schools, on the position board of the National Association for Independent Schools (NAIS); and on JewishJobs.com, for day school positions. You can also sign up with an independent school headhunting firm, although such firms may want to see prior high school teaching experience.

**Museums/archives/historical societies:** The research and teaching arms of Jewish, Holocaust, and general museums, archives and historical societies seek staff with expertise in the specific subject area of their institutions. PhDs in Jewish Studies are at a distinct advantage for many of these positions, given their excellent language and writing skills and deep familiarity with archival research and material culture. Positions in such institutions can range from research and curatorial jobs to directors of public and educational programming. Positions listings can be found through the Coalition of Jewish Museums (CAJM), College Art Association (CAA), Jewish Library Association (JLA), American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), as well as the *Chronicle of Higher Ed* and Idealist.org.

**Foundations/endowments:** Foundations that focus on higher education and the humanities, such as the Mellon Foundation, Teagle Foundation, and National Endowment for the Humanities, seek program officers with expertise in a range of humanistic disciplines. Foundations with a focus on Jewish culture, education, academic programs, and communal activities also look for staff with in-depth understanding of Jewish history, culture, and contemporary life. Position listings for such organizations can be found on their websites, as well as in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, Idealist.org, and JewishJobs.com, for the Jewish communal world.

**Publishing:** While the publishing industry is certainly undergoing its own dramatic changes, academic and trade presses still rely on keen thinkers, readers, and writers to serve on their editorial staffs. New online and print publications with a Jewish focus look especially for contributors with the deep understanding of Jewish culture, politics, and society. The best place to find positions in this industry is through websites of the American Association of University Presses (AAUP), Publishers Weekly, Publishers Marketplace, Media Bistro, Journalism-Jobs, and publishing houses and publications themselves.

In order to make yourself a strong candidate for positions outside of academia, try to work or volunteer in any of the areas you are

interested in pursuing. If you are considering publishing, get an editorial job—as a managing editor of a journal, as a style- or copyeditor—or start writing for a blog or online publication. If you are thinking about academic administration, take on a job as a program administrator—even for just a few hours a week—in a dean’s or college program office. Make sure to TA, or better yet, tutor or teach in an afterschool or Hebrew school program if you are contemplating independent or day school positions. Volunteer for a nonprofit in the area you are interested in working.

Aside from following positions listings, let people know about your interest in nonacademic jobs. Ideally, your dissertation advisor will be open to this discussion, and can suggest ideas and connect you with others. If your advisor is not helpful in this area, then turn to other faculty members, administrators, and professionals. The more people who know about your openness to other careers, the more people will think of you when they hear of a job. You should also contact people whose positions you find interesting and ask if you can meet. These “informational interviews” are very common and regarded as a professional courtesy. It’s an excellent way to find out about different careers, get a sense of work environments, and share your cv. Social/professional networking sites like LinkedIn are also good for this purpose.

If you are applying for a nonacademic job, make sure to tailor your cv and cover letter to the position. Unless central to the job opportunity, do not lead with a discussion of your research interests and doctoral topic. A cover letter that opens with a long paragraph about your dissertation suggests that your heart still lies in academe (or that you didn’t feel like taking the time to change the letter). Rather, foreground the work, volunteer, and academic experience most closely related to the opening. Likewise, open your cv with your relevant professional experience, not your publications and conference presentations unless specifically pertinent to the job.

If you want to keep a foot in the door of academia, even when taking a position outside it, keep publishing, present at conferences, give guest lectures, teach a course, and stay active in learned societies. And let it be known to colleagues and advisors that you welcome the chance to apply for a tenure-track job when an appropriate position opens up. The AJS Conference will offer a lunchtime workshop on December 19, dedicated to career options for Jewish Studies PhDs. Please join us for this event, and let us know how else we can support the professional development of Jewish Studies scholars.

**Rona Sheramy**

*Association for Jewish Studies*

*The Association for Jewish Studies wishes to thank the  
Center for Jewish History and its constituent organizations*

**American Jewish Historical Society,  
American Sephardi Federation, Leo Baeck Institute,  
Yeshiva University Museum, and  
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research**

*for providing the AJS with office space at the Center for Jewish History.*

# The Religious Issue

## Religion and Its Discontents

Susannah Heschel

As someone teaching Jewish Studies within a religion department (as well as in an interdisciplinary Jewish Studies program), I often straddle two very different academic enterprises. Religion departments, particularly Dartmouth's, stress interdisciplinary methods and welcome comparative approaches, whereas Jewish Studies departments tend to be oriented toward texts and historical method, often ignoring comparison and context and focusing instead on Jewish experience. There are strengths and weaknesses in both, and certainly important contributions could be made to each by the other.

For example, the scholarly study of religion can often become embroiled in definitions and methods that arose within a European Protestant context and that distort non-European, non-Christian religions. Ever since September 11th, scholars have revived interest in religion and their skepticism regarding secularization, and yet *religion* in this context is often a substitute for Christianity. It has become a cliché that secularism is the left hand of religion, “an imitation religion,” as Etienne Balibar writes. Yet precisely what constitutes “religion”? Bill Brown, in a widely-praised exposé of the medieval Christian hermeneutic at the heart of Frederic Jameson's Marxist critique of postmodernism, found Dante echoed in Jameson's critique of the Bonaventure Hotel. That religion would lurk even on the Marxist left—which repudiates the smell of piety—came as a shock. Brown's study led him to ask “whether it is not so much secularism as an internalization of religion . . . that renders faith imperceptible.”

Yet is this faith or is this Christianity? And is it an internalization that is at work, a triumph of religion that Brown, in surprise, has uncovered, or is it rather a supersessionism, secularism colonizing Christianity, just as the New Testament colonized the Hebrew Bible? Pervasive in the field of religion is a confusion of religion and Christianity, and far too close an alliance between Protestant interests and the scholarly study of religion. Here is one of the areas Jewish Studies might offer

a corrective, in pointing out Christocentric assumptions and biases.

Within the field of Jewish Studies, the revival of interest in religion in recent years has also made an important mark, most notable perhaps in Moshe Idel's critique of Gershom Scholem's studies of mysticism. Idel insists, for example, that we cannot separate mystical texts that we read as systems of symbolic meaning from mystical figures, such as Abraham Abulafia, whom we designate as explorers of mystical experience; human experience, in its multifaceted complexity, underlies the texts as well. For the modern period, Shmuel Feiner's important reconsiderations of eighteenth-century modernization narratives, and Naomi Seidman's subtle and powerful readings of gender and sexuality in eastern European *Haskalah* literature are two excellent examples of the new attention to religion's role in crafting not only human agency, but also subjectivity.

In other contexts, though, the new enthusiasm for the study of religion has led in less helpful directions. A recent ethnographic study of young Hasidic girls in Boro Park, Brooklyn, for example, simply reports what the girls told the author. The girls are happy and feel engaged with modernity, we are told. The author does not probe deeper, so that the study contains nothing that falls out of accord with the subjects' own self-understanding. Yet scholarship on religion cannot simply reiterate the subjects' narrative. We might ask if everything is really so easy and cheerful in the lives of these Hasidic girls. Or did the author deliberately end her study prior to the girls' marriages in order to avoid the possibility of recording disappointment, discontent, or conflict? Where, in other words, is the problematic of the book? These girls may indeed have agency, even in the context of a social realm that affords them little autonomous choice; perhaps they are able to manipulate successfully its strictures or achieve reconciliation within its limitations. As scholars we must consider these girls' subjectivity and the limitations on their self-understanding and exploration that are imposed by religious authority.

What is, indeed, the religious life, and how can scholars move beyond studies of agency to examine inner lives?

Attentiveness to how religion and the secular affect subjectivity and inner life has been brought to the fore most recently by philosopher Charles Taylor's recent book, *A Secular Age*, the most significant and widely discussed recent study of secularization. Taylor's striking contribution is to move our discussion of secularization away from a focus on society and ritual to examine religiosity, asking how our subjectivity has been altered in the course of what we call secularization. Indeed, Taylor's starting point is his observation that five hundred years ago, most human beings were believers, while today only a minority are. What brought about this shift? And how has it affected human experience and subjectivity?

Moving beyond the Weberian paradigm of a disenchanted world as the marker of secularization (which Weber too easily equates with modernity), and Peter Berger's claim that modernity marks the end of the “sacred canopy,” Taylor asks about changes in subjectivity that arise with an end of religious belief. The shift away from the enchanted world, he argues, is not simply a matter of subtraction, the loss of certain beliefs or practices or disintegration of religious authority. Rather, the secular age sees the emergence of a “buffered self,” in contrast to the “porous self” that experienced transcendence and was vulnerable to forces from outside. The buffered self is invulnerable, with a clear boundary between mind and world, mind and body so that emotional life is “an inner, mental space.” Melancholy, for the secular, buffered self, is a matter of body chemistry, relief is achieved through medication, and the goal is self-awareness and self-control. The buffered self is disengaged, with invulnerable boundaries that allow the self to become a master of meaning.

The paradigm of the two selves, while useful for understanding secularism's impact on the individual, is too sharply drawn, and Taylor is too sympathetic to religiosity, linking religion too closely to divine transcendence, and failing as well to distinguish religion



from other forms of experience, such as the aesthetic. At the same time, Taylor's study is filled with brilliant insights into the transformations of the past five hundred years. His massive study, however, with its focus on Protestantism and European theology, fails to take Jewish experience into account and would have benefited enormously from attention to scholarship in Jewish Studies. Not once does he consider the engagement of Protestant theologians in debates over Jewish emancipation, nor the discomfort of Christians over their "discovery" of the Jewishness of the historical Jesus, nor the rise of anti-Semitism and the racialization of Christianity, nor whether European Jews experienced the same emergence of a buffered self. Similarly, he speaks

generically about the human self, without consideration of race, class, or gender.

Still, Taylor's paradigms might be usefully applied to the study of Jewish experience. Much of our consideration of modernization processes focuses on changes in ritual, social assimilation, Christianization of synagogues, new philosophical and theological rationales, the emergence of historical method, as well as the development of forces of resistance that cleave ever more ardently to halakha: "Remove one brick and the entire edifice will collapse." Taylor urges us to think about changes in subjectivity and selfhood that come with the secular age, and to consider the consequences of our disengagement from our inner life that characterizes the buffered self—the

sense of autonomy, an imagined conquest of fear, a commitment to self-control and self-direction, features that have significant moral and political consequences. Studies of Judaism's modernization have examined political and economic pressures, with religion often measured in terms of ritual behavior and its abandonment, all of which are important factors; consideration of how secularization changes the self, as Taylor has suggested, adds an important dimension.

*Susannah Heschel is the Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College. Her most recent book is The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany (Princeton University Press, 2008).*

---

## THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT **AWARDED**  
MORE THAN **80 TRAVEL GRANTS** TO SUPPORT  
**SCHOLARS PRESENTING RESEARCH** AT THE  
AJS 43RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The AJS thanks its members and the following  
foundations, organizations, and institutions for supporting  
the AJS travel grant program:

AJS Women's Caucus  
Center for Jewish History  
Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation  
Hadassah-Brandeis Institute  
Lucius N. Littauer Foundation  
Maurice Amado Foundation  
Posen Foundation

# CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

A DECADE OF CULTURE,  
SCHOLARSHIP, AND IDEAS

## Research Opportunities at the Center

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS Since 2002, the Center has proudly sponsored research fellowship programs. To date one of the most successful ongoing programs of the Center, this initiative fosters research opportunities for upcoming and established scholars while bringing the collections housed at the Center to life. Fellowships are now available at every level from undergraduate to senior scholar.

### NEH FELLOWSHIP FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS

CJH offers fellowships to senior scholars through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The award supports original research in the humanities at CJH. Applications are welcome from college and university faculty in any field who have completed a PhD more than six years prior to the start of the fellowship and whose research will benefit considerably from consultation with materials housed at CJH. Fellowships carry a stipend of up to \$50,400 for a period of one academic year.

### PRINS FOUNDATION POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP FOR EMIGRATING SCHOLARS

We invite foreign scholars who seek permanent teaching and research positions in North America to apply for this award, which will support 12-month fellowships for scholars who are at the beginning of their careers. Fellows will be provided with an annual stipend of \$35,000 to conduct original research at the Center's Lillian Goldman Reading Room and utilize the vast collections of our partners. This award allows the Center to serve as the gateway for the best and brightest emerging scholars seeking to begin a new academic life in the U.S.

### VISITING SCHOLARS PROGRAM

We invite scholars working in the field of Jewish Studies who have completed their doctorate or its equivalent to apply for an affiliation with CJH to work in the collections of one or more of its partner institutions. Scholars are generally expected to commit to a regular presence at CJH for at least three months. Scholars may apply for a full academic year, the fall or spring semester, or for the summer. Visiting scholars will be provided with work space, a CJH e-mail account and access to CJH resources. This program does not provide a stipend or financial support.

### GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

CJH offers fellowships to PhD candidates supporting original research using the collections at the Center. Preference is given to those candidates who draw on the library and archival resources of more than one partner. Full fellowships carry a stipend of up to \$15,000 for a period of one academic year. It is expected that applicants will have completed all requirements for the doctoral degree except for the dissertation.

### UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

Advanced undergraduate students at North American universities are invited to apply to carry out research in the archives and libraries of CJH's partner institutions. This fellowship is designed for third and fourth year undergraduates preparing theses or other major projects in Jewish history and related fields. Projects require substantive use of archival and printed sources (e.g., newspapers, collections of sermons, memoirs, institutional reports) housed at CJH and not available at the student's home institution. The amount of the fellowship is up to \$1,000 and students are encouraged to seek matching funding from their home institutions. The award may be used for travel purposes and lodging while at CJH.

### JOSEPH S. STEINBERG EMERGING JEWISH FILMMAKER FELLOWSHIP

Undergraduate and graduate emerging filmmakers working on topics related to modern Jewish history are encouraged to apply for this fellowship, which supports research in the archives housed at CJH. The award is designed to help further existing projects, or to start new projects, whose subject matter is in line with the collections housed at CJH. Recipients are eligible for awards of up to \$5,000 and are provided with access to the resources at CJH.

For detailed information and application procedures for the above opportunities, please visit [www.research.cjh.org](http://www.research.cjh.org).

### ACADEMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

Steven J. Zipperstein, Stanford University, Chair  
Derek Penslar, University of Toronto, Co-Chair  
Elisheva Carlebach, Columbia University  
Jane S. Gerber, Graduate Center, CUNY  
Debra Kaplan, Yeshiva University

Marion A. Kaplan, New York University  
Samuel D. Kassow, Trinity College  
Arthur Kiron, University of Pennsylvania  
James Loeffler, University of Virginia  
Tony Michels, University of Wisconsin  
Paul North, Yale University  
Riv-Ellen Prell, University of Minnesota

Jeffrey Shandler, Rutgers University  
Paul A. Shapiro, US Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Mark Slobin, Wesleyan University  
Sarah A. Stein, University of California, Los Angeles  
Francesca Trivellato, Yale University  
Jeffrey Veidlinger, Indiana University  
Beth Wenger, University of Pennsylvania

# AJS Institutional Members

2011–2012

The Association for Jewish Studies is pleased to recognize  
the following Institutional Members:

## Full Institutional Members

Brandeis University  
Columbia University, Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies  
Cornell University, Jewish Studies Program  
Harvard University, Center for Jewish Studies  
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion  
Indiana University, Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish Studies Program  
The Jewish Theological Seminary, The Graduate School  
Lehigh University, Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies  
McGill University, Department of Jewish Studies  
Monash University, Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation  
New York University, Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies  
The Ohio State University, Melton Center for Jewish Studies  
Stanford University, Taube Center for Jewish Studies  
University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Jewish Studies  
University of California, San Diego, Judaic Studies Program  
University of Maryland, Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Michigan, Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Jewish Studies  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Carolina Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Texas at Austin, Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies  
Yeshiva University, Bernard Revel School of Jewish Studies  
York University, Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies

## Associate Institutional Members

American University, Center for Israel Studies & Jewish Studies Program  
Center for Cultural Judaism  
Foundation for Jewish Culture  
Georgetown University, Program for Jewish Civilization  
Hebrew College  
International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism  
Johns Hopkins University, Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Jewish Studies Program  
Loyola Marymount University, Jewish Studies Program  
National Yiddish Book Center  
Northeastern University, Jewish Studies Program  
Northwestern University, The Crown Family Center for Jewish Studies  
Old Dominion University, Institute for Jewish Studies and Interfaith Understanding  
Portland State University, Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Jewish Studies  
Purdue University, Jewish Studies Program  
Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies  
University at Albany-SUNY, Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Arizona, Arizona Center for Judaic Studies  
University of Connecticut, Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life  
University of Denver, Center for Judaic Studies  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Program in Jewish Culture and Society  
University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Judaic and Near Eastern Studies Department  
University of Minnesota, Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Nebraska at Lincoln, Norman and Bernice Harris Center for Judaic Studies  
University of North Carolina at Asheville, Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Oregon, Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies  
University of Pittsburgh, Jewish Studies Program  
University of Tennessee – Knoxville, The Fern and Manfred Steinfeld Program in Judaic Studies  
University of Virginia, Jewish Studies Program  
University of Washington, Samuel and Althea Stroum Jewish Studies Program, Jackson School of International Studies  
University of Wisconsin – Madison, Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Sam and Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies  
Vanderbilt University, Program in Jewish Studies  
Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures

**If your program, department, foundation, or institution is interested in becoming an AJS institutional member,  
please contact Rona Sheramy, AJS Executive Director, at [ajs@ajs.cjh.org](mailto:ajs@ajs.cjh.org) or 917.606.8249.**

# Archeology of the Religious Imagination

Michael Fishbane

Two events made a profound impression on me as a young student, and now, decades later, I realize how formative they were for setting the direction of my interests in the study of the religious imagination. The first event, textual in nature, was triggered by an apparently dry, legal term in the Mishnah that referred to certain fields as *sedeh ba'al* (*Shevi'it* 2:9). In context, this could only mean a field that depended on rainfall (not irrigation). It was thus possible to wonder whether this designation gave mythic expression to a field fructified by the ancient Canaanite god of the storm—Baal. But how could this be? And if it could, perhaps this was merely a dead metaphor with no living force. A trip to the Talmud turned me upside down; for there Rav Judah is reported as saying that “rain is the husband (*ba'ala*) of the soil” (*Ta'anit* 6b). This is certainly no myth, though it may be the stepson of a myth; and the biblical proof text offered by the sage, stating that the rain-soaked earth “gives birth” to its produce (*Isaiah* 55:10), may likewise be some half-breed of older mythic thinking.

Once these thoughts started percolating, it was hard not to think that primordial mythic structures might continue as living cultural elements in totally different religious environments—erupting from their subsurface channels into biblical similes and rabbinic metaphors. That is, I came to realize that a textual surface may conceal deeper dimensions, and one should be ready to plumb their hidden reserves through the nuances of a casual comment (as with *Isaiah*) or a more deliberate act of exegesis (as with Rav Judah). But this process is also problematic because one is only alerted to these possibilities on the basis of analogies in other sources (in this instance, a pagan myth). That is, we only know by means of the known—and this requires caution and care.

My second event, this time pictorial in form, reinforced these musings. I remember being struck by a fragmentary ancient Egyptian depiction of ‘Ammon Re in Procession.’ Enough was still visible to make this characterization—for there they were: gods and king, and a gallery of servants and polymorphic figures all bearing their offerings. But if there were traces galore, the gaps left much to the imagination. And this, too, set me wondering about how one constructs a religious ‘Gestalt’



Aby Warburg, 1912, photographer unknown.

so that the unknown may be inferred from the known, and the portions in one zone of meaning could be coordinated with details found elsewhere. Once again, the issue was only apparently a matter of ‘reading’ the surface features of a phenomenon, and had more to do with construing its imagined depth. The challenge was to perceive in a given artifact’s inherent form and vitality—not intuitions projected from contemporary scholarship and based on vestigial evidence.

The two happenings were thus different yet similar, and have brewed within all these years—inspiring me to seek the unseen in the visible and the unsaid in the said. Everything depends upon imagination and intuition. But since this includes discerning the evidence as well, a careful methodology, constantly revised, is required to keep one’s perceptions under control.

\*\*\*

All these thoughts came to mind once again upon re-reading Aby Warburg’s 1923 lecture on Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America. Warburg had collected his data a quarter century earlier, on an expedition to the American Southwest, but was motivated to present it before the inmates and doctors of the Bellevue sanatorium in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, in an effort to prove his sanity and inaugurate his dismissal. It is a stunning performance, replete with the

powerful intuitions and methodological controls that made him a path breaking analyst of Renaissance art. In many marvelous works, Warburg deftly disclosed the layers of culture and mind embedded in the symbolism of Florentine paintings—in particular, the great depths of the religious imagination revealed by the conjunction of old pagan myths with later cultural figures. It was the entwining of the two, as well as the transformed meaning of ancient myths in their latter-day recrudescence that was so arresting. Each instance was an event in its own right, showing the cultural vitality of primordial forms.

And just this was the burden of Warburg’s lecture on the Pueblo snake rituals. The very assemblage of the artifacts and their analysis is nothing less than an archeology of the religious imagination—showing, through a series of disparate images on the ancient serpent, a kind of palimpsest of mental layers, where the oldest ones (the most raw and coiled features of the ever-mysterious serpent) remained active and resurfaced in new configurations. Warburg’s major concern, as he explicitly admits, was to reveal the primordial strata of the human imagination and challenge the ‘myth of rational progress.’ Like the serpent, our minds molt and grow new skin—but (apparently) never wholly transcend their deep, terrestrial embodiments.

In the course of his work, Warburg came to call these creative images *Pathosformeln*, formulae of feelings—these being the rich vocabulary (of images and words) that gives expression to deeper sensibilities and emotions. They provide the evidence of depth pathos. The interpreter must learn how to ‘read’ them properly, in order to penetrate their deep grammar and intuit their diverse configurations. I am compelled by these insights, and believe their value extends beyond the world of pictorial art. In fact, I think they may help one think better about some of the issues mentioned at the outset. Following Warburg’s lead, we may thus regard each mythic element as a symbolic form expressing (in dramatic and personified images) deeper intuitions, feelings, and insights—whether of nature, or theology, or the very order of things.

All these mythic forms, then, can be seen as *Pathosformeln*—each instance encoding depths of feeling about existence, variously



amenable to our understanding in proportion to our knowledge. The thicker the evidence, the more resonant the soundings; and the more judicious the analogies, the more justified the intuitions. Each expression is an outcropping of subsurface elements, allowing the interpreter to follow the vein of ore to its source; and each one must be examined in its own right.

On this basis, I wish to say a bit more about penetrating the depths of the Jewish religious imagination encoded in texts. Many of these sources (both legal and theological) are the result of editing and stylization, which have transformed oral components into written ones and elided diverse elements into compact units. As a result, the textual yield is compressed and elliptical; and this makes their interpretation difficult and emotional valence elusive. Nevertheless, there is one element that gives some access to the generating pathos informing our sources—and this is *the exegetical act itself*, including the addition of proof texts from Scripture.

We already had a hint of this in the rabbinic tradition about rain credited to Rav Judah, where the sage's comment (that "rain is the *ba'al* of the soil") was supplemented by a biblical citation conveying a vivid explanation of the fructification of rain through images of gestation and birth. In a sense, Rav Judah layers his own explanation in the soil of Scripture and gives roots thereby to his bold image. Both the initial statement and the secondary proof text are *Pathosformeln*, offering cues to the cultural realities at their core. Indeed, through them we sense that the legal metaphor in our Mishnah is not only derived from a living sensibility, somehow continuous with ancient Canaanite strata, but still retained imaginative depth in some rabbinic circles. Unexpectedly, new traces of their thought-world are disclosed.

But we can plumb deeper precisely where the act of exegesis transforms the sense of the text. Consider the following rabbinic myth, created whole cloth from the texture of Scripture. In place of a biblical depiction of divine wrath, which states that God "withdrew his

right hand from before (*mipnei*) the (besieging) enemy" (Lam. 2:3), thereby allowing them to enter the city unchallenged, the sages introduce a stunning image of sympathetic suffering. Reading against the grain, and turning the text upside down, one Midrash has God say that he will identify with Israel "because of (*mipnei*) what the enemy" has done to his people; and just as their arms were bound behind them as captured exiles, so would he likewise put his arm behind him and share their fate.

Radical exegesis has thus transformed a text of punishment into one of sympathetic care. But it is the *prior* human pathos which evoked it that deserves special comment. Troubled by Scripture's personification of divine wrath, a belief in God's exilic care has revised the original metaphor. It thus behooves us to perceive within the external images their underlying sensibility.

Just as the biblical instance must be read as an emotive metaphor of abandonment and punishment, so must the rabbinic image be seen for the divine sympathy it projects. In both cases, bodily metaphors are occasions for theological emoting: the sense of punishment is conveyed by the passive-aggressive image of a withdrawn hand; and the longing for comfort elicits a counterimage of compassionate identification. Understanding this, we may plumb the images to their initiating pathos; and by this act of controlled intuition be guided toward the wellspring of their creative surge.

\*\*\*

Faced with certain topics, we are often stymied by surface sediments. Take the case of the small stone called *shetiyah*—reported in the Mishnah (Yoma 5:2) to have been in the Temple since earliest times, and to have been used to hold the incense pan during the Yom Kippur ritual in the second Temple (replacing the lost ark!). What might the priests and sages have thought about this stone, at the center of the most sacred site? Did they have in mind myths like those reported in the Talmud about a stone from which the world was established, even cast by God himself into the primeval

water, according to R. Isaac Napaha? Similar myths are well-known, both early and late, and recorded in both traditional and more marginal sources. In them this stone was also said to have stopped up the ancient *Tehom*—surging up like Tiamat of yore. What does all this mean? Can we put a spade to this *shetiyah*-stone and unearth a myth of world origins, upon whose midpoint the Temple stood? And we may wonder: did oral subsurface traditions only burst forth at later times, spewing a plethora of latent motifs into fuller legends; or were these formulations generated by the terse reference in our Mishnah? Faced with such imponderables, one may be reluctant to explain the known by the unknown or fill-in the Gestalt on one's own.

Pondering *Pathosformeln* leads to other cultural considerations of a related kind. Simply to know the manifest content of a given statement, and describe its external form, is to remain on its surface level of knowledge—or *noema*; and this is a far cry from understanding its inner core of meaning and belief-structure—or *pisteuma*. I mention these two terms and this polarity because Raimon Panikkar once used them to discuss the difference between knowing an "other religion and intuiting its most intimate convictions." He added that this complication affects inter-religious dialogue, as well, since we tend to re-formulate our private beliefs in terms of public knowledge. That is, we construct a discourse of rational information and so translate our religious pathos into external expressions. Only through sustained dialogue and attentive sympathy may one possibly penetrate these formulations—because people talk back and may clarify misinterpretations. But our texts do not answer, as Plato once famously said. And so, we interpreters of religious ideas must keep at it, ever hoping to crack the code. But what would confirm that we have hit home?

*Michael Fishbane is Nathan Cummings Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Chicago. His most recent book is Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology (University of Chicago Press, 2008).*

# Religion and Secularism: Together Forever

Jonathan Schorsch

It seems obvious that religion and secularism generate one another. Religion must have secularism to denounce as a path of error, ingratitude, and disconnection. Secularism must have religion against which to define itself. The two phenomena act as enemies agreeing to a mutual embrace, mutual parasites. Many phenomena manifest or combine both religious and secular traits, depending on what we mean when we use these terms (a little more below). I mean what I say in the way someone recently explained in an issue of *New York* devoted to Wall Street, “Sure, [the hedge fund] Bridgewater could be defined as cultish, [. . .] But companies like Google and Apple are also cults. Goldman Sachs is a cult. If you’re creating a strong corporate culture, to some extent you’re creating a cult.” From certain functionalist or sociological perspectives, theology does not distinguish religion and secularism from one another.

One place to start, given the theme of this issue of *Perspectives*, is secular Judaism. Secular Jews, I can understand, secular Jewishness, likewise. But secular Judaism?! What can this mean? I think of Mordecai Kaplan, one of cultural Judaism’s founding lights, and the very modern and American voice of his *Judaism as a Civilization*. Interest: the Jew must

be interested in Judaism or else all is lost. But interest in living in/out the ways of Jewish civilization remains a metaphysical, transcendentalist, trans-generational gambit, an offering to an imagined community larger than the self. It is ironic, but not surprising that Kaplan’s non-supernaturalism grounds itself on essentially religious impulses. To need or desire for national survival things like “the people,” “tradition,” *our* culture, is to remain beholden to spiritual qualities, to spiritualized entities. None of these things is desired for itself, but precisely because each *represents* an idea (that cannot be grasped physically by a single individual) of “us” into which the self can be fit for the sake of belonging socially and temporally. While Kaplan’s usage of the term “civilization” can be read as a corrective to the Protestant circumscription of the term “religion” to a narrow theological/intellectual meaning, Kaplan’s Jewish “life” and “civilization” are in many respects Torah in its widest premodern sense, Torah made digestible for moderns by sociology and folklore. It is not surprising that toward the end of his career Kaplan modified his signature phrase to “religious civilization.”

From another perspective, Leo Strauss, a secular social scientist, insists that Judaism

“cannot be understood as a culture.” One “cannot live on” secular Jewish culture. Playing with the biblical verse (“man cannot live on bread alone” [Deut. 8:3]), Strauss equates—with intentional irony?—secular Jewish culture to physical food; it might be necessary for survival but it remains insufficient for living a good life. Strauss turns, if not to religion in the full sense of the word (alas, there is too much of Machiavelli in Strauss), then at least to metaphysics, the transcendent, to “ideas.” Always something in excess of what is imagined to be secular. Hence the irony I find in a humanistic rabbi (a term I can fathom) who recently wrote, without irony, in a letter to the editor of the *Jewish Review of Books* about how secular Jews celebrate Passover. Far be it from me to tell people how to celebrate this holiday, but it is known that the Haggadah went out of its way to exclude Moses in order to focus on God’s direct and starring role in redeeming the Israelites through various miracles, and the holiday centers around this miraculous divine national liberation! Yes, yes, Passover has also become all about family, eating; meanings are reshaped. But if secular Judaism has communal rituals like this, is it truly secular? Indeed, editing the book *Religions of America* (1975), Leo Rosten included secular humanism, amusingly. A spokesperson for the New York Society for Ethical Culture notes that by law, “leaders and counselors in Ethical Culture and humanist groups are legally qualified to function as ministers of religion.” This gets to the heart of the question of religion and secular, which is (as always) also a political one, a question of making lines, allocating resources, declaring and performing loyalties.

The Posen Foundation offers yet another example. Its antireligious propaganda is accepted within academia seemingly without question (by scholars and administrators who would, to my knowledge, never tolerate funding from Chabad or any other organization insisting on the promotion of *religious* Judaism). The Posen Foundation insists it merely supports the understanding that Judaism “is not solely a religion,” something with which it is hard to argue, except, perhaps, for the religious totalitarians against whom the Posen Foundation is polemicizing. Yet few journals devote more attention to religion than the foundation’s (now-defunct?) journal *Contemplate*. Even the journal’s spiritual/



Jemba drum. Photo courtesy of Ahron D. Weiner, [www.ahronphoto.com/nextyearinuman](http://www.ahronphoto.com/nextyearinuman).



The Association for Jewish Studies  
is pleased to announce the

## **RECIPIENTS OF THE 2011 JORDAN SCHNITZER BOOK AWARDS**



In the Category of Ancient and Medieval  
Jewish History:

**MARINA RUSTOW, Johns Hopkins University**

*Heresy and the Politics of Community: The Jews of the Fatimid Caliphate*  
(Cornell University Press)

In the Category of Jewish Literature and Linguistics:

**SHACHAR M. PINSKER, University of Michigan**

*Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe*  
(Stanford University Press)

\* \* \*

Honorable mentions in Jewish Literature and Linguistics:

**GABRIELLA SAFRAN, Stanford University**

*Wandering Soul: The Dybbuk's Creator, S. An-Sky*  
(Harvard University Press)

**MAEERA Y. SHREIBER, University of Utah**

*Singing in a Strange Land: A Jewish American Poetics*  
(Stanford University Press)



Information and application procedures for the 2012 competition will be  
available on the AJS website ([www.ajsnet.org](http://www.ajsnet.org)) in February of 2012.

*Support for this program has been generously provided by the  
Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation of Portland, Oregon.*

philosophical name comprises a flag erected on contested terrain. While the foundation justifies its stance through the statement that “the majority of world Jewry defines itself as secular,” a plausible claim, it is difficult to read without wincing wishful but loaded and problematic retrojections in its journal such as that “Secular Judaism is part of the Jewish people’s pluralistic culture, a dynamic culture that has been experiencing change for over 3,000 years.” In a fight against prescription, description becomes its own prescription. Another contributor, after detailing the variety of ancient Jewish sects and approaches, goes so far as to claim that it is “pluralism that keeps the Jewish people alive.” Not Shabbat

(as the Talmud has it), not devotion to God or their own ways, not courage and perseverance in maintaining their own difference, not stiff-necked stubbornness, but pluralism has become the new place marker, offering a nomothetic and all-encompassing answer, as if in imitation of stereotyped religion. In all the above, the attempt is not merely to contextualize and “contain” Judaism, but to supersede it.

How different, after all, is the Posen Foundation’s bestowing of grants for courses on cultural Judaism from former bank holding company CEO John Allison’s BB&T Charitable Foundation’s granting schools up to \$2 million in funding if they create a course on capitalism that requires the reading of Ayn Rand’s

*Atlas Shrugged*? The degree of acceptance the Posen Foundation has gained is easily explained by the dire monetary situation in universities today, even more than the ostensible harmony of its mission with academia’s secularist stance. Like so many religions, the Posen Foundation’s secularism insists on ultimate values, which, in the final analysis, remain unprovable (nation, peoplehood, relativism, the irrelevance of God, a particular past, a radiant and improved future), hence the foundation deploys a system of belief (even if without supernaturalism), and grounds itself on hidden metaphysics. Its fervor and missionizing also bespeak a conversionary orientation. Obviously, many organizations act in

# LEGACY HERITAGE JEWISH STUDIES PROJECT

*Directed by the Association for Jewish Studies*

## GRANTS IN SUPPORT OF INNOVATIVE PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

### RECIPIENTS FOR THE 2012–13 ACADEMIC YEAR:

Muhlenberg College

*Jews, Money, and the Development of Modern Capitalism*

Project Director: Jessica Cooperman

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

*Beyond the Holocaust*

Project Director: Jennifer M. Hoyer

The University of Mississippi

*Intertwining Legacies: A Lecture Series on Jews and African-Americans in the Deep South*

Project Director: Willa M. Johnson

University of Pittsburgh

*Squirrel Hill, the Jewish Community of Pittsburgh, and American Urban History*

Project Director: Adam Shear

Support for the Legacy Heritage Jewish Studies Project is generously provided by  
Legacy Heritage Fund Limited.

Please visit [ajsnet.org](http://ajsnet.org) for detailed descriptions  
of Legacy Heritage projects.





this way, but the point is that this makes them more akin to religious groups than less, the point is that the question of God or not-God is often beside the point. Less I be misunderstood, I must note that I am a great supporter of Jewish pluralism, am all in favor of multiple forms of Judaisms—atheism, separation of church and state, modernity, critical scholarship and even secularization. May secular Jewishness thrive and be well and live long.

I cite Kaplan, Strauss, Posen, and secular Judaism not to bash the latter, nor to rehash a sterile either/or between secularism and religion, but precisely to argue for their structural codependence. Religious-secular interweaving carries salient analytical ramifications, obviously. From a diachronic, rather than structural perspective, it seems obvious that the religious and the secular generate one another. The Enlightenment reacted against religion yet was itself very much a movement



Rave in Florentine, Tel Aviv, 2008, by Jonathan Klinger, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

within religious communities. The excesses and failures of Enlightenment programs and high modernism led to new interest in religious modalities, including postmodernism. One could point to endless macro and micro give and take between the religious and secular over the centuries. How many sons and daughters of rabbis became ardent Zionists? How many children of secularist leftists became *ba'alei teshuva*? The relationship of Zionism and religion on the whole has fluctuated greatly. Though the numbers leaving and coming to Jewish religiosity may not be equal, keeping in mind the bidirectionality helps prevent modernist assumptions of linearity. Claude Levi-Strauss, son of a secular family, became one of the most sensitive interpreters of tribal mythologies and a mythologist of sorts himself; secular but Zionist Hans Jonas, in whom there is so much current interest, sought to combat modernity's worst inclinations by developing a countermanding

metaphysics-based ethics (one that echoes the classical rabbis surprisingly often). We all know hundreds more similar and different examples.

Synchronically, the most interesting phenomena comprise precisely those that are “in between” or comingling religion and secularism. I think of the recent rise of Israeli “tribal” youth culture—a medley of subcultures that spans Rainbow Festivals, world music, Eastern healing and spiritual paths, enjoyment of altered states of consciousness—and American Jewish environmentalism, the latter including movements to expand the laws of kashrut to cover questions of eco-kashrut (food produced through unjust labor practices or factory farming, energy wastage at synagogues, etc.). Though coming in varying shades, both Israeli youth tribalism and American eco-Judaism reject a narrow formal religion based on ancient circularly defined theology as well as vapid materialist secularism; and both combine hippie sensibilities, New Age spirituality, and some form of progressive politics (though also nationalist, even settler types). Though showing wide variety, both preach forms of secular salvation through/in nature, critiques of society's moral failures, the cleansing of sins of materialism and commercialism (a kind of saving of souls). Both evince elements of spreading the faith, insist on a personal piety and purity, and emphasize ceremonies/rituals ranging from the purely social (hiking, retreats) to the unabashedly spiritual (farming as spiritual practice, farming within a halakhic framework). One could ask similarly about most of the prominent and interesting phenomena of Judaism/Jewishness: Are they secular or religious? And if so, how, in what ways, to what ends? I won't bother to go into more examples but it is easy to fill the answer, even for now, with phenomena and entities such as the Holocaust, the State of Israel, American Jewish education, or recent American Jewish literature.

The same comingling easily can be seen in individuals, and long before “modernity” arose. By now sociology and anthropology have made it clear that personal identity is complex, multivalent, even fragmented. Bertha Pappenheim, an ardently radical feminist and political activist who also wrote her own prayers, insisted that the League of German Jewish Women maintain kashrut, and never abandoned her Orthodox Judaism. Such complexity strikes me as fairly ubiquitous or at least frequent enough to warrant attention. Most Jews today—from all denominations, even the observant—imbibe and give some

degree of credence to secular scholarship in some form, whether archaeology, historicist biblical criticism, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology, natural or physical sciences, etc. Many (most? all?) religious Jews live and thrive in the modern, secular world. Many attendees at even Orthodox synagogues likely do not fully believe in God or believe in a traditional manner. Most Jews, I suspect, meld traditional Jewish mythologies about the creation of the world or of humanity, for instance, with astrophysics and evolution. Many secular Jews attend synagogue on occasion and have



Rave in Florentine, Tel Aviv, 2008, by Jonathan Klinger, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

bar or bat mitzvahs for their children, but more importantly feel particular connection to Jewishness and Jews. Both observant and secular Jews may bifurcate their psyches, compartmentalize discursive domains or deny their own inner complexity, but I would argue that most live both secularly and religiously, if one can put it so.

Jewish life and thought today could hardly be anything other than a melange, frissón, bricolage, or *balagan* of the secular and religious—frequently tense, often humorous (intentionally or not), occasionally even harmonious. Isolating something called secularism is as difficult and counterproductive as isolating something called religion. The questions to be asked are political. What benefits—such as funding, political power, cultural capital—or disadvantages—marginalization, delegitimation—accrue to one said to be religious? or secular? Who labels? Whose labels stick? What do those labels do? And for whom?

*Jonathan Schorsch is associate professor in the Department of Religion at Columbia University. His most recent book is Swimming the Christian Atlantic: Judeoconverts, Afroiberians and Amerindians in the Seventeenth Century (Brill, 2009).*

# A Conversation about Religious Studies and Rabbinic Texts

Elizabeth Shanks Alexander and Beth Berkowitz

**Elizabeth Shanks Alexander:** My interest in the academic study of religion began when I did my undergraduate degree in Religious Studies. I found Religious Studies to be a powerful approach because it addresses the big questions of life—What makes life meaningful? How does one account for evil?—without being “frontal” like philosophy. Philosophy dares to answer these questions directly—and so, in my opinion, fails. The answers of philosophy are abstract and conceptual, and did not give me a feeling of awe and amazement, which is what I thought I should feel if I’ve managed to answer such questions. It seems to me that answering these questions is not merely about conveying information, but about being transformed, or having an “experience” of the answer.

**Beth Berkowitz:** I’m on the same page about philosophy—it always felt to me to be removed from reality even as it claimed to address the most important things about reality. Individual perspective and experience, the rootedness of thought, seem to get lost. But the big questions you mention also feel that way to me. “Why is there evil?” instead of “Why is this particular evil facing me at this particular moment?” My husband, a novelist, always speaks about the telling details, and it is the telling details that I like. I find religion most interesting when it reflects the experiences of people with specific interests, anxieties, passions (even though, for the rabbinic texts we both study, that specificity or realness is very hard to recover).

**Shanks Alexander:** One thing I like about Religious Studies is that the disciplinary approach allows me to engage these questions in a communal setting (the academic classroom) that is not constrained by the dogmatic or social pressures at work in the community of faith. It’s like we are asking: If one were to hold “x” set of beliefs, what would make them coherent and spiritually powerful? In the academic context, the question is always asked in the subjunctive. One takes a set of texts, symbols, or practices and tries to understand what is compelling about them, but there is no pressure to conform one’s life to its demands. The goal is only to reconstruct imaginatively

what makes such a worldview plausible and compelling.

**Berkowitz:** I think for both of us Religious Studies offered a new perspective on our Jewish identities, and in both our cases it was studying *other religions* that proved transformative. For me, it was a course on Japanese religion that I took as a first-year undergraduate. The history and culture of Japan felt foreign, but the concern of Buddhism with the suffering brought by attachment was resonant for me at the time and I had never heard it formulated that way before. At the same time I took a course on Judaism that did not resonate for me at all. Religious Studies may be important less as a disciplinary model than as a forum in which people can study other religions so as eventually to get some perspective on their own.

**Shanks Alexander:** I was uncomfortable in my undergraduate classes about Christian theology. Not being Christian myself, many of the concepts discussed were entirely unfamiliar to me. I was annoyed or even vaguely horrified that sometimes the teacher didn’t bother to define certain concepts; I think he assumed we were all “in the know.” It was so unlike my classes in Islam where all students were on an equal footing—we were all ignorant. The teacher explained everything from the beginning. I vowed that I would teach in a manner that made the classroom a viable learning space for those who had not grown up Jewish; I didn’t want anyone to have to go through what I went through.

In the classroom today, I try to be transparent about the intersection between what we are doing in the academic context and the experience of religion within a community of faith. I am always explicit about the fact that in the academic classroom we do not constitute ourselves as a community of faith. I want both my Jewish and non-Jewish students to feel comfortable. I let the Jewish and non-Jewish students know that they may face different challenges in the classroom. The non-Jewish students may feel intimidated by the many Hebrew terms, the foreign concepts and the sheer mass of unfamiliar material. For the Jewish students, the challenge may be to

hear concepts that they understand intuitively described in terms that don’t mesh with their own experiences. They may feel uncomfortable when the academic approach forces them to see from an outsider’s perspective what they’ve learned and experienced at home.

**Berkowitz:** Your teaching does exactly what teaching should—invite in the unfamiliar and unsettle the familiar. The challenge is that everyone’s familiars and unfamiliar are different, so there are always a lot of things happening in the room at once, and one doesn’t always get to know every student and what assumptions and expectations they are bringing to the venture.

**Shanks Alexander:** The experience I had in my courses on Christian theology was unpleasant, and it felt deeply unfair. I was really mad at one student in particular who didn’t have intellectual discipline and kept using jargon from his community of faith, rather than the vocabulary of concepts we had developed in the classroom. I forever want to unsettle that student who interfered with my own learning experience.

**Berkowitz:** I had a similar experience in college, but mine was in a Jewish Studies classroom. Columbia’s yeshiva-educated, Orthodox Jews were like a foreign tribe for me. The experience of alienation is painful, but in both our cases it seems to have spurred us on to understand more and better. But now, the last thing we want to do is to alienate the younger versions of ourselves.

Religious Studies, I think for both of us, provides a neutral ground that equalizes students and equips all of us with a common language of inquiry. As a product of the academy, it is open to anyone (who has the resources to gain access to the academy). I do question whether and how I fit into Religious Studies, but I rely on the discipline to remind myself and my students to step outside ourselves and to welcome new perspectives. I don’t want to withdraw to a place where everyone takes Jewish insider status for granted.

**Shanks Alexander:** I like the way you write about “inviting in the unfamiliar” and

# ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

## 43RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**DECEMBER 18–20, 2011**

Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC

**Join the AJS for more than 160 sessions devoted  
to the latest research in Jewish Studies.**

### Special conference events include:

- Book Exhibit featuring more than forty leading publishers of Judaica and related scholarship
- New! Digital media sessions, with the latest online and digital resources for Jewish Studies scholars
- New! Professional Development Workshops, Monday, December 19, 1:00–2:00 PM
- New! AJS Honors Its Authors Coffee Break, Monday, December 19, 4:00–4:30 PM, sponsored by the Jewish Book Council Sami Rohr Prize
- Coffee Break in Book Exhibit Hall, Monday, December 19, 10:30–11:00 AM, sponsored by The Graduate School of the Jewish Theological Seminary
- Cocktail and Dessert Reception for all attendees, Monday, December 19 at 9:00 PM, in honor of the Center for Jewish History's tenth anniversary

### Please join us Sunday, December 18 for the Annual Gala Banquet and Plenary Lecture

6:15–7:15 PM Reception for all attendees

7:15–8:15 PM Banquet (by pre-reservation only)

8:15–9:15 PM Plenary Lecture by Dr. Avishai Margalit, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His topic will be **“The Historian as Traitor and Lawyer: The Case of Josephus.”**

### AJS Gala Banquet Sponsors

The AJS wishes to thank the following Jewish Studies programs, departments, and institutions for sponsoring the Gala Banquet:

Arizona State University, Center for Jewish Studies  
Hebrew College  
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
Indiana University, Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns  
Jewish Studies Program  
Jewish Theological Seminary, The Graduate School  
New York University, Skirball Department of Hebrew and  
Judaic Studies  
Northwestern University, The Crown Family Center for  
Jewish Studies  
Rutgers University, Department of Jewish Studies and  
the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of  
Jewish Life  
Stanford University, Taube Center for Jewish Studies

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Carolina Center  
for Jewish Studies  
University of Maryland, The Gildenhorn Institute for  
Israel Studies  
University of Maryland, The Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff  
Program and Center for Jewish Studies  
University of Michigan, The Frankel Center for Judaic Studies  
University of Pittsburgh, Jewish Studies Program  
University of Texas, Schusterman Center for  
Jewish Studies  
University of Virginia, Jewish Studies Program  
Wesleyan University, Jewish and Israel Studies Program  
Yale University, Judaic Studies Program  
Yeshiva University

For further information about sessions, meals, hotel reservations, visiting Boston, and special conference events, please refer to the AJS website at [www.ajsnet.org](http://www.ajsnet.org) or contact the AJS office at [ajs@ajs.cjh.org](mailto:ajs@ajs.cjh.org) or 917.606.8249.

# **Berman Foundation Dissertation Fellowships in Support of Research in the Social Scientific Study of the Contemporary American Jewish Community**

## **The Association for Jewish Studies**

is pleased to announce the 2012 Berman Foundation Dissertation Fellowships in Support of Research in the Social Scientific Study of the Contemporary American Jewish Community. The Berman Fellowships— two awards of \$16,000 each—will support doctoral work in the social scientific study of the North American Jewish community during the 2012-2013 academic year.

## **Applicants must be Ph.D. candidates**

at accredited higher educational institutions who have completed their comprehensive exams and received approval for their dissertation proposals (ABD).

## **Application Deadline: March 29, 2012**

Support for this project is generously provided by the Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation.

For further information, please visit the AJS website at [ajsnet.org](http://ajsnet.org)



“unsettling the familiar.” It reminds me of how J. Z. Smith talks about the academic study of religion. For him, the comparative approach involves two complementary moves: familiarizing the strange and de-familiarizing the familiar (“making the familiar seem strange in order to enhance of our perception of the familiar,” [Relating Religion, 383]). I think we are both on the same page in finding the implied comparative perspective to be an academic safe haven of sorts. I think we like it because it allows us insights that wouldn’t otherwise be available. I also think it’s interesting that one can adopt a comparative approach without doing actual comparison between religious traditions. We both focus mainly on rabbinic religion (of course, we do look at Greco-Roman and Christian materials when they help shed light on the texts that interest us, but I think we both begin with a primary interest in rabbinic materials for their own sake). For us, the comparative approach is a way of framing the material; it envisions people from all kinds of backgrounds having an equal stake in the conversation.

**Berkowitz:** I like the way you’ve described comparison as an implied perspective, since when I was coming of age in Religious Studies, people were still doing what I would call phenomenological comparison à la Mircea Eliade, for example, comparing notions of sacred space or sacred time or the experiential dimensions of religion across traditions. You often come across this kind of thing when you tell people you teach Religious Studies—all religions are really the same, everyone really worships the same God or gods, we all tell the same stories. On a certain level, that’s true, we’re all part of the same species and go through the same basic life processes, and of course you can compare religious concepts and rituals. But that approach flattens out the very things that make religion interesting, as we’ve been discussing—if you have only the familiar or the pruned-down essence, you’ve lost distance, difference, and variation, in other words, complexity.

**Shanks Alexander:** I completely agree with you that the danger of comparative work is when it flattens the richness of historical, cultural, and intellectual difference. I agree that Religious Studies fails if it espouses some kind of universalistic platitudes. It’s especially problematic when the researcher constructs the so-called universal categories from their own cultural and religious perspective.

**Berkowitz:** I’ve come to embrace comparative work as it emerges from *within* a culture, not as something I myself have constructed (which is not to say I am not still constructing the inquiry). Now I ask not how can I compare rabbinic cultures to, for example, Roman pagan cultures, but how do the Rabbis themselves do that? What impulse lies behind the need to find parallels or contrasts, for the Rabbis and also for the people who approach me with their theories of religion’s universal sameness?

**Shanks Alexander:** One of the things I find powerful about the Religious Studies approach is that it enables me to engage questions that religious people engage, while remaining in a secular context (which is where I need to be if I am to be true to my own intellectual and cultural sensibilities). I guess the comparative approach to religion is a safe haven for me in more than one way. I find the questions that people engage in their performance of devotion, whether in ritual or text, to be humanly compelling. In the words of Robert Orsi, “Religions provide men and women with existential vocabulary with which they may construe fundamental matters, such as the meaning of and the boundaries of the self, the sources of joy, the borders of acceptable reality, the nature of human destiny, and the meaning of various stages of their lives. It is through . . . various religious idioms that the necessary material realities of existence—pain, death, hunger, sexuality—are experienced, transformed and endured” (*Between Heaven and Earth*, 169).

You might say that I am attracted to studying religion generally—and rabbinic texts, specifically—because I, too, experience the human vulnerabilities that religious idioms provide a means of navigating. When I succeed in reconstructing the ancient rabbis’ performance of piety or devotion, I am at the very least moved, and maybe even transformed in some small way. If I am transformed, it is a transformation brought about by sympathetically imagining how religious idioms operate.

**Berkowitz:** Religion and Religious Studies don’t speak to me in the same way that they do to you. It’s not that I don’t experience my own vulnerabilities. I think it’s that I’m suspicious of or alienated by others’ efforts to express them for me, especially in a public setting. Perhaps it is that alienation that leads me to ask the questions I do, such as: What is at stake when religious authorities articulate a route

of redemption for others? To what ends do they formulate the meaning of the pain, death, hunger, and sexuality of which Orsi speaks? What are the politics of “the existential vocabulary” that religious traditions furnish? I am interested in the social or political or cultural conditions that make this existential vocabulary possible and that this vocabulary strives either to protect or to change. Like you, I sympathetically imagine religious idioms, as you described above, but I combine that with a sense that these idioms are thoroughly political (in the broadest sense of politics) in their origins and in their impact.

**Shanks Alexander:** Orsi himself is quite sensitive to what you call the “politics” of religion. He writes that the “very same religious idioms do tremendous violence in society and culture and bring pain to individuals and families, all the while that they ground and shape the self, structure kinship bonds, serve as sources for alternate imaginings of the social world, and so on” (*Between Heaven and Earth*, 171).

**Berkowitz:** When I speak of politics, though, I don’t mean something necessarily negative or violent. I refer to the webs of relationships and social meanings in which we live and which we are always negotiating. Religion can’t help but be part of them, and I don’t think of that as a failing or flaw.

**Shanks Alexander:** To a certain extent, there is something a-historical about the connection we seek to establish with the subjects of our study (though not the methods we use to achieve it). Ideally, however, identifying with the subject of one’s study (in our case, the rabbis) should not lead to “subjective” research. Whenever we analyze a rabbinic text, we must maintain all the necessary disciplines of research. We must draw on philological training, attend to the intellectual and cultural contexts of late antiquity, and attend to the literary and generic conventions of the text. Orsi describes religious experience in a manner that manages to capture both that which is humanly compelling about it (and therefore transcends time and place) and that which is historically located and specific. Orsi suggests that religious idioms are particular to time and place. Ironically, only when we do the scholarly work of describing religious idioms thickly (which includes locating them historically and describing them in all of their particularities), can we appreciate that which is most humanly compelling about them.

**Berkowitz:** I agree with you on everything here. But I think the same is true for any field of the humanities—to do great work, one has to get to know one’s subject of study very, very well, yet not get so lost in the details that one forgets what is actually interesting about it.

**Shanks Alexander:** I’m inclined to say that rabbinic Judaism has no special status in the field of Religious Studies. As we’ve been saying, one feature of Religious Studies that appeals to us is its comparative approach. In such a context, rabbinic Judaism is one more piece of data for comparative analysis. Undoubtedly, the study of rabbinic Judaism is valuable because it expands our understanding of the phenomenon of religion. However we define religion, it now has to be able to encompass features of rabbinic Judaism.

**Berkowitz:** I would agree with you that rabbinics deserves neither more nor less of a role in Religious Studies than anything else. But I would point out a problem with the term *religion*. The word is popularly used to refer to God-related stuff, which means that if you start asking questions about rabbinic religion, you’re going to seek out texts that deal with God in some explicit way. But there are many rabbinic texts that barely talk about God, though they may presume a lot of things about God. Take Mishnah Sanhedrin’s ritual of criminal execution that I’ve spent some time studying: God is mentioned only a handful of times, and it’s not a religious ritual in the sense that most people would use the term. Or all the legal materials in the Bavas (Bava Kamma, Bava Metzia and Bava Batra)—the term *rabbinic religion* doesn’t capture what is going on in those tractates. The typical meaning of “religion” has to be radically altered in order to apply to much of rabbinic literature.

The same can be said for any religious tradition, where the God/gods-related stuff is only one strand within the story. We need a Religious Studies that realizes this and that operates as a sub-field of Cultural Studies or at least exists in deep interdisciplinary dialogue with a variety of other fields. So I like your

conclusion that religion must encompass rabbinic Judaism, that rabbinic Judaism goes well beyond what typically falls under the category of religion, and that rabbinic Judaism as a result can push the category of religion to be very broad. But I think any other religious tradition, if studied closely and well, would force the category of religion in the same direction.

**Shanks Alexander:** Conversely, what does the study of rabbinic texts have to gain by taking the methods of Religious Studies seriously? My sense—and you may disagree—is that, as a field, rabbinics has been somewhat slow to embrace Religious Studies as a primary scholarly tool for reflecting on our texts. I have a couple of guesses as to why that may be so. First, I think the safe haven that you and I have found through the methods of Religious Studies, was found by an earlier generation of scholars when they used historical methods. When they asked historical questions, they distanced themselves from the traditional world of study, where medieval hagiography and historiography reigned. I can empathize with the fact that they needed to study the texts, the personalities, and the events behind the texts more objectively than they felt was being done within the community of faith. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi characterizes the early ventures into historical research as the “faith of fallen Jews” (*Zakhor*, 86). I have nothing against historical research per se, but it doesn’t serve the same existential function for me that it did for an earlier generation of scholars.

I sense that the turn to literary theory and midrash was spurred, at least in part, by a disappointment with what could be accomplished by historical research as an end in and of itself. In reflecting on the creative synergy between literary theorists and scholars of midrash in the 1990s, David Stern writes that “the midrash-theory connection sought to overcome this melancholy awareness of the failure of historicism. . . . [T]he midrash-theory connection hoped to discover in midrash a form of Jewish creativity that could be transmissible, reclaimable, in a way that purely

historicist knowledge about the Jewish past could never be” (*Midrash and Theory*, 10). I empathize with Stern, just as I empathize with the earlier generation who found history to be a powerful means of connecting to the tradition, while maintaining critical distance. For me, however, Religious Studies proves to be the most compelling model to navigate the tension between identifying with and distancing myself from the rabbis of antiquity.

**Berkowitz:** I like the narrative you’ve created here of how Jewish Studies scholars of the last century have found meaning in their materials. I think we’re not alone in finding Religious Studies particularly useful for rabbinics—I would put Neusner and many of his students in that camp. Recent panels at the AJS and AAR conferences, and my experience last year as a fellow at a law school, are leading me to think of legal theory as the next frontier. I suspect the people in law schools have more to offer to us rabbinicists than we’ve realized.

It may just be that when you take *texts* to be your object of study (and why we have done that is itself worth considering), you seek out whatever conceptual framework best helps you with the text you’re looking at. An eclectic approach is simply an adaptive strategy. Fortunately for us, the permeability of disciplines that characterizes today’s academy facilitates and encourages this kind of eclecticism.

*Elizabeth Shanks Alexander is associate professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. She is the author of Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition (Cambridge, 2006) and the forthcoming book, Between Man and Woman: Gender and Timebound, Positive Commandments.*

*Beth Berkowitz is associate professor of Talmud and Rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary. She is the author of Execution and Invention: Death Penalty Discourse in Early Rabbinic and Christian Cultures (Oxford University Press, 2006).*

# AJS 43rd Annual Conference

December 18-20 • Grand Hyatt Washington • Washington, DC

## EXHIBITORS

*Academic Studies Press*  
*Adam Matthew Education*  
*Association Book Exhibit*  
*Brandeis University Press*  
*Brill*  
*Cambridge University Press*  
*Center for Jewish History*  
*De Gruyter*  
*Edwin Mellen Press*  
*Foundation for Jewish Culture*  
*German Historical Institute*  
*The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute*  
*Indiana University Press*  
*Jerusalem Books Ltd*  
*Jewish Lights Publishing*  
*Jewish Publication Society*  
*Jewish Review of Books*  
*Journal of Jewish Identities*  
*Lexington Books*  
*The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization*  
*Middlebury College Language Schools*  
*Mohr Siebeck*  
*Moment Magazine*  
*National Yiddish Book Center*  
*New York University Press*  
*Nextbook/Tablet Magazine*  
*Posen Foundation*  
*Project Muse*  
*Purdue University Press*  
*Rutgers University Press*  
*Schoen Books*  
*The Scholar's Choice*  
*Springer*  
*Stanford University Press*  
*Syracuse University Press*  
*University of Pennsylvania Press*  
*Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht*  
*Wayne State University Press*  
*Yale University Press*  
*YIVO*

## ADVERTISERS

*Academic Studies Press*  
*Adam Matthew Education*  
*American Academy for Jewish Research*  
*Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ)*  
*Berghahn Books*  
*Brandeis University Press*  
*Brill*  
*Cambridge University Press*  
*Center for Jewish History*  
*Chicago Center for Jewish Studies*  
*Goldstein-Goren International Center for Jewish Thought*  
*The Hadassah-Brandeis Institute*  
*Hebrew University - Summer School*  
*Indiana University Press*  
*Indiana University Press/Journals*  
*Jerusalem Books Ltd*  
*Jewish Book Council*  
*Knopf Doubleday*  
*Leo Baeck Institute*  
*Melton Center for Jewish Studies at The Ohio State University*  
*Mohr Siebeck*  
*National Yiddish Book Center*  
*New York University Press*  
*Oxford University*  
*Posen Foundation*  
*Rutgers University Press*  
*Stanford University Press*  
*Tel Aviv University, International MA in Jewish Studies*  
*Temple University - The Feinstein Center for American Jewish History*  
*United States Holocaust Museum*  
*The University of Arizona, The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies*  
*University of Connecticut*  
*University of Pennsylvania Press*  
*University of Texas at Dallas*  
*University of Washington Press*  
*University of Wisconsin-Madison*  
*Wayne State University Press*  
*Yale University Press*  
*Zalman Shazar Center*

# COMING TO THE CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

SEPTEMBER 12–DECEMBER 31

MOSES MENDELSSOHN:  
CONVERSATION AND  
THE LEGACY OF  
THE ENLIGHTENMENT

EXHIBITION



Moses Mendelssohn is a pivotal figure in the development of Modern Judaism. This exhibition explores the theme of conversation in his life and legacy, including his relationship with his family, students, friends and opponents, Jewish and Christian alike; in his writings; in his concept of Judaism, which he sees as grounded in conversation between teachers and students; and more broadly in his attempt to put into conversation Judaism and the Enlightenment, and Hebrew and German language, literature, and thought.

DECEMBER 15

BISMARCK AND THE  
GROWTH OF MODERN  
ANTI-SEMITISM IN GERMANY

LBI MEMORIAL LECTURE

Jonathan Steinberg, Professor of History,  
University of Pennsylvania.

Professor Steinberg is the author of the highly acclaimed new book *Bismarck: A Life*, which Dr. Henry Kissinger called “the best study of Bismarck in the English language.” Steinberg describes the political genius of the man who dominated his era. Bismarck’s belief in Prussia’s cohesion and authority, and in a nationalism that could be put to good use, ultimately led to Germany’s tragic 20th century.

MARCH 29, 2012

RECOVERING LOST VOICES  
OF THE SEPHARDIC PAST

DISCUSSION

Professors Aron Rodrigue and Sarah  
Abrevaya Stein, Moderated by Sara Ivry



In celebration of the release of *A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonika: The Ladino Memoir of Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi*, the first Ladino memoir known to be written. Join a conversation with two

leading scholars of Sephardic history about the quest for lost sources and perspectives on the Judeo-Spanish past. Co-sponsored by the American Sephardi Federation

APRIL 29, 2012

NEW YORK CITY AND  
THE JEWS

SYMPOSIUM

Since the 17th century the fate of the Jews has in part hinged on the political, economic, and cultural dynamics of New York. Starting with the tiny community of New Amsterdam, which defined the nature of civic and religious life into the 21st century, Jews have also played a pivotal role in shaping the city. This one-day symposium will explore the long-term dimensions of this historic and symbiotic relationship. Panels of scholars will explore the breadth of the city’s history as it operated in tandem with the Jews who lived there, with those who lived beyond its borders, and with the many points of intersection between the city and its Jewish people.

CENTER  
FOR  
JEWISH  
HISTORY

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT US AT  
www.programs.cjh.org  
TEL: (212) 294 8301  
15 West 16th Street, NYC

## Vallentine Mitchell Publishers



### Smuggled In Potato Sacks

*Fifty Stories of the Hidden Children of the Kaunas Ghetto*  
Solomon Abramovich and Yakov Zilberg (Eds)

Collective memory of events that happened to Kaunas Jewry during the occupation of Lithuania. Contains 50 stories.  
2011 416 pages  
978 0 85303 814 6 HB \$59.95 / 9780853038245 PB \$24.95



### Fascism and the Jews

*Italy and Britain*  
Daniel Tilles and Salvatore Garau (Eds)

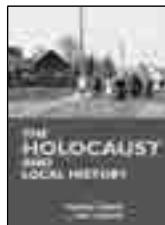
Examination of the Jewish communities in interwar Britain and Italy unravels Jewish experiences of fascism.  
2011 224 pages  
978 0 85303 864 1 HB \$74.95



### Mussolini's Concentration Camps for Civilians

*An Insight into the Nature of Fascist Racism*  
Luigi Reale

Comprehensive reconstruction of Mussolini's concentration camps in Italy for civilians.  
2011 175 pages  
978 0 85303 884 9 HB \$74.95



### The Holocaust and Local History

Thomas Kühne and Tom Lawson (Eds)

Cutting edge Holocaust histories by younger scholars. Includes an introduction reflecting on the role of the local in Holocaust studies.  
2011 272 pages 10 illus  
978 0 85303 924 2 HB \$79.95



### Being Jewish and Doing Justice

*Bringing Argument to Life*  
Brian Klug

NEW IN PAPERBACK

Foreword Rabbi Dr Byron Sherwin

Klug deals with a wide range of moral, social and political issues centred on questions of identity, Jewish or otherwise.  
2011 360 pages  
978 0 85303 973 0 cloth \$34.95



### Jewish Symbols and Secrets

*A Fifteenth-Century Spanish Carpet*  
Anton Felton

Reveals the neglected role of textiles in Jewish culture and the history of the Sephardi weavers of Spain.  
2012 296 pages 56 colour 18 b/w photos & line drawings  
978 0 85303 834 4 HB \$79.95

29/45 High Street, Edgware, Middlesex, HA8 7UU, United Kingdom  
T: +44 (0) 20 8952 9526 F: +44 (0) 20 8952 9242 E: info@vmbooks.com

920 NE 58th Ave Suite 300, Portland, OR 97213, USA  
T: 1-800-944-6190 F: 503-280-8832 E: orders@isbs.com

www.vmbooks.com



# Current inquiries. Enduring insights.



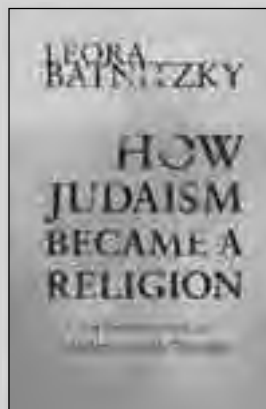
## Einstein Before Israel

Zionist Icon or Iconoclast?  
*Z'ev Rosenkranz*

“Z'ev Rosenkranz's careful and highly readable exploration of Einstein's encounters with his Jewish identity opens surprising windows not only into the life and mind of the twentieth century's most famous scientist, but also into the history of Zionism, the founding of Hebrew University, and the tumultuous history of British Palestine.”

—Michael Gordin, Princeton University

Cloth \$35.00 978-0-691-14412-2



## How Judaism Became a Religion

An Introduction to Modern Jewish Thought  
*Leora Batnitzky*

“Modernity and emancipation challenged the religious, political, legal, and cultural wholeness of diasporic Jewry—and seemed to require Jews to choose whether they were members of a religion, or a nation, or a culture, or a civilization. Leora Batnitzky provides a fascinating and illuminating account of the resulting debates and of those who defended the different options.”

—Michael Walzer, Institute for Advanced Study

Cloth \$27.95 978-0-691-13072-9



## The Origins of Jewish Mysticism

*Peter Schäfer*

“*The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* is the culmination of a lifetime of scholarship by one of the most important figures in the field. Full of fresh and convincing interpretations, it is among the most significant works on Jewish mysticism to appear in decades. Peter Schäfer is an original thinker.”

—Philip Alexander, University of Manchester

Paper \$35.00 978-0-691-14215-9



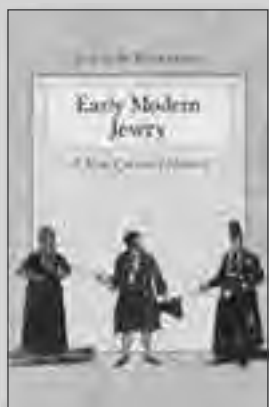
## The Scandal of Kabbalah

Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice  
*Yaacob Dweck*

“*The Scandal of Kabbalah* is excellent. It is one of the first studies to take cutting-edge scholarship on the history of the book and apply it to a Hebrew text. Yaacob Dweck makes a serious contribution to scholarship on Leon Modena, to Jewish intellectual history of the early modern period, and to the history of the Hebrew book.”

—Eliševa Carlebach, Columbia University

Cloth \$35.00 978-0-691-14508-2



Winner of the 2010 National Jewish Book Award in History, Jewish Book Council

## Early Modern Jewry

A New Cultural History  
*David B. Ruderman*

“Ruderman's provocative thesis marks a scholarly watershed. It reopens and complicates the question of when modern Jewish history began.”

—Lawrence Grossman, *Forward*

Paper \$19.95 978-0-691-15288-2



## Maimonides in His World

Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker  
*Sarah Stroumsa*

“Stroumsa considerably broadens our understanding of Maimonides's Graeco-Arabic sources. . . . She challenges scholars of Jewish and Muslim thought to look beyond the artificial confines of their disciplines.”

—Carlos Fraenkel, *Times Literary Supplement*

Paper \$24.95 978-0-691-15252-3



# Beyond the Hermetically Sealed Self

Mara Benjamin

It could be argued that the legacy of Enlightenment has proven most lasting in its indictment of subjugation, its equation of freedom with autonomy, and its coronation of the latter as the ideal achievement of the self. Nevertheless, the many and varied critiques of classical liberalism that have emerged across disciplines in recent decades—in feminist, critical, and postcolonial theory; in religious studies, theology, and psychoanalytic theory—have challenged the long reach of Enlightenment thought and politics on precisely this point. Boundedness, a more nuanced cognate of bondage, has attained increasingly greater currency as philosophers and cultural theorists recognize that the boundaries between self and other confound bedrock notions of the modern era. How can our notions of agency, desire, and will, reflect the complex ways in which individuals are shaped by their immediate surroundings and their broader social groups? Key words like *relationality*, *interdependence*, and *network* have surged in importance as scholars and others forage for new metaphors to describe our interconnected lives and modes of consciousness.

In light of this broad endeavor to reconceptualize the self, I have been thinking about agency both within and beyond Jewish Studies. Increasing attention to the diverse realms in which the unqualified positive valuation of autonomy cannot be assumed has offered me the beginning of a new engagement with Jewish texts and cultures. In my recent considerations of agency, I have begun pairing a discussion that is millennia old with recent contemporary ethical, cultural, and philosophical perspectives. Premodern Jewish intellectual traditions offer potent counter narratives to the pride of place that autonomy has enjoyed in modern moral theory, philosophy, and religious studies.

The foundational assumptions of normative rabbinic texts hold Jewish selves to be “always already” bound, and indeed obligated, to others and to God. The ritual, civil, and ethical commandments (*mitzvot*) that comprise the fabric of Jewish piety, express at the same time a basic claim about the obligated nature of the self: in rabbinic literature, Jewish selves are commanded (*metzveh/metzuva*); they are obligated (*hayyav/hayyevet*). To me



Woodcut print depicting medieval Jewish family at the seder table, from Prague Haggadah (Prague, Gronem and Gershom ben Solomon Ha-Cohen, 1526).

this suggests that a dynamic but nonetheless constrained notion of the self is construed as the gift, privilege, and responsibility of membership in the Jewish covenantal community. The normative self of Judaism is imagined as a beast of burden, accepting the “yoke” (‘ol) of God’s dominion and of the commandments as an ox would accept the yoke of its master. This theological anthropology of human beings as “bound” or “yoked” was never fundamentally contested in premodern Judaism; in the rich repository of traditional Jewish legal and narrative texts, to be a Jewish self means to have entered a social world already “encumbered,” as it were, with tasks, duties, and relationships. All of this invites a parallel investigation into post-Foucauldian religious and cultural studies, which foreground questions of how structures of power “command” or “demand” various forms of response in actors and how agency might be reconceived in light of these structures.

Yet any construction of a Jewish theological anthropology based only on these premises will inevitably falter. For the range and types of obligations that are developed in the Jewish classical tradition reflect the imagination and the limits of the elite, often politically marginal, male scholastic leadership of rabbinic Judaism. A critical investigation of what normative premodern Judaism might contribute to the study of agency, autonomy, and freedom

must recognize these limits. And this is where it gets interesting. Not only can an intellectual tradition millennia in the making inform contemporary discussions of the human situation, but contemporary discussions of the self can also inform the three-thousand-year-old tradition. What might the often assumed, naturalized, and undertheorized obligations of women in many Jewish cultures tell us about the privileged obligations of scholarly Jewish men? In elite and popular Jewish cultures, primary among women’s obligations has been the routine or daily management and care of children. Not the formal education of children, but sustaining and training them to be competent members of the social community has been a female obligation. The ubiquitous yet overlooked labor of women in this realm challenges the iconic model of the self—autonomous, self-sufficient, rights-oriented, and androcentric—so central to classical liberal economic and political theory from an entirely different angle. How might recognition and investigation of this labor reshape and expand the contours of our anthropologies of Jewish religious life? And how, in turn, might this fuller understanding add to current conversations about the nature of the self and its obligations within religious studies?

In my own work, I have found that investigating women’s lives in traditional Jewish cultures reveals an instructive gap between

subjection that is privileged and chosen and subjection that is imposed and naturalized. Feminist philosophical, ethical, and religious investigations into maternal obligation in particular bring the constancy and urgency of mothers' obligations, in all their affective, spiritual, and political dimensions, into view. For some feminists, ideologies of correct maternal behavior collaborate in limiting women's political influence; for others, mothering is a political act that allows subjugated minorities to resist cultural annihilation. The daily work of sustaining and training a child is just as diversely interpreted: for some, caring for a dependent is an ascetic form of spiritual discipline; for others, it offers evidence of the basic relationality of all human life. These contributions, taken together, form the heart of a nuanced understanding of the self—one defined by both agency and an existential porousness and openness to others. Notwithstanding the profound differences that appear

in these perspectives on maternal labor, this literature renders motherwork visible. The best of this literature challenges us to think about mothers' lives and childrearing beyond the narrow mother/child dyad; it demands consideration and critique of how communities apportion the many labors involved with raising the next generation. Once that occurs, reflection on maternal (or, as is the case for many of us these days, parental) obligation becomes integrated and even central to the same considerations of autonomy, agency, obligation, and freedom that are so important in contemporary religious studies and that remain the crucial touch points for religious thought in modern Western life. And, in turn, Jewish thought can enter the contemporary conversation on mothering, as contributor to and beneficiary of a more expansive and nuanced vocabulary of obligation.

At minimum, the attentive, dynamic relationships individuals necessarily cultivate

with young children in their care provide the ground of a more fully developed portrait of agency than we have in dominant forms of ethical, philosophical, and religious life. So, too, the normative texts of Judaism challenge long entrenched discourses of self-achievement and autonomy. Both of these conversations point, in important and timely ways, toward how we might begin to replace the pejorative opposites of autonomy and bondage with other possibilities: boundedness, responsiveness, and receptivity.

*Mara Benjamin is assistant professor of Religion at St. Olaf College. She is the author of Rosenzweig's Bible: Reinventing Scripture for Jewish Modernity (Cambridge University Press, 2009) and is currently working on a book tentatively titled The Obligated Self.*



**Committed to an interdisciplinary, comparative, and theoretical approach to Jewish Studies**

- 35 Faculty Members •
- Over 60 Courses •
- Ph.D. Certificates in Jewish Culture and Society & Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies •
- Jewish Studies Major through Department of Religion •
- Jewish Studies Minor •
- Visiting Israeli Writers Program •
- Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies •
- Jewish Studies Workshop •

[www.jewishculture.illinois.edu](http://www.jewishculture.illinois.edu)



**EMORY**  
UNIVERSITY

**Tam Institute for Jewish Studies**

The Tam Institute for Jewish Studies (TIJS) at Emory University is proud to welcome our newest faculty members:



**Dr. Ellie Schainker**, Blank Family Foundation Assistant Professor in History and Jewish Studies (modern Russian and Eastern European Jewish history)

and



**Dr. Cornelia Wilhelm**, Visiting DAAD Professor in History and Jewish Studies for 2010–2012 (German Jewish and American Jewish history)

For more information on undergraduate or graduate work in Jewish studies at Emory, graduate top-off fellowships, or our new Graduate Certificate Program in Jewish Studies, see our website at [www.js.emory.edu](http://www.js.emory.edu).

# Rule of the Word versus Rule of the Image: Two Defining Moments

Brian Klug



Cave of the prehistoric “Galilee Skull,” approximately 1900–1920, by American Colony (Jerusalem) Photo Department. G. Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection, Library of Congress.

When I was seventeen and applying to university, I told my teachers that I wanted to study philosophy. They did not show much enthusiasm for my choice of subject. This was an Orthodox Jewish school in northwest London, and philosophy, an intellectual tradition whose very name stamps it as Greek, was hardly the flavor of the month—or the millennium. And yet I took to Plato like a herring to water. Why? There is no denying the disparities between Greek and Hebrew styles of thinking, and you might have thought that reason and revelation are ultimately mutually exclusive. So, how come I, a nice Jewish boy with an Orthodox education from age five to eighteen, felt at home with the *apikoroi*? And not me alone: lots of other nice Jewish girls and boys, without turning their backs on Judaism, have had a similar experience. How come?

Light can be shed on this question by juxtaposing two famous passages from the two bodies of literature that seem, at first, so opposed: the drama of the Decalogue in Moses’s *Exodus* and the allegory of the cave in Plato’s *Republic*. Both are defining moments, the one for Hebrew scripture and the other for

Greek philosophy. And I find between them a striking affinity.

This perception is liable to seem improbable. From the Children of Israel camped at the base of Mount Sinai to the troglodytes dwelling under Mount Olympus (where I imagine Plato’s cave to be located) is quite a leap; it is certainly a reach. So, I should clarify in advance what I am—and am not—setting out to do. First, this essay is no more than an attempt at an adumbration of a nascent idea. Second, I am granting myself philosophical license and not trying, in the manner of a scholar, to be true to the intention—whatever that might mean—of the original texts. Consequently, and third, I am open to the objection that affinity is in the eye of the beholder. Could it be that looking makes it so? I do not think it is so simple. Yet in the end the form of argument I am making goes something like this: “This is how it strikes me. Does it not strike you the same way?” I have nothing else to offer than a way of looking.

Fourth, what I am not doing is this: interpreting *Exodus* in the light of the *Republic*, nor vice versa. I am not following in the footsteps of Philo (the man who has been

called “the first Jewish philosopher”), wearing one Hebrew sandal and one Greek, seeking to synthesize the passages that I am comparing. I am merely setting them side by side, letting them keep their distance from each other, allowing them to speak their own language, and listening for resonances that seem to bear on my question. The Alexandrian saw Moses in the role of the philosopher-king of Plato’s *Republic*. I cannot say that I am quite able to see Moses in this light. Philosophy, I feel sure, would have been Greek to him. My Moses is nonphilosophical, my Plato nonprophetic. I am not sure that either speaks to the other. But each speaks to me.

What do I hear them saying? In a word: a word. A word as distinct—and even as opposed—to an image. It is a curious but critical distinction in the two texts under discussion, both of which, in their different ways, are about the making of a people or society, a project in which ethics is of the essence. “Justice, justice shall you pursue,” exhorts Moses (Deut. 16:20), while the *Republic* is subtitled “on justice: political.”

Consider these symmetries. Both passages begin with a state of captivity: *Exodus* is about an enslaved people, Israel, while the people in the *Republic* passage (who Socrates says are “like us”) are imprisoned in a cave, in thrall to the images on the wall. Both passages are narratives of ascent and descent. In the one case there is the prophet Moses, who, alone among the people of Israel, makes the trek up the mountain and down. In the other case there is the philosopher, who is given no name in the text, who is not even called “philosopher,” but who clearly represents the Socratic lover of wisdom and who is able to negotiate “the rough steep path” that leads up, up, and away from the cave, into the light of day, where the sun (the Idea of the Good) beams down from an azure sky.

Which is not, I admit, what conditions are like on Sinai, where the weather is terrible. There is “thunder and lightning and a dense cloud upon the mountain” (Exod. 19:16). The disparity between the two scenes could hardly be greater; which might seem to rule out my interpretation before it has got off the ground (so to speak). But although the conditions are so different, their effect is the same: in both

cases those below are in the dark about what is transpiring above. Just as the dwellers in the cave are shut in, the Children of Israel are shut out. And just as the philosopher completes a lonely ascent and, out of sight from below, confronts “the sun” and extracts a *logos* (account) of the Good, so the solitary Moses climbs to the summit and, out of view of the base, encounters Hashem (“the name,” Exod. 6:3) and obtains the *aseses ha-dvarim*: the ten words on how to live. Both bring the word down from on high.

Evidently, the people do hear the voice of Hashem speaking from within the cloud (Exod. 19:9). But do they get it? Do they, to put it differently, *hear* it? A familiar theme in prophetic literature (beginning with Moses) is that the people have eyes but do not see and ears but do not hear (Deut. 29:3). And a constant prompt that the prophets use (again Moses starts the trend) is “Hear, O Israel!”—as though the people don’t. When the voice of Hashem emanates from the cloud, what do they hear? An articulate sound. It makes a great impression. But, in effect, they do not hear a word. We gather this from the fact that they proceed at once to make an image, the

molten calf of gold. The moment that Moses disappears from view and the impression made by the voice of Hashem fades away, they look for a replacement, a new image that substitutes for the one they have lost, an image that endures rather than the evanescent word. Earlier they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do!” (Exod. 19:8). Now they are manufacturing a golden calf, which expressly contradicts the word that Hashem spoke in their hearing. But from *their* point of view, there is no contradiction. Their behavior is consistent according to some such principle as this: “Always worship and obey that which impresses you most in the moment.” This is the rule of the image. Roughly, it is the opposite of the rule of the word. And the contradiction is deeper than the infringement of a single clause in the pact between Hashem and the people. The worship of an image contradicts the whole sense of a god who, fundamentally, from day one, speaks.

Not being an image, the word Hashem speaks cannot be taken in at a glance. To grasp it is to engage with it, to wrestle with its meaning as if with an angel, never letting go but never pinning it down: perpetually a defining

moment. The word of Hashem is inherently fecund; it is a word that begets more words that beget still more. The begetting is the getting: to get it is to feel that you have *not* quite got it, not ever, like a permanent itch you can never scratch enough, so that you keep on scratching, keep on defining. A divine word—a word we attribute to heaven—always calls for discussion. To discuss it is to hear it: this is the rule of the word. If it ceases to summon discussion it degrades into image: it no longer *is* a word—though it might *look* like one. No word that falls into human hands is immune from this risk. The word become image: this is the state of religion when it has degraded into fundamentalism.

The people of the book are subject to the rule of the word. So is the philosopher, whose *logos* of the Good is never definitive. It always calls for more argument; which is why, differences notwithstanding, some of us feel at home among the Greeks.

*Brian Klug is senior research fellow in Philosophy at St. Benet’s Hall, Oxford. His most recent book is Being Jewish and Doing Justice: Bringing Argument to Life (Valentine Mitchell, 2011).*



Mount Sinai, 2006, by Wikimedia Commons user Cirodite.



# New from Stanford University Press

## Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture

### How Strange the Change *Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms*

MARC CAPLAN

"A masterpiece in comparative literature that will quickly establish itself as a classic in both Yiddish and African literary studies."

—Ato Quayson,  
University of Toronto

\$60.00 cloth

### A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonica

*The Ladino Memoir of Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi*

Edited by ARON RODRIGUE and SARAH ABREVAYA STEIN; Translation, Transliteration, and Glossary by ISAAC JERUSALMI

"This precious historical source offers a passionate portrait of the struggle between traditionalist and modernizing forces within the late-nineteenth-century Sephardic world. It is a gripping read and will advance the scholarly agenda of Sephardic studies."

—Francesca Trivellato,  
Yale University

\$50.00 cloth

### Beyond Expulsion *Jews, Christians, and Reformation Strasbourg*

DEBRA KAPLAN

"Kaplan shows that, despite the expulsion of Jews from Strasbourg, they continued to have history there; more importantly, this history is tightly connected to the confessional history of the city and the Empire."

—Magda Teter,  
Wesleyan University

\$60.00 cloth

### Mongrels or Marvels

*The Levantine Writings of Jacqueline Shohet Kahanoff*

Edited by DEBORAH A. STARR and SASSON SOMEKH

"Kahanoff's extraordinarily important writings have held a certain aura or mystery for many decades and have been unavailable in their original English language form. Her work has enduring value, shedding light on an important historical period from a unique and complex perspective."

—Ammiel Alcalay,  
Queens College, CUNY

\$60.00 cloth

### Sanctuary in the Wilderness *A Critical Introduction to American Hebrew Poetry*

ALAN MINTZ

"This fascinating literary study of twelve Hebrew poets who flourished as a 'virtual community' in America about the middle of the 20th century revises and expands our understanding of poetry, modernism, Hebrew, and, not least, America."

—Ruth Wisse,  
Harvard University

\$65.00 cloth

### Music from a Speeding Train *Jewish Literature in Post-Revolution Russia*

HARRIET MURAV

"Offers an illuminating interpretation of Soviet Jewish culture, treating this complex phenomenon from a refreshingly new literary perspective. It is the first literary study to cover the entire Soviet period and deal equally expertly with Yiddish and Russian texts."

—Mikhail Krutikov,  
University of Michigan

\$65.00 cloth

## Also of Interest

### Idol Anxiety

Edited by JOSH ELLENBOGEN and AARON TUGENDHAFT

"A fresh, eclectic combination of established and new voices on an old problem that is important to at least three different fields: religious studies, art history, and philosophy."

—Seth Sanders,  
Trinity College

\$21.95 paper \$55.00 cloth

### Genesis 1-11

*Tales of the Earliest World*  
EDWIN M. GOOD

"A rare combination of outstanding linguistic analysis, keen literary-critical insight, and uniquely engaging prose. Good brings fresh perspective to literature that has become all too familiar in its standard translations."

—Timothy Beal,  
Case Western Reserve University

\$15.95 paper \$40.00 cloth

NEW IN PAPERBACK

### A River Flows from Eden *The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*

MELILA HELLNER-ESHED

"A fascinating and richly textured work that combines linguistic and literary acumen with a historian of religion's interest in the phenomenology of mysticism and a poet's sensitivity to language."

—Elliot K. Ginsburg,  
University of Michigan

\$29.95 paper

### The Zohar 6

*Pritzker Edition, Volume Six*  
Translation and Commentary by DANIEL C. MATT

"A monumental contribution to the history of Jewish thought."

—Koret Jewish Book Award

*Zohar: The Pritzker Editions*

\$55.00 cloth

### Nelly Sachs, Flight and Metamorphosis

*An Illustrated Biography*  
ARIS FIORETOS

Translated by TOMAS TRANAES

"For some years the time has been ripe for a literary biography of Nelly Sachs. Now these thorough, thoughtful, deeply studied pages, enlivened by remarkable images, should become a definitive source."

—John Felstiner,  
author of

*Translating Neruda:  
The Way to Macchu Picchu, Paul  
Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew, and  
Can Poetry Save the Earth?*

*A Field Guide to Nature Poems*  
\$29.95 paper \$75.00 cloth

 **Stanford**  
University Press

800.621.2736 [www.sup.org](http://www.sup.org)

[www.sup.org/facebook](http://www.sup.org/facebook)



# Context of Scripture Online

*Canonical Compositions, Monumental Inscriptions  
and Archival Documents from the Biblical World*

General Editor: William W. Hallo  
Associate Editor: K. Lawson Younger, Jr.

[brill.nl/cso](http://brill.nl/cso)



*The Context of Scripture* illuminatingly presents the multi-faceted world of ancient writing that forms the colorful background to the literature of the Hebrew Bible. The online version makes the content of this unique and valuable reference work even more accessible. Designed as a thorough and enduring reference work for all engaged in the study of the Bible and the ancient Near East, it provides reliable access to a broad, balanced, and

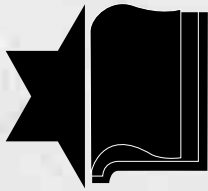
representative collection of Ancient Near Eastern texts that have an impact on the interpretation of the Bible. Each entry includes an introduction to the text, an authoritative translation, commentary, and bibliographic references.

The online version is based on the substantial three-volume work and will be updated with the fourth volume, currently planned for publication in 2012.

## Features and Benefits

- Includes ALL volumes of the Context of Scripture
- Browsable index including subjects, names, and places
- Allows for basic and advanced searches
- Full cross-referencing to biblical passages

**New! With Liner Notes!**



Now available from the  
**Jewish Book Council**



**A \$1200 value,  
30 titles, 215 CDs,  
only \$160\* (plus  
shipping)! It is a perfect  
gift for loved ones. Or, why  
not donate it as a gift  
to your local synagogue  
or senior citizen  
home?**

# *the* **SAMI ROHR LIBRARY** *of* **RECORDED YIDDISH BOOKS**

*The historic compilation of Yiddish classics, read aloud by native Yiddish speakers at Montreal's Jewish Public Library, and presented by the National Yiddish Book Center, preserves complete, unabridged books on CD.*

*Thirty titles are now available, including works by: Sholem Aleichem, Sholem Asch, I.L. Peretz, Mendele Moykher Sforim, and I.B. Singer, among others.*

**For more information,  
call 212-201-2920  
or email  
jbc@jewishbooks.org**

**\* This project is subsidized by a generous grant from the Rohr family of Miami.**



EMORY  
UNIVERSITY

Tam Institute for  
Jewish Studies

## ***NEW! Graduate Certificate Program in Jewish Studies***

Beginning in fall 2011, the **Tam Institute for Jewish Studies (TIJS)** will coordinate a new graduate certificate program providing formal recognition of a Jewish studies focus for PhD students working in any department of Emory's Laney Graduate School. The program offers supplemental training in methods and languages; exposure to cross-disciplinary perspectives; funding opportunities for research, study, and travel; and mentoring in the professional culture of Jewish studies. Participants will be part of a vibrant intellectual community that brings together students and faculty members from across the university.



### **Fellowship Opportunities for work**

**in Jewish studies.** TIJS also offers several top-off fellowships to support PhD students pursuing Jewish studies topics in any discipline. These fellowships supplement the generous departmental fellowships and tuition waivers awarded to all accepted PhD students. No separate application is required; departments and programs will nominate appropriate candidates who are offered admission.

To apply to Emory PhD programs, complete the James T. Laney Graduate School application found at [www.gs.emory.edu/admissions](http://www.gs.emory.edu/admissions) and indicate your interest in Jewish studies.

For further details on PhD programs in History, Religion, Comparative Literature, and other Emory departments that work closely with the Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, explore the links on the TIJS Graduate Studies webpage at [www.js.emory.edu/grad](http://www.js.emory.edu/grad) or contact Tobi Ames at 404.727.0896.

111138-1

# Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies - University of Michigan Fellowship Opportunity

**Theme 2013-2014:**

## **Jews & Gender**



The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies will devote a theme year to the exploration of gender as applied to Jews, their religion and culture, past history and current practices. It invites applications that extend questions stimulated by gender to traditional aspects of Jewish studies, such as literature, rabbinics, politics, and history as well as to new areas of Jewish studies, such as diaspora, cultural, performance, and migration studies. We invite proposals that contest basic paradigms, such as what is meant by religious life, by community, and that explore gender norms and representations. Not only women but also men and masculinity, sexuality and the sexual politics of Jewish identity are appropriate topics for study. We see this year as a chance to move research on Jews and gender into relatively unexplored areas, such as the senses, emotions, and new media. Building upon several decades of scholarship, the theme of Gender will bring scholars from diverse disciplines together to explore various questions linked through a common theoretical focus on gender.

**The application deadline is October 22, 2012.**

Past fellows have come to the Frankel Institute from such diverse fields as law, literature, history, rabbinics, music, architecture, archaeology and anthropology and include such notable scholars as Barbara Mann, Chava Weissler, Aharon Oppenheimer, Sammy Smooha, Leora Auslander, and Hana Wirth-Nesher.

For more information and application materials, contact  
The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at  
(734) 763-9047 or [JudaicStudies@umich.edu](mailto:JudaicStudies@umich.edu).

**<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic>**

# Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World Online

Executive Editor: Norman A. Stillman

[brill.nl/ejio](http://brill.nl/ejio)



BRILL



The *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (EJIW) covers an area of Jewish history, religion, and culture which until now has lacked its own cohesive/discreet reference work. The Encyclopedia aims to fill the gap in academic reference literature on the Jews of Muslim lands particularly in the late medieval, early modern and modern periods.

The expanded online version (started in 2010), *EJIW Online*, will include 2000 illustrations in addition to multimedia files for all articles covering music and performers. *EJIW Online* will be updated twice yearly with newly commissioned articles, illustrations, multimedia, and primary source material.

## Features and Benefits

- Interdisciplinary articles cover a wide range of topics from history, law, music, visual arts, social sciences, philosophy, anthropology and demography
- Alphabetical order and cross-references enable quick and easy searching
- Over 150 color and black and white illustrations, graphs and maps
- Over 2,200 entries and 1.5 million words
- Updates will include new articles, illustrations and multimedia
- The only reference work of its kind
- Up-to-date research and bibliographies make it indispensable for all levels of users
- Over 350 internationally-renowned scholars from all over the world

For pricing options, consortium arrangements and free 30-day trials for these collections contact us at [brillonline@brill.nl](mailto:brillonline@brill.nl) or [brillonline@brillusa.com](mailto:brillonline@brillusa.com) for customers in the Americas.



# Religion and the Birth of Jewish Radical Politics

Adam Sutcliffe

The disproportionate presence of Jews in the history of left-wing political movements has been widely noted—by historians, Jewish leftists themselves (who have often proudly romanticized this lineage), and their right-wing adversaries (among whom it has served as an enduring anti-Semitic theme). Radical Jews have almost always been vigorously anticlerical, and are usually considered as antithetical to religion in every way. In light of recent work by Talal Asad, Jose Casanova, Charles Taylor, and others that has complicated the relationship between religion, politics, and the slippery process we describe as “secularization,” however, the place of religion in the emergence of Jewish political radicalism in the first half of the nineteenth century is due for reexamination. Despite their hostility to all traditional religious practice and their ambivalent or even hostile attitude to the Jewish collectivity, the trace of a Jewishly religious approach to the ethical meaning of history infused the thought of this first wave of Jewish radicals, up to and including Marx himself.

In his excellent book *Redemption and Utopia* (1988), Michael Löwy noted the large number of early twentieth-century central European Jewish thinkers, such as Martin Buber, Walter Benjamin, Georg Lucács, and Gershom Scholem, who were drawn to utopian and libertarian visions of the future inspired both by German Romanticism and by Jewish messianism. Despite their utter alienation from traditional Judaism, they found within the religion a pulsing source of radical, antinomian energy, in stark contrast to the clinical rationalism that the sociologists Max Weber and Werner Sombart were then identifying as Judaism’s central hallmark. Löwy argues that this secular radicalization of Judaism emerged only toward the end of the nineteenth century, almost exclusively in Germanic Europe. Jewish radicalism has an earlier history too, however, the religious undercurrents of which have not been seriously explored.

All roads in the history of Jewish radical politics lead back to Spinoza. Both the Jewishness and the religiosity of this most famous outcast from the Sephardic community of Amsterdam have been endlessly contested, but since his death in 1677 he has certainly been



Ludwig Börne. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg, shelf number S36\_F03093.

an immensely compelling, inspirational figure to many on the political left, and to left-wing Jews in particular. Despite his uncompromising rejection of Jewish law and rabbinical authority, the emancipatory impulse of Spinoza’s philosophy is expressed in religious terms. Blessedness, he writes at the close of his posthumous *Ethics*, is not the reward for virtuous living, but is itself the knowledge, consciousness, and love of the unity of all things in God that enables the wise individual be truly virtuous and happy. Spinoza’s other major work, meanwhile—his *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670)—is a close analysis of the Hebrew Bible, building a universalist argument against theocracy and for freedom of thought and speech on the particular example of ancient Jewish history.

David Biale, in his penetrating recent study of the Jewish secular tradition, *Not in the Heavens* (2011), makes the important point that the Jewish embrace of universalism is itself marked with Jewish particularity: because Judaism stands in Western culture as the essence of particularity, Jews seeking to escape this position have often rejected particularism with intense vehemence and

embraced universalism with a singular passion. Spinoza can be interpreted as a case in point, and certainly his lucidly geometric philosophy has been lauded by many as the purest possible antithesis of the particularistic legalism of his birth community. The eager espousal of universal values by Jews, then, should be seen as an inversion of normative Judaism rather than as an exit from it, and as such not only defined in relation to religion but also in a sense itself religious.

The place and meaning of religion in European society was never more in flux than in the early nineteenth century, and for nobody was this more so than for Jews negotiating the rapid transformations of the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic eras. Jews in this period reformulated the Jewish religion, adopted mainstream secular culture with an eagerness that has often been described as quasi-religious, and were also disproportionately drawn to radical political movements that were tinged with religious idealism. It is interesting, for example, to note the significant number of Jews drawn to the early utopian socialist movement led by the French count Henri de Saint-Simon. Typically young, assimilated or assimilating, and from affluent banking families, these Jewish Saint-Simonians embraced both the messianic and the productivist facets of this movement. One of them, Gustave d’Eichtal, who retained a strong attachment to his Jewishness despite his childhood baptism into Catholicism, was so convinced of the affinity between Judaism and Saint-Simonianism that he instigated a proselytizing mission to the largest synagogue in Paris, and argued that the female messiah whom the group actively anticipated would not be a gentile but a Jewess.

In Germany, the dominant influence on the first generation of Jewish radicals was Hegel. The political energy of France, however, made a strong impression on many of them, and when the July Revolution broke out in Paris in 1830, the French capital immediately became an irresistible magnet for several German Jews who found a special role mediating between these two cultures. Heinrich Heine is the most famous member of this group, but more interesting politically is the essayist Ludwig Börne. Born in the Frankfurt ghetto in 1786, Börne became steadily more

radical through his adulthood, dying in Parisian exile in 1837 a committed revolutionary. He was often extremely pointed in his writings on Jews and Judaism, emphasizing the alienating fiscal preoccupation of the world of his upbringing, and sharply critical of Frankfurt's most famous Jews, the Rothschilds. Despite his Protestant baptism in 1818, however, he retained an identificatory concern with the political rights and collective future of German Jewry. He also explicitly connected his commitment to freedom and cosmopolitanism to his Jewish background: "The Jews are the teachers of cosmopolitanism," he famously wrote. Only in his final years did he become explicitly interested in religion, and when he did so it took a Christian form. In the mid-1830s, Börne encountered the work of the democratic socialist French Catholic, Félicité Lamennais, and with great enthusiasm translated into German his aphoristic *Words of a Believer*. This religious turn should not be dismissed as an expression of confused, even self-hating, apostasy. As with the cultic "New Christianity" of the Jewish Saint-Simonians, although the framing of Börne's late religiosity was Christian its political essence was universal and the impulses leading him to it were profoundly shaped by his Jewish background and social position.

The religious universalization of Judaism is more explicit in a work identified by some as the first explicit articulation of German socialism: Moses Hess's *Holy History of Humanity* (1837). In this rather tortuously Hegelian tome, Hess divides history into three eras. Judaism dominated the first era, and Christianity the second; the third, modern era had been heralded by the messianic genius of Spinoza, and in its imminent egalitarian and utopian culmination the Jews were finally destined to fulfill their universal historical mission. Despite Hess's avowed atheism, an intensely Jewish messianism suffused his writing in this period: not for nothing was he mockingly nicknamed by his comrades "the communist rabbi." His universalist messianic radicalism is little changed—beyond the declaration that the Jews will fulfill their historical destiny by establishing their own state—in his much better-known, later Zionist work, *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862).

The connection between Judaism and political radicalism, then, has a deep history. Echoing and sometimes invoking Spinoza, Jewish radicals in the era of the emergence of socialism espoused political visions of the future that were shaped by Judaism both positively and negatively. They drew on religious traditions of utopian messianism, while

emphasizing a universalism that was consciously antipodal to the tribal particularism that they, like their non-Jewish peers, strongly associated with Judaism. However, their disavowal of Jewish particularity was not clear-cut. The Jews were almost invariably cast in an important role in the future unfolding of history, whether as a national exemplar (for the later Hess), a source of quasi-prophetic insight (for Börne), or a group whose necessary transformation was central to a wider overcoming of the pernicious social impacts of commerce and finance (a pervasive belief among early nineteenth-century reformists and radicals). This final association, most famously and vigorously asserted by another radical Jew, Karl Marx, in his *On the Jewish Question* (1844), is of course deeply particularly thorny and problematic. However, it also should be understood as in part religious: a political rearticulation of a messianic utopianism in which the Jews retained an uncomfortably central and heavily overdetermined importance.

*Adam Sutcliffe is senior lecturer in European History at King's College London. His most recent book, co-edited with Jonathan Karp, is Philosemitism in History (Cambridge University Press, 2011).*

## Free Online Israel Textbook



- A comprehensive online anthology covering Israeli history, politics, economy and culture.
- Contributors include Israel Prize winners Amnon Rubinstein and Aharon Barak, in addition to other top Israeli scholars.
- Students and professors can download any or all chapters for classroom use at no charge.
- Chapters will continue to be added and updated to keep up with current thought and events.
- To Access:

[www.JewishVirtualLibrary.com](http://www.JewishVirtualLibrary.com) → Publications → Israel Studies: An Anthology



### Table of Contents

#### Part One: History

- *The History of Zionism* - Moshe Maor
- *The Yishuv: The Jewish Community in Mandatory Palestine* - Aviva Haramish
- *Israel and the Holocaust* - Shlomo Aronson
- *The Israeli-Arab War of 1948* - Yoav Gelber
- *Jewish Settlement in the Land of Israel/Palestine* - Ilan Troen

#### Part Two: Society and Culture

- *Women in Israel* - Anat Maor
- *Multicultural Realities* - Guy Ben-Porat
- *Religion in Israel* - Ilan Fuchs
- *Israeli Culture* - Dalia Liran-Alper
- *Israel and its Arab Minority* - Yitzhak Reiter
- *Media in Israel* - Michael Widlanski
- *Israel's Economy 1986-2008* - Rafi Melnick and Yosef Mealem
- *The History of Hebrew Literature in Israel* - Michal Ben-Horin
- *Art in Israel* - Michael Widlanski

#### Part Three: Israeli Democracy

- *Israel's Partial Constitution: The Basic Laws* - Amnon Rubinstein
- *The Values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State* - Aharon Barak
- *Human Rights and the Supreme Court in Israel* - Doron Shultziner
- *National Government Institutions* - David Nachmias

#### Part Four: Wars and the Peace Process

- *The Sinai War and Suez Crisis 1956-7* - Motti Golani
- *The 1967 Six-Day War* - David Tal
- *The 1973 Yom Kippur War* - Uri Bar-Joseph
- *Israel's War on Terrorism* - Arie Perlinger
- *The Peace Process* - Galia Golan

#### Part Six: International Relations

- *The United States and Israel: 1948-2008* - Avraham Ben-Zvi
- *Israel and the Arab World - From Conflict to Coexistence* - Alexander Bligh

# Hameyvin Yavin: Language and Super Jews

Sarah Benor

When people think about religion, they tend to think about individuals' beliefs and their adherence to laws and customs. As a trained linguist, I tend to think about their language. Do they express their faith in divine providence by peppering their speech with "Thank God," "God willing," or "God forbid?" Do they avoid cursing and taking God's name in vain?

Among Jews, the relationship between language and religion becomes even more interesting because of the additional layers of Hebrew and other Jewish languages. We can look not only at phrases individuals use or avoid but also at how they pronounce Hebrew and infuse their speech with structures from ancestral languages. Among contemporary American Jews, Yiddish/Ashkenazic Hebrew, Modern Israeli Hebrew, and English offer competing norms: do we study *Tórah*, *Toráh*, or *Toyre*? Are prayer shawls *tallitot*, *taleysim*, or *tallises*? Do we "learn out" something from a *Gemora* or do we simply learn it? When Jews use one or another of these variants they present themselves not only as Jews but also as certain types of Jews: older or younger, more or less connected to Israel, and more or less oriented toward textual mastery or strict halakhic observance.

As I have found in my ethnographic and survey research, language is an especially salient marker of Orthodox identification. This is not limited to divine expressions like *baruch hashem* (bless God), *chas v'shalom* (God forbid), and *mirtsheshem* (with God's help: from *im yirtse hashem*); but also includes hundreds of words for religious rituals and concepts, for instance *toyvel* (immerse [as in objects] in a ritual bath), *aveyra* (sin), *gebruks* (soaked matzah, prohibited on Passover by some Ashkenazim); as well as hundreds of words used outside of the religious sphere, such as

*leytsanus* (silliness, buffoonery), *lichora* (apparently), and *yungerman* (young [married] man). Orthodox Jews, especially those closer to the right pole of the Modern Orthodox to Black Hat continuum, tend to use Ashkenazic patterns, including pronunciation of Hebrew *thaf* as [s] rather than Israeli [t] and the periphrastic verbal construction (e.g., "It might be *meorer*



Super Jew, 2010, by SLR Productions, licensed under GNU Free Documentation License.

the *tayva*" [arouse the lust] and "He was *mekarev* me" [brought me closer (to Judaism)]). This is true not only of the majority Ashkenazic population but also of many Orthodox Jews of Sephardi and Mizrahi descent. We also hear Orthodox Jews using Yiddish-influenced syntax (e.g., "staying by them" and "We study all day Torah"), the word "so" used where English generally doesn't allow it (e.g., "If you'll come to us, so you'll see"), the hesitation click from Israeli Hebrew, and quasi-chanting intonation. Language is such an important part of American Orthodox identity (especially, but not solely, among men), that people refer to it as "Yeshivish" or "FrumSpeak," and *ba'alei teshuva*—non-Orthodox Jews who embrace Orthodoxy—pick up many of the distinctive linguistic features.

While Orthodox Jews are most distinct linguistically from their non-Jewish

neighbors, they are not the only ones with language interesting enough to analyze. Of course there are the children of immigrants from Iran, Russia, Israel, and elsewhere, who speak English with some influences from their native languages. There is the insular Syrian community in Brooklyn that maintains words from Judeo-Arabic in their English even two to

three generations after the major wave of immigration. And there are the secular Yiddishists, some of whom speak Yiddish "*az di tate-mame zoln nisht farshteyn*" (so their parents won't understand—a reversal of the generational trend). We might even analyze the language of Jewish communal organizations—such as the creative use of Hebrew and Yiddish in program names and the trend of JBranding (e.g., JDate, JSpot, JGooders).

But in my opinion, one of the most interesting groups to analyze linguistically is young non-Orthodox Jews who are highly involved in

Jewish religious life (henceforth referred to with the less unwieldy but more tongue-in-cheek phrase *super Jews*). In an Internet survey that I conducted with Steven M. Cohen, we asked respondents dozens of questions about their use of Hebrew and Yiddish words and other linguistic features, as well as about demographic traits. Using non-random "snowball sampling," the survey received more than 40,000 responses (see links on my HUC faculty webpage for details about methodology and findings). In the remainder of this article, I offer my analysis of the survey results about non-Orthodox super Jews, limiting the sample to the 23,004 respondents who grew up speaking English in the United States and who identify themselves as Jewish and not Orthodox.

First, we need a working definition of *super Jews*. While there are many options, Cohen and I decided that respondents must

meet at least two of the following three criteria: (1) attend services more than monthly; (2) have visited Israel three or more times or lived there; and (3) all or almost all of their friends are Jewishly engaged. According to this definition, 11 percent of this (non-Orthodox) sample is considered super Jews (674 individuals age 18–45 and 1,917 45 years or older).<sup>1</sup> We see differences between super Jews and non-super Jews at all ages, but the strongest differences are among those under 45. Results for this age group are presented in Table 1.

To what can we attribute these differences? One might guess that the rise of non-Orthodox Jewish day schools plays an important role. This may be partially true, but only a small percentage of respondents attended day school (see Table 1). Perhaps greater participation in informal Jewish education. The super Jews are somewhat more likely to have attended Jewish summer camps and participated in youth groups and college Jewish groups, but the differences are not huge.

American Jewish landscape. As the tongue-in-cheek label suggests, this can be an elitist identity. Many super Jews participate in a lay-led minyan (prayer group) in which members tend to be Jewishly educated and observant. In a minyan setting, public speech (including announcements and the *drash* or *dvar Torah*) and private conversations are likely to include Hebrew and Yiddish words and phrases and other insider language.

The linguistic profile of super Jews is epitomized by a phrase I hear periodically:

**Table 1: Percentage of non-Orthodox Jewish respondents under age 45 who report that they . . .**

	Not Super Jews	Super Jews
have excellent or good comprehension of prayer book Hebrew	14	70
have at least some comprehension of Talmudic Aramaic	20	71
use bentsh (say Grace After Meals, bless)	25	78
use drash (explanation, sermonic commentary)	15	72
use davka (specifically)	11	68
use kal vachomer (all the more so)	3	44
use balagan (mess, chaos)	16	77
use yofi (nice)	21	73
use heimish (homey)	25	68
use “Are you coming to us for dinner?”	29	55
attended Jewish day school	11	24
attended Jewish sleep-away summer camp	51	61

Crucially, non-Orthodox super Jews differ from other non-Orthodox Jews in their language skills. Especially in the younger group, they are much more likely to report excellent or good Hebrew skills and at least some comprehension of Talmudic Aramaic. Second, they are much more likely to report using many of the Yiddish, Hebrew, and Aramaic words we asked about, especially in the religious domain. They are much more likely to report using Israeli Hebrew words, which is not surprising given that many of them have spent time in Israel.

Young super Jews are significantly more likely than non-super Jews to use Yiddish words that are most common among their parents and grandparents, like *macher* (big shot), *naches* (pride), and *heimish* (homey). Super Jews even report more use of Yiddish-influenced grammar, such as “Are you coming to us for dinner?” and “She has what to say.”

I argue that the major factor in the distinctive linguistic profile of non-Orthodox Jewish elites is their interaction with others like them. Anyone who attends synagogue more than monthly, has spent significant time in Israel, and/or reports that most of their close friends are engaged in Jewish life (the three criteria we used to define super Jews) likely has regular conversations with others like them. In addition, almost half of young super Jews in the sample refrain from handling money on Shabbat, which suggests that they may also host and/or attend Shabbat meals regularly. We know from studies around the world that people who talk to each other on a regular basis often converge linguistically. Participating in Jewish religious and communal life offers Jews ample opportunity to converse with others like them and to learn and spread Hebrew and Yiddish words.

Non-Orthodox super Jews are crystallizing into a distinctive group within the

“hameyvin yavin,” meaning “Those in the know will understand.” I asked some friends how they use this ultimate insider phrase, and one replied, “Since I work in Hebrew Bible and Rabbinics, often giving public lectures at synagogues or Jewish community centers I’ll allude to something heretical or politically controversial but not spell it out. I’ll tell others ‘I’m saying X, and hamevin yavin.’” This phrase offers a fine example of the richness we can discover when we analyze the relationship between language and religion, especially among super Jews.

*Sarah Bunin Benor is associate professor of contemporary Jewish Studies at Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. She is finishing a book entitled Becoming Frum: How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism.*



# The Jewish Quarterly Review

*The Jewish Quarterly Review* is the oldest English-language journal in the fields of Jewish studies, recognized for more than a century for its exemplary quality. *JQR* attends to scholarly detail while attempting to reach a wider and more diverse audience. In each issue of *JQR* the ancient stands alongside the modern, the historical alongside the literary, the textual alongside the contextual, the past alongside the present.



Subscribe today at  
[jqr.pennpress.org](http://jqr.pennpress.org)

## Recent and Upcoming

**Auerbach's Scars: Judaism and the Question of Literature**  
BY GALILI SHAHAR

**Effeminacy in the Shadow of Empire: The Politics of Transgressive Gender in Josephus's *Bellum Judaicum***  
BY JASON VON EHRENKROOK

**Review Forum: On David Engel's *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust***  
BY ALEXANDRA GARBARINI, RICHARD I. COHEN, DAVID CESARANI

To subscribe to *JQR*, email: [pubsvc@tsp.sheridan.com](mailto:pubsvc@tsp.sheridan.com), call 1-717-632-3535, or go online

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PRESS

**YAD HANADIV**

**BERACHA FOUNDATION**

## ***FELLOWSHIPS IN JEWISH STUDIES 2012/2013***

Yad Hanadiv and the Beracha Foundation have established a Visiting Fellowship Program in Jewish Studies. Fellowships are granted each year to scholars of Jewish Studies who hold non-tenured university positions (or will receive tenure after September 2012). Fellows will spend the academic year in Israel pursuing their own research while also working with a senior scholar in their field. The fellowship for 2012/13 will be in the sum of \$24,000 with an additional \$3,000 for spouse, plus \$3,000 per child. Fellows are required to confirm that upon completion of the fellowship they will resume teaching Jewish Studies at a university outside Israel.

The deadline for receipt of applications is 23 December 2011. Application forms and additional information may be obtained from:

YAD HANADIV / BERACHA FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIPS

16 Ibn Gvirol, 92430 Jerusalem, ISRAEL

e- mail: [natania@yadhanadiv.org.il](mailto:natania@yadhanadiv.org.il) or [isaiah.gafni@gmail.com](mailto:isaiah.gafni@gmail.com)

Tel: 972-2-566 5107 ext. 310



NEW FROM THE NEXTBOOK PRESS JEWISH ENCOUNTERS SERIES

## MODERN WRITERS

## TIMELESS SUBJECTS



**“A penetrating and authoritative dissection of a landmark case and its aftereffects”**

— PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



**“A small masterpiece.**  
The romance of Hebrew scholarship has never been so vividly conveyed.”

—HAROLD BLOOM



 **SCHOCKEN**  
www.schocken.com

 **nextbook**  
PRESS  
www.nextbookpress.com

AVAILABLE AT AMAZON  
hardcover and ebook formats

Perfect for your syllabus: find discussion guides, videos, and other teaching tools for these and other Jewish Encounters titles at [www.nextbookpress.com](http://www.nextbookpress.com)

# JEWISH STUDIES FROM DE GRUYTER

Please visit us at the  
AJS 43rd Annual Conference  
in Washington, DC

*Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov  
(Eds.)*

## WITH LETTERS OF LIGHT

Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior

2010. vii, 456 pages

**Hardcover** RRP € 129.95 [D]/US\$ 195.00

ISBN 978-3-11-022201-2

**eBook** RRP € 129.95 /US\$ 195.00

ISBN 978-3-11-022202-9

**Print + eBook** RRP € 199.95 /US\$ 300.00

ISBN 978-3-11-219037-1

(Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages 2)

*Ran HaCohen*

## RECLAIMING THE HEBREW BIBLE

German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism

*Translated by Michelle Engel*

2010. vii, 250 pages

**Hardcover** RRP € 89.95 [D]/US\$ 135.00

ISBN 978-3-11-024756-5

**eBook** RRP € 89.95 /US\$ 135.00

ISBN 978-3-11-024757-2

**Print + eBook** RRP € 139.95 /US\$ 210.00

ISBN 978-3-11-214252-3

(Studia Judaica / Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 56)

*Yaakov Sharett (Ed.)*

## THE REPARATIONS CONTROVERSY

The Jewish State and German Money in the Shadow of the Holocaust 1951-1952

2011. x, 416 pages

**Hardcover** RRP € 99.95 [D]/US\$ 150.00

ISBN 978-3-11-025508-9

**eBook** RRP € 99.95 /US\$ 150.00

ISBN 978-3-11-025538-6

**Print + eBook** RRP € 149.95 /US\$ 225.00

ISBN 978-3-11-218941-8

*Claudia Simone Dorchain and  
Felice Naomi Wonnemberg (Eds.)*

## CONTEMPORARY JEWISH REALITY IN GERMANY AND ITS REFLECTION IN FILM

03/2012. Approx. 300 pages

**Hardcover** RRP € 99.95 [D]/US\$ 150.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026512-5

**eBook** RRP € 99.95 /US\$ 150.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026513-2

**Print + eBook** RRP € 149.95 /US\$ 225.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026832-4

(Europäisch-jüdische Studien –  
BEITRÄGE / Herausgegeben vom Moses  
Mendelssohn Zentrum in Kooperation mit dem  
Zentrum für Jüdische Studien 1)

*Irene Eber*

## WARTIME SHANGHAI AND THE JEWISH REFUGEES FROM CENTRAL EUROPE

Survival, Co-Existence, and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City

01/2012. Approx. 300 pages

**Hardcover** RRP € 99.95 [D]/US\$ 150.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026797-6

**eBook** RRP € 99.95 /US\$ 150.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026818-8

**Print + eBook** RRP € 149.95 /US\$ 225.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026819-5

(New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History 1)

*David J. Fine*

## JEWISH IDENTITIES, THE GERMAN ARMY, AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

02/2012. Approx. 210 pages. 30 figures

**Hardcover** RRP € 79.95 [D]/US\$ 120.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026796-9

**eBook** RRP € 79.95 /US\$ 120.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026816-4

**Print + eBook** RRP € 119.95 /US\$ 180.00

ISBN 978-3-11-026817-1

(New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History 2)

*Jits van Straten*

## THE ORIGIN OF ASHKENAZI JEWRY

The Controversy Unraveled

2011. xii, 234 pages. 12 figures. 14 tables

**Hardcover** RRP € 79.95 [D]/US\$ 120.00

ISBN 978-3-11-023605-7

**eBook** RRP € 79.95 /US\$ 120.00

ISBN 978-3-11-023606-4

**Print + eBook** RRP € 119.95 /US\$ 180.00

ISBN 978-3-11-219189-7

*Stefan Weninger*

*In collab. with Geoffrey Khan,  
Michael P. Streck and  
Janet C. E. Watson (Eds.)*

## SEMITIC LANGUAGES

An International Handbook

12/2011. Approx. 1,200 pages

**Hardcover** RRP € 329.00 [D]/US\$ 494.00

ISBN 978-3-11-018613-0

**eBook** RRP € 329.00 /US\$ 494.00

ISBN 978-3-11-025158-6

**Print + eBook** RRP € 489.00 /US\$ 734.00

ISBN 978-3-11-214666-8

(Handbooks of Linguistics and Communication Science [HSK] 36)



Please order our **New Publications Catalog Jewish Studies 2011/2012** at [marketing@degruyter.com](mailto:marketing@degruyter.com)

**DE GRUYTER**

Prices in US\$ apply to orders placed in North America only  
Prices are subject to change  
Prices do not include postage and handling

[www.degruyter.com](http://www.degruyter.com)

## NEW BOOKS FROM YALE



### Levant

*Splendour and Catastrophe on the Mediterranean*

Philip Mansel

"This is a rich piece of historical storytelling that will satisfy scholars, travelers, readers of travel literature, and everyone in between. Highly recommended for anyone with an interest in this complicated region of the world."—*Library Journal* (starred review) 33 b/w illus. \$35.00

### Kabbalah in Italy, 1280-1510

*A Survey*

Moshe Idel

This sweeping survey is the first to focus attention on a specific center of Kabbalah, charting the ways that Kabbalistic thought and literature developed in Italy and how its unique geographical situation facilitated the arrival of both Spanish and Byzantine Kabbalah. \$55.00

### Building After Auschwitz

*Jewish Architecture and the Memory of the Holocaust*

Gavriel D. Rosenfeld

The first major study to examine the rise to prominence of Jewish architects since 1945. "Unbelievable in breadth and depth, *Building After Auschwitz* is a page-turning primer on Jewish architectural identity in flux, as it sits uneasily between alienation and assimilation."—Stanley Tigerman 25 color + 150 b/w illus. \$50.00

### The Forgotten Palestinians

*A History of the Palestinians in Israel*

Ilan Pappé

Historian Ilan Pappé examines how Israeli Palestinians have fared under Jewish rule and what their lives tell us about both Israel's attitude toward minorities and Palestinians' attitudes toward the Jewish state. 8 b/w illus. \$30.00

### The Music Libel Against the Jews

*Vocal Fictions of Noise and Harmony*

Ruth HaCohen

"This book is . . . brilliant in its theoretical framework, and original in its insight and use of diverse avenues of historical inquiry—music history, the history of anti-Semitism, the history of Jewish thought, and the interrelationship between politics and culture."—Leon Botstein, President of Bard College 9 color + 80 b/w illus. \$55.00

### The Medieval Haggadah

*Art, Narrative, and Religious Imagination*

Marc Michael Epstein

This beautifully illustrated volume explores four illuminated manuscripts created for use at home services on Passover, including the fascinating Birds' Head Haggadah, and offers new insights on the meaning of their magnificent and enigmatic artwork. 151 color illus. \$65.00

### Jewish Lives

#### Sarah

*The Life of Sarah Bernhardt*

Robert Gottlieb

"A fine introduction to a fascinating woman, giving the reader a lively sense of why, so many decades after her death, the name of Sarah Bernhardt, above all others, still stands for actress."—*The Forward* 94 b/w illus. \$25.00

#### Hank Greenberg

*The Hero Who Didn't Want to Be One*

Mark Kurlansky

The remarkable life story of the first Jewish superstar athlete, by *New York Times* bestselling author Mark Kurlansky. "Thorough, insightful and well-written."—*Jewish Journal* \$25.00

#### Emma Goldman

*Revolution as a Way of Life*

Vivian Gornick

"Gornick's portrayal of Goldman captures Goldman's psychological makeup in a profound, empathetic, and eloquent way."—Alice Wexler, author of *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* \$25.00

#### Solomon

*The Lure of Wisdom*

Steven Weitzman

"[Weitzman] offers answers to many questions about the accomplished and wise king, and writes of Solomon's significance to Jews, Christians and Muslims."—*Jewish Week* 4 b/w illus. \$25.00

#### Moses Mendelssohn

*Sage of Modernity*

Shmuel Feiner

Translated by Anthony Berris

"A fascinating portrait of an important Enlightenment figure. . . . A respectful and balanced treatment of the 'Socrates of Germany' and the 'Father of Reform Judaism.'"—*Library Journal* \$25.00

#### Leon Trotsky

*A Revolutionary's Life*

Joshua Rubenstein

"Joshua Rubenstein has produced a steadily intelligent, insightful biography of one the last century's most alluring intellectual-politicians, a man of astonishing brilliance and no less astonishing rigidities."—Steven J. Zipperstein, Stanford University \$25.00

### New in Paperback

#### In Ishmael's House

*A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*

Martin Gilbert

"A comprehensive yet accessible approach."—*Publishers Weekly* "A model reference work that is sure to remain a standard for years to come."—*Jerusalem Post* 30 b/w illus. \$23.00

#### The Settlers

*And the Struggle over the Meaning of Zionism*

Gadi Taub

This inside look at Israel's most momentous internal conflict shows why the settlements in the occupied territories were never an extension of mainstream Zionism but rather its opposite. "Offers a profound and fascinating account of the practical and ideological challenges posed by the settler movement."—*Foreign Affairs* \$25.00

#### Judaism

*A Way of Being*

David Gelernter

"*Judaism* itself is a wide-ranging book about the beliefs, practices and philosophy of the world's first monotheistic religion—a book that Jews and non-Jews alike will find well worth reading."—Jay Lefkowitz, *The Wall Street Journal* "Superb."—*The New York Times* 4 color illus. \$18.00

Yale UNIVERSITY PRESS

YaleBooks.com

# Schusterman Center for Israel Studies

Brandeis University



## Programs

*Now accepting applications. Visit website below for details and deadlines.*

### • The Summer Institute for Israel Studies 2012

The Summer Institute for Israel Studies has prepared academics from more than 150 universities worldwide to teach courses on Israel in the humanities and social sciences. Fellowships include: seminars taught by leading scholars and public intellectuals from Israel and the United States; travel to Brandeis and Israel; meals and accommodations; and up to a \$2,500 stipend.

### • Schusterman Graduate Fellowships 2012-2013

Full and partial fellowships for doctoral students focusing on modern Israel in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Brandeis University. Up to \$24,000 per year, plus tuition and health benefits.

The Center supports Israel Studies courses in Fine Arts, Sociology, Politics, Middle East Studies, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and Anthropology.

## Publications

### • Schusterman Series in Israel Studies

Book length and shorter works of original scholarship on topics in Israel Studies published by Brandeis University Press/UPNE.

Manuscript submissions: [fuks@brandeis.edu](mailto:fuks@brandeis.edu)

### • Israel Studies

A journal presenting multidisciplinary scholarship on Israeli history, politics, society and culture. Cosponsored by the Schusterman Center and Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in affiliation with the Association for Israel Studies; published by Indiana University Press.

Article submissions: [istudies@bgu.ac.il](mailto:istudies@bgu.ac.il)

[www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter](http://www.brandeis.edu/israelcenter) • [scis@brandeis.edu](mailto:scis@brandeis.edu) • 781-736-2166



# NEW IN 2011 JEWISH STUDIES



**A Knight at the Opera: Heine, Wagner, Herzl, Peretz and the Legacy of Der Tannhäuser**  
Leah Garrett, ISBN: 978-155753-601-3 • Paperback • \$39.95 • September 2011

*A Knight at the Opera* examines the remarkable and unknown role that the medieval legend (and Wagner opera) *Tannhäuser* played in Jewish cultural life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The book analyzes how three of the greatest Jewish thinkers of that era, Heinrich Heine, Theodor Herzl, and I. L. Peretz, used this central myth of Germany to strengthen Jewish culture and to attack anti-Semitism. In the original medieval myth, a Christian knight lives in sin with the seductive pagan goddess Venus in the Venusberg. He escapes her clutches and makes his way to Rome to seek absolution from the Pope. The Pope does not pardon Tannhäuser and he returns to the Venusberg. During the course of *A Knight at the Opera*, readers will see how Tannhäuser evolves from a medieval knight, to Heine's German scoundrel in early modern Europe, to Wagner's idealized German male, and finally to Peretz's pious Jewish scholar in the Land of Israel. Venus herself also undergoes major changes from a pagan goddess, to a lusty housewife, to an overbearing Jewish mother. The book also discusses how the founder of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, was so inspired by Wagner's opera that he wrote *The Jewish State* while attending performances of it, and he even had the Second Zionist Congress open to the music

of *Tannhäuser's* overture. *A Knight at the Opera* uses *Tannhäuser* as a way to examine the changing relationship between Jews and the broader world during the advent of the modern era, and to question if any art, even that of a prominent anti-Semite, should be considered taboo.

## Jews and Humor

Leonard J. Greenspoon (ed.), ISBN: 978-1-55753-597-9 • Paperback • \$35.00 • October 2011

Jews and humor is, for most people, a natural and felicitous collocation. In spite of, or perhaps because of, a history of crises and living on the edge, Jews have often created or resorted to humor. But what is "humor"? And what makes certain types, instances, or performances of humor "Jewish"? These are among the myriad queries addressed by the fourteen authors whose essays are collected in this volume. And, thankfully, their observations, always apt and often witty, are expressed with a lightness of style and a depth of analysis that are appropriate to the many topics they cover. The chronological range of these essays is vast: from the Hebrew Bible to the 2000s, with many stops in between for Talmudic texts, medieval parodies, eighteenth century joke books, and twentieth century popular entertainment. The subject matter is equally impressive. In addition to rounding up many of the "usual suspects," such as Woody Allen, the Marx Brothers, and Gilda Radner, these authors also scout out some unlikely comic resources, like the author of the biblical book of Exodus, the rabbinic writer of Genesis Rabbah, and the party records star Belle Barth. Without forcing any of these characters into a pre-constructed mold, the scholars who contributed to this collection allow readers both to discern the common features that make up "Jewish humor" and to delight in the individualism and eccentricities of the many figures whose lives and accomplishments are narrated here.

Because these essays are written in a clear, jargon-free style, they will appeal to everyone— even those who don't usually crack a smile!



**Unfinalized Moments: Essays in the Development of Contemporary Jewish American Narrative**  
Derek Parker Royal (ed.), ISBN: 978-1-55753-584-9 • Paperback • \$45.00 • December 2011

Focusing on a diversely rich selection of writers, the pieces featured in *Unfinalized Moments: Essays in the Development of Contemporary Jewish American Narrative* explore the community of Jewish American writers who published their first book after the mid-1980s. It is the first book-length collection of essays on this subject matter with contributions from the leading scholars in the field. The manuscript does not attempt to foreground any one critical agenda, such as Holocaust writing, engagements with Zionism, feminist studies, postmodern influences, or multiculturalism. Instead, it celebrates the presence of a newly robust, diverse, and ever-evolving body of Jewish American fiction. This literature has taken a variety of forms with its negotiations of orthodoxy, its representations of a post-Holocaust world, its reassertion of folkloric tradition, its engagements with postmodernity, its reevaluations of Jewishness, and its alternative delineations of ethnic identity. Discussing the work of authors such as Allegra Goodman, Michael Chabon, Tova Mirvis, Rebecca Goldstein, Pearl Abraham, Jonathan Rosen, Nathan Englander, Melvin Jules Bukiet, Tova Reich, Sarah Schulman, Ruth Knafo Setton, Ben Katchor, and Jonathan Safran Foer, the

fifteen contributors in this collection assert the ongoing vitality and ever-growing relevance of Jewish American fiction.

**20%  
DISCOUNT**

Receive 20% off the retail price when you order directly through Purdue University Press and mention discount code "AJS11". Offer expires December 31, 2011

PURDUE UNIVERSITY PRESS | [www.thepress.purdue.edu](http://www.thepress.purdue.edu) | 800.247.6553





*(Photo provided by the Israel Ministry of Tourism.)*

# STUDY IN ISRAEL 2012

## Explore the fascinating corners of Jerusalem!

Michigan State University and Hebrew University are offering a special program allowing students to continue making progress in their academic programs while studying Israeli history and culture in Jerusalem. In addition to coursework, an optional internship working with Israeli businesses, agencies, and non-profit organizations will be available. Visit us on the Web ([studyabroad.msu.edu](http://studyabroad.msu.edu)) to find out about costs, eligibility requirements, course information (including Hebrew language), and more; or contact Cindy Chalou at the MSU Office of Study Abroad, (517) 432-4345, [chalouc@msu.edu](mailto:chalouc@msu.edu).

- For majors in business, finance, journalism, communications, public affairs, political science, international relations, and the arts and humanities, as well as other majors.
- 20 weeks (January – June) during spring semester 2012
- Deadline to apply is November 15, 2011
- Visit the Web for details [studyabroad.msu.edu](http://studyabroad.msu.edu)

The development of this program has been supported by a MASA grant to Hebrew University and Michigan State University aimed at expanding study in Israel. MASA is a non-profit company in Jerusalem supported by the Israeli government to sponsor study abroad in Israel

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

**Study Abroad**

109 International Center | East Lansing, MI 48824-1035  
517-353-8920 | [osapa@isp.msu.edu](mailto:osapa@isp.msu.edu) | [studyabroad.msu.edu](http://studyabroad.msu.edu)

## MELTON CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES



*One of the largest and most diverse  
Jewish studies programs in the country*

*32 outstanding faculty members whose teaching  
and research is among the broadest in the nation*

*BA, MA, and PhD programs*

*Programs in history, philosophy, literature,  
Hebrew, Yiddish, and more*

*Judaica library with more than 250,000 holdings*

*Two Graduate Fellowships  
(now accepting applications for the 2012-13 year)*

[meltoncenter.osu.edu](http://meltoncenter.osu.edu)

UniversityCommunityGrowth

## The Robert A. and Sandra S. Borns Jewish Studies Program Indiana University

- NEW: Master's Degree in Jewish Studies
- Doctoral Minor
- Undergraduate Major, Certificate & Hebrew Minor
- Graduate Fellowships and Undergraduate Scholarships Available



Goodbody Hall 326 • 1011 E. Third Street • Bloomington, IN 47405  
Tel: (812) 855-4153 • Fax: (812) 855-4314 • [injsp@indiana.edu](mailto:injsp@indiana.edu) • [www.indiana.edu/~jsp](http://www.indiana.edu/~jsp)



### Leo Baeck Institute Gerald Westheimer Career Development Fellowship

The Leo Baeck Institute is offering a Career Development Award as a personal grant to a scholar or professional in an early career stage, e.g. before gaining tenure in an academic institution or its equivalent, whose proposed work would deal with topics within the Leo Baeck Institute's mission, namely historical or cultural issues of the Jewish experience in German-speaking lands.

The award of up to \$20,000 will cover the period July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013 and, at the discretion of the reviewing board, may be renewed for a second year.

The grant is intended to provide for the cost of obtaining scholarly material (e.g. publications), temporary help in research and production needs, membership in scholarly organizations, travel, computer, copying and communication charges and summer stipend for non-tenured academics.

Applications outlining the nature and scope of the proposed project including a budget should be submitted, in no more than two pages, by March 1, 2012 to Dr. Frank Mecklenburg, Leo Baeck Institute, 15 E. 16<sup>th</sup> St. New York 10011, NY. A *curriculum vitae*, names of three references, and supporting material (outline of proposed work, draft of chapters, previous publications) should be appended. e-mail submission to [fmecklenburg@lbi.cjh.org](mailto:fmecklenburg@lbi.cjh.org) is encouraged.

# Making Klal Yisrael Count: The Difficulties of Defining Black Jewish Communities

Janice Fernheimer

In November 2008, I gave a presentation on my research about Black Jews and was asked a question that I've continued to think about ever since. The presentation was on Hatzaad Harishon, a multiracial nonprofit organization that valued *klal Yisrael* (Jewish peoplehood) and worked to gain greater recognition of and legitimacy for Black Jews in New York City and the surrounding areas from 1964–1972. The question was simple enough: “How many Black Jews are there?”

In trying to offer an answer, however, I brushed up against a host of issues that the term Black Jew raises—for Jewish peoplehood, for definitional claims, and for what Adam Newton terms “blackjewishrelations.” In order to answer the question, one first has to define who Black Jews are and that, like any question of Jewish identity, is no simple task. I'll elaborate more on the issue of definition in a moment, but first a little more about my answer in 2008.

In my response to the audience member, I cited a statistic I read in Tobin et al., “In Every Tongue: The Racial and Ethnic Diversity of the Jewish People,” which claimed that “20 percent of all Jewish people” or 1.2 million people were Jews of “diverse” backgrounds, a category used to include “African, African American, Latino (Hispanic), Asian, Native American, Sephardic, Mizrahi and mixed-race Jews by heritage, adoption, and marriage.” The statistic comes from The Institute for Jewish Community and Research (IJCR)'s 2002 national telephone survey, which suggested there are more than 6 million Jews in the United States, a much larger number than the 5.2 million that the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) found. The IJCR uses the same categories as the NJPS, but they argue they were able to locate more Jews for two reasons: “the nature of the questions and the order in which they were asked” (Tobin et al.). They found it “was less threatening to begin the interview with a series of personal questions that inquired about ancestry rather than religious identity.” Tobin et al. argue that the numerical discrepancy between the IJCR and the NJPS surveys stems from the IJCR's success in getting “more ethnic and cultural Jews” to respond. The audience member

bristled at my response, claiming the number seemed high and the category used to arrive at it was flawed. A respected Jewish social scientist and a member of the Black Jewish community offered a more modest number of 120,000, a number similar to what that NJPS 2000 found for “Jewish adults living in the United States who were born in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and the Caribbean (not including Israel).” In 2009, Yavilah McCoy was interviewed by the *Forward* and offered an even smaller number of 20,000 “self-identified Jews of color.”

Since so many of these questions hinge on the way the categories of Jew and Black are constructed, let me pause for a moment to unpack some of the terms. While people tend to think of race and religion as separate categories, they are often intermingled. For example, Jewish people had been in the U.S. since the early Republic and had initially been conceived as religious others. During the nineteenth century, however, they were racialized as Hebrews or Israelites after large numbers of Jewish immigrants came to the U.S. seeking refuge from government-sponsored persecution in much of Europe. During this same period, newly freed American blacks were attempting to construct a positive image of selfhood to counter the negative associations white racists attached to Blackness as a racial construct. Many African Americans turned to and identified with the Biblical Israelite narratives that were familiar to them from their experiences during slavery. At this historical juncture when nationalism was on the rise and the “Jewish Question” intersected with the “Negro Problem,” Israelitism offered recuperative answers to both, and the social and religious movement of Black Judaism was born. Melding beliefs from American religious traditions of Holiness Pentecostalism and Black nationalism, Black Judaism offered a way for many Black Americans to counter the negative stigma associated with Blackness by appealing to Israeliteness instead.

Yvonne Chireau calls attention to some of the earliest congregations: Williams Saunders Crowdy's Church of God and the Saints of Christ, also known as Temple Beth-el, established in Lawrence, Kansas in 1896; Prophet

Frank S. Cherry's Church of the Living God—Pillar and Ground of Truth for All Nations established in Philadelphia in 1912; and Elder Warren Robinson's Temple of the Gospel of the Kingdom, Ever Live and Never Die Church established in New York City in 1917. And perhaps the most famous and influential congregation of all is Rabbi Wentworth Matthew's Commandment Keepers established in New York City in 1919. Rabbi Matthew's congregation was one of the first to observe exclusively Jewish practices, and in 1925 he established the Ethiopian Hebrew Rabbinical College to help train Black Jewish Rabbis and spiritual leaders. As these spiritual leaders went on to found affiliate synagogues in other parts of New York, the U.S., and the Caribbean, Rabbi Matthew's influence and belief system gained considerable reach.

As the names suggest, many early Black Jewish congregations were not exclusively Jewish in orientation, and their beliefs and practices evolved over time. The term *Black Jew* has been used by and applied to a variety of groups with a wide continuum of religious beliefs, rituals, and practices. At one end are Black Jews who would be recognized by members of the recognized Jewish community as Jews either because they were born to an authenticated Jewish mother or because they had converted according to halakhah. On the other end are Blacks who identify as either Hebrews or Israelites through race and/or nationality, but who may share very little if any ritual practice with the recognized Jewish community. Moreover, some of these groups may actively argue that *they* and *not* the recognized Jewish community are the “true Jews.” In the middle are a variety of other groups who may use any of the terms: Jew, Hebrew, or Israelite, and who may perform rituals and practices that incorporate elements of recognized Judaism, Christianity, or both. Each group's choice of terms for self-identification is affected by a variety of cultural beliefs. Some groups eschew the use of the term “Jew” because it has come to be associated with whiteness in the U.S. context. Instead they prefer the terms Hebrew and Israelite because they are associated with ancient African roots, and have become a way to assert racial pride



Photo credit: Jewish Multiracial Network.

and affiliation with African customs, cultures, and traditions. For many Black Judaic groups, Hebrewism or Israelitism, and thus also identifying as Black Jews is a way of reclaiming African heritage.

Although these groups differ on how they define and trace their biblical ancestors (through Moses, King Solomon, Queen of Sheba) and whether or not they see themselves as one of the Lost Tribes, they all trace some kind of lineage from the ancient Hebrews or Israelites depicted in the Torah. Moreover, these groups share a belief that their biblical descendants were Black and spent time in Africa, either because they emphasize that ancient Israel was part of the African continent, because they believe that they are descendants of Ethiopians, or because they believe their descendants lived in exile in Africa after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Some groups also trace Jewish heritage through ancestors from Africa who practiced Jewish rituals such as

circumcision or refraining from eating pork and were later brought to the U.S. or the Caribbean as slaves. Other groups claim Jewish heritage through ancestors who were the offspring of unions between Jewish slave owners and slaves living in the Caribbean. Since many of the Jewish people involved in the slave trade were of Sephardic origin, people who claim this line of descent may identify primarily as Sephardic, rather than as Black Jews or as Jews of color, which of course returns us to the earlier questions of categorization and the relationship of Black Jews to broader conceptions of Jewish peoplehood.

The problem stems from the perception, shared by many Jews and non-Jews in the U.S. that Jews have become “white.” The predominant black/white binary of U.S. cultural apperception forces Jews to choose one or the other, though they may prefer to identify as neither. In this context Jews who do not fit the lighter-skinned Ashkenazi “norm,” may self-identify more strongly as “other,” regardless

of whether others identify them as persons of color. Admittedly, as the IJCR’s category “Jews of diverse backgrounds” suggests, the net may then get cast so widely as to not have significant meaning *unless* it is read against the grain of the perception of Jews as white. Shifting that perception to be more inclusive of a broader scope of Jewish peoplehood means taking Jews of color seriously, something many organizations and scholars have begun to do.

In November 2010, the International Society for the Study of African Jewry held its first meeting in London. Among others, groups such as Kulanu, B’chol Lashon, Jews in all Hues, and the Jewish Multi-Racial Network boast large memberships and garner attention from organizations within and outside the Jewish establishment. A slew of recent and forthcoming publications attests to a strong market for research in this area: Jacob Dorman’s *Chosen People*, forthcoming from Oxford, focuses on African American Israelites



and Black-Jewish relations; Don Seeman's *One People, One Blood: Ethiopian Israelis and the Return to Judaism* (2010); Edith Bruder's *The Black Jews of Africa: History, Religion, Identity* (2008); Emanuela Trevisan-Semi's *Jacques Faitlovitch and the Jews of Ethiopia* (2007); Marla Brettschneider's *The Family Flamboyant: Race Politics, Queer Families, Jewish Lives* (2006); and Lewis Gordon's establishment of the first center of Afro-Jewish Studies at Temple University in 2005. Meanwhile, Jews of color are also telling their own stories in myriad cultural productions: the recent musical *The Colors of Water*, written by Yavilah McCoy and Anita Diamant with editing by Janet Buchwald; Y-Love's (Yitzchak Jordan) rap music; Shais Rison's blog [www.manishtana.net](http://www.manishtana.net) and Jewish dating service for Jews of color; and Aliza Hausman's work in progress, *Memoirs of a Jewminicana*, to name just a few. Given the

burgeoning growth in community, scholarly, and creative production, I expected I might have some stronger ground to stand upon when revisiting the question, "How many Black Jews are there?" Instead I will end this piece with a request. The time has arrived for an authoritative survey of Black Jews in the U.S. and Africa, as part of a broader group of Jews who view themselves to be "of color" in the U.S. context. The new survey's results would allow me to answer the question, without causing other scholars to bristle. Of course, it will need to be clear about definitions and categories, explicitly defining who counts and why. The new survey instrument and study would be even more respected if Jews of color were included in both its design and implementation. A survey that combines some of the methods of Tobin et al. so as to reach more Jews of color, but clarifies its categories so that

it might acquire the authority and respect that NJPS has long received, and includes the input of Jews of color would be a welcome resource to scholars in this area. It is time to broaden the visuals we use to represent, clarify the definitions we use to construct, and sharpen the methods we use to count Jews of all hues.

*Janice W. Fernheimer is assistant professor of Writing, Rhetoric, and Digital Media at the University of Kentucky. She is completing the monograph Rhetoric, Race, Religion: Hatzaad Harishon and Black Jewish Identity from Civil Rights to Black Power (under contract with University of Alabama Press).*

*Thank you to Nicky McCatty for his help in obtaining photos to illustrate this article.*

## SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

Now Accepting Applications for:

FALL 2012

SPRING 2013\*

SUMMER 2013

HADASSAH-BRANDEIS INSTITUTE

The HBI Scholar-in-Residence Program welcomes applications from scholars, artists, writers, and communal professionals on any topic related to Jewish and gender studies for residencies of one to four months in fall 2012 and summer 2013.

All Scholars-in-Residence receive a monthly stipend, housing or a housing subsidy, and office space at the Brandeis University Women's Studies Research Center.

\* For Spring 2013, we will convene the Spring Seminar on Gender, Culture, Religion, and Law, and scholars working in two areas are invited to apply: those exploring conflicts between women's claims to gender equality and legal norms justified in terms of religious and cultural traditions, and those examining the status of women under religious law, either within a single tradition or using cross-cultural or interdisciplinary approaches.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 2, 2012**

Inquiries: [dollins@brandeis.edu](mailto:dollins@brandeis.edu)

THE HADASSAH-BRANDEIS INSTITUTE | [BRANDEIS.EDU/HBI](http://BRANDEIS.EDU/HBI) | 515 SOUTH STREET, WALTHAM, MA 02454



# Jewish Renewal and the Paradigm Shift: A Conversation with Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

David Shneer



Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi at the University of Colorado at Boulder, January 2011. Courtesy of the Program in Jewish Studies, University of Colorado at Boulder.

January 22, 2011

**David Shneer:** You're originally from Austria. I love your stories about your childhood in Vienna, going from davening on Shabbat morning to a Zionist youth group in the afternoon. After the Nazis came to power in Austria, you fled to Belgium, and then had to flee Europe entirely. You ended up in Brooklyn studying with the Lubavitcher rebbe, whom I believe you met as a refugee in France. And, if I recall, you were one of the earliest Chabad emissaries in the late 1940s and 1950s, traveling to college campuses and even having your own congregations. But something happened in the 1960s that made you realize there was something bigger or at least different for you to do. What happened?

**Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi:** The people whom you befriend, the people with whom you exchange ideas, they create change in you, and that included the people that I wanted to influence, in this case those who came to my Chabad community. So if I wanted to influence them, I had to know what they were thinking. When I started to understand what they were thinking, then I too began to think that way too.

There was a time when a group of rabbis used to meet at Oconomowoc in Wisconsin,

at the Union for Reform Judaism Institute. We paid our way, shared expenses, and talked to each other about those things that we couldn't talk about to people in our own rabbinic associations. These are the people who got my first report of my LSD experience, originally published in a book called *The Ecstatic Experience*, so the shift happened in a gradual way. After all, how could I influence people to continue with a Judaism that was still insisting, by some voices, that the world was created 5700 and so many years ago. I had already shifted in my mind from ortho-dox to ortho-prax. In other words, I kept the rules as they were, but I certainly couldn't teach it in the Orthodox way. It was always that I wanted to go into a deeper and higher understanding of the thing. In those days these ideas were piecemeal, like little islands of thought; some of them were more psychological, some of them were more spiritual, some of them were more ecumenical.

The turn to a more contemporary understanding of the world began in 1947 in New Haven, Connecticut, when I was still teaching at a Lubavitcher yeshiva. I start to read secular and religious teachings outside of Judaism and Chabad. I got hold of the *Portable World Bible* by Robert Ballou and found out that Gentiles also have rebbes. To my amazement I found out that in India there was such a person as Ramakrishna. And I found out that there are some Catholics who are monks and who are having difficulties in mental prayer, and I thought that they were doing the same thing. How do you keep your mind from wandering? How do you keep your mind, while you're meditating, from the intrusions of things you don't want? I began to see that we were all sharing practical ways of how to connect with God.

I got involved with different Catholic orders; that was in my Catholic period. Then I became involved in what I call my Hindu period.

At that time, I used to often talk about the "dialogue of devoutness." I would take a story of one of the rebbes and one of the Catholic Saints who were dealing with the same kind of situation. I loved to confuse my

students and take a snippet from the *Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot)*, from *The Desert Fathers*, and from the meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. I would cut away the personal markers and shuffle them all up and then I asked the students to try and separate which one is Christian, which is Jewish, and which one is pagan. They could not. It was all in the language and the experience of the second century of the Common Era.

So I always talked about the "dialogue of devoutness" instead of the dialogue of theology. The dialogue of theology gets us to a place where we have to talk about the doctrinal differences, and it becomes a disputation because it deals only with doctrinal differences. To call idolators people who believe different credos than I believe did not make sense to me anymore.

If the first part of my life in the United States was about restoration of the world destroyed in the Holocaust, by the 1950s and 1960s, I was envisioning something called Jewish Renewal, rooted in its time and place, and one that was future thinking rather than about the past. First, we talked about the update in theology and cosmology that Renewal demanded. Second was the feminist part. Third was eco-kosher, bio-kosher. And fourth, the importance of ecumenism, as I now formulate it, that every religion is a vital organ of the planet. It would be foolish to say that everybody should be Jewish, the same way as it would be foolish to say that the whole body should be made of liver.

**Shneer:** So how do you deal with the Jewish concept of chosenness?

**Schachter-Shalomi:** Chosen to be a liver. What would happen if all of a sudden I were to take liver cells and put them into my heart? I would die. I think specificity is necessary, just as we want specificity in plants, how we want specificity in animals. The DNA of something is very important and very specific. For example, I like to translate the name *Adonai tsva'ot*, classically translated as Lord of hosts, as Lord of diversity. I think diversity is a lot better way of saying that.

So Jewish Renewal then says: we want to continue the way of Jewish piety and the heart and spirituality. We want to continue it in such a way that we don't have to pawn our heads. We want to be able to do it in such a way that will contribute to the health of the planet. We want to do it in such a way that we recognize what we need: first of all, our connection with other religions. We want to feel free to borrow what we need from them and to let them borrow what they need from us. In 1962 or 63, shortly after China conquered Tibet and sent many Tibetans into diaspora, I met a Tibetan Lama in New Jersey. I mentioned to him if they want to know how to survive in the diaspora, it would be important for us to talk with each other. It took a long time until we came to Dharamsala.

In those days, after meeting the Dalai Lama, I sent a telegram to Ben-Gurion asking Israel to offer him sanctuary. It didn't happen, and it was better that it didn't happen. They made a lot of tsuris for him when he put the yarmulke on and went to the Western Wall. He is such a sweet guy, really a wonderful person. But then, you know the issue started to come up: how would the Tibetans survive? And he said, "You people have been doing this for two thousand years. How do you do it?" I suggested that they should have a Seder in the family to talk about the story of the Buddha's enlightenment, the story about how it came to Tibet, to talk about the foods that their forefathers ate (Tzampa) and drank four cups of butter tea. The whole point is to make it sensory.

In fact, this gets to one of the important things of the paradigm shift in religion—the importance of the body. Prior to that, everything that had to do with the body was low. If it's sensual, it's bad; that opens the door for Satan and so on.

Today we must start looking at the life of the planet as the highest priority. All religions have to put this as the highest priority: to enhance the organismic life of the planet. From that point of view we have to share more with each other and feel free to give and take. Look how much we have learned from yoga. Some people are doing Jewish yoga and some people enjoy Jewish meditation, which is *Vipassana* with a little bit of Yiddish salt and pepper, so that it should taste more Jewish. You see that this is inevitable. The world is moving to something that Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest in China,

described when he was told by the Church not to teach his stuff. His philosophy was that we are moving to an idea of the "divinization of the planet." I feel that Teilhard wasn't telling me something that was so out of my scope, because the first teaching I got from the Lubavitcher Rebbe's son-in-law, Menachem Mendel, who later became the last Lubavitcher Rebbe, way back in 1940 in Marseille as we were both fleeing Europe, already foreshadowed this idea for me.

**Shneer:** It's a sort of syncretic approach. Religions borrow from each other for sources of innovation.

**Schachter-Shalomi:** I don't like syncretic. It's a good word but it has been used in a negative way, to discount the interactions of religions. Organismic is different. I'll tell you why. Ilya Prigogine, a Belgian chemist, teaches that closed systems tend to entropy. How does a system survive? By having a strange attractor bring something from the outside in. When I start looking at how Judaism is a closed system in those enclaves that don't want to allow anything else in, I realize that entropy is setting in. Instead of dealing with spiritual values, we are now concerned about who is the one who declares that this is kosher—"from this kosher certification I don't eat and from that kosher certification I do eat"—that is entropy: spiritual entropy. It is necessary to let in things from the outside. That's why I don't like syncretism. It is too much in the head.

**Shneer:** At what point did you think that this new idea, what would come to be called Jewish Renewal, should be institutionalized, if ever?

**Schachter-Shalomi:** It started with Daniel Siegel. He had been to the Reconstructionist seminary in Philadelphia. He was very close to ordination but decided not to do it, because it was too dry and it didn't touch him. Daniel came to me and said, "Would you ordain me?" I told him that for me, if you want to be a rabbi, you have to know as much as a good European shammas knew. In Europe, if the rabbi couldn't do something, the shammas could step in. If the Torah reader (*baal kriya*) wasn't there, he could read the Torah. He could do everything that's necessary. Ultimately, we are asking, what does a rabbi need to *know*, but rabbis also need to have spiritual direction themselves.

**Shneer:** How do you maintain that initial charge that you gave to Daniel Siegel: that someone getting ordained needs to know what a European shammas does?

**Schachter-Shalomi:** Now he doesn't have to be a European shammas.

**Shneer:** What does he have to be now?

**Schachter-Shalomi:** Now he has to be a person who can be both a pastor and a spiritual guide to his people, and a liturgist who really knows the craft of not performing but being in the presence of God with a congregation.

**Shneer:** What brought us here to do this conversation was the donation of your papers to the University of Colorado's archives, which we hope will be beginning a much larger project of serving as the reservoir.

**Schachter-Shalomi:** And when people start asking the kinds of questions you asked me here, then they will have the documents for it. There were the innovations in the liturgy. We have all these documents here. The exchange of letters with some of the people like Thomas Merton is wonderful material. I'm now digging up some of the old letters written to and from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. That's wonderful material, too. People ask me, Are you happy with how Jewish renewal is today? And I say, "It's not my business anymore." Just as I was deployed and used by God and Earth in the process of life, so there will be other people who will be used the same way. If they are awake and open to what is happening, they will continue Jewish renewal.

Now what comes? A *brucha*, a blessing. May everybody who is going to touch one of those papers in the archive feel good about it, because some of these papers are going to fall apart or be out of order. May things in your life be so wonderful that you shouldn't get upset about that. So a blessing to all of you: *v'nomar. Amen.*

*David Shneer is professor of History at the University of Colorado, Boulder. His most recent book is Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War, and the Holocaust (Rutgers University Press, 2010).*

# JEWISH REVIEW

---

## OF BOOKS

*“An intellectual center where key Jewish ideas, issues, and books can be discussed and hashed out.”*

—The Chronicle of Higher Education

**Don't miss the next issue . . .  
subscribe today!**

### ***Recent articles include:***

Robert Alter on Yehuda Amichai

Allan Arkush on Zionism & Diaspora

Peter Berkowitz on Middle East Peace

Robert Chazan on The Crusades

Ruth Franklin on Holocaust Literature

Ruth Gavison on State Theory

Anthony Grafton on Elias Bickerman

Moshe Halbertal on Prayer

Hillel Halkin on Harold Bloom

Dara Horn on Yiddish Prophecy

Adam Kirsch on Rosa Luxemburg

Shaul Magid on Hasidism

Abraham Socher on Chabad

Norman Stillman on The Cairo Geniza

Ruth R. Wisse on Abraham Sutzkever

David Wolpe on Chief Rabbi Sacks

Steven J. Zipperstein on Saul Bellow



[www.jewishreviewofbooks.com](http://www.jewishreviewofbooks.com)

# Yale

YALE UNIVERSITY'S PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES SEEKS TO FILL A TENURED POSITION IN HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE. PRIMARY DEPARTMENTAL AFFILIATION WILL BE DETERMINED AS IS APPROPRIATE TO THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE'S FIELD AND METHODOLOGY. WHILE CANDIDATES ARE EXPECTED TO HAVE BROAD FAMILIARITY WITH THE CORPUS OF HEBREW LITERATURE AS A WHOLE ACROSS ITS HISTORY, PREFERENCE WILL BE GIVEN TO CANDIDATES WHO WORK IN MODERN HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE. CANDIDATES SHOULD BE THOROUGHLY FLUENT IN HEBREW LANGUAGE AS WELL AS WHICHEVER LANGUAGES WERE IN CONTACT WITH HEBREW IN A CANDIDATE'S AREA OF SPECIALIZATION. THEY SHOULD BE WELL-GROUNDED IN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF LITERATURE, INCLUDING THE ABILITY TO SITUATE HEBREW LITERATURE AND ITS HISTORY WITHIN BROADER CULTURAL AND COMPARATIVE CONTEXTS. CANDIDATES SHOULD HAVE AN OUTSTANDING RECORD OF EXCELLENCE IN PUBLICATION AND TEACHING, THE LATTER AT BOTH THE UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE LEVELS. THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE WILL BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO EXISTING PROGRAMS IN THE TEACHING OF HEBREW LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, WORKING CLOSELY WITH COLLEAGUES IN THE PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES AS WELL AS IN RELEVANT DEPARTMENTS AND PROGRAMS. YALE UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER. YALE VALUES DIVERSITY AMONG ITS STUDENTS, STAFF, AND FACULTY AND STRONGLY ENCOURAGES APPLICATIONS FROM WOMEN AND UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY SCHOLARS. APPLICATIONS, WITH CURRENT VITAE, SHOULD BE SUBMITTED ONLINE AT [HTTPS://ACADEMICJOBSONLINE.ORG/AJO/JOBS/968](https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/968)

INQUIRIES AND NOMINATIONS CAN BE SENT BY E-MAIL TO THE CHAIR, AT  
<RENEE.REED@YALE.EDU>.

APPLICATIONS WILL BE REVIEWED BEGINNING NOVEMBER 1, 2011.

# Yale

**YALE UNIVERSITY  
PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES  
JACOB AND HILDA BLAUSTEIN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW  
2012-2014**

THE PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES AT YALE UNIVERSITY IS OFFERING A TWO-YEAR JACOB & HILDA BLAUSTEIN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP THAT WILL BEGIN ON JULY 1, 2012. CANDIDATES FOR THE FELLOWSHIP MUST HAVE A PH.D. IN HAND BY JULY 1, 2012 AND MUST HAVE RECEIVED THE DEGREE NO EARLIER THAN 2009. THE PROGRAM SEEKS A SPECIALIST IN MEDIEVAL JEWISH HISTORY/JUDAISM WHO WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH APPROPRIATE MEMBERS OF YALE'S FACULTY.

THE JUDAIC STUDIES BLAUSTEIN FELLOW WILL BE EXPECTED TO BE IN RESIDENCE, TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YALE'S LIBRARY AND ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS, TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF THE UNIVERSITY, AND TO TEACH THREE SEMESTER COURSES OVER TWO YEARS. THE ANNUAL STIPEND WILL BE \$52,000 PLUS HEALTH BENEFITS.

CANDIDATES CAN APPLY ONLINE AT

[HTTPS://ACADEMICJOBSONLINE.ORG/AJO/JOBS/998](https://academicjobsonline.org/ajo/jobs/998) OR SEND A COVER LETTER, CV, PROJECT PROPOSAL, THREE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION, AND A LIST OF PROPOSED COURSES TO:

JACOB AND HILDA BLAUSTEIN POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

JUDAIC STUDIES

P.O. BOX 208282

NEW HAVEN, CT 06520-8282

EMAIL: [RENEE.REED@YALE.EDU](mailto:RENEE.REED@YALE.EDU)

WEBSITE: [HTTP://WWW.YALE.EDU/JUDAICSTUDIES](http://WWW.YALE.EDU/JUDAICSTUDIES)

**THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATION MATERIALS IS**

**FEBRUARY 6, 2012**

*YALE UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION  
EMPLOYER*



# The Latest

## Jewish History on the Mall

Deborah Dash Moore

As I climbed the stairs at the Fifth Street subway station, brilliant sunlight and blue skies greeted me. Turning left, I stepped onto new gray paving and paused to look up at the handsome building facing Philadelphia's Independence Mall. Jews had arrived here, where Revolutionary America took shape, to claim their public presence. I rounded the corner to enter the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH). Facing me stood an African American guard and a Jewish cashier. I purchased my ticket from the cashier, who explained that it was a souvenir of my visit. Then I turned to the guard, who indicated the security apparatus. No doubt about it: NMAJH was a Jewish museum; no way I could mistake it for MoMA where one walks in unscanned.

Exiting the elevator on the fourth floor where the exhibit begins I read statements on freedom articulating the museum's theme. "Behold a government, erected by the Majesty of the People," Moses Seixas, the warden of Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, wrote to George Washington in 1790 when he became president, "which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance. . . ." The language reverberates as an American ideal. A less well-known quote from Abraham Cahan, the formidable editor of the Yiddish daily *Forverts*, speaks of freedom as a shared hope, the opportunity to live in freedom as an animating dream. Images accompany the words: photographs of American Jews, starting with Hank Greenberg and ending with Ethel Rosenberg. I nodded with recognition until I came to Helga Weise. Helga Weise? Fifteen years ago Paula Hyman and I edited a historical encyclopedia of *Jewish Women in America*. Helga Weise? I shrugged.

Freedom's theme now received visual and historical articulation: Jews are wanderers; expelled from Vienna in the seventeenth century, they arrive in New York harbor and gaze on the Statue of Liberty in the nineteenth century. Freedom allows Jews to invent and reinvent themselves: Camden Jews salute the Israeli flag in 1948. Freedom inspires struggles for rights and political protest: Bella Abzug leads a Women's Strike for Peace march in



Bar and Bat Mitzvah Cake Toppers. National Museum of American Jewish History, 2006.1, Peter H. Schweitzer Collection of Jewish Americana.

1961; cloakmakers go on strike in 1916. The images are dizzying and eclectic. I retreated to walk across the bridge to the exhibit proper, covering 1654–1880. This standard chronology posits the violence that accelerated Jewish emigration from the Russian empire as a key turning point.

Much that follows is familiar: Peter Stuyvesant gives Jews permission to trade

and live in New Amsterdam even as he tries to exclude them; a map shows migration and trade routes as well as the growth of settlements (including, in a nice transnational touch, Montreal and Jamaica); family trees carry several of the early arrivals down to the twentieth century ending with some recognizable names (Supreme Court justice Benjamin Cardozo and *New York Times* publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger). Then, portraits of colonial Jews, the first original objects. The text panel points out that nothing in the paintings references the Jewish identity of these men and women. The number of objects increases now, many lent by the American Jewish Historical Society. And we hear the first of many actors speaking historical texts, in this case, a woman reading from Abigail Franks's letters in a high British accent.

The museum offers some gems: Anna Gratz's coffee service and Poor Will's pocket almanac with annotations by Michael Gratz indicating Hebrew dates. The elegant Hebrew script exemplifies the dual nature of Jewish



The Hebrew Purim Ball at the Academy of Music, Purim Association of New York City, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, April 1, 1865. National Museum of American Jewish History, 1992.4.70.



Tzedakah Box, Federation of Jewish Charities, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ca. 1920. National Museum of American Jewish History, 1996.21.1. Gift of Marilyn Witlin Eisenstaedt.

life in early America as does Joseph Simon's miniature Torah scroll that he carried to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, when it was a trading outpost. Colonial Jews may have been acculturated merchants who often intermarried but they were neither ignorant of Jewish learning nor willing to forsake Jewish religious traditions.

The Revolution is presented in a red room, with booming battle sounds, a woman narrating the relevant history, and what will become another museum theme—that Jews fought on both sides of battles that divided Americans. Financier Haym Solomon is given his own panel but the straightforward text acknowledges that his relatives embellished his career, reflecting the latest perspective in historical scholarship. Similarly, a panel on the celebration of the revolution in Philadelphia describes the triumphant march in which Jews participated as equals and the option of a kosher table at which they could feast at the end of the parade. The new United States of America would offer Jews both solidarity and separation.

Not until the nineteenth century do Jews begin to be treated as a group. The fight for Jews' rights to hold office in Maryland elicits a from a visitor, "I don't like Maryland anymore. You had to be a Christian to hold office." A large map with flashing lights and spoken narrative occupies the center of a room ringed with panels on different cities: New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, Cincinnati, Houston. Women receive equal attention. Rebecca Gratz's signal

achievements occupy a large case, along with her fancy silver shoe buckles made by the famous Jewish silversmith, Myer Myers. The Charleston panel includes Isaac Harby's English/Hebrew manuscript book of the first reformed liturgy but it is too high to read. At least I can enjoy the imaginative trade cards advertising Jewish stores.

An elaborate unkosher menu of a B'nai B'rith Banquet at the West End Hotel in New Orleans in 1886 upstages the notorious Trefa banquet. Dance cards, fancy dresses, and Purim balls introduce charitable activities. Then comes the anti-Semitic incident of exclusion from a hotel in Saratoga, New York.

I headed downstairs to dreams of freedom. White plaster curved sheets symbolizing immigrants' correspondence form a backdrop for mostly anonymous images, words, and voices. "I'm a revolutionary," announces an accented woman's speech. I cross the bridge to view the years 1880–1945. Alfred Stieglitz's famous photograph of *The Steerage* confronts me. Every photography scholar knows that Stieglitz took this 1907 picture on a ship bound for Europe. The non-Jewish women and men in steerage were heading home. Yet American Jews can't resist transforming the photo into an icon of arrival, symbolizing Jews who immigrated to the United States and not the fraction who returned. If you don't look carefully, you can even imagine that the woman standing in steerage wearing a white shawl with a black stripe over her head is a man wearing a tallit. I was annoyed. None of the eminent scholars who guided the exhibit would have deliberately misused a document. But a photo, even a famous one, is just a picture . . .

My annoyance gradually dissipated as I pass stacks of suitcases, a map of waves of migration (which includes Canada but not Mexico), ads for ship companies, debates on quotas, an interactive display. Then I saw a panel debunking the myth of name changes at Ellis Island. Immigrants Americanized their own names, the text explains, sometimes helped by public school teachers. A container holds laminated single sheets from Hebrew and Yiddish papers, with an English translation on the back. Nice. As the daughter and granddaughter of printers I admired the linotype keyboard machine. Very nice. The objects start to pile up—candlesticks, menorah, tallit katan from 1888 with lovely embroidery, yahzeit calendar, a ketubah with a photograph of the bride and groom. There are seltzer bottles (later there is bottling machine for seltzer), a samovar, noodle cutter, Breakstone's box



Baseball Signed by Sandy Koufax. National Museum of American Jewish History, 2004.1.2. Gift of George Blumenthal.



Ice Skate of Sasha Cohen. National Museum of American Jewish History, 2006.1.2905, Peter H. Schweitzer Collection of Jewish Americana.

for cheese, and the 1923 *Jewish Cook Book* (in much better shape than the one I inherited). The theme of "Becoming American" touches on settlement houses, Jewish education, the Jewish underworld, and the garment industry.

Rapidly the exhibit continues into World War I, "Freedom Challenged." War posters, soldiers' uniforms, and Alfred Uhry talking about the trial and lynching of Leo Frank, along with the Palmer Raids that rounded up radicals after the war convey effectively a dark spirit in the United States. This leads, unsurprisingly, to "Closing America's Doors." Then the exhibit considers the interwar years under the rubric, "Competing Visions." Eddie Cantor sings, "If You Knew Susie," one of my favorite girlhood songs. I'm in a good mood until the Hollywood Moguls appear on screen. There unfurls the standard litany of tough, ambitious men who struggled to make it in America. "As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again," intones the text, explaining that film industries on the

economic margins allowed Jews, prevented from entering other fields, a chance to succeed in a new industry. A parade of name changes undercuts the earlier panel. I'm still angry at the language. Am I the only person who hears "moguls" and thinks oriental potentates? Hardly a friendly or accurate way to describe businessmen, entrepreneurs, and motion picture executives. I'm disappointed to see NMAJH use a historically pejorative term.

I left entertainment for "Jewish Identities, American Culture." Here, Yiddish song and Tin Pan Alley compete for our attention. Henry Roth, Mike Gold, and Superman duke it out in a section on literature. I was pleased to discover modern dance and wish that photography had been recognized. The Art Students League and Ben Shahn's mural, a sculpture by Chaim Gross and a small painting Moses Soyer offer a taste of New York Jewish culture. Next is "Jews Face the Great Depression," plus Communism and Socialism. Materials from Jewish summer camps convey how Jews attempted to inculcate values in their children. Religious materials abound. A fantastic architectural model of the Brooklyn Jewish Center showing the pool in the basement, elegant social hall

above it, and large synagogue on the second floor demonstrates beautifully the multiple components of synagogue center.

Turning the corner, I confront two screens up high, one with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the other with Hitler. The juxtaposition effectively demonstrates parallel events unfolding in the 1930s. FDR reminds us that all we have to fear is fear itself. "Jackass," spit a young man behind me. "Should have bombed the shit out of Germany and be done with it." In the next room Jewish GIs tell stories about Dachau and fighting. "Prayer is not enough," Lester Strikoff explains. "You got to go out there and do things." At the Battle of the Bulge, he was the point man. The two men and one woman, Dorothy Nash, hold their audience riveted.

The final floor covers the rest of the twentieth century. Its themes, "Expanding Freedom," include civil rights and the Rosenbergs' Cold War, Israel and suburbanization, Feminism and Soviet Jewry. A rapidly changing screen asks questions: What would you have done? What were their dreams? What were their fears? New faces appear on the bridge to the exhibit. I recognize American studies

scholar Alan Trachtenberg and feminist theologian Judith Plaskow. I also recognized the title of one of my books as a heading of a section, "To the Golden Cities," and smiled. On a 1950s television set in a suburban Jewish house, I glimpsed Sid Caesar, Jack Benny, and Dinah Shore and Barbra Streisand on the Jack Paar show in 1961.

Suburbanization means new synagogues. Frank Lloyd Wright's Elkins Park synagogue takes center stage. The widespread popularity of Bar and Bat Mitzvah register in invitations, cake toppers, an October 1952 issue of *Life* featuring "Life Goes to a Bar Mitzvah." I admired Margo Bloom's Bat Mitzvah dress and remembered my own.

Video clips present diverse intellectual and political figures. Sequences pair songs, such as Bob Dylan's "Don't Want to Work on Maggie's Farm No More" with Allen Ginsberg saying "Ohm," or Carole King's music with Betty Friedan and women's liberation, or Simon and Garfunkel with the civil rights march in Birmingham. The pairs work. Then diverse panels picture women's activism, Israel advocacy and the Six Day War, the Soviet Jewry struggle. Popular culture returns with "Exodus," "Bagels and Bongos," an American Jewish Girl Doll, and a Reagan button in Yiddish (but not one for Nixon).

The final room asks questions—Are Jews white? And invites answers—most say no. I didn't linger; I needed to catch a train.

NMAJH represents an impressive achievement. It takes an unwieldy theme of freedom and works creatively to portray tensions as it moves through time. The exhibit draws on recent historical scholarship even as it hesitates to break new ground. It privileges popular culture and social history over that of elites and situates American Jews as part of the fabric of American society. The tone is mostly celebratory, not a portrait of declension. Yet the exhibit confronts difficult issues, such as the Cold War and trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. The museum implicitly engages the other buildings around the mall, inserting American Jews into an historical dialogue better than any single book. Would I go back? Yes, if my grandson accompanied me.

*Deborah Dash Moore is director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of History at the University of Michigan. She is co-editor with Marion Kaplan of Gender and Jewish History (Indiana University Press, 2011).*



Now celebrating its twentieth anniversary, the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison brings together scholars, students, and community members to study and interpret Jewish history, religion, politics, society, and culture.

- Over 20 affiliated faculty members in the arts, humanities, education, law, and social sciences
- Undergraduate Major and Certificate programs in Jewish Studies
- Scholarships and grants available to undergraduate and graduate students, including the Weinstein Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in Education and Jewish Studies
- Home to the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture
- Numerous community programs, including the Greenfield Summer Institute, the Conney Project on Jewish Arts, and Madison Summer KlezKamp

<http://jewishstudies.wisc.edu>



# SCHOLARSHIP. MEANING. COMMUNITY.

At The Graduate School of The Jewish Theological Seminary, we examine texts through multiple lenses to understand their significance for different communities, both past and present. This type of sophisticated study is the cornerstone of the rigorous graduate education that we provide here at JTS.

- Immerse yourself in Jewish texts
- Study with our world-renowned faculty
- Deepen your understanding of the Jewish experience

**Join us in exploring scholarship that matters. Our diverse academic community will enrich your studies and shape the scholar and leader you will become.**



## **The Jewish Theological Seminary**

The Graduate School  
Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies  
H. L. Miller Cantorial School  
and College of Jewish Music  
The Rabbinical School  
William Davidson Graduate School  
of Jewish Education



# JTS

## **The Graduate School**

3080 BROADWAY • NEW YORK, NY 10027  
(212) 280-6060 • [www.jtsa.edu/graduate](http://www.jtsa.edu/graduate)



# The New Jewish Food Movement and the Jewish Consumer

Andrea Lieber



Students at the KoVe, Dickinson College, 2010. Photo credit: A. Pierce Bounds.

The line to get food from the KoVe, the new KOsHer-VEgan concession in our college dining hall, often winds around the corner. On a typical day, while the regular menu features a standard burger and fries, at the KoVe, you can choose honey-glazed salmon with a Jack Daniels pineapple topping, or an oat nut burger, each served with side dishes of sugar snap peas and butternut squash seasoned with ginger and cilantro.

Students willing to wait out the long lines say that the food offered by the KoVe is healthier and fresher, compared with the regular fare. “It’s just better,” one student declared when I asked her if it was worth the wait. A small minority of students choose the KoVe because of its Star-K kosher supervision—in fact, there is only one student on campus who observes a fully halakhic definition of kashrut. Many of those who frequent the KoVe are vegetarians, excited about the gourmet vegan choices. According to Louise Powers, one of two full time *mashgichot*, “Keeping kosher doesn’t have to mean eating matzoh ball soup. . . Anyone can eat kosher food, and we want to be sure it is tasty enough so anyone may want to. Food can be kosher *and* delicious.”

What does it mean for kosher dining and vegan dining to form an alliance in the marketplace of a college cafeteria? In some respects, the kosher-vegan alliance reinforces the popular assumption that “kosher” equals “healthy,” an idea explored at length in Sue Fishkoff’s recent book, *Kosher Nation*, which chronicles the story of kashrut’s Americanization. The fact that a small liberal arts college in rural Pennsylvania is literally “catering” to two niche dietary needs is also a symbolic attempt at inclusivity and an acknowledgement of student diversity. But, what interests me most about the success of the KoVe on campus is the extent to which it is a product of what has been called a “new Jewish food movement”—a popular current that marries kashrut and environmental sustainability toward a new reading of traditional Jewish practices.

The new Jewish food movement is a specifically Jewish phenomenon that intersects with a broader, national conversation about food sourcing and food consumption in the United States. The conversation has been fueled by best selling books like Michael Pollan’s *Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Eric Schlosser’s *Fast Food Nation*, and Matthew Abelman’s *Fields of*

*Plenty*. These works, like the documentaries *Super Size Me* and *Food Inc.*, each highlight the way politics, economics, and big industry all intersect at the American dinner table. The growing popularity of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, as well as the Obamas’ backyard organic garden, are indications that people nationwide are taking the conversation seriously.

While the broader food movement in the U.S. is grounded in an implicit critique of the American consumer culture that gave us factory farming and McDonald’s, the new Jewish food movement also argues for a shift in the way we think about Jewish consumption. In articulating a model of the Jewish consumer that centers around an ethic of sustainability and environmental awareness, the new Jewish food movement offers a paradigm for American Jewish consumption in the post-Madoff era that challenges twentieth-century postwar images of the Jew as a materialistic (over)consumer. The new ideal of a just, restrained, and sustainable Jewish consumer thus stands in blatant contrast to the portrayal of the Jew as a stereotypical driver of capitalism, exemplified by overly lavish bar mitzvahs, suburban



McMansions, and stereotypes of the Jewish American Princess that had been the stock and trade of pop cultural representations of Jews for decades.

The loudest voice of this emerging movement is HAZON, a nonprofit organization that promotes experiential education around issues of environmental sustainability. Partnering with similarly focused organizations like Jewish Farm School, The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, Urban Adamah, and the Teva Learning Center, HAZON's programming is trans-denominational and appeals to Jews at various life stages, but especially young adults. Providing immersion experiences, such as short-term internships in a Jewish farming community, bike rides to raise funds for environmental projects, and CSAs with a specifically Jewish educational component, HAZON's programs emphasize Jewish tradition as a pathway that opens up to an engagement with universal concerns.

The Jewish food movement's redefined ideal of ethical consumption is expressed primarily through a re-reading of classical texts, where Jewish sources are read for their alignment with more universal, contemporary values about sustainability and social justice. In HAZON's educational materials, *berakhot* over food are re-interpreted as a system of mindfulness that fosters our awareness of food sourcing, and kashrut itself is emphasized as an ethical discipline. Many of the agricultural laws in the Bible become aligned with contemporary issues concerning the ethical treatment of food laborers and feeding the world's hungry. Shabbat, in a new application of Heschel's classic work, is read as a practice that fosters restrained consumption.

While rereading classical sources in new ways is perhaps the cornerstone of any progressive movement in Jewish culture, there are some trends in this latest phenomenon that really stand out. The new Jewish food movement is characterized by what Andrea Most, in a session devoted to this topic at the 2010 AJS

annual meeting, called a "neo-pastoral" mood that echoes "back to the land" projects in modern Jewish history, which of course found its greatest expression in Zionism. Through hands-on educational experiences that introduce farming and agriculture in a Jewish context, the movement promotes a spiritual connection to the local environment through a deep engagement with Jewish texts and traditions that relate to both food production and consumption.

One implicit assumption evident in many of these reinterpretations of classical sources is that Judaism, in its twentieth-century materialism, has become alienated from the true meanings of its own texts. In earlier periods of Jewish history, Jews' alienation from the land was figured as an overemphasis on text; the Jewish condition of diaspora caused Jews to privilege text over place. Now, in the new Jewish food movement, this situation is reversed. In the twenty-first century, our alienation from the deepest meaning of Jewish texts is actually the result of our own alienation from land—from our pastoral roots, and from the primary ways of reading Jewish law in its original agricultural context. Urban farms, synagogue CSAs, and biblical gardens are the new laboratories where younger generations of Jews can experiment with a Judaism that seems relevant in a cultural moment when everyone seems to be thinking about food.

Tensions between new and classical readings of kashrut came front and center last fall when a drama erupted surrounding the use of disposable tableware at the KoVe. The KoVe functions as a single station within a larger dining facility that serves the entire student body. Students use regular dishes and silverware in the main facility, which are later washed by industrial dishwashers and reused again later. In order to maintain the necessary standards of kashrut, the KoVe serves food only on disposable plates with disposable utensils. This enables students who eat at the KoVe to mingle with their friends in the

cafeteria, regardless of what's on their plates. But, it also means that you can't bring a dish from another area of the cafeteria to the KoVe counter.

The KoVe uses all biodegradable and compostable disposables, and composts them in house at Dickinson's own 180-acre organic farm that then provides fresh produce to the KoVe. Nonetheless, the vegan student community became outraged by what it perceived as rampant waste at the KoVe. The fact that the Star-K certification authority sanctioned this waste in the name of keeping kosher was confusing—after all, wasn't environmental sustainability a Jewish value? One student was concerned enough to write about the dilemma in an independent student publication on campus, stating "The choice to use all bioplates represents a relatively fair, although, I would argue, ultimately damaging, ethical compromise between a Jewish food ethic and a sustainable environmental ethic."

Students were very vocal about what they perceived to be hypocrisy on the part of the KoVe *mashgichot*. If keeping kosher meant eating sustainably, how could the halakhic requirements of the Star-K authority trump *bal tashkhit*, the biblical prohibition against waste? And, of course, the *mashgichot* were completely baffled as to why students would even want to put kosher food on a non-kosher plate to begin with. In the field of environmental ethics, tension between competing ethical priorities is often resolved by positing a hierarchy of values. If the KoVe has to answer to "a higher authority," to quote the iconic Hebrew National campaign of the 1970s, I wonder which authority will ultimately prevail?

*Andrea Lieber is the Sophia Ava Asbell Chair of Judaic Studies and associate professor of Religion at Dickinson College. She is the author of The Essential Guide to Jewish Prayer and Practice (Alpha Books/Penguin USA, forthcoming in March 2012).*

[www.trigere.com](http://www.trigere.com)  
[jane@trigere.com](mailto:jane@trigere.com)

The "Women of the Balcony" series is at the Derfner Judaica Museum

**TRIGERE  
ART**

Visit  
**AJS  
booth  
101**

to see "A Binder for Isaac"

**SCHOEN  
BOOKS**

[www.schoenbooks.com](http://www.schoenbooks.com)  
[ken@schoenbooks.com](mailto:ken@schoenbooks.com)

Request our email catalogues of scholarly Judaica



# The Questionnaire

## What is the most and least successful course you have taught?

### Rebecca Alpert

*Associate Professor, Department of Religion,  
Temple University*

#### Teaching “Religion in Philadelphia”

I have taught undergraduate courses at Temple University (a bit of Jewish Studies but mostly Religion and Women’s Studies) for many years, but a pedagogy course I took this past summer transformed the way I defined success in my teaching. While I used to place more emphasis on the quality of my lectures and the dynamism of class discussion, I now also measure success by how well I design assignments and what students learn in the process of doing them. During the fall 2010 semester I had an opportunity to test out my new criteria in a course I created for our general education program, “Religion in Philadelphia,” which I taught for the first time.

The most successful assignment was a “Mapping Religious Philadelphia” project. Students ventured out in groups of four to observe together what religion looked like on the streets in a Philadelphia neighborhood of their choosing. I created the groups based on how students rated themselves on the skills needed to complete the project—powers of observation, knowledge of the city and its transportation systems, access to digital photography equipment, the ability to create maps and make PowerPoints, and comfort with oral presentation. In preparation I showed them a PowerPoint I had created that highlighted different aspects of religious life, encouraging them to look beyond churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques to other dimensions, from billboards and graffiti to grave stones and historical markers. The projects they presented in class were fabulous examples of what students can do when asked to work together to discover and create. They also let me know how much they enjoyed not only doing the assignment but learning from each other in the evaluations I asked them to write about their experiences.

The least successful assignment was a final portfolio, in which I asked students to collect their work, resubmit the best examples (and something they revised), and write a

short essay reflecting on what was most beneficial and what was most difficult for them. Judging from their essays, I didn’t craft the assignment well. The prompts I gave did not evoke the level of critical thinking and analysis that I wanted. In the future, I will write better questions, asking for cumulative and synthetic judgments about their work that I hope will elicit more thoughtful responses.

I highly recommend finding ways to challenge students to do work that encourages their active participation and reflection—it makes teaching more productive and more fun!

### Mark Baker

*Associate Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Director of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University*

After a quarter of a century of teaching and watching the blackboard change to a whiteboard and now a digital screen, I’ve moved many of my classes from the lecture room to off-shore sites. Over the past year I’ve taught an intensive, two-week course on the aftermath of conflict and genocide in South Africa and Rwanda; a course on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Israel and the Palestinian Territories; and journeyed with student groups through the landscapes of post-Holocaust memory in Berlin, Prague, Warsaw, Krakow, and Vilnius. Students emerge from these immersions in the ‘traumascapes, of recent’ history engaged and transformed by the encounter. Of course there is the compulsory research essay, readings, and exam, but nothing in the classroom can match a conversation with a Rwandan survivor whose flesh is marked by a machete wound; or a visit to a church near Kigali where the bones of the slaughtered worshippers bear witness to their final prayers; or attendance at a genocide tribunal on a rural hilltop in Rwanda; or being guided through the alleyways of Soweto by a fellow student who grew up there; or a visit to an abandoned wooden synagogue near the forests of Ponary; or taking the train from Berlin to Wannsee and stopping at Platform

17 from where Germany’s Jews were deported; or moving from a hotel in West Jerusalem to East Jerusalem; or visiting Abraham’s tomb in Hebron twice—once from the Jewish side and then again from the Muslim side; or meeting a student in Deheishe refugee camp, and then listening to a parent speak of his hope despite losing a daughter in a suicide bomb attack in Jerusalem.

My worst course? The one I’ll be giving next year where I find myself alone in the lecture room, while the students are all at home listening to me talk to myself through technologies that encourage absence. I might just turn off the button and see if anyone notices.

### Michael Feige

*Senior Lecturer in Israel Studies, Sociology,  
and Anthropology, Ben-Gurion University*

Coming for a year from Israel to Emory University, Atlanta, I was required to teach two courses on Israel and two general courses in Sociology. For one of those courses, I chose “Introduction to Sociology” (101). Teaching that course often in Israel, and having experience in teaching more advanced sociology courses, I was under the illusion that even if you would wake me up in the middle of the night, I would be able to stand before a class and deliver an inspiring appearance. That turned out not to be the case. I learned how culture-specific an introduction to a seemingly universalistic academic discipline can be. I knew Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, but I did not truly know my students. When teaching the sociology of religion, class, ethnicity, deviance, and gender, I found it difficult to relate to their life experiences. It was a sobering experience for me, as the supposedly easy course turned out to be the most exhausting, time-consuming, and anxiety-generating that I have ever done.

My best classes would be small seminars of highly motivated advanced students, discussing contested topics of Israeli historiography, touching upon their identity as Israelis, their moral convictions, and also, tacitly, the turbulent academic world that they hope to

join. Those miraculous, intense encounters sometimes do happen, and when they do, they may have a profound influence on the students. This year, however, my first-year introductory course on Israeli society, with seventy students, is becoming an unexpected pleasure. It all started by accident. Checking attendance, I realized that the students—for reasons beyond my grasp—added their identity numbers to their names. I told them that, not being from the Mossad, I have no use for those numbers. I asked them to write their majors instead. The following week, they were requested to add their hometown. Growing in confidence, I moved to all kinds of simple opinion polls, presenting the results in the following class. When discussing the dominance of the army in the Israeli cultural sphere, I pointed out that last week, when the question was what Israeli movie they liked best, most students chose movies having the army as their main theme. The question on the favorite Israeli song showed that most students chose songs that were composed and performed before they were born, and about a third picked songs probably older than their parents. And the most popular prime minister, according to students of Israel Studies at Ben-Gurion University, was Yitzhak Rabin, with the namesake of the university coming only second. Learning about Israeli society became a joint experience full of surprises, for me as well as for the students. For Israeli students, studying their own society is both thrilling and unnerving; the polls, limited and “unscientific” as they were, stressed the connection between the material learned and their living experiences, in a totally different and more satisfying way than my “Introduction to Sociology” course mentioned before.

## Christine Hayes

*Robert F. and Patricia R. Weis Professor of Religious Studies in Classical Judaica, Yale University*

My most successful courses are those in which I manage to render unfamiliar that which is familiar. A good example is my “Introduction to the Hebrew Bible.” Students who take this course invariably enter the course with some presuppositions about the Bible and/or the deity who figures as one of its central characters, deriving from religious education or simply reflecting general cultural assertions (positive or negative) about the Bible. I love creating the conditions in which these

comfortable presuppositions are challenged, dissolved, and ultimately replaced by a more profound understanding of the complex, multifaceted, and multivocal nature of the text. The intellectual and personal excitement this generates in students is palpable.

In general, I think that any course that centers on the study of religious texts will succeed to the degree that the students come to see that they cannot exempt religious texts from the kind of loving scrutiny, wrestling, and pummeling with which we favor every other kind of text in our world. When approaching religious texts, many students put on kid gloves while others, animated by an iconoclastic fervor, treat them dismissively and derisively. I hope that in my Bible course and other text-based courses, students learn to transcend these dichotomies so as to encounter and struggle with the texts in all their rich complexity—their grandeur, their banality, their pathos, their self-contradiction, and, surprisingly enough, their profound humor (a feature students so often miss).

My least successful course was a general survey of the Ancient Near East taught at the very beginning of my career. Although I tried to make the lectures as interesting as possible, it seemed to me that the course fell flat—it lacked the sparkle, intellectual energy, and excitement that are such important elements of good teaching. As I thought about why this might be the case, I realized that it was because I did not have—and therefore did not convey to my students—a good account of why what I was teaching mattered. In preparing a new course now, I think long and hard about why what I am teaching matters. This has an influence not only on what I choose to teach but on the energy and excitement with which I present it.

## Robin Judd

*Associate Professor of History and Jewish Studies, The Ohio State University*

*Perspective's* query concerning my most and least successful courses summoned a hodgepodge of embarrassing, exhilarating, and meaningful memories. It may seem facile, but my teaching zeniths and nadirs are inexorably linked to my pedagogical goals. In the last decade, I have come to identify five metrics: Do I get to know my audience? Do I challenge my students to take risks in order to achieve knowledge? Do I create a bridge between my classroom and the larger communities

in which we live? Do I organize my courses around specific themes and questions? Do I promote discussion about the class material inside and outside of the classroom?

One course stands in stark relief. My first year at Ohio State, I taught a seminar entitled “Gender and Jewish History.” Despite the fact that my teaching and research interests directly informed the course, the class was a disaster. Of the two women and twenty men enrolled in the class, few expressed excitement with the reading list or assignments. Almost no one was interested in questions of gender or in the Jewish experience. Students had taken the course because they needed a class on Tuesdays at 1:30. Others expressed their now-dashed hopes that they would meet a Jewish girl (they had, but I was their professor and married).

The class bombed. I did not make the materials relevant. I focused on maintaining high academic standards and teaching the material I wished to address. I bulldozed my way through the class and flopped.

That year, I realized that I needed to set clear pedagogical goals, one of which had to be taking the time to know and appreciate my audience. OSU students represent varying classes, generations, ethnicities, religions, and races. They come from inner-city Cleveland, Appalachia, the farms of Western Ohio, former industrial towns, and war-torn countries. My Jewish history courses enroll football players, Somali refugees, marching band musicians, state-chess champions, retired police officers, future lawyers, and soldiers who get called for active duty midway through the quarter. In the last ten years of teaching, I've found ways to take advantage of their differences, skills, and talents. While I may prefer some courses (“History of the Holocaust”) to others (“Western Civilization”), I hope that my classes have become more successful as I have become committed to addressing and meeting specific metrics.

## Robert Kawashima

*Associate Professor of Religion and Jewish Studies, University of Florida*

Not unlike Socrates, I find it necessary to begin by professing my ignorance. I know neither what a successful class is in itself, nor what its outward signs might be. If Plato is to be trusted, Socrates himself was a very great teacher. For this reason, many of us profess to employ his “method” in the classroom. But

# NYUPRESS

*Keep reading.*

## Jews and Booze

Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition

MARNI DAVIS

“A fascinating, nuanced social history.”

— *Kirkus*

Marni Davis examines American Jews' long and complicated relationship to alcohol during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the years of the national prohibition movement's rise and fall.

\$32.00 • CLOTH

In the *Goldstein-Goren Series in American Jewish History*

## All Together Different

Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism

DANIEL KATZ

“[A] pathbreaking study.”

— David Levering Lewis, New York University

\$45.00 • CLOTH

## Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah

New Insights and Scholarship

Edited by FREDERICK E. GREENSPAHN

“Thoughtful, provocative, and frequently even inspiring.”

— Lawrence Kushner, author of *I'm God; You're Not*

\$25.00 • CLOTH

## The Paranoid Apocalypse

A Hundred-Year Retrospective on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*

Edited by RICHARD LANDES and STEVEN T. KATZ

Re-examines *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion's* popularity, investigating why it has persisted, as well as larger questions about the success of conspiracy theories even in the face of claims that they are blatantly counterfactual and irrational.

\$35.00 • CLOTH

In the *Elie Wiesel Center for Judaic Studies series*

NEW in PAPERBACK

## Still Jewish

A History of Women and Inter-marriage in America

KEREN R. MCGINITY

“Compelling.... Offers a fresh perspective that challenges standard interpretations.”

— Joyce Antler, Samuel Lane Professor of American Jewish History and Culture at Brandeis University

\$25.00 • PAPER

## Tours that Bind

Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism

SHAUL KELNER

“[Offers] fascinating insights into one of the most daring and effective social experiments of the modern Jewish Diaspora.”

— *The Jerusalem Post*

\$24.00 • PAPER

## Sephardic Jews in America

A Diasporic History

AVIVA BEN-UR

“In this excellent book, Ben-Ur helps address a severe gap in the historical scholarship of American Jewry, and blazes a trail for other scholars to follow.”

— Zion Zohar, Director and Chair, President Navon Program for the Study of Sephardic and Oriental Jewry, Florida International University

\$25.00 • PAPER

## Jews and the Civil War

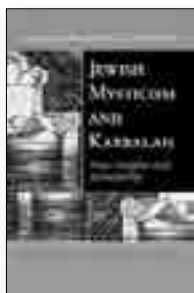
A Reader

Edited by JONATHAN D. SARNA and ADAM MENDELSON

“Will very quickly become one of the definitive scholarly texts on the Jewish role in the Civil War.”

— *Jewish Book World*

\$24.00 • PAPER



www.nyupress.org



can we agree on what this method actually consists in? Are Plato's "Socratic" dialogues, for example—not actual (spoken) dialogues, but their literary (written) representation—properly Socratic? Is the ideal class, then, necessarily a discussion? Is it even legitimate to practice this method in the modern university? Which is to ask: Can and should the modern search for "knowledge" imitate the ancient search for "wisdom"? And since we know how the *polis* rewarded Socrates, we do well to distinguish carefully between the appearance of success and the "real" thing.

The success of a class should, I assume, be measured against its goal. Need I add that students, administrators, and instructors often have different goals in mind? My aim as an instructor is simply this: the transmission of knowledge. My teaching is thus structurally identical to my scholarship, adding only that the latter is in a reciprocal relationship with other scholars. Instruction thus presupposes the ongoing acquisition of knowledge, namely, research, which takes time. This "free" time may appear to be a mere luxury, but it is, in fact, absolutely necessary for acquiring and transmitting knowledge. I say "transmission," however, and not "reception." The receptiveness of one's audience—their inclination to agree, approve, etc.—is extrinsic to knowledge as such. The question is, then, whether one can and should employ instructional techniques that are unrelated to the specific knowledge being transmitted, as one can, for example, employ convincing rhetorical techniques that are unrelated to the particular thesis being argued.

### **Ken Koltun-Fromm**

*Associate Professor of Religion,  
Haverford College*

The most successful class I have taught is the one I just completed, "Modern Jewish Thought," in the Spring 2011 term at Haverford College (you can find the syllabus at: <http://dvar.haverford.edu/courses/modern-jewish-thought/>). I invited eight of my colleagues to suggest readings for our Monday class sessions, and then send me their scholarly work on this class material for students to read for our Wednesday meetings. For example, I asked Noam Pianko to suggest readings on Mordecai Kaplan for Monday, and I provided copies of Noam's work on Kaplan to my students for Wednesday. All of this provided the framework for Noam to actually "visit" the classroom via Skype on the very day

that we read his work on Kaplan. I mirrored this framework for each of the eight participants: readings in modern Jewish thought for Monday, my colleague's research for Wednesday, and a Skype hookup so that my students could engage directly with scholars in the field. All eight scholars then arrived on campus at the end of the semester for a symposium in modern Jewish thought and culture. Technology (Skype) and funding (Hurford Humanities Center grant) expanded my classroom beyond Haverford's borders.

My least successful course undermined the very goals of that modern Jewish thought class. Early in my career, I team-taught a course in "Ethics and the Good Life" with one of my mentors at Haverford. Big mistake, for I foolishly attempted to emulate his teaching style and ended up becoming what I was not—certainly not a good life by any standard of assessment. Teaching is a praxis, I soon realized, and one enacted with distinctive style and character. My colleagues in modern Jewish thought projected their own sense of purpose and concern into the classroom; I wish I had done the same in mine.

### **Tony Michels**

*George L. Mosse Associate Professor  
of American Jewish History, University of  
Wisconsin at Madison*

What is the least successful course I have taught? If you asked my former student, Alia, she might say it was my undergraduate survey, "The American Jewish Experience." After taking the course in 1999, Alia regretted that I made the Jews seem "ordinary." I gave lectures on migration patterns, economic niches, intracommunal debates, and other aspects of social, cultural, and political history. I considered these topics interesting and significant, but Alia brought a different perspective to bear. A devout Christian (of an unspecified denomination) and an African-American, she expected a course that would somehow do justice to God's Chosen People. The Jews are special, Alia believed, so she wanted to know why I depicted them prosaically, as if they were like any other people. I do not recall what I said, but I know I failed to give a cogent answer. Alia's question pointed to others I had not adequately considered, probably because they always seemed too daunting. Does Jewish history differ in any profound way from that of other ethnic, religious, or racial groups? Is there anything inherently unique about Jewish history? If not, why do I teach it? Why

not subsume Jews under some general rubric? I suppose that if I accepted the theological underpinning of Alia's criticism, I would have reached definitive conclusions by now. But, as it stands, I am still working through the questions, hopefully to the benefit of all my courses. I thank Alia for prompting me.

### **Don Seeman**

*Associate Professor of Religion and Jewish  
Studies, Emory University*

I have been teaching long enough to know that "success" in teaching can be a very difficult thing to measure. Sometimes students come to me long after a course that I considered less than fully successful to tell me that, for them, it was a life-changing event. Do I measure success by that one student or by the others who seemed less than fully engaged? How much should I care about the consumerist metric of formal student evaluations, and how much should I care about my own view of the integrity and importance of the material I taught? There are no singular answers to these questions, and a lot also depends on the life-course of the teacher—is she pre-tenure or post? Still, all things considered, the most problematic course I ever taught was a 300-student "Introduction to Anthropology" that I taught in Hebrew before I was fluent. In retrospect, my cultural assumptions were all wrong: it upset me that students read the newspaper, chatted, or even spoke on the telephone while I lectured, though I later watched the same course taught by a successful senior faculty member who just spoke to the front row and ignored everyone else in the room. There was one student who told me that the course helped him decide to go on in the field, but it made me want to run in the other direction.

By contrast, the most successful course I ever taught on all counts has been a recurring graduate seminar in the "Ethnography of Religious Experience," which I give in Emory's Graduate Division of Religion. It allows me to teach methodology and research ethics along with books I truly love, and to induct students into an intellectual tradition that I care about. The best part of all is that students have taken what I taught and run with it in their own directions—two participants organized a whole conference on ethnography and theology last year. Isn't this why we all have gone into teaching?

## Nancy Sinkoff

Associate Professor of Jewish Studies  
and History and Chair of Jewish Studies,  
Rutgers University

I often tell my students that crafting a convincing historical argument can be compared to an attorney making a summation argument to a jury. She has to tell a narrative, with a beginning, middle, and end, and must adduce evidence that convinces the jury that the narrative holds together and is “true,” with the understanding that the evidence has been selected in order to make a specific claim.

I like to tell historical narratives and my most successful teaching, therefore, takes place in two broad surveys of Jewish history, where I teach frontally and tell students how I conceptualize the Jewish past. The first, “JSC 2: The Early Modern/Modern Experience,” starts at the end of the fifteenth century and culminates in the interwar years in both Europe and the United States, and the second, “Jewish Power, Jewish Politics,” begins with the war with Rome and ends with the contestations between the government of the modern State of Israel and its Jewish inhabitants in the territories.

In JSC 2, students are exposed to the political, economic, social, and religious transformations that marked the transition from subjects to citizens, from a community whose status was based on privileges to that of individuals with rights, from societies based on hierarchy to those committed to equality, and from identities based on fate to those based on self-conscious choice. A Western bias, with the centrality of the process of political emancipation at its core, is explicit in this narrative and I foreground it in my introductory lecture. At the end of the course, we test the hypotheses of these transformations by comparing the structure, identities, politics, varieties of religious commitments, and languages of interwar Jewry to those of their early modern predecessors. In general, I feel that I have convinced the jury, that is, of helping them understand how vastly different contemporary Jewish life is from its premodern past.

In “Jewish Power, Jewish Politics,” I approach the wide variety of Jewish political behavior in the diaspora by presenting students with a simplified dichotomy between the quiescent politics of the Sages and the adversarial politics of the rebels during the War with Rome. We then move rapidly through Jewish history, examining

the Bar Kokhba revolt, the “royal alliance” in medieval Iberia, the “Noble-Jewish” nexus in early modern Poland, and the étatism of the Haskalah, highlighting the fact that for most of Jewish history, *dina dimalkhuta dina* was understood by Jewish leaders to be the best strategy for safeguarding Jewish interests and security. We then look at the birth of modern, radical Jewish politics in Eastern Europe and its migration to the American diaspora, spending time with the modern Jewish labor movement, the attraction of Jews to socialism, communism, liberalism, and to postwar neo-conservatism, interrogating the topics in light of the introductory dichotomy. Sections on Jewish political behavior during the Holocaust and among Jewish settlers who do not wish to uphold the *dina* of a Jewish *malkhuta* close the course. While I always pose rhetorical questions, encourage questions, and read primary sources with my students, the course’s success has derived, in great part, from my mastery of the material and ability to communicate it in a frontal style to my students.

My least successful courses have been seminars, no matter what the topic (“Modern Jewish Historiography,” “Community and Crisis,” “What If You Can’t Go Home? Cultural Effects of Nazism and Communism on Post-war Lives,” “Jewish Historical Fiction”) and I attribute this to the fact that my undergraduates, in general, are daunted by the demands of reading sufficient historical material on their own, analyzing its key features, and articulating its meanings in small group discussions. I have come to the conclusion that in order for seminars to be successful, I have to spend far more time in class on the mechanics of being a student of history and far less time on actual historical content and texts. Seminars are thus far less satisfying to me as an educator, and I therefore prefer frontal lecturing, enhanced by relevant films, analysis of images, and structured in-class discussions of primary sources.

## Rebecca L. Stein

Associate Professor of Anthropology,  
Duke University

For the past ten years, at a variety of research institutions, I have taught an introductory course on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Because of the need for brevity within the advertised course schedule, the full title of the course—“Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict”—rarely appeared on the books. Herein

a symptomatic irony lies. For while the language of “conflict” is legible to many students across the political spectrum, the very term “Palestine” is understood as incendiary by many, Jewish students numbering heavily among them—a signifier that suggests not merely “bias” on the part of the professor in question, or so some charge, but also her refusal to countenance histories of Jewish oppression and victimhood. For other students, Arabs numbering heavily among them, the potential absence of this term signals acquiescence to the dominant narrative of the conflict—one which has effectively absented Palestinian indigeneity from the historical record. The central project of this class is less to mediate between these largely incommensurate positions than to refuse the notion of a history or political conflict understood in dyadic terms—that is, as Jewish suffering versus Palestinian suffering; a history in which victimhood is mutually exclusive, the claims of one party canceling those of the other.

The power of this class lies less in the assigned material, and in the stories and reflections it elicits from participants. Over the course of ten years, I have heard about the Jewish grandmother who emigrated to Palestine from Germany in the 1930s; the Palestinian relatives who lived as refugees in Lebanon; the family from East Africa who never met any Jews, and mistrusted all accounts of anti-Semitism; the Israeli extended family, originally from Argentina, who only encountered Palestinians during their army tours of duty in the occupied Palestinian territories. The success of this class lies in the power of these personal narratives—ones that, taken together, can complicate the dyadic model in ways that few academic sources can. Yet this is also the source of the class’s failure. On the final day of instruction, when students are invited to speak in personal terms about “what they really think” (an idiom I usually discourage), I am always stunned by the number of students who return to the comfort of the dyadic account, using the language of identity politics (“As a Jew, I think. . .” or “As a Palestinian, I think. . .”) to avoid the complications that the class material has introduced. I tend to conclude that academic language, with its tools of analysis and critique, is too dispassionate to dismantle beliefs that are, for many of these students, integral to not merely their public performance of self, but perhaps their private understandings as well.



**Association for Jewish Studies**

Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th Street

New York, NY 10011

