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2017 SPRING REVIEW
October 2017

News from the
Center for Jewish Studies at
Harvard University
Online at cjs.fas.harvard.edu
WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES?

The Center for Jewish Studies serves as an umbrella organization, encompassing and coordinating the many academic and extra-curricular programs in Jewish Studies at Harvard University. Faculty, courses and other academic programs at the university are located in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the Harvard Divinity School, and the Harvard Law School. We sponsor our own conferences, lectures and seminars. We also cosponsor other seminars and lectures with departments across the Harvard campus, including lecture series with the Mahindra Center for the Humanities, the Center for European Studies and the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies. The Judaica Division of Widener Library boasts one of the world's greatest library collections in the world. Taken together, Harvard offers students and scholars resources in Jewish Studies virtually unparalleled anywhere in the world.

ON THE COVER: Starr Fellows 2017, LEFT TO RIGHT (back) Lennart Lehnhaus, Richard Hidary, Todd Berzon, René Bloch; (front) Judith Newman, Françoise Mignue, Ellen Bimbaum
MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

AS I WRITE, the semester at Harvard is just beginning although, by the time you’ll be reading this newsletter, we’ll already be deep into it. The coming several months will be very full for the Center for Jewish Studies. Two days ago, on September 12, the acclaimed graphic novelist and cartoonist Art Spiegelman delivered this year’s Doft Lecture to a sold-out audience in Sanders Theater. The Alan and Elisabeth Doft Lecture is the Center’s main event that seeks to engage students and the larger Boston area community. You will read more about it in our next fall review newsletter. The event was one of the most successful the Center has ever staged. The morning after the lecture, Mr. Spiegelman met with a packed room of undergraduates to follow up on his lecture and discuss his work with them.

In November, the Center will be sponsoring an international conference to commemorate the Balfour Declaration on its hundredth anniversary. The conference will deal specifically with the Declaration’s impact and reception throughout the world. It will bring some sixteen scholars from Europe, Israel, and across America to participate in its sessions. Later in November, the Center, with the Early Modern European History Workshop, is initiating a new biennial lecture on Early Modern Jewish topics; this year’s lecturer will be Professor Elisheva Carlebach of Columbia University. The renovation of Widener 745, a Jewish studies reading room for students, is nearly complete and we hope to have a re-dedication celebration in the near future. This semester we also welcomed Dr. Madeleine Cohen as our new Preceptor in Yiddish.

I want to express my especial gratitude and thanks to the administrative staff of the Center, specifically Rachel Rockenmacher and Sandy Cantave Vil. I was on leave last spring semester (doing research on a book on Jewish books in libraries throughout Europe, Israel, and America) and directing the Center remotely. But the actual day-to-day running of the Center was done by Rachel, Sandy, and two other part-time assistants, Dena Davis (until last fall) and Diana Marginean.

The spring semester’s work was extremely demanding. Last year’s Starr Seminars, on the topic Jews and Judaism in the Greco-Roman world and run by Professors Shaye Cohen and Paul Kosmin, was one of our most successful. We hosted the first of what we hope will be annual meetings of the Friends of the Center in both Cambridge and New York City (where the meeting was graciously hosted by Peter Solomon). At future meetings, we plan to have two presentations to the Friends: the director will report on the Center, and one faculty member will present some aspect of his or her research.

For years the administrative staff of the Center — Rachel, Sandy, and their predecessors — has shown its dedication and love for the Center in countless ways — by working overtime, by giving our programs extra-special consideration, and by responding to the many needs and requests of our students and faculty with unsurpassed patience. Much of the expense of maintaining the infrastructure of the Center is made possible by the gifts and generosity of our Friends and other donors. To you, too, we offer our gratitude for your support. We hope to see you at future meetings of the Friends of the Center, and if you happen to be in Cambridge, please stop by our offices.

David Stern
Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature
We are thrilled to welcome MADELEINE (MANDY/MINDL) COHEN as our new Preceptor in Yiddish. Madeleine Cohen comes to us from the University of California, Berkeley, where she recently earned her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature with a designated emphasis in Jewish Studies. Her research focuses on modernist Yiddish literature in the early 20th century with comparative work in German, Hebrew, and Polish language literatures. Her dissertation, entitled “Here and Now: The Modernist Poetics of Do’ikayt,” investigated the representation of place in modern Yiddish literature and the politics of those relationships to place. Madeleine is also the current Editor-in-Chief of In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies.

At Berkeley, Madeleine taught beginning Yiddish language. She also taught reading & composition courses in comparative literature and her other great literary love: science fiction. Two of her courses were “Social Politics of Science Fiction” and “Alternate Histories and Political Imagination.”

Dr. Cohen will be teaching Yiddish language at three levels in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations: elementary, intermediate and advanced. Harvard College students may take Yiddish to satisfy their foreign language requirement. We are very grateful to the Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation Fund for Yiddish Language Instruction and the Joseph Morton Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies for their essential support for the Preceptorship in Yiddish.

Mandy’s research focuses on modernist Yiddish literature in the early 20th century with comparative work in German, Hebrew and Polish language literatures.
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER FELLOWSHIP

This year, Rabbi Caryn Broitman of the Martha’s Vineyard Hebrew Center was our twenty-third Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow and our first woman in this role. The fellowship was established in memory of Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver ’48 to enable an “active congregational rabbi who has demonstrated exceptional intellectual and academic interest, originality and energy” to engage in full-time research at Harvard for a semester.

MESSAGE FROM RABBI CARYN BROITMAN

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Center for Jewish Studies for the opportunity to be the Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow during the spring semester of 2017. After 25 years as a congregational rabbi, it was a great blessing to spend concentrated time on my own research and feel supported by the amazing resources of the Center for Jewish Studies and Harvard. I am interested in the topic of the secular-sacred in modernist literature, and was able to concentrate on the Yiddish writer Jacob Glatsheyn in the context of other modernist writers. I took a class on the Yiddish short story with Professor Saul Zaritt and a second class entitled “The Joyce Effect” taught by Professor Beth Blum. I was able to spend long days at the Widener library, delving into the extraordinary Judaica collection there. I began formal Yiddish language study with a tutor (Elena Hoffenberg, ’17) and continued to study it beyond my fellowship. This study has enriched my work as a rabbi. I am already thinking about classes I can offer to the congregation that incorporate my research and learning. There are many people in Jewish congregations who define themselves as secular but are open to themes of the sacred through literature and the arts. Yiddish literature in the context of comparative study opens up the possibility of deeper discussions and experiences in those areas. I am also grateful for the connections I made with the Starr Fellows and other scholars at CJS. The experience and relationships have enriched my work on many levels and will continue well beyond the semester. I am deeply grateful.
HARRY STARR FELLOWSHIP IN JUDAICA

The Harry Starr Fellowship in Judaica supports a group of scholars from around the world to gather at Harvard to engage in full-time research in Jewish Studies. This research fellowship was founded with a generous bequest from the estate of Harry Starr ’21, former president of the Lucius Littauer Foundation.

The Starr Fellowship is open to scholars at different stages of their academic careers. Most years we organize the fellowship around a designated subject area. This year, Professors Shaye J.D. Cohen and Paul Kosmin hosted the Starr Seminars with the Department of Classics in the area of “Jews in the Classical World.” Fellows present their works in progress at these weekly meetings throughout the spring semester. Starr Seminar presentations often elicit lively discussion between the Starr Fellows, other visiting scholars and fellows, students and faculty from Harvard, and other area universities.

2017 HARRY STARR FELLOWS INCLUDED TODD BERZON, ELLEN BIRNBAUM, RENÉ BLOCH, RICHARD HIDARY, LENNART LEMHAUS, FRANÇOISE MIRGUET, AND JUDITH NEWMAN. HERE, THEY ARE ACKNOWLEDGED BY DAVID STERN AT THE 2017 CJS RECEPTION.
STARR SEMINARS SPRING 2017
JEWS IN THE CLASSICAL WORLD

FEBRUARY 2, 2017
Opening meeting
PROFESSOR SHAYE J.D. COHEN
Harvard University
Discussion of reading: Jews and Christians in Antioch according to John Chrysostom

FEBRUARY 16, 2017
Rabbis as Greco-Roman Rhetors: The Setting and Structure of Rabbinic Homilies
RICHARD HIDARY
Yeshiva University

MARCH 2, 2017
Cosmopolitan Ideals and Social Realities in First-Century Alexandria
ELLEN BIRNBAUM
Independent Scholar

MARCH 9, 2017
Babel Explained: Language and Materiality among Ancient Jews and Early Christians
TODD BERZON
Bowdoin College

MARCH 23, 2017
Philo of Alexandria: Between Greek and Jewish Myth
RENÉ BLOCH
Universität Bern

MARCH 29, 2017
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs
JAMES L. KUGEL
Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish Studies, Bar-Ilan University and Harry M. Starr Professor Emeritus of Classical and Modern Hebrew Literature, Harvard University

MARCH 30, 2017
Blessing the House of Jacob: Time and Testament in Early Judaism
JUDITH NEWMAN
University of Toronto

APRIL 6, 2017
When Stating “Facts” is an Act of Power: False Accusation in Early Jewish Literature
FRANÇOISE MIRGUET
Arizona State University

APRIL 20, 2017
Bodies of Knowledge: Talmudic Medical Expertise and Knowledge Culture(s) in Late Antiquity
LENNART LEHMHAUS
Freie Universität Berlin

APRIL 27, 2017
Informal discussion: Some Preliminary Thoughts on Time in the Seleucid Levant
PROF. PAUL KOSMIN
Harvard University
I spent my time as a Starr Fellow writing the first chapter of a larger project on the materiality and tactility of speech in ancient Jewish and early Christian literature. The chapter itself concerns the reception history of the story of the tower of Babel, from the Book of Jubilees (ca. 200 BCE) to the Venerable Bede's *On Genesis* (ca. 720 CE). In the essay, I have tried to show that this history is marked by certain interpretive patterns that connected religion, language, and physical matter. Babel became a narrative unit upon which later authors mused about the transformative and material power of language. Interpretations of Babel were meditations on the material causes and effects of language as a metric of religiosity. As a Starr Fellow, I received incredibly helpful feedback during my own seminar presentation. I also learned an enormous amount from the work of the other fellows. The Starr Fellowship represented a magnificent way to spend my sabbatical. I must profusely thank all the other fellows for their good humor and encouragement; our conveners, Professors Paul Kosmin and Shaye Cohen; the CJS Director, Professor David Stern; and CJS staff, Sandy Cantave Vil, Rachel Rockenmacher, and Diana Marginean. Thank you all for allowing me to join you for one semester! It is an experience I will remember for years to come.

—I spent my time as a Starr Fellow writing the first chapter of a larger project on the materiality and tactility of speech in ancient Jewish and early Christian literature.”

—Todd Berzon

As an honorary Starr Fellow, I spent the spring semester of 2017 working on two projects related to the seminar’s theme “Jews in the Classical World.” Both projects pertained to the Jewish Diaspora thinker and biblical exegete Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B.C.E–50 C.E.). In my seminar paper, I juxtaposed Philo’s ideas about being a citizen of the world with his account of a violent uprising against Alexandrian Jews in 38 C.E. With the help of other Starr Fellows, I explored resulting questions and ironies about Alexandrian Jews and non-Jews who may have shared Philo’s cosmopolitan ideas. I also focused on Philo himself, who, after the riots, appeared before the Roman Emperor Caligula to plead the Jewish cause. My second project involved completion of a manuscript for the Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series, published by Brill and the Society of Biblical Literature. Together with Professor John Dillon of Trinity College Dublin, I co-edited a new introduction to, translation of, and commentary on the *Life of Abraham*, in which Philo recasts biblical accounts about Abraham into a kind of Greco-Roman *bios*, or biography. The congenial support and encouragement of seminar participants spurred me on. Each week Starr Fellows convened, joining Professors Shaye Cohen and Paul Kosmin and other colleagues to feast on delectable food and scintillating ideas. I feel deeply privileged and grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for offering me this wonderful opportunity!

—Ellen Birnbaum

“The congenial support and encouragement of seminar participants spurred me on.”

—Ellen Birnbaum
Richard Hidary
Yeshiva University

During my stay at Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies I conducted research comparing Roman and rabbinic funeral orations. Eulogies, after all, can offer a unique window into cultural views of the fundamental values of life, death, suffering, martyrdom, piety, afterlife, community, civics, family, and other central issues that orators would address at such opportunities. Comparing the content, structure, and setting of these orations informs us about how the rabbinic community was integrated into the surrounding society—but also found ways to distinguish themselves from it. I also completed an article comparing the role of witness testimony in Roman, Qumranic, and rabbinic law courts. I argue that the exegetical debates over the biblical requirement for two or three witnesses encodes fundamental differences between these groups regarding their view of truth, interpretation, and the divine versus the human roles in pursuing justice. I am grateful to the other Starr Fellows and faculty members from the Center for Jewish Studies and the Classics department for sharing their expertise on the experience of the Jews in the classical world, and for their friendship, feedback, and insight.

Rene Bloch
Universität Bern

Perhaps there is no place more appropriate to delve into research on Philo of Alexandria than Harvard University. It is here, after all, that Harry Austryn Wolfson wrote his majestic monograph *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,* published 70 years ago. Wolfson presented a bold thesis: Philo was the cornerstone of medieval philosophy, both Christian and Jewish, which was eventually superseded by another great Jewish philosopher, Spinoza. My research at the Center for Jewish Studies in the spring semester 2017 was certainly of much more modest dimensions: following up on my earlier scholarship on Jewish-Hellenistic encounters with Greek mythology, I focused on how Philo of Alexandria dealt with Greek myth and how he responded to the challenge of Jewish myth. In a forthcoming article, I will argue that Philo, while repeatedly rejecting myth, made use of Greek myth as a pool of traditional thought and in some way acted himself as a myth maker. During my fellowship at Harvard, I also continued working on a German edition and commentary of Philo’s *Life of Moses*. Our weekly Starr Fellow seminars in the Classics department, as well as the many conversations with faculty and students from both Jewish Studies and Classics, were tremendously enriching for me, and time and again, they proved to be thought-provoking. One hardly needs to mention the excellent research facilities at Harvard University. Towards the end of my stay, I took the opportunity to study Harry A. Wolfson’s correspondence relating to the publication of his 1947 monograph on Philo, which can be found in the Harvard University Archives. This is a most remarkable series of letter exchanges. I am very grateful indeed to have been invited to be a Starr Fellow and to have been allowed to profit from the intellectual temptations provided by the Center for Jewish Studies.

Richard Hidary
Yeshiva University

“...I conducted research comparing Roman and rabbinic funeral orations. Eulogies, after all, can offer a unique window into the views a culture...”

–Richard Hidary

“Perhaps there is no place more appropriate to delve into research on Philo of Alexandria than Harvard University.”

–Rene Bloch
LENNART LEHMHAUS  Freie Universität Berlin

As a Harry Starr Fellow, I have been working on two separate but interrelated questions. While studying Talmudic concepts of medicine, illness and healing in particular, I also explored rabbinic notions of expertise and the encyclopedic dimension of Talmudic knowledge discourses in general. My research has been stimulated and facilitated by the treasures of literature available in the Harvard libraries, as well as by many fascinating encounters and conversations throughout the duration of my fellowship.

Our Starr seminars featured a host of inspiring papers. The fruitful discussions during the seminar, often continued over coffee or via email, attest to the great collegiality among our group and the Harvard faculty and students who joined us regularly. Beyond the circle of the seminar, I had the pleasure to meet and discuss my research with Harvard faculty and Ph.D. candidates, as well as with colleagues working in the greater Boston area, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New York.

“While studying Talmudic concepts of medicine, illness and healing in particular, I also explored rabbinic notions of expertise and the encyclopedic dimension of Talmudic knowledge discourses in general.”

–Lennart Lehmhaus

My presence in Cambridge allowed me to participate in many inspiring workshops and lectures at Harvard and in the Boston area. Moreover, I presented a talk as part of the CJS’s colloquium and at the Shifting Frontiers conference (Yale, March 2017). I also attended workshops at Brown University on Jewish origins, at Yeshiva University on rabbinic ethics, and at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton on ancient knowledge communities.

Finally, it is in no small part due to the welcoming atmosphere at the Center for Jewish Studies that the time at Harvard will be remembered and highly cherished by me and my family. This has been an enriching experience—intellectually and on a personal level.

FRANÇOISE MIRGUET  Arizona State University

I am very grateful to have been awarded the Harry Starr Fellowship for the academic year 2016–2017. During the Fall semester, I completed and submitted my book manuscript, An Early History of Compassion: Emotion and Imagination in Hellenistic Judaism. The book is being published by Cambridge University Press and will be available in October 2017. In this book, I trace the appropriation and reinterpretation of pity by Greek-speaking Jewish communities of late antiquity. I explore in particular how the requirement to feel for those who suffer sustained the identity of the Jewish minority. In the spring, I had the joy of meeting and being part of a wonderful group of Starr fellows.

“…I completed and submitted my book manuscript, An Early History of Compassion: Emotion and Imagination in Hellenistic Judaism.”

–Françoise Mirguet

Our weekly conversations were a time of thought-provoking and friendly exchanges. It was the perfect environment in which to begin my new research project, which started with an analysis of stories about false accusation, in late antique Greek literature, both Jewish and non-Jewish. My fellowship year was an enriching and inspiring experience!
My time as a Starr Fellow was richly rewarding. The CJS staff members—Rachel, Sandy, and Diana—were extraordinarily helpful and supportive. They provided fellows with information about how to get settled in the Cambridge area and connect to the various Harvard systems. The institutional resources of Harvard are unparalleled. Since I received my doctorate at Harvard’s NELC Department in 1996, I can personally attest that the libraries at Harvard have only become better. Digital resources permit online access to a wealth of material and library research assistants procure scanned articles and other materials delivered online. Thus, the only limits imposed on my research were directly related to the abilities of my own brain.

This fellowship allowed me to gain a very good start on a new research project that concerns conceptions of time and temporality in early Judaism. I am particularly interested in how certain times are considered to have a special character and are more potent than others. The Sabbath is an obvious example, but the concept of the “latter days” whether of an individual life or of the world, according to the sectarian group connected to the Dead Sea Scrolls, were also considered potent times. We see evidenced in some Jewish literature of the Hellenistic-Roman period. The timing of my 2017 fellowship was fortuitous in that I was also able to attend a joint graduate seminar, “Pasts and Future Pasts in the Hellenistic World.” Professors Paul Kosmin in the Classics Department and Giovanni Bazzana from the Harvard Divinity School were conducting this seminar during the spring semester, and they invited me to join them. Readings and discussion from that seminar are proving to be important to the development of my own project. A particular highlight of the semester for me were the lecture and seminar of my Doktorvater and former CJS director James Kugel. His visit also coincided with my Starr seminar presentation and his expertise and advice proved invaluable.

I also very much enjoyed getting to know the other Starr Fellows and their work during our weekly exchanges. I am very grateful to all at CJS for the fruitful semester that provided a spur to my scholarship!
FEBRUARY 2, 2017

ANNUAL CJS SPRING RECEPTION

JUSTINE LANDAU

ETHAN SCHWARTZ

LENNART LEHMHAUS

PIOTR STEINKELLER, OKTOR SKJAERVO, BERNARD SEPTIMUS, PAUL KOSMIN AND DAVID STERN

VARDIT SAMUELS, ELLEN BIRNBAUM AND FRANCOISE MIRGUET

JOSEPH HOSTYK
JANUARY 30, 2017
“A Dreadful Experience:” How the 1946 Zionist Congress in Basel Changed the Center of Gravity of Jewish Politics

SIMON ERLANGER
Professor of Judaic Studies and Theology, University of Luzern

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Study Group, The Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies

FEBRUARY 2, 2017
ANNUAL CJS SPRING RECEPTION
See reception photos on previous page

FEBRUARY 10, 2017
An Israeli Theater Experience

RUTH KANNER
Israeli director, actress, professor, manager of the Ruth Kanner Theater Group

Harry Edison Fund

FEBRUARY 15, 2017
How Did Jewish Women Gain Cultural Capital in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth?

MOSHE ROSMAN
Professor, Koschitzky Department of Jewish History, Bar-Ilan University, Israel; Fellow, Israel Institute for Advanced Study, Jerusalem

Yanoff-Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews of Russia/Eastern Europe Seminar, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies

MARCH 1, 2017
The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews

MAURICE SAMUELS
Betty Jane Anlyan Professor of French, Yale University and Director of the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the France and the World Seminar and Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, the Department of History, the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, and the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

Lectures and Events continue on page 16
Those pursuing Jewish studies at Harvard University may benefit from a number of funds established over the years. New funds are formed continuously; the following funds are currently supporting students and scholars in their pursuit for greater knowledge and achievement in this field. These also may support publications and events at the Center for Jewish Studies. For further information on establishing a named fund, or contributing to one, please contact our office.

**NAMED STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS AND PRIZES IN JEWISH STUDIES**

- Mandell L. Berman Fellowship
- Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund
- Harry Edison Fund
- Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- Leo Flax Fellowship
- Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation Fund for Undergraduate and Graduate Travel to Israel
- Hertog Undergraduate Study Abroad Fund
- Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship
- Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund
- Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies
- Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship
- Sosland Family Fellowship
- Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies
- Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Family Fellowship for Advanced Research in Judaica Studies
- Isadore Twersky Fellowship

**NAMED TEACHING AND RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS**

- Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation Yiddish Language Instruction Fund
- Joseph Engel Fund
- Suzanne and Dr. Lawrence Fishman Fellowship Fund
- Freed Research Fund in the Center for Jewish Studies
- Isaac-Melech, Icla and Zelman Rykles Memorial Fund
- Edwin Lichtig, Jr. Research and Teaching Fund
- Joseph Morton Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies
- Rohr Visiting Professorship in Modern Israel Studies
- Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellowship
- Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica Fund
- Harry Starr Teaching and Research Fund
- Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica
- Selma and Lewis H. Weinstein Fund for Jewish Studies
- Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professorship

**NAMED LECTURE AND PUBLICATION FUNDS**

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

**OTHER NAMED FUNDS**

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

DAVID STERN (RIGHT) SHOWS MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT TO FRIENDS OF CJS (L-R): JANE JACOBSON, MICHAEL BOHNEN, JANE RABB, SHALIMAR FOJAS WHITE
FRIENDS OF THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

In December 1984, Peter Solomon (AB ’60, MBA ’63) announced the establishment of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies. The Friends of CJS seeks to provide an ongoing base of support for the Center and to enable it to expand its present areas of activity. Annual support from the Friends helps shape the future of Jewish Studies and sustains the Center as an influential, multifaceted enterprise at Harvard.

YOU ARE INVITED

Show your interest in Jewish Studies at Harvard by joining the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies in one of four categories listed in the box above. Friends receive invitations to lectures, symposia and colloquia, copies of the newsletter, and selected publications published by the Center.

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining the Friends, please notify the Center at (617-495-4326) or cjs@fas.harvard.edu, so that we may contact and acquaint them with the Center’s mission.

SOME OF THE PROJECTS SPONSORED BY THE FRIENDS INCLUDE:

- student research projects (both undergraduate and graduate, school year and summer);
- graduate student fellowships;
- research-related expenses for visiting scholars;
- public lectures and class presentations by distinguished scholars;
- student discussions at the Jewish Studies Reading Group;
- doctoral dissertation advising by specialized scholars from outside Harvard;
- group discussions of research in progress for faculty and students in Jewish studies at the Harvard Jewish Studies Workshop.

HOW TO GIVE

ONLINE: To make a gift by credit card to the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, please click HERE (https://community.alumni.harvard.edu/give/16040850) for Harvard University’s online giving form and follow the instructions.

Click on “Select a School/Affiliate” and scroll to UNIVERSITY from the dropdown list. Then under “Select a Fund,” choose OTHER-Harvard University. Under “Gift details,” enter Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies (or the name of another fund of your choice), Center for Jewish Studies.

GIFTS BY CHECK MAY BE MAILED TO:

Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University
6 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

Please make checks payable to "The President and Fellows of Harvard College” and include a note in the memo line of the check that this is for the “Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies” (or the name of the other fund of your choice).
MARCH 6, 2017

Jewish Studies From a European Perspective: PANEL DISCUSSION

JAY HARRIS (MODERATOR)
Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies, Harvard University and Dean of Undergraduate Education

RENÉ BLOCH
Professor of Jewish Studies, Universität Bern and 2016–2017 Harry Starr Fellow in Judaica

LENNART LEHMHAUS
CRC/SFB 980 “Episteme in Motion,” Freie Universität Berlin and 2016–2017 Harry Starr Fellow in Judaica

FRANÇOISE MIRGUET
Associate Professor of Hebrew and Near Eastern Culture, Arizona State University and 2016–2017 Harry Starr Fellow in Judaica

Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica Fund

MARCH 9–10, 2017

The Harvard Graduate Conference on International History (Con-IH 17)

Migration, Immigration, Diaspora Conference

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: PAUL KRAMER
Associate Professor of History, Vanderbilt University

Migration, Immigration, Diaspora featured twelve papers by graduate students studying in seven countries. Their research on migration, immigration, and diaspora spanned the 13th to the 21st centuries and touched nearly every continent.

Harry Edison Fund

MARCH 20–21, 2017

A Northeast Regional Conference for Graduate Students
Pluralism, Multilingualism, and Jewish Identities

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: NAOMI SEIDMAN
Koret Professor of Jewish Culture, Graduate Theological Union

The goal of the conference was to explore the interplay of cultural and linguistic diversity in Jewish experiences from antiquity to modernity.

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies

MARCH 22, 2017

Above the Barriers: Leonid Pasternak and the Renascence of Jewish National Art in 20th Century Russia

LAZAR FLEISHMAN
Professor of Slavic Studies, Stanford University

Yanoff-Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews of Russia/Eastern Europe Seminar, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies

MARCH 27, 2017

From Assimilation to Elimination: The Exclusion of Jews from Czech Society in the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia

BENJAMIN FROMMER
Professor of History, Northwestern University

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Study Group, The Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies

“JEWISH STUDIES FROM A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE,” A HARRY STARR FELLOWS PANEL DISCUSSION MODERATED BY JAY HARRIS
MARCH 28, 2017
The Divine Travel Agent: Some Reflections on the Biblical Story of Joseph

JAMES L. KUGEL
Professor Emeritus, Department of Jewish Studies, Bar-Ilan University and Harry M. Starr Professor Emeritus of Classical and Modern Hebrew Literature, Harvard University

Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center

MARCH 29, 2017
Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies Cambridge lecture

DAVID STERN
Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies

The Director shared the current state of Jewish Studies at Harvard with the Center’s donors.

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies and Yanoff-Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

APRIL 19, 2017
Jewish Ludmir: Book Launch and Symposium

ANTONY POLONSKY, SERHII PLOKHII, MARTA DARIA OLYNYK, HARVEY BUDNER, VOLODYMYR MUZYCHENKO

Jewish Ludmir is the history of the Jewish Community of Volodymyr Volynsky and the surrounding area from 1171 to current times. It was written in Ukrainian by the present head of the Jewish Community, Volodymyr Muzychenko, and published in Ukraine in 2011. The book was translated by Marta Daria Olynyk and recently published by Academic Studies Press. Antony Polonsky, Professor Emeritus of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts, wrote the Introduction to the English edition.

With the Jews of Russia/Eastern Europe Seminar, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute

APRIL 20, 2017
Explaining Modernization of Jews in Nineteenth Century Italy

MARCO DI GIULIO
Associate Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature, Program of Judaic Studies and Italian Department, Franklin & Marshall College

William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Study Group, The Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies

APRIL 24, 2017
Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies New York lecture

DAVID STERN
Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature, Harvard University, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies

The Director shares the current state of Jewish Studies at Harvard with the Center’s donors.

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies and Yanoff-Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund
I deeply appreciate the support received through the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies Fund fellowship and the Center for Jewish Studies. This fellowship allowed me to conduct research and continue my studies during the 2017 summer break. I am also grateful for the advice on my summer research received from Professors Jay Harris and Alison Simmons. I have long been interested in a curious detail of modern European intellectual or scientific history: the enthusiastic engagement of many of Germany’s leading scientists in the country’s war effort soon after the beginning of World War I. Many people across Europe were caught up in the excitement of 1914, yet it is still surprising to what extent many leading German scientists endorsed militaristic statements and transformed their own research to aid war industries—from physiologist Paul Ehrlich’s signature on a declaration praising “militarism” to fellow Nobel laureate Richard Willstatter’s shift from studying plant cells to developing gas masks.

I went to Berlin to try to understand the religious and moral attitudes of a group of these scientists, many of whom were Jewish, and how such attitudes might have related to their military work. During my time in Berlin, I worked at a range of institutions and libraries—at Freie and Humboldt universities, the Charité medical center, and the Max Planck Society—reading some of the scientists’ own letters and memoirs, and secondary texts by historians or the scientists’ students. I was also able to visit many of the neighborhoods and buildings where the scientists once worked, taught, and lived, giving me a personal view of their lives and milieu. I am thrilled that I had the opportunity, thanks to this fellowship, to better understand these scientists in Berlin, and I look forward to continuing my studies of them in the months ahead!

—Richard Yarrow, Social Studies and Philosophy, ’19

“Many people across Europe were caught up in the excitement of 1914, yet it is still surprising to what extent many leading German scientists endorsed militaristic statements and transformed their own research to aid war industries…”

—Richard Yarrow
I am a rising senior at Harvard College, and a resident in Cabot House. I am concentrating in Social Studies with a secondary major in Psychology. A summer fellowship from the Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund allowed me to travel to Israel and conduct research on the “Combatting Terrorism” law passed in Israel a year ago. This law is the first comprehensive counterterrorism law passed in Israel since 1948. I was specifically interested in how the law balances civil liberties with security concerns, and how this balance translates into practice. During my time in Israel, I met with academics, security experts, members of Knesset, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Justice Ministry, and even a Supreme Court Justice. I plan to incorporate my research findings into my senior thesis.

Although I had lived in Israel during a gap year between high school and college, conducting research this past summer represented an entirely new experience. I very much appreciated the opportunity to meet with so many experts on counterterrorism and hear such a wide variety of views on the topic. While I sought answers for my research questions, I realized that I actually had more questions at the end of the summer than at the beginning.

—Basia Rosenbaum ’18, Social Studies

I feel fortunate to be the 2017 beneficiary of the Suzanne R. and Dr. Lawrence M. Fishman Endowed Fund for Jewish Studies, and thankful for the support received from the Center for Jewish Studies. This generous fellowship allowed me to travel to Israel this past summer, where I conducted archival research for my senior thesis in history. For my thesis, I am focusing on the politics of Holocaust collective memory, and how the memory of the Holocaust motivated certain policy positions and objectives in the US and in Israel in the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, I researched in-depth pivotal moments in the US-Israel relationship, including the Eichmann trial, the Soviet Jewish emigration movement, the Munich Massacre, and the Entebbe rescue operation. While in Israel, I was able to take advantage of the archives at the Massuah Institute for Holocaust Studies, the Central Zionist Archives, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, and the Abba Eban Archives at the Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace. A highlight of my summer was the opportunity to conduct an interview with an Israeli-American activist in the Soviet Jewry movement, providing me with valuable perspective on my studies.

—Raya Rivka Koreh ’18, History

“I very much appreciated the opportunity to meet with so many experts on counterterrorism, and hear such a wide variety of views on the topic.”

—I Basia Rosenbaum
The Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship from the Center for Jewish Studies enabled me to participate in the Upper-Level Greek course at the City University of New York’s renowned Latin/Greek Institute. The course featured consolidation and deepening of Attic Greek skills through intense study of three Classical authors: Plato, Sophocles, and Thucydides. My Greek improved considerably as a result of my participation in this course. Proficiency in ancient Greek has long been essential for my work in biblical studies and ancient Judaism, allowing me to engage with the Septuagint, Hellenistic Jewish writings, and the New Testament, all in their original Greek. As I look ahead to my work on my dissertation prospectus this coming academic year, I anticipate using my newly strengthened Greek skills to incorporate substantive comparative work with Classical Greek literature and culture into my dissertation. I am so grateful for the support of the Center for Jewish Studies, without which my participation in this fantastic summer program would not have been possible!

—Ethan Schwartz, Ph.D. candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion

The Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship made it possible for me to spend my summer designing a curriculum for a forthcoming publication from the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) focused on Jewish literature composed during the Second Temple period (500 BCE–70 CE). The opportunity to read and edit this book was a wonderful experience for me and just the sort of preparation I needed in order to design courses of my own.

Without this grant, I would be unable to invest my time into this wonderful academic work. It is already paying off, as I am now working on another curriculum for texts of that very period! I am grateful for this funding and I am excited to continue contributing to the field of Jewish Studies in the future!

—Rachel Slutsky, Ph.D. candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion

“The Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship made it possible for me to spend my summer designing a curriculum for a forthcoming publication from the Jewish Publication Society (JPS)…”

—Rachel Slutsky
I am deeply grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for supporting my research through the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship during the summer of 2017. This fellowship made it possible for me to travel to Israel, to explore materials and connect with individuals who are crucial to my research on ideas that underpin Israel’s democratic institutions. Although my research is still in its earliest stages, the conversations and research I was able to conduct during my visit to Israel and back at Harvard have already allowed me to start two major research projects. I hope these projects will play an important role both personally, as part of my dissertation, and publicly, by contributing to the understanding of political institutions of democracies in general and of Israel in particular.

—Avishay Ben Sasson-Gordis
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Government

This summer I attended the School of Polish Language and Culture at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. While the immersive program significantly improved my language skills, my experience was further enriched by all the cultural offerings during the Cracovian summer, such as the week-long Jewish Culture Festival at the end of June. Through organized field trips and my own excursions, I learned more about the city’s Jewish-Polish cultural connections beyond Kazimierz. Kraków’s literary heritage is also central to my research interest in twentieth-century Polish poetry. Outside of class, I was able to reread works of Borowski, Miłosz, Szymborska, and Zagajewski, contextualize their verses at various places where they were once created, and draw connections to other literary traces I stumbled upon throughout the city. In short, these two months in Kraków have been a most rewarding academic and cultural experience. They helped substantiate my knowledge of Polish literature and also inspired me with new possibilities for future comparative research. I cannot be more grateful to the summer Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship I received through the Center for Jewish Studies. Thank you for your generous support!

—Cecily Cai, Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Comparative Literature

“...these two months in Kraków have been a most rewarding academic and cultural experience.”

—Cecily Cai
MARCH 20 – 21, 2017
PLURALISM, MULTILINGUALISM, AND JEWISH IDENTITIES
A NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS
RACHELLE GROSSMAN
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Comparative Literature

RACHELLE was born and raised in Spokane, Washington. She attended the Joint Program between the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) and Columbia University where she earned two bachelor’s degrees, one in Modern Jewish Studies from JTS, and the other in Comparative Literature from Columbia with a focus on Latin American literature. In addition to academic study in New York City, Rachelle also worked as an educator in several Jewish communities, designing curricula, giving classes, and organizing youth programming.

With support from Rachelle’s honors thesis advisors, who encouraged her to pursue graduate work as a next step in her career, Rachelle’s interest in Jewish studies became increasingly academic over time. After earning a master’s degree in Jewish Education from the Jewish Theological Seminary, she joined the Ph.D. program in the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University. Now in her third year, Rachelle is preparing for her oral examinations, and will work as a teaching fellow. Her research interests include world literature and literary modernism, with a focus on Yiddish in Latin America. In the future, Rachelle hopes to pursue an academic career of teaching and research.

Rachelle is thankful to have found a supportive Ph.D. cohort at Harvard. She is also thankful for advice from her advisor Professor Mariano Siskind, who holds a joint appointment in the departments of Comparative Literature and Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL). Professor Siskind has nurtured and supported her research interests, and helped her identify potential dissertation topics from within the broader field of comparative literature. Rachelle also works with Professor Saul Zaritt, whose research interests in Jewish and Yiddish literatures, among others, match her own. Currently, Rachelle is considering dissertation topics related to Yiddish literatures in North America and Latin America, with a possible focus on Argentina.

Thanks to a 2017 summer research and study fellowship funded by the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund, Rachelle was recently able to study Yiddish language and culture in Buenos Aires, Warsaw, and Vilnius. After a month exploring the YIVO (IWO) archives in Buenos Aires, a distinctive center of Yiddish literature and culture, Rachelle attended the International Summer Seminar at the Center for Yiddish Culture in Warsaw, Poland. Following this, she participated in the Yiddish Institute Program in Yiddish Language and Literature in Vilnius, Lithuania. Finding an enthusiastic community of other young Yiddish scholars, the Yiddish-language coursework and daily conversations inside and outside of the classroom enabled Rachelle to polish her language skills beyond reading. She will apply such skills to future work with oral histories and recorded media, such as materials from Yiddish theater and radio. Rachelle is confident that this immersion in these three distinctive linguistic and geographic spaces from this past summer will be immensely helpful in her dissertation work.

When she is not focused on academic work, Rachelle enjoys baking bread, sewing, traveling, and biking.
HANNA HESS

Class of 2019

HANNA is a junior in Harvard College, pursuing a joint degree in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and History. Hanna sees her interest in Jewish law as a springboard to a broader interest in the study of religious law in other faith communities. She hopes to one day study and compare legal norms developed in religious communities within different political and cultural contexts. Hanna plans to leverage her knowledge of religious law to contribute to the broader field of legal studies.

Hanna is also keenly interested in the study of languages. She is fluent in English and Hebrew, and conversational in French and Arabic. She has studied classical and literary Arabic at Harvard and also developed a faculty in colloquial Arabic while living in Jordan. Hanna’s love of languages originated from her childhood experience of living within different types of religious communities: Ultra-Orthodox, Centrist Orthodox, and Modern Orthodox. Her parents were only introduced to Hebrew and Jewish Religious culture as adults. As a result, Hanna and her siblings navigated on their own the linguistic particularities and dialects of the various communities and schools the family joined. Hanna discovered she had a linguistic talent that increased her chances of being accepted into these tightknit schools and communities where she had entered as a newcomer, and as a student from a family of modest means. Currently, Hanna is considering how to weave her love for languages into her academic work. She sees this as a natural fit. She views religion itself as a language of sorts, by which communities create meaning from their shared experiences. Just like religion, languages can serve to separate and cluster groups that differ along religious, socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic lines.

For Hanna, it has been a privilege to be able to encounter a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish groups at Harvard. Together with her Muslim roommates, it’s been educational to explore the similarities and differences in their respective upbringings. These conversations have broadened her understanding of the cultural, ethnic, and social context in which religious communities develop. She considers Judaic studies as a platform that allows her to understand other religious and cultural structures and institutions both in the United States and in a global context.

Funding from the Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies Fellowship made it possible for Hanna to intern in summer 2017 with the “Books Within Books: Hebrew Fragments in European Libraries” project. Hanna spent two and a half months working with this project in both France and Italy. The Project salvages book bindings and notarial files from libraries and archives in a dozen European countries, as well as from Israel and the USA. Book bindings were often created by affixing or joining together pages from 15th and 16th century Hebrew manuscripts. There are very few remaining medieval Hebrew manuscripts that are complete and undivided. The thousands of recovered manuscript fragments provide unique insights into medieval Jewish life and intellectual activities in Europe, a treasure trove referred to as the “European Geneizah”. Where possible, groups of uploaded fragments that are determined to originate from the same codex are reconstructed into “virtual volumes.”

Under the tutelage of Dr. Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, the leader of the Books within Books project and a professor of medieval Hebrew paleography at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne), Hanna catalogued and researched newly compiled inventories of Hebrew fragments in Italian libraries in Modena, Pergola, Cesena, Castello, Corinaldo, and Faenza. She worked to identify and categorize the texts, date them and determine their origins. During her internship, Hanna was responsible for the creation of approximately 75 fragments for the digital database of Books within Books, which will soon be published online. Hanna worked either alone of her project, or next to other Ph.D. students who were also working on their respective manuscripts.

Outside her academic interests, Hanna enjoys spending time with her siblings, listening to talk show podcasts in different languages, and running.
REPHAEL “RAFI” STERN
Ph.D. candidate, Department of History

REFAEL “RAFI” STERN was born in Chicago and grew up between Chicago and Jerusalem, where he lived from 2000–2007. He explains, “Growing up in Israel during the second Intifada was the initial spark to my interest in the politics and history of the Middle East.” At Brandeis University, where he completed his undergraduate degree, Rafi took history courses focused on this region, which allowed him to gain a broader and more diverse exposure to the many challenges of this region. Upon graduation, Rafi decided that he no longer wanted to pursue a career in medicine. Instead, he decided to study Arabic in Jordan, followed by a master’s degree in Near Eastern history at Princeton University. In his studies, Rafi was interested in acquiring a deeper understanding of modern Jewish history. Rafi explains that while Middle Eastern studies tend to focus on Palestine and Israel primarily through the perspective of the Middle East, he was interested in learning about Jewish history as seen from outside this region. Building on his previous background in Jewish history from high school, he pursued this goal of studying modern Jewish history under the supervision of Derek Penslar. His general exams field, which included a whopping 170 books, gave him a rather firm (though still surface) grasp of Jewish history since 1500. Rafi plans to continue to study Jewish history and the nation of Israel. He hopes to complement and contextualize such studies with concerns, problems, and approaches embedded and rooted within a broader Middle Eastern history.

When he found out that Professor Derek Penslar would be coming to Harvard to teach, Rafi decided he also wanted to pursue doctoral work in the same institution. As a third year Ph.D. candidate in History at Harvard, Rafi is very pleased with this decision. “Professor Penslar is a great advisor who cares about his students … He is a great scholar and a great mensch.” Professor Penslar encouraged him to accompany him to a conference in Germany in 2018, where he will speak on Zionism and colonialism. Rafi is also grateful for the terrific support of Professor Sam Moyn, who continues to help with advising even after leaving Harvard.

Rafi explains that the state of Israel was founded in 1948, a time period during which empires were collapsing, in a moment of decolonization. Though people often see the founding of the state of Israel as a settler colonial movement, Rafi argues that it is actually a post-colonial movement. He explores this historical event in connection with the founding of India and Arab states. He also examines the relationship between Zionism, Europe and the histories and experiences of colonized peoples in other parts of the world.

In the spring of 2017, Rafi completed his general exams in early modern history, modern Jewish history, modern Middle East, Britain and its empire, and international legal history. In the coming year, Rafi plans to work as a Teaching Fellow for Professor Penslar. This fall he hopes to work with a course on Israel in comparative perspective, and in the spring on modern Middle Eastern history. Rafi would like to incorporate digital projects into these courses, such as mapping and historical photo collections. “Media meets history,” he laughs.

Rafi is thankful for many of the resources available at Harvard. He notes the importance of academic communities at Harvard, particularly student groups working on Middle Eastern history and the Jewish Studies Student Workshop, which Rafi co-chairs with fellow student Ethan Schwartz. In March 2017, Rafi co-organized two student conferences, one at the CJS on the topic of “Pluralism, Multilingualism and Jewish Identities”, and another one in the History Department. Rafi is grateful to collaborate with a handful of other fellow students in the History Department who are also working on other topics within the field of Jewish history. Working with these students has expanded Rafi’s horizons and expertise. “We’re spoiled here [with the] library! Almost everything is here, [except] a few obscure books [that one can only find] in Israel.”

Another highlight of Rafi’s time at Harvard has been fellowship support for travel opportunities for academic pursuits. He gave a paper at a conference in London, and conducted research in Germany and Israel. In the near future, Rafi plans to stay closer to home. Rafi and his wife welcomed a baby daughter in the spring “right before generals [exams].” He attributes this experience to forcing him to learn how to use his time to study much more efficiently. In the future he hopes to pursue an academic career.
NANCY KO ’17
Kirkland House

Civilizing Omission: Historical America and the Alliance Israélite Universelle During the Iranian Constitutional Period

ABSTRACT: This paper provides an alternative account of political life for Jews in Iran through a critical reading of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, a French-Jewish philanthropic organization aimed at “civilizing” the Jews of the Orient. The Alliance itself and historians of Iran posit that Iranian Jews were not politically active during the Constitutional period because of their non-participation in the Constitutional Revolution. But the archives of the Alliance expose the political instabilities that render the Constitutional Revolution an inappropriate litmus test for Jewish political activism. The success of the Ottoman Empire’s constitutional revolution in 1908 led the Alliance to belief that the Iranian Constitutional Revolution could similarly fulfill the organization’s “civilizing mission.” Yet given the failures of the revolution, the Alliance itself would become the site of Jewish political life in Iran, and Alliance Jews—both indigenous and European — became part of the political fabric of Iran.

In sum, this paper is about paradox. It is a story about how the very goals of the Alliance—its civilizing mission—constituted both Iranian Jewish political life and the omission of that life during the years of Iran’s nation formation.

RAYA RIVKA KOREH ’18
Adams House


ABSTRACT: From 1967 to 1990, more than a quarter of the Jews who lived in the Soviet Union emigrated, fleeing the Soviet government’s policies of forced assimilation. Their journeys from the Soviet Union to Europe, the United States, and Israel became important and divisive political issues for Israel and the American Jewish community. American Jewish organizations such as the American Jewish Committee were essential to the world-wide Soviet Jewry advocacy movement, representing a critical shift in 1960s American Jewish advocacy — from focusing on universalistic causes, such as the civil rights movement, to more ‘Jewish-centric causes.’ This paper explains this shift in advocacy in relation to a rise of Holocaust consciousness in the late 1960s—a result of a confluence of political, social, and structural changes, including the American responses to the Six Day War in 1967. However, advocacy for Soviet Jews also tested the relationship between American Jews and Israel. The Israeli government, through its covert Liaison Bureau, was instrumental in equipping American Jewish organizations with the resources and motivation to elevate the Soviet Jewry
issue to the tops of their agendas in the 1960s. Yet, by the early 1970s, American Jewish organizations charted an independent course of action, both from Israeli directives and US foreign policy — a remarkable deviation from the established pattern of American Jewish deference to the objectives of the Israeli government. This divergence in American Jewish and Israeli strategic prioritization vis-à-vis Soviet Jews was due to the development of American Jewish Holocaust consciousness in the late 1960s, distinct from Holocaust memory in Israel.
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GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS
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Will Friedman (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Isadore Twersky Fellowship
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Matthew Hass (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Center for Jewish Studies Fellowship
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Rachel Grossman (Comparative Literature), Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship
Zalman Rothschild (Harvard Law School), Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship
William Tamplin (Comparative Literature), Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship
Miriam-Simma Walfish (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations), Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship

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