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WHAT IS THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES?

The Center for Jewish Studies serves as an umbrella organization, encompassing and coordinating the many academic and extra-curricular programs in Jewish studies at Harvard University. 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. The Center supports student and faculty research, teaching, and visiting research scholars from around the world in Jewish studies.

We also sponsor and co-sponsor conferences, lectures and seminars, and work closely with departments across the Harvard campus as well as with the Mahinda Center for the Humanities, the Center for European Studies, the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, and the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law in Harvard Law School. 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.
DAVID STERN

We hope this letter finds you and yours safe and well during these difficult and strange times.

I write to you from my home in Cambridge to give you an update on news from the Center for Jewish Studies during this period of the pandemic. As you doubtless know, Harvard, like other American universities, switched to all-remote teaching last March. This instructional format will continue through the spring semester. The Yard is eerily quiet. Even though some freshmen and a select number of other students are back on campus, they are safely ensconced in their rooms under strict rules to maintain their safety and health. Much of the rest of the University is closed to public use, most faculty and staff are working remotely from their homes. Despite all these challenges, the University—and the Center—continue to operate at almost full steam. Spirits, by and large, remain high.

The Center for Jewish Studies has also adapted to these new circumstances. Though less severe than it first seemed, the financial impact of the pandemic to the University’s budget has forced all of us to cut non-essential spending, limit some of our activities and to re-channel many others into virtual and remote formats. Happily, thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the Center has had its own resources to fund its activities and provide essential support to students. In our efforts to be good citizens of the University at large, we reach out to other centers and departments to collaborate on joint programs and support students in the field of Jewish studies. We are providing extra financial aid to many students and doubled our subventions for dissertation completion fellowships for graduate students whose work has been slowed by the pandemic. We paid to bring students who had been conducting research abroad when the pandemic struck back to America and subsidized tuition for remote study programs for undergraduates and graduate students whose plans to travel abroad over the summer were cut short, including five Harvard students who participated in an online course on Ladino—a first for the Center!

All our classes, seminars, and lectures have switched to a virtual format. Even though a quarter of Harvard's undergraduates chose to take leave this semester, all our courses are being offered—and several even have better-than-average enrollments! Professor Derek Penslar was able to very successfully run the last half of the Starr Seminars last spring on the topic of “The Affective Turn in Modern Jewish History.” We are now planning for the Spring 2021 Starr Seminars on “New Approaches to Jewish Thought” to take place in the same way. Current Starr Fellows are working on their research projects remotely, literally

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all over the world. Our previously scheduled Weinstock Visiting Professors for the year have deferred their appointments until next year, but Professor Marion Aptroot of the University of Düsseldorf will be offering a course on Old Yiddish, remotely, this spring.

We have a full lecture series planned for this year. Somewhat paradoxically, the pandemic has allowed us to expand our lecturer pool, because it is now easier to invite foreign speakers remotely. We will be hosting talks and seminars by professors from Europe and Israel as well as from all over America. The online audiences for these talks are often much larger than anything we’ve had in real time. In November, Emily Nussbaum, The New Yorker’s television and culture critic, delivered this year’s annual Doft Lecture on the topic of Jews in contemporary American popular culture and we are currently working with the Hutchins Center for African and African-American Research on an ongoing series, beginning this spring, on Black and Jewish Voices. Full details about all these programs will be available on our website. We hope you will tune in and join us!

Please stay safe and well.

With best wishes for a healthy new year,
Warmly,

David Stern
Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University
Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature

Congratulations 2020 Graduates!

Harvard College:
Amitai Baruch Abouzaglo (Comparative Study of Religion)
Kalia Deborah Firester (Visual and Environmental Studies)
Hayley Beth Jaffe (Social Studies)
Ariella Kahan (History)
Adam Nahari (Philosophy)
Eliya Orkin Smith (History and Literature; Theater, Dance & Media)
Rebecca Juliet Thau (History and Literature; Romance Languages and Literatures; secondary in Jewish studies)

Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences:
Eric X. Jarrard, Th.D. (Committee on the Study of Religion)
Ethan F. Schwartz, Ph.D. (Committee on the Study of Religion)
Tamar Sella, Ph.D. (Department of Music)
From the desk of
LUIS GIRÓN NEGRÓN

Acting Chair, Fall 2020,
Department of Comparative Literature
Professor of Comparative Literature and of Romance
Languages and Literatures

Lectures:
Recent lectures include “Maimónides romanceado: Apuntes sobre la Visión Deleitable y la recepción de la Guía en la España cuatrocentista” (Universidad Complutense, Facultad de Filosofía), now published in the Anales del Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía. “Traducción y exegesis en las Biblas romancedas” at the International Congress Biblias hispánicas: traducción vernácula en la Edad Media y el Renacimiento in Palma de Mallorca (Universitat de les Illes Balears), forthcoming at the Anuario de Estudios Medievales and “The Rabbi, The Friar, and the Knight: Moshe Arragel and the Old Spanish Bibles” at the Beyond Translation: Vernacular Jewish Bibles: From Antiquity to Modernity conference sponsored by our very own CJS (February 2020).

Publications:

I am now close to completing the first two volumes of the annotated critical edition and study of The Old Spanish Bible of Moshe Arragel: Volumes I (Introductory Study and General Prologue) and II (Genesis), prepared in collaboration with Andrés Enrique-Arias, Francisco Javier Pueyo Mena and the late Ángel Sáenz Badillos, and forthcoming in the Heterodoxia Iberica series for Brill.

From the desk of
STEPHEN GREENBLATT

Cogan University Professor of the Humanities

Publications:
My account of the Misteri d’Elx, “Witness to a Mystery,” was published in the June 11, 2020 issue of the New York Review of Books. In this article, I share my experience attending the annual Misteri d’Elx in the Basilica de Santa María, Elche, Spain, 2015—one of the few living relics of collective celebrations called “mystery cycles” or “miracle plays” that were once widespread in medieval Europe. The elaborate two-day spectacle is described and I share reflections on its representation of Christian and Jewish history. It is a performance rich with history and collective celebration. The article can also be found at: http://stephengreenblatt.com/.
My recent activities include the following:

**Lectures:**


The Kistemaker Annual Lecture Series, Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, FL, February 11–12, 2020:

“To Love the God Who Loves: Recovering the Biblical Commandment from Emotionalism and Eroticism” (four lectures):

2. “Why Did God Fall in Love with the People Israel?”
3. “Self-Interest and Self-Sacrifice: Can’t We Just Replace the Fear of God with the Love of God?”

“The Binding of Isaac in the Three ‘Abrahamic’ Traditions,” a lecture co-sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, Department of Religious Studies, Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts, and Department of History, University of California, Santa Barbara, January 13, 2020.

Two lectures at Congregation Agudath Israel of West Essex, Caldwell, NJ, November 25, 2019:

“The Binding of Isaac in the Three ‘Abrahamic’ Traditions”

“Is Abraham our Common Father? What the Term ‘Abrahamic Religions’ Conceals”


**Articles:**


**Books:**


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**From the desk of JON D. LEVENSON**

*Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies*

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**Articles:**


**Books:**


Massachusetts Amherst; the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies; the University of Bern; the Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University of Berlin; and the Institute for the History of Emotions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin.

Publications:


“German Jewry and World War I: Beyond Apologetics and Polemics,” in Beyond Inclusion and Exclusion: Jewish Experiences of the First World War in Central Europe, eds. Jason Crouthamel, Tim Grady, Mike Geheran, and Julia Köhne (Berghahn)


“Gender and Economics Through a Trifocal Lens” in American Jewish History


Theodor Herzl: The Charismatic Leader was published in February, 2020 by Yale University Press.

Other Activities:

I spent part of my sabbatical in spring 2019 at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, where I worked on my current book project, a history of Zionism through the lens of emotion.

From the desk of

DORIS SOMMER

Ira Jewell Williams, Jr. Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of African and African American Studies

I met Chicago-based Svara, the Traditionally Radical Yeshiva (svara.org), through my daughter, Annie Sommer Kaufman, who now facilitates the “Lace Midrash” (see https://interleaved.buzzsprout.com/925780/3798455-shabbat-no-3-the-amora-s-new-clothes). Annie and many others learned to read Talmud from Rabbi Benay Lappe. We learned to read each word of a short passage with a partner and a dictionary (don’t assume anything); translate literally and freely (inside and out); commit the passage to memory. And then we see a new twist from the next sage. I recognized Svara as if it were home when I first attended Queer Talmud Camp two years ago. I would have gone again this summer but for the lockdown.

Queer at the campsite means welcome for the mostly young participants. Their numbers grow so that Svara hosts multiple summer sessions every year at a variety of sites. Campers are a heterogeneous group, but a good number are unconventional children of religious homes where they often find it hard to integrate. Queer sons and daughters use pronouns of their choice. They may pierce body parts, dye hair in a range of colors, dress as they choose. And they long for Jewish learning. Svara shares that love of learning and combines it with love, period. It is an exhilarating mix of intellectual rigor and personal validation. It is the spirit of the Talmud.

On good days, I sense a deep family resemblance between this affectionate teasing and twisting of words in Svara and my own academic work. We both queer texts.
That’s what literary critics do. Though my primary literature is Latin American, written in Spanish and Portuguese, my approach is familiar to serious Talmudists like Rabbi Lappe and her disciples. The approach is to catch contradictions in the texts, to ask it questions and enjoy the lingering doubt raised by each answer, because doubt allows interpretation to continue; it fuels the dynamic back and forth contrapunteo with a partner and then with a community of readers.

Reading Emmanuel Lévinas had brought me to the brink of reading Talmud. (My father would have been a good partner had I dared to spar with him.) Lévinas calls Judaism a “religion for adults,” mature enough to forgo inspired belief in favor of reasoned investigation. That’s why the man-made Talmud, not the sacred Torah, is the object of scrutiny in a religion that is rabbinic, not revealed. It is also why scrutiny can be irreverent, risky, playful. “The pages of the Talmud, mischievous, laconic in their ironic or dry formulations, but in love with the possible...seek contradiction and expect of a reader freedom, invention, and boldness.” [Lévinas: Nine Talmudic Readings, 1990]

Circling back to Talmud through Svara and Lévinas, I have gained a new level of pleasure in the texts, through dialogue with Benay Lappe, for which this short note has been a pretext (see pre-texts.org).
VISITING FACULTY

The Center for Jewish Studies is very pleased to be able to support Visiting Professors and Visiting Lecturers in Jewish Studies to supplement our course offerings in areas of Jewish studies not covered by our current faculty (or those on leave). The generous gift of Gerard Weinstock, The Gerard Weinstock Visiting Professorship, supported two visiting faculty members last year: Dr. Yael Berda in Sociology and Dr. Rachel Seelig in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. We were able to bring two additional Visiting Professors in Jewish studies: Professor Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia University) was our Joseph Engel Visiting Professor in the Department of History, and Professor Tally Amir taught in the Department of Sociology with the support of the Israel Institute.

Yael Berda, Gerard Weinstock Visiting Lecturer, Department of Sociology (academic year)
Assistant Professor of Sociology and Anthropology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
“Sociology of Law,” Department of Sociology
“Transnational Historical Sociology,” Department of Sociology
“Junior Tutorial: Race and Bureaucracy,” Department of Sociology

Rebecca Kobrin, Joseph Engel Visiting Professor in American Jewish Studies (Fall 2019 semester)
Russell and Bettina Knapp Assistant Professor of American Jewish History, Columbia University
“A Global History of Modern Jewish Migration,” Department of History
“Jews and the City: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Urban History,” Department of History

Rachel Seelig, Gerard Weinstock Visiting Lecturer, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (Fall 2019 semester)
Visiting Scholar, Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Toronto
“Berlin: German Capital, Jewish Center,” Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Tally Amir, Israel Institute Visiting Associate Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology (academic year)
Senior Lecturer of Immigration and International Law at the College of Law and Business, Israel
“The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict: Contemporary Socio-Legal Aspects,” Department of Sociology
“Human Rights in Israel and the United States,” Department of Sociology
Visiting Faculty

**Gerard Weinstock Visiting Lecturer (Sociology)**
Yael Berda, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (academic year)

**Joseph Engel Visiting Professor in American Jewish Studies (History)**
Rebecca Kobrin, Columbia University (fall)

**Gerard Weinstock Visiting Lecturer (Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Comparative Literature)**
Rachel Seelig, University of Toronto (fall)

**Israel Institute Visiting Associate Professor (Sociology)**
Tally Amir, College of Law and Business, Israel (academic year)

**Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow**
Rabbi Reuven Leigh, Cambridge Traditional Jewish Congregation, UK (fall)

**Alan M. Stroock Fellow**
Geoffrey Levin, New York University (academic year)

Visiting Scholars, Fellows and Post-Doctoral Fellows

**Nadav Berman-Shifman** (academic year)

**Tsivia Frank-Wygoda** (academic year)

**Ilana Szobel** (academic year)

**Ilan Tamir** (academic year)

**Asaf Ziderman** (academic year)

Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica

**Francesca Bregoli** (Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY) (academic year)

**Hadar Feldman Samet** (University of Pennsylvania) (academic year)

**Joshua Meyers** (Stanford University) (academic year)

**Paul Nahme** (Brown University) (academic year)

**Orit Rozin** (Tel Aviv University) (spring)

**Joshua Teplitsky** (Stony Brook University) (spring)

**Rabbi Reuven Leigh** of Cambridge Traditional Jewish Congregation in the United Kingdom spent the fall semester of 2019 at Harvard as CJS’s twenty-seventh annual Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow. It was truly a pleasure to host Rabbi Leigh to engage in full-time research. CJS is grateful, as well, for his generous efforts to reach out to students and scholars during his time in residence. In Cambridge, UK, Rabbi Leigh serves as a University Chaplain at Cambridge University, Director of Chabad of Cambridge (UK), and Director of the Cambridge Lehrhaus: Centre for Jewish Thought. In addition to his rabbinic ordination, Rabbi Leigh also holds an Advanced Diploma in the Study of Religion, as well as M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees from the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge.

The **Daniel Jeremy Silver 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.
FROM SILVER FELLOW
RABBI DR. REUVEN LEIGH

The opportunity to spend the fall semester with the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard as the Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow was a truly enriching experience. Whilst there are a whole range of similarities between Cambridge, UK, where I reside, and Cambridge, MA, the fellowship provided me with the time and space to engage in research away from the day-to-day concerns back home.

The main focus of my research during the semester was on a set of unpublished sermons of Rabbi Avraham Chein (1877–1957). Chein served in rabbinic positions in Russia, Poland and France before arriving in Israel in 1935, where he emerged as a highly regarded thinker especially amongst the political and literary elites. He was extremely well-versed in contemporary literature and philosophy and was a talented writer who garnered praise from figures such as Sholem Aleichem and Ahad Ha’am. His writings display a strong opposition to warfare and capital punishment and an all-round scepticism about the nation state. Notwithstanding the political nature of his articles he maintains an intense piety and spiritually rich tone throughout, resulting in an unusual example of Jewish theo-political writing.

Rabbi Chein’s archive is housed in the National Library in Jerusalem and contains a large amount of unpublished material which I hope to examine further. For now, my time at Harvard enabled me to analyse and prepare for future publication of ten sermons which will hopefully become part of a larger volume of Rabbi Chein’s writings.

In addition to the wonderful support and guidance from Rachel Rockenmacher and Sandy Cantave Vil from the CJS office, I also managed to get to know a number of this year’s Starr Fellows, and spent time with students and staff at Harvard Chabad and Harvard Hillel. I will be forever grateful for this wonderful opportunity and look forward to future collaborations between our Cambridges.

”...my time at Harvard enabled me to analyse and prepare for future publication of ten sermons, which will hopefully become part of a larger volume of Rabbi Chein’s writings.”

—Rabbi Dr. Reuven Leigh

FROM STROOCK FELLOW
GEOFFREY LEVIN

My year as an Alan M. Stroock Fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies helped me to advance my research on several fronts. Most recently, I drafted an article examining the emotions that drove debates between American Jews about Israeli-Palestinian peace in the 1970s. The article focused on American Jewish activists involved in an organization called Breira: A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations, arguing that leading activists underwent a similar emotional trajectory in their relationships with Israel. Several aspects of the article were inspired by the work of fellow scholars at Harvard. The excellent feedback I received during my Starr seminar will be very helpful moving forward with it. The piece is connected with the broader project I have been working on, a book tentatively titled Our Palestine Question: Israel, American Jews, and Palestinian Rights, 1948–1978.

Other projects that I worked on while at Harvard included a book chapter for an edited volume titled The Jewish 1950s and an article for a special journal issue on anti-Semitism in American history. The article, which I wrote during my early months at Harvard, made use of a wide variety of archival and secondary sources that I found at Widener Library.

Finally, the warm, intellectual cohort of fellows at the Center for Jewish Studies has been helpful in other ways, offering helpful advice regarding the academic job market. In part thanks to the support I received at Harvard, I was fortunate to have been offered a tenure-track position at Emory University, which I will begin in Fall 2020.
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THE HARRY STARR FELLOWSHIP IN JUDAICA supports a group of scholars from around the world to gather at Harvard to engage in full-time research in Jewish studies. This research fellowship was founded with a generous bequest from the estate of Harry Starr ’21, former president of the Lucius Littauer Foundation.

The Starr Fellowship is open to scholars at different stages of their academic careers. From a record number of applicants, we selected six Starr Fellows for 2019–20. Most years we organize the fellowship around a designated subject area and work together with an academic department in that field. Last year, we invited a group of scholars early in their careers around the topic of “The Affective Turn in Modern Jewish History.” Starr Fellows presented their works in progress at the Starr Seminars, weekly meetings during the spring semester. We were also able to invite some outside speakers to present to the group. These presentations often elicited lively discussions between the Starr Fellows, other visiting scholars, and faculty and students from Harvard and other area universities.
Francesca Bregoli
Queens College and The Graduate Center, CUNY

“When envisioning...challenges, one surely thinks more along the lines of ‘cold winter’ and ‘severe snowstorms’ than of ‘global pandemic.’...Our shared experience this year has forged meaningful bonds that will not be easily forgotten.”

My stay as a year-long Starr Fellow at Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies was not just extremely productive, but also very rewarding in varied and lasting ways. What a memorable opportunity these two semesters proved to be! The year’s theme, “The Affective Turn in Modern Jewish History,” was an ideal framework to make substantial progress on my current book project. My research revolves around 18th-century Jewish family businesses in the Italian-speaking Mediterranean world. I am investigating, specifically, the articulation of emotions such as love, anxiety, and affliction as part of merchants’ self-representation to family members, business associates, and Jewish and non-Jewish authorities, through a study of private correspondence, supplications, and notarial and court records. For the paper I workedshopped at our weekly seminar, I focused on episodes of domestic disorder in prominent Jewish merchant families which pitted self-described “afflicted fathers” against wayward apostate sons, exploring the nexus between beleaguered paternal authority and communal and individual Jewish credit.

The Starr Fellowship opened up a most welcome space to transcribe, analyze, and write. Harvard’s unmatched library resources led to unexpected intellectual discoveries. Considering the unique nature of last academic year, I also feel fortunate to have been able to fully immerse myself in the University’s academic life in the fall; taking advantage of the seminar series in Early Modern History, the History of the Book, and in Business History at the Harvard Business School across the river; rekindling friendships with colleagues at Harvard, and making exciting new ones.

Hadar Feldman Samet
Independent Scholar

Being a Starr Fellow at Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies has been an extraordinarily enriching experience. I am truly grateful to Professor David Stern and Professor Derek Penslar for their kind hospitality and support, to Rachel Rockenmacher, Sandy Cantave Vil, and Allison Andrews for their cheerful and devoted assistance, and to the Fellows for many friendly and interesting encounters. The fellowship has provided me with the best conditions for pursuing my research on the late offshoots of the Sabbatian movement—the most prominent messianic phenomenon in Jewish history. This year’s Starr Seminar theme, “The Affective Turn in Modern...
Jewish History,” allowed me to engage with conceptual frameworks that offer new historical, literary, and performative dimensions to unexplored Sabbatian mystical manuscripts in the context of intercultural exchanges in the late Ottoman Empire. The fascinating, stimulating, and very pleasant Starr Seminar meetings demonstrated the important and unique contribution of the affective prism to Jewish studies. The seminars continued to be so after they were unexpectedly replaced by virtual gatherings in mid-March. The weekly discussions and the feedback I received greatly broadened my views on the diverse and rich perspectives of affect in Jewish studies and will undoubtedly have a formative impact on my work.

Harvard’s endless scholarly opportunities and unparalleled facilities have significantly assisted me in conducting my research and developing new directions for future studies. As my work lies at the junction of Jewish studies and Middle Eastern studies, and integrates performative aspects of texts, the vast relevant academic events at Harvard and in the Boston area have inspired me enormously. I was especially delighted to have had the opportunity to start a collaboration with Professor Mehmet Ali Sanlikol, participate in events at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and meet some of its faculty including director Professor Cemal Kafadar, and join the meetings of Cambridge Musiki Cemiyeti (Cambridge Society for Classical Turkish Music) directed by Feridun Özgören. The past year has been an unforgettable cultural and intellectual experience for my family and me, residing in the international environments of Cambridge and Boston. We will surely look back on this year with much gratification and many fond memories.

“The weekly discussions and feedback I received greatly broadened my views on the diverse and rich perspectives of affect in Jewish studies....The past year has been an unforgettable cultural and intellectual experience for my family and me.”

Joshua Meyers
Stanford University

During my time as a Starr Fellow, I worked on two major projects. The first, my book project, studied Jewish politics during the Russian Revolution. In particular, I explored the effort to reimagine the relationship between Jews and the state at a moment when all—both good and bad—seemed possible. The party at the heart of my research, the Jewish Labor Bund, represented the largest Jewish revolutionary party in Russia and Poland. As the only party of any size equally devoted to Russia and its Jews, it serves as an invaluable vantage point from which we can study the relationship between Jews and Russia at a time the assumptions that relationship had been preceded on were in flux. Additionally, the Bund played an outsized role in debates over Russia’s national question, both at large and regarding the Jews specifically. As such, my research sheds light on the relationship between Russia, its Jews, and other minorities at the time of the Soviet Union’s emergence.

At the same time, I worked on an article exploring the relationship between Jewish and Russian revolutionaries in the early 20th century, and how feelings of victimization contributed as much to the eventual schism between the two as ideological differences did. I also gave two talks while at Harvard. The first, “A Brief History of the Jewish Labor Bund,” was given digitally through the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and surveyed the history of the largest Jewish socialist party in Russia and Poland. The second, “125 Years Young: New Horizons in Bundist Scholarship,” was given at Harvard as the Jacob Pat Memorial Lecture and examined how the history of the Jewish Labor Bund has been written at various times and from differing ideological vantage points.

In addition to our individual research projects, the weekly Starr Seminars proved an invaluable and enriching space. They provided a warm feeling of fellowship and provided us with a stimulating exchange of ideas and scholarship. I also participated in workshops at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and built relationships with colleagues throughout Harvard and at other schools in the greater Boston area.

“My research sheds light on the relationship between Russia, its Jews, and other minorities at the time of the emergence of the Soviet Union.”
My year as a Starr Fellow was one of the most productive I have had as a scholar. I continued my work on a book project that seeks to understand the impact of racial discourse on Jewish self-fashioning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with the traces of this racial formation on Jewish collective memory and identity.

To make sense of this influential yet obscured dimension of Jewish collective identity, I set out to think about the emotional and affective worlds of Jewish collective suffering, memory, and longing for self-determination. I wondered, what might Jewishness feel like to Jews living in fin-de-siècle Germany and Central Europe, as they experienced public perceptions and feelings about the racial distinctness and perniciousness of the imagined “Jew?” How did they express their anxieties over being associated with such derision, especially as racial anti-Semitism intensified in the wings before seizing center stage with the rise of Nazism? How might the movement for cultural renewal and self-assertion, including the Zionist youth movement, have seized hold of this same cluster of negative associations with the word “Jude” and, instead of despairing, reinvented the spectrum of feelings Jews might hold when asserting their belonging to this people?

Although I was in the writing stage of this project when I first took up residency at Harvard, I started to explore the “My Life in Germany Contest Papers” collection at the Houghton Library. These autobiographical essays and first-person reflections on life before and during the rise of National Socialism provide a window into the emotional stakes of being a Jew in a time of complete social upheaval. This collection has provided me with material for both my current project and for future work, making my time at Harvard one I will not soon forget.

Unfortunately, this extremely productive year was abruptly cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, even during the lockdown, our weekly Starr Seminars provided an important space for intellectual community and camaraderie. I joined a wonderful group of scholars who gave generously of their time and emotional energy during this period of uncertainty to help each other think ever more deeply about our research questions and our written work. My project has benefitted immeasurably from the cohort this year and I am sad that our time together was cut short. But the vibrant community of Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies extends beyond the physical limits of campus, as I learned firsthand, and I will hold it dear as I return home.

“My year as a Starr Fellow was one of the most productive I have had as a scholar...our weekly Starr Seminars provided an important space for intellectual community and camaraderie. I joined a wonderful group of scholars who gave generously of their time and emotional energy during this period of uncertainty to help each other think ever more deeply about our research questions and our written work.”
Orit Rozin
Tel Aviv University

“My goal was to finish a manuscript on the security challenges of Israel in the first two decades after its independence through the prism of the history of emotions.”

When I arrived in Cambridge for the spring term, the novel coronavirus seemed as remote as the city of Wuhan, the epicenter of a new, mysterious epidemic. My goal was to finish a manuscript on the security challenges of Israel in the first two decades after its independence through the prism of the history of emotions. Indeed, I spent the first weeks of my sabbatical as a Starr Fellow writing a chapter about violent Arab militants and criminals crossing Israel’s borders and arousing fear, anger, and the desire for revenge. Reprisal raids, as well as putting these felons on trial, were common responses as military strikes and law came to be seen as interchangeable. Letters penned by soldiers and citizens revealed the prevalence of anger and the desire for revenge. Yet policy makers and judges, as well as newspaper editors and writers, delegitimized the thirst for revenge. Israeli decision-makers believed that it was imperative, for both security and policy reasons, to respond militarily to attacks by Arabs (Palestinians, mostly). At the same time, they believed that it was incumbent on them to constitute a moral Israeli society whose members felt that justice was on their side. Israeli policymakers and leaders grappled with the need to channel the negative emotions, even as they sought to gain public confidence and instill a sense of security.

The Starr Seminars, organized by Derek Penslar and David Stern, featured a select group of scholars whose engaging papers I found insightful. Alas, as the epidemic became a pandemic and campus life shut down, our intellectually stimulating Thursday seminars ended abruptly, then went online. Rachel Rockenmacher and Sandy Cantave Vil helped us navigate through the crisis. I was sad to go home months before I had planned, but happy to have at least experienced some of the vibrant intellectual life at Harvard.

Joshua Teplitsky
Stony Brook University

Although my residence at Harvard as a member of the Starr Fellowship was cut short by the arrival of the COVID-19 epidemic, my time both at Harvard in person and with the virtual community that continued from a distance was important for pushing my work in new directions. I am working on a book about Jews and epidemic disease, a topic that became eerily relevant in the middle of the spring semester. That project, provisionally titled Quarantine in the Prague Ghetto, aims to reconstruct the outbreak of the plague in the city of Prague in the early eighteenth century. A history of epidemic, as has become apparent in our own historical moment, reveals competing pressures and different social arrangements that are disrupted or accelerated during a crisis.

My research aims to tell the story of the ways that an outbreak in Prague revealed how Jews were both a part of the city’s social fabric but were also understood to be distinct from it. It examines how Jews responded to the plague, both in their provisions for health and welfare, but also culturally and—most relevant to the theme of the Starr seminar—emotionally. During my time at Harvard, I learned a great deal, thanks to the immeasurable resources of its library system and the wonderful intellectual environment of the weekly seminars. I already miss being away!

“I am working on a book about Jews and epidemic disease, a topic that became eerily relevant in the middle of the spring semester.”
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Center for Jewish Studies
Harvard University
6 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

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

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- Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund
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- Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation Yiddish Language Instruction Fund
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- Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies
READING AMOZ OZ THROUGH MANY EYES

October 30, 2019
FALL RECEPTION
September 18, 2019
OCTOBER 30, 2019

Reading Amos Oz through Many Eyes

Reflections by:

PROFESSOR BOAZ BARAK
Gordon McKay Professor of Computer Science, Department of Computer Science, Harvard University

DR. OFRIT LIVIATAN
Lecturer on Law and Politics, Department of Government, Harvard University

PROFESSOR ABRAHAM LOEB
Frank B. Baird, Jr., Professor of Science, Department of Astronomy, Harvard University

PROFESSOR DEREK PENSLAR
William Lee Frost Professor of Jewish History, Department of History, Harvard University

Moderated by:

DR. IRIT AHARONY
Senior Preceptor in Modern Hebrew, Harvard University

Panel discussion by scholars from different fields about the impact of Amos Oz’s writings

Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica

OCTOBER 24, 2019

Diasporic Home-Making: Jews in Paris and Berlin in the 20th Century

LEORA AUSLANDER
Professor of European Social History and the Arthur and Joann Rasmussen Professor in Western Civilization, The University of Chicago

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

OCTOBER 24, 2019

VISIT TO THE JUDAICA DIVISION, WIDENER LIBRARY, HARVARD COLLEGE

Staff from the Center for Jewish Studies and the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

OCTOBER 25, 2019

Not a Good Time for Hebrew?

MAYA ARAD
Hebrew author and writer in residence at the Taube Center for Jewish Studies, Stanford University

Harry Edison Fund

NOVEMBER 5, 2019

Poetry in Translation: Hebrew-English, English-Hebrew

ADRIANA X. JACOBS
Associate Professor and Cowley Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Literature; Fellow, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Oxford

Harry Edison Fund
NOVEMBER 5, 2019
**How Intellectuals Can Create Political Change**

**RUTH CALDERON**
Caroline Zelaznik Gruss and Joseph S. Gruss Visiting Professor in Talmudic Civil Law, Harvard Law School, former Knesset member, founder of Elul Beit Midrash, founder of Alma: Home for Hebrew Culture

*Robert and Florence Dreben Lecture and Publication Fund* with the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law, Harvard Law School

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NOVEMBER 6, 2019

**The Catastrophe of Translation**

**ADRIANA X. JACOBS**
Associate Professor and Cowley Lecturer in Modern Hebrew Literature; Fellow, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University of Oxford

*Harry Edison Fund* with the Charles Knapp Israel Studies Fund at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University; the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University; the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University; and the Rethinking Translation Seminar, Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

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NOVEMBER 6, 2019


**GENNADY ESTRAIKH**
Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University

**VASSILI SCHEDRIN**
Alfred and Isabel Bader Post-Doctoral Fellow in Jewish History in the Department of History at Queen’s University

*Estelle and Howard Rubin Fund* and *Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund* with the Seminar on Russian and Eurasian Jewry at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University. The Project on Russian and Eurasian Jewry has been made possible with the generous support of Genesis Philanthropy Group.

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NOVEMBER 7, 2019

**A Premonition of the Shoah? R. A. Reiss’s Photographs of Monástir, 1917**

**NICOLE JORDAN**
Associate Professor of History, University of Illinois; Local Affiliate, Center for European Studies, Harvard University

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

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**RUTH CALDERON ANSWERS QUESTIONS**

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**GENNADY ESTRAIKH, MAXIM D. SHRAYER, & VASSILI SCHEDRIN**

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**REBECCA KOBIRN**
NOVEMBER 7, 2019
Translating Job to Make a Difference

EDWARD L. GREENSTEIN
Professor Emeritus of Bible, Bar-Ilan University

Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Hebrew Bible Student Workshop

NOVEMBER 14, 2019
Russian Jewish Immigrant ‘Bankers’ and American Finance: The Case of Saul Singer and the Bank of United States

REBECCA KOBIRN
Russell and Bettina Knapp Associate Professor of American Jewish History, Columbia University; Joseph Engel Visiting Professor in American Jewish Studies, History Department, Harvard University (Fall 2019)

Joseph Engel Fund with the Davis Center Seminar on Russian and Eurasian Jewry, Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University

NOVEMBER 19, 2019
Dine & Discuss

RABBI REUVEN LEIGH
Rabbi, The Cambridge (UK) Traditional Jewish Congregation, Director, Chabad of Cambridge (UK), 2019–20 Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow, Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University

Co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University with Harvard Hillel

NOVEMBER 20, 2019
A Half Century of Jewish Immigration from the former Soviet Union: Demographic Aspects

MARK TOLTZ
Senior Research Associate (ret.) in the Division of Jewish Demography and Statistics at the Avraham Harman Research Institute of Contemporary Jewry of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Estelle and Howard Rubin Fund and Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Seminar on Russian and Eurasian Jewry at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University. The Project on Russian and Eurasian Jewry has been made possible with the generous support of Genesis Philanthropy Group.

NOVEMBER 21, 2019
#GamAni?: Sexualized Violence in Hebrew Literature and Israeli Culture

ILANA SZOBEL
Associate Professor on the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Chair in Hebrew Literature, Brandeis University; Visiting Scholar, Harvard University (academic year)

Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University; and the Studies of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, Harvard University

DECEMBER 2, 2019
Annual Jacob Pat Memorial Lecture:
Panning from Silents to Uploads: Cultural Re/Creation in Yiddish Film

SARA FELDMAN
Preceptor in Yiddish, Harvard University

Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund with the Judaica Division, Harvard Widener Library

HEBREW BIBLE STUDENT WORKSHOP
MEETING DATES:
9/19/19, 10/10/19, 11/7/19, 12/9/19

JEWISH STUDIES STUDENT WORKSHOP
MEETING DATES:
9/24/19, 10/7/19, 11/5/19, 11/19/19
DECEMBER 7, 2019
Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program Conference:
The Transmission & Reception of the Qur’ān in Light of Recent Scholarship

Panelists:
SHADY NASSER, Harvard University (Chair)
GABRIEL SAID REYNOLDS, University of Notre Dame
WALID SALEH, University of Toronto
DEVIN STEWART, Emory University
BEHNAM SÂDEGHI, University of Oxford
FRANÇOIS DÉROCHE, Collège de France
ALBA FEDELI, Universität Hamburg
GEOFFREY KHAN, University of Cambridge
INTISAR RABB, Harvard Law School

Co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University; The Program in Islamic Law, Harvard Law School; and the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School

DECEMBER 9, 2019
The Rediscovery of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of the Hebrew Bible

GEOFFREY KHAN
Regius Professor of Hebrew, University of Cambridge

Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund with the Alwaleed Bin Talal Islamic Studies Program, Harvard University; and the Hebrew Bible Student Workshop

MAYA ARAD LECTURE, OCTOBER 29, 2019
SPRING RECEPTION
FEBRUARY 4, 2020
FEBRUARY 6, 2020
Jewish Emancipation Reimagined
DAVID SORKIN
Lucy G. Moses Professor of Modern Jewish History, Yale University
William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 11, 2020
Comedy or Leadership? A Conversation with Activist-Turned-Comedian
NOAM SHUSTER-ELIASSI
Comedian, Visiting Fellow with the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative, Harvard Divinity School
Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies with the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 20, 2020
The Bacterial Turn in Yiddish Literature: Two Case Studies
SUNNY YUDKOFF
Assistant Professor in the Department of German, Nordic, and Slavic and the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison
Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies with the Jews in Modern Europe Seminar, Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 24, 2020
Beyond Translation: Vernacular Jewish Bibles, from Antiquity to Modernity Conference
Panel I: The Ancient Period
PAUL KOSMIN, Harvard University (Chair)
ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED, New York University
STEVEN FRAADE, Yale University

Panel II: The Medieval Period
NICHOLAS WATSON, Harvard University (Chair)
MEIRA POLLIACK, Tel Aviv University
LUIS GIRÓN-NEGRÓN, Harvard University

Panel III: The Early Modern & Modern Periods
JON LEVENSON, Harvard Divinity School (Chair)
MARION APTROOT, Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
ABIGAIL GILLMAN, Boston University
Panel IV: The Twentieth Century
SANDRA NADDAFF, Harvard University (Chair)
NAOMI SEIDMAN, University of Toronto
LAWRENCE ROSENWALD, Wellesley College

Panel V: Concluding Panel
JONATHAN SARNA, Brandeis University
RUTH LANGER, Boston College
DAVID DAMROSCH, Harvard University

Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Fund for Innovative Research in Judaica. Co-sponsored with the Department of Comparative Literature, Harvard University; the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University; Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School; and the Jewish Cultures and Societies Seminar and Rethinking Translation Seminar at the Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard University

FEBRUARY 25, 2020
The Jew as Migrant: From Theory to Poetry
VIVIAN LISKA
Professor of German Literature and Director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Antwerp, Belgium
Co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University; Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School; and Harvard Hillel

FEBRUARY 28, 2020
Music - Lady or Maid? Composing Music for Films - Challenges and Triumphs
ADY COHEN
Film composer and Associate Professor at Berklee College of Music
Harry Edison Fund

APRIL 1, 2020
Yiddish Music
ANTHONY RUSSELL
Vocalist, composer and arranger specializing in Yiddish song
A virtual lecture to Yiddish students taught by Yiddish Preceptor, Sara Feldman
Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

APRIL 3, 2020
Israeli Music
DANIEL SALOMON
Israeli pop rock singer and musician
A virtual talk about his music and Israeli music to the Modern Hebrew students taught by Senior Preceptor, Dr. Irit Aharony
Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund

APRIL 7, 2020
Israeli Humor
SHAYNA WEISS
Associate Director of Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University
A virtual talk about Israeli humor to students in the Jews, Humor, and the Politics of Laughter course taught by Assistant Professor Saul Zaritt
Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

APRIL 17, 2020
Israeli Literature and Society
YANIV ICZKOVITS
Contemporary Israeli writer and philosopher
A virtual talk in Hebrew about Israeli literature to the Modern Hebrew seminar students taught by Senior Preceptor, Dr. Irit Aharony
Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund

APRIL 23 AND 28, 2020
Public Health Work in New York’s Yiddish-Speaking Hasidic Community
ALYSSA MASOR
Independent scholar
Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund

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FOLLOWING MARCH 2020 CLOSURES, EVENTS WERE HOSTED ON ZOOM.

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HEBREW BIBLE STUDENT WORKSHOP
MEETING DATES:
2/5/20, 2/19/20, 3/4/20
ZOOM MEETING DATES:
3/24/20, 4/6/20, 4/20/20

JEWISH STUDIES STUDENT WORKSHOP
MEETING DATES:
2/6/20, 3/3/20
ZOOM MEETING DATES:
4/13/20
The Yiddish language program hosted several exciting activities for its students, much of it with the support of the Center for Jewish Studies. A group of students traveled to the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA, for a tour, talks and a screening of *Indecent*. We instituted a *leyenkrayz*, a Yiddish reading circle. Readings included poetry, a play, and a futurist novella. Wilfried Zibell ’21 organized the first Yiddish *Simkhe* and we now regularly have Zoom parties.

The Yiddish language classes enjoyed several guest speakers:

- **Adah Hetko** spoke about her research and creative work in Yiddish education and music, gave Harvard Yiddish students a glimpse into the production of their textbook, and taught them how to sing “*Di sapozhkelekh*.”

- **Jana Mazuriewicz**, founder of the Yiddish Arts and Academics Association of North America, spoke about Yiddish theater in Poland and why she wrote and directed *Wooden Wars*.

- **Bella Bryks-Klein** spoke about her life, the work of her father Rachmil Bryks, and cultural activism for Yiddish in Israel.

- **Charles Berlin** and **Vardit Samuels** gave an orientation to Widener Library’s Judaica Collection—with a special look at Yiddish theater.

- **Joshua Meyers**, Harry Starr Fellow, shared myths and facts about the Bund.


- **Elena Luchina** presented on Yiddish in different parts of the world, dialects, and Hasidic culture.

- **Anthony Russell**, singer and cultural activist, answered students’ questions and sang in his operatically trained *bas-kol*.

- **Alyssa Masor** spoke about her community relations work for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to prevent measles and coronavirus within Brooklyn’s Hasidic community.
try to bring my students the human side of Israel, one with which they can connect. I also try to show the vast diversity of cultures and perspectives in Israel by inviting Israeli guest speakers who represent a broad array of backgrounds and interests. In particular, several of our guests have been artists, who have engaged in an open conversation with our students. In recent years, the Center for Jewish Studies has supported some terrific guest speakers for our students, including: Ruth Kanner in improvisation theater; Joseph Cedar, Eran Riklis, Tamar Kay in cinema; Hanoch Piven in political arts; Alona Frankel in illustration and children’s books; Maya Arad, Etgar Keret, Dror Burstein, and Almog Behar in literature.

We invited three guest presenters to our spring semester classes: Daniel Salomon, one of Israel’s best rock musicians and a composer, singer and producer; Yaniv Iczkovits, an acclaimed writer; and Ady Cohen, a musician and composer for theater and TV and a professor at Berklee College of Music. We did not let the pandemic stop us from meeting. With Zoom, we were even able to meet once from an artist’s studio!

Sam Meyerson, an undergraduate student in first-year Hebrew, wrote:

On April 3rd, the students of Modern Hebrew at Harvard University had the great privilege of enjoying a live concert and talk with renowned Israeli musician Daniel Salomon over Zoom. Salomon shared his story, from discovering his love for musical composition as a young child in Haifa to his remarkable career as one of Israel’s leading musicians, contributing to theater and cinema, as well as solo music.

Salomon sang several of his most popular songs, which were so catchy that I found myself humming the melodies to myself days later. He explained how he approaches writing songs for film soundtracks and shared some of his cinematic work. At the end, we gave him a rousing virtual ovation….When looking back on this uniquely challenging semester, I am certain that I will remember Zoom-ing with Daniel Salomon as a distinct highlight.

Gahl Rinat, a graduate student in the advanced seminar in Israeli culture, wrote:

The name Yaniv Iczkovits might not yet be familiar in American culture, though his work has been celebrated by David Grossman and others. Iczkovits’s novel, The Slaughterman’s Daughter, received the distinguished Agnon Prize in 2015 and recently has been translated into English (expected release in the United States in the coming year). Professor Aharony arranged this unique opportunity for Harvard students to speak personally with this rising author.

In April, a group of advanced Hebrew students…spoke with Yaniv Iczkovits over Zoom. The topics of conversation ranged widely, including discussions of the creative process, Wittgenstein, fatherhood, publishing and writing in Hebrew, the history of the Hebrew language, and the importance of humor.

[I was surprised to learn that] Iczkovits did not read much before high school. His introduction to the study of literature was in a high school class taught by our Dr. Irit Aharony. Mesmerized by the multiple layers of meanings and the secrets uncovered in that class, he became determined to understand books more deeply, went on to college, earned a Ph.D., and held a postdoctoral fellowship.

He first earned recognition in 2002 for The Combatant’s Letter, signed by dozens of reserve combat soldiers and officers demanding to no longer serve in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied territories. Five years later, he published his first novel. Today he pens opinion pieces and fiction that provoke reflection and discussion. Iczkovits described how his approach to literature has evolved, particularly upon becoming a father. He has taken an increasing interest in his own family history in Europe and the longer trajectory of the Hebrew language,…and is completing a fourth novel. I enjoyed his observation of how Israelis today say goodbye: “tov yalla bye.” Flowing quickly across three languages, such linguistic play and coexistence gives Iczkovits hope: we can still find humor in it all.
New Graduate Exchange Program in Jewish Studies with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Center for Jewish Studies is thrilled to announce a new exchange program between Harvard University and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem for graduate students in Jewish studies. For one semester a year, this program will bring one graduate student from The Hebrew University of Jerusalem to Harvard, and one graduate student from Harvard to The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

We are very grateful to Caroline Kahlenberg, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History, for being our first exchange student for the pilot program in the spring semester of 2020. Unfortunately, the pandemic struck while she was in Jerusalem, which curtailed her ability to attend classes and meet with scholars in person. Despite the constraints, Caroline was able to make the most of her time there.

This spring semester (2021), we have plans to send another Harvard graduate student to The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and to bring our first student from there to Harvard. We will have to see what this year brings and will delay this year's exchange if we must.

First Harvard University/The Hebrew University of Jerusalem Graduate Student Exchange Program

CAROLINE KAHLENBERG, PH.D. CANDIDATE, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

During the Spring 2020 semester I participated in the Harvard-Hebrew University graduate student exchange program and lived in Jerusalem. The semester at Hebrew University was not what I had anticipated, as all courses were taught via Zoom due to the COVID pandemic, but it was nevertheless enjoyable and fruitful for my studies. I enrolled in three classes and audited two: Judeo-Arabic Newspapers in North Africa; Palestinian History in the 20th Century; Postcolonial Arabic Literature; Jewish Consumer Culture in Early 20th Century Palestine; and The History of the Scholarly Field of Middle Eastern Studies in Israel. These classes greatly helped me to think about how to frame my dissertation project, which focuses on the establishment of a Jewish-Arab border in early 20th-century Palestine. They also gave me ideas for the class I’ll be teaching at Harvard in Spring 2021 called “Arabs, Jews, and ‘Arab Jews’ in the Modern Middle East.” Over the semester, I was able to improve my Hebrew and Arabic reading and writing skills, and to learn from professors whose work I greatly admire.

Being in quarantine in Jerusalem was certainly not easy, as we were not allowed to walk more than 500 meters from our house except to go to the grocery store. The fact that I had classes to look forward to every day was quite helpful for maintaining a routine. In my final month, the quarantine regulations were loosened, and we were able to enjoy the weather and hike around Jerusalem before returning to the United States. I am very grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for facilitating this graduate exchange program with The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
COURSES IN JEWISH STUDIES FALL 2019

GENERAL EDUCATION
General Education 1118. The Holocaust

FRESHMAN SEMINARS
Freshman Seminar 62U. Zombies and Spirits, Ghosts and Ghouls: Interactions Between the Living and the Dead

BIBLICAL/ANCIENT NEAR EAST
Ancient Near East 120A. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 1: Pentateuch and Former Prophets
Harvard Divinity School 1306. Deuteronomy

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE
Comparative Literature 157. From Type to Self in the Middle Ages
Jewish Studies 155. Covenant, Conversion, and Intermarriage

MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE
History 14OA. Global History of Modern Jewish Migration
History 1954. Jews and the City: An Introduction to Modern Jewish Urban History
Jewish Studies 160. Berlin: German Capital, Jewish Center
Sociology 1120. Human Rights in Israel and the United States
Sociology 1167. Sociology of Law
Sociology 2219. Transnational Historical Sociology: Antisemitism and Imperialism
Modern Hebrew 241R. Advanced Seminar in Modern Hebrew: Israeli Culture: Cinema & Literature

CLASSICAL HEBREW (BIBLICAL AND MODERN) AND YIDDISH LANGUAGE
Classical Hebrew AA. Elementary Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 120A. Intermediate Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 130AR. Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew BA. Elementary Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 120A. Intermediate Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 130A. Advanced Modern Hebrew I
Yiddish AA. Elementary Yiddish I
Yiddish BA. Intermediate Yiddish I
Yiddish CA. Advanced Yiddish I

JEISH LAW (HARVARD LAW SCHOOL)
Advanced Topics in Jewish Law and Legal Theory
Reading Talmudic Stories
Law and Narrative in the Talmud
To Politics and Beyond

ADDITIONAL COURSES RELEVANT TO JEWISH STUDIES
Government 94OF. Law and Politics in Multicultural Democracies
History 14T. My Country Right or Wrong? Nationalism in the Modern World
Religion 1461. Gender, Religion and Scripture

COURSES IN JEWISH STUDIES SPRING 2020

GENERAL EDUCATION
General Education 1095. Is War Inevitable?
General Education 1149. One Book, Two Religions, Many Truths

BIBLICAL/ANCIENT NEAR EAST
Ancient Near East 120B. Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 2: Latter Prophets and Writings
Harvard Divinity School 1300. Studies in the Former Prophets: Seminar
Religion 1290. Archaeology and History of Israel/Palestine from the Second Temple to the Early Islamic Period
Religion 1399. The Trial and Death of Jesus

CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE
Comparative Literature 143. The Jewish Library: Four Jewish Classics
Comparative Literature 167. Prayer and Prayerbook (Tefillah and Siddur)

MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE
Comparative Literature 106. The Yiddish Short Story: Folk Tales, Monologues, and Post-Apocalyptic Parables
Comparative Literature 152. Jews, Humor, and the Politics of Laughter
Religion 1256. Gender and Judaism in Modern America
Religion 1525. The Holocaust: Religion and Representation
Sociology 98BF. Junior Tutorial: Race and Bureaucracy
Sociology 1138. The Israeli/Palestinian Conflict: Contemporary Socio-Legal Aspects

CLASSICAL HEBREW (BIBLICAL AND MODERN) AND YIDDISH LANGUAGE
Classical Hebrew AB. Elementary Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 120B. Intermediate Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 130BR. Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew BB. Elementary Modern Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew 120B. Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew 130B. Advanced Modern Hebrew II
Yiddish AB. Elementary Yiddish II
Yiddish BB. Intermediate Yiddish II
Yiddish CB. Advanced Yiddish II

JEISH LAW (HARVARD LAW SCHOOL)
Advanced Topics in Jewish Law and Legal Theory

ADDITIONAL COURSES RELEVANT TO JEWISH STUDIES
History 1049. Nazi Germany and the Holocaust
Religion 1400. Introduction to the New Testament
Religion 1529. The Holocaust and the Churches, 1933-45
2020 WINNERS:
Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies
Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies

JOSHUA MORIARTY
SONIA EPSTEIN
DANIEL ROSENBLATT
TAMARA SHAMIR
ETHAN SCHWARTZ
REBECCA JULIET THAU
ARIELLA KAHAN
Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies

This prize is given to the Harvard University student who submits the best undergraduate essay in Jewish studies. It was established by Lewis H. Weinstein ’27, LL.B. 1930.

Tie for First, Tie for Second

The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020 Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies. Sonia Epstein ‘21, a junior in Eliot House and Joshua Moriarty ’21, a junior in Pforzheimer House tied for first place. Epstein’s entry was “The ‘Nitzanim’ of 1948: Recentering Morocco in Moroccan-Jewish Education” and Moriarty’s entry was “Conflicting Imperatives: ‘Religious Praxis’ and Secular Ethics in Yeshayahu Thought.”

Daniel Rosenblatt ’20, a senior in Pforzheimer House won second place for his essay “Eden in the Garden State: Luxury and Liberation in the Jersey Homesteads Planned Community, 1936-1939.” Tamara Shamir ’21, a junior in Leverett House tied for second place. Shamir’s essay was “Inventing Tradition: Marital Freedom and Halachic Solutions in Israel’s Religious Courts.”

Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies

These prizes are awarded in each of the following categories: the best doctoral dissertation in Jewish and Hebrew Studies and the best dissertation in the field of Jewish and Hebrew Studies prepared by an undergraduate. They were established by Harry Starr ’21, LL.B. 1924.

Three Outstanding Works

The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2020 Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies. Ethan Schwartz, Ph.D. (Committee on the Study of Religion) was recognized for his outstanding doctoral dissertation, “The Construction of Subversive Speech in the Latter Prophets and in Plato’s Socratic Dialogues.”

Ariella Kahan ’20, a senior in Mather House, and Rebecca Juliet Thau ’20, a senior in Lowell House, won the Starr Prize for their exceptional senior theses. Ariella, a History concentrator, submitted “Friends of Foes? Palestinian Arabs in the Eyes of American Women Zionists, 1929–1948.” Rebecca’s senior thesis focused on “‘French’ Theory? The Intellectual Reverberations of Hélène Cixous’ juifémintité.” Rebecca is graduating with concentrations in History and Literature; Romance Languages and Literatures; with a secondary in Jewish studies.
Rachel Slutsky grew up outside Boston, in Sharon, MA, and attended the Maimonides School, a Jewish day school in Brookline. There she developed her foundation in and love of Jewish studies. At Yeshiva University (Stern College for Women), she majored in English literature and Jewish studies. From there, she earned her M.A. in Hebrew Bible at the University of Chicago. “I have been consistently in school since the age of three.”

Rachel wanted to be a high school Jewish studies teacher before she went to college. Her own high school teacher, Malka (Zeiger) Simkovich, had earned her B.A. at Yeshiva, M.A. at Harvard, plus a Ph.D. from Brandeis. She urged Rachel to do the same. At Yeshiva, Rachel studied medieval Jewish interpretation with Dr. Michelle Levine, and was introduced to comparative hermeneutics. The question of how you can know what the text means has captivated Rachel ever since.

“I want to delve into the ‘real text.’ My interest in commentary is what brought me to Harvard; now I am focusing on late antiquity and early rabbinics.” Rachel’s dissertation focuses on the biblical story of Noah and its reception in the Second Temple/early Rabbinic period. “How did early readers of this text understand it? Specifically, did they view Noah as a Jew or proto-Jew, or as the ultimate Gentile?” Slutsky is thrilled to have her dissertation committee include Professors Shaye Cohen, David Stern, Jon Levenson, and Andrew Teeter.

Rachel values a broad background in Jewish studies. She enjoys being the “on-call graduate student” for undergraduate concentrators in Jewish studies. In one of her Yiddish language classes, she prepared a podcast in Yiddish for Veybertaytsh. Over the past few years, Rachel has co-chaired the Jewish studies Student Workshop, a forum for students in Jewish studies from several departments and schools at Harvard to meet regularly, share their works-in-progress and give each other feedback. “I like to hear from people beyond my specialty. In this group, I’ve been able to learn about areas I don’t encounter in my own research, such as Jewish music, Kant and Judaism, and the work of Hannah Arendt.”

Rachel is particularly thankful to the Center for Jewish Studies for its financial support. “I have received funding multiple times from the CJS. This has facilitated some great experiences: research in Germany, an interfaith program at a monastery, and conferences in Denmark, Sweden and England.”

In addition to her research and writing, Rachel is the newly-appointed Assistant Director of Undergraduate Studies (ADUS) in the Committee on the Study of Religion here at Harvard. Working closely with undergraduates and running the senior thesis seminar, she is “doing what [she] loves.” Her other teaching experiences including serving as Head TF for Professor Kevin Madigan’s Holocaust course and for Professor Jay Harris’s “Conditional Equality: The Case of the Jew in the Modern World.” She has taught a course on Biblical Aramaic, and numerous junior tutorials. In the future, Rachel hopes to become a professor of Jewish studies, and she is eager to teach in rigorous and diverse environments. For example: “I would love to teach in a Christian institution, to teach those who are not Jewish about Judaism; conversely, I would be just as excited to learn what Judaism means to someone outside of it.”

In addition to her academic teaching, Rachel is a fitness instructor at Harvard, where she teaches Zumba every week. She also has certifications in Barre Above and Balletone. When not teaching or studying, Rachel also enjoys time at home with her husband, Jacob, who works for the Massachusetts State Auditor.
Wilfried Zibell ’21 is a joint concentrator in the departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (focusing on Yiddish), and Comparative Literature. His interest in Yiddish stems from his interest in “rare and endangered languages.”

Life at Harvard and in Cambridge is worlds apart from Wilfried’s childhood home. He grew up in the Iñupiaq village of Noorvik in northwestern Alaska. The village is located above the Arctic Circle in the tundra and quite isolated. Still, it is one of the largest in his region—about the size of Indiana with a population of about 6,000. There are no roads in or out of Noorvik. In the summer, people travel by boat. In the winter, a bulldozer connects the three larger villages in the region across the ice. Survival in Noorvik depends on subsistence living, and Wilfried learned how to gather local berries, and killed his first caribou at “around five or six.” To visit the orthodontist, Wilfried had to travel three hours to Fairbanks every couple weeks, and stay with his sister.

The tiny high school in Noorvik supplemented its offerings with online classes from the state university and other online learning programs, and Wilfried’s junior and senior year studies were conducted entirely online. This must have been good preparation for the current remote learning situation. He was one of eight graduates in his senior class, with only one the prior year. He applied to Harvard “on a whim,” and was excited by Saul Zarrit’s course “The Politics of Yiddish” during his freshman year.

“I’m not Jewish, my family is not Jewish, but I am very interested in Yiddish.” Concerned about the decline in use of the Iñupiaq language and its future, Wilfried sees parallels to Yiddish; both languages “exist on a dialect continuum.” (The Iñupiaq language is related to native languages across northern Canada, from the west coast to Greenland.) There is a sense of urgency to preserve and promote fluency in both languages, and both are connected to movements and nation-building. Wilfried finds hope in the example of Yiddish and its “perseverence.” He is also interested in the linguistics and history of Yiddish, especially the history of the Bund, its ideologies and social context, and the role of the Workmen’s Circle in Eastern European Jewish culture.

Wilfried is working this year on his senior thesis, a comparative study of Iñupiaq and Yiddish languages and cultures in relationship to land. Now in his third year of Yiddish language study, he credits Professor Saul Zaritt with inspiring him to select a joint concentration in Jewish studies, within the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. In addition to Yiddish language courses taught by Sara Feldman, Wilfried also enjoyed Professor David Stern’s course “Child Sacrifice, Pros and Cons: The Binding of Isaac in Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Modern Literature,” and especially appreciated the conversation and atmosphere of the smaller classes in Comparative Literature, Yiddish, and some other Jewish studies courses.

Wilfried is excited about the “wealth of resources” at Harvard, particularly the academic opportunities. “In Comparative Literature, I am able to create my own curriculum and explore...”

“I’m not Jewish, my family is not Jewish, but I am very interested in Yiddish.” Concerned about the decline in use of the Iñupiaq language and its future, Wilfried sees parallels to Yiddish; both languages “exist on a dialect continuum.” (The Iñupiaq language is related to native languages across northern Canada, from the west coast to as Greenland.) There is a sense of urgency to preserve and promote fluency in both languages, and both are connected to movements and nation-building.
freely” a wide variety of materials. In addition, he has been enjoying a number of extracurricular activities. “I write for Satire 5, a new comedic publication on campus that is community-oriented and online,” with the motto “To comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.” In addition, Wilfried has been developing his skills (on his own) in the Inupiaq language.

Last year, Wilfried became involved in starting an undergraduate Jewish studies journal, Emet. “It is a journal of Jewish studies, broadly defined.” They have gathered submissions from Harvard College students from academic papers to art to photography. “We could even include a musical or video entry on our Website.” Despite the fact that work was curtailed when students were sent home in March (due to the pandemic) and many of the organizers are on leave from Harvard this year, Wilfried is hoping to get out its first digital edition. We will be sure to announce it when it is ready!

Though he feels he has adjusted to the culture shock of a move to Cambridge, he finds the constant busyness “exhausting.” Here he misses the day/night cycle above the Arctic Circle, the stars, and especially the strong family and community networks. He is one of a small number of College students to be in residence this year, and hopes to graduate this spring. Getting back to campus required a two-hour drive on a snow machine, to get to a small plane, to get to a larger jet. For the future, Wilfried is considering graduate school or possibly law school, but is still unsure. “There are few jobs at home, but I want to be close enough to visit easily.”

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**STUDENT WORKSHOP REPORTS**

**Hebrew Bible Student Workshops**

*by Allison Hurst*

Last fall, the Center for Jewish Studies sponsored two lectures for the Harvard Hebrew Bible Student Workshop (HBW), a bi-weekly colloquium for visiting Bible scholars and graduate student research. With funding from the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, the HBW was able to invite Ed Greenstein, Professor Emeritus of Bible at Bar-Ilan University. The Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund supported the lecture by Geoffrey Khan, Professor of Hebrew at the University of Cambridge. In “Translating Job to Make a Difference,” Professor Greenstein presented original insights about the book of Job that arose during his work on a new translation. Professor Khan offered a presentation entitled “The Rediscovery of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of the Hebrew Bible,” in which he discussed new research that seeks to recover the Tiberian reading tradition following the cessation of the activities of the Masoretes in Tiberias in the tenth century CE.

The CJS was scheduled to sponsor two additional Hebrew Bible Workshop lectures in the spring that were unfortunately cancelled due to COVID-19. Those were to be given by Liane Feldman, Assistant Professor in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University, and Peter Dubovsky, Professor of Old Testament Exegesis at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and International Visiting Jesuit Fellow at the College of the Holy Cross (Spring 2020). We are rescheduling Professor Feldman’s lecture this fall.

**Jewish Studies Student Workshops**

*by Uri Schreter*

The Jewish Studies Workshop is an interdisciplinary, student-led group, which meets every other week to discuss students’ academic papers and presentations. In the workshop, we define “Jewish studies” in the broadest way possible, and so we invite speakers with interests across the humanities and the social sciences, ranging from antiquity to the present, and covering disciplines such as history, philosophy, political science, Bible studies, and the arts. Last year, for instance, we heard papers about theatrical representations of biblical narratives, early modern Jews and the birth of public banking, the origins of Shavuot in Second Temple Judaism, postwar Yiddish music and politics, and much, much more. Additionally, we invited Professor Saul Zaritt to talk about the history and meaning of the field, and for an open conversation about the inner workings of the academic world of Jewish studies. Toward the end of this academic year, as learning turned virtual, we launched a remote version of our workshop, which resulted in several successful talks with even higher attendance than usual! The 2019-2020 workshop was co-organized by Rachel Slutsky, a doctoral candidate in Hebrew Bible, and Uri Schreter, a doctoral candidate in historical musicology.
ACADEMIC YEAR 2019–2020

GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS (FULL YEAR)

- Zhan Chen (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Mandell L. Berman Fellowship
- Will Friedman (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- Caroline Kahlenberg (Department of History) Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship
- J.J. Kimche (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Sosland Family Fellowship and Isadore Twersky Fellowship
- Sara Klugman (Harvard Graduate School of Education) Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Jesse Mirotznik (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Aaron and Clara Rabinowitz Trust Fellowship
- Shoshana Razel Guedalia (Harvard Divinity School) Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
- Ethan Schwartz (Committee on the Study of Religion) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- Miriam-Simma Walfish (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Alan M. Stroock Fund for Advanced Research in Judaica
- Dalia Wolfson (Department of Comparative Literature) Leo Flax Fellowship

GRADUATE STUDENT J-TERM FELLOWSHIPS

- Emily Bogin (Harvard Divinity School) Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Avishay Ben Sasson-Gordis (Department of Government) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- Jan Burzlaff (Department of History) Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies
- Marton Farkas (Department of Comparative Literature) Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- J.J. Kimche (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
- Sara Klugman (Harvard Graduate School of Education) Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Molly Silverstein (Harvard Divinity School) Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Rachel Slutsky (Committee on the Study of Religion) Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT J-TERM FELLOWSHIPS

- Amitai Abouzaglo ’20 Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Isaiah Michalski ’21 Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies
- Joshua Moriarty ’21 Lisner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund
- Rebecca Thau ’20 Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies

SUMMER RESEARCH AND STUDY FELLOWSHIPS 2020

UNDERGRADUATE SUMMER SUPPLEMENTAL RESEARCH AND STUDY FUNDING

- Michael Kaufman Jasper ’21 Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies
- Matt Jelen ’21 Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies
- Amelia Roth-Dishy ’22 Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Benjamin Simon ’21 Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund
- Rebecca Thrope ’22 Lisner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund, Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
- Eli Zuzovsky ’21 Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund

GRADUATE SUMMER RESEARCH AND STUDY FUNDING

- Jan Burzlaff (Department of History) Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship
- Walter (Sasson) Chahanovich (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund
- Roy Ginsberg (Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures) Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- Rachelle Grossman (Department of Comparative Literature) Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund; Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies
- Allison Hurst (Committee on the Study of Religion) Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- Caroline Kahlenberg (Department of History) Selma and Lewis H. Weinstein Fund for Jewish Studies
- J.J. Kimche (Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship
- Rachel Slutsky (Committee on the Study of Religion) Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
- Rephael Stern (Department of History) Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship
- Dalia Wolfson (Department of Comparative Literature) Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship
Thanks to the generous help of the Center for Jewish Studies and the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship, I was able to spend several weeks of summer 2019 studying at Aristotle University’s Modern Greek School in Thessaloniki, Greece. As a result of continued study in Modern Greek, I was able to participate in several courses in the Philology Department at that university studying Homer, Plato, and Plutarch. My hope is that continued immersion in Ancient Greek thought will help me better to contextualize and understand Second Temple and Rabbinic literature.

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

I had the privilege to spend the summer of 2019 in Jerusalem working on my dissertation, “Rabbis, Parents, and Dynamics of Cultural Transmission in the Babylonian Talmud.” On this trip, I was able to connect with leading scholars in the field of Rabbinics. These encounters have helped me sharpen my argument and broaden my network of connections with senior scholars. I first met with Moshe Simon-Shoshan, whose work on the literary fabric of the Talmud informs my explorations of Rabbinic narrative. He was able to connect me with other scholars such as Galit Hasan-Rokem, an expert in folklore and gender in Rabbinic literature. I also met with Inbar Raveh, whose work on mothers has enhanced my own work on maternal transmission, and finally, Marc Hirshman who has written about education in Rabbinic literature. His insights added greatly to my first chapter about paternal transmission. Thank you to the Center for Jewish Studies and the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund for supporting my work!

— Miriam-Simma Walfish
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

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— Jesse Mirotznik
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
Thanks to the generous funding of the **Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies**, I had the opportunity to spend the summer of 2019 in Oxford, UK, studying medieval Hebrew manuscripts at the Bodleian Library. For the first two weeks of my time there, I took part in a workshop on medieval Hebrew manuscripts. The Bodleian Library is home to some of the most significant and impressive Hebrew manuscripts around, including a Mishneh Torah with annotations in the Rambam’s own hand, as well as beautifully illuminated manuscripts like the Kennicott Bible. The workshop featured a number of professors, researchers, and guest speakers and included an extended crash course in paleography, the study of scripts and handwriting.

In the weeks following the workshop, I had the privilege of working under Prof. Judith Schlanger on her project “Books Within Books,” helping to assemble a database of Hebrew manuscript fragments from across Europe. The project aims specifically to bring to light fragments that have been buried within the bindings of other manuscripts—historically, bookbinders would repurpose fragments of worn manuscripts in an effort to save money. Once valued only for the material they were written on, these scraps of text are of great interest to modern historians. “Books Within Books” aims to identify, catalogue, and sometimes even reunite these fragments of Hebrew manuscripts.

Over the summer, I learned an enormous amount about manuscripts, about Jewish history, and about the study of books—and I was lucky to be able to continue some of that study with Prof. David Stern back at Harvard. The summer opened my eyes to a new and fascinating field of study, and I’m incredibly grateful for the opportunity afforded to me by the CJS.

— *Matt Jelen*
Harvard College ’21

“Through the generosity of Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies and the **Suzanne and Dr. Lawrence Fishman Fellowship Fund**, I spent the summer of 2019 at the Center for Jewish History in New York City researching my senior thesis. I used the resources there to access Yale University’s Fortunoff Archives, a collection with thousands of Holocaust survivor testimonies.

These testimonies were critical for the development of my senior thesis, a project that delves into the perseverance of maternal behaviors and reactions among Jewish women in Auschwitz. As a result of my work at the Center for Jewish History, I gained access to the stories of more women and, subsequently, a deeper understanding of what it was like to be a Jewish woman in this specific concentration camp. Many thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies for this incredibly helpful and enriching opportunity!”

— *Hayley Jaffee*
Harvard College ’20

“As a result of my work at the Center for Jewish History, I gained access to the stories of more women and, subsequently, a deeper understanding of what it was like to be a Jewish woman in this specific concentration camp.”

— *Hayley Jaffee*
I am deeply grateful to the Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund and the Center for Jewish Studies for supporting my participation in the 2019 Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Graduate Conference in Jerusalem. There, I presented a paper on rethinking the freedom of the press in Israel and other democracies. The CJS J-Term award made it possible for me to participate in one of Israel’s largest graduate conferences, benefit from the comments of other international as well as Israeli faculty and students, and strengthen personal and institutional connections with the Israeli political science and Israel studies community.

My paper examines how the standard way in which we understand the notion of the freedom of the press is insufficient in helping us conceptualize and discuss the challenges the press faces in the current moment of democratic crisis. It was borne out of considering the events of recent years in Israel, the U.S. and other liberal democracies, and no-longer-liberal democracies like Hungary. Throughout my research I have found the debates in Israel regarding the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the press to be more broadly instructive than I had initially expected. Since returning from the trip I have been hard at work at implementing the changes suggested to me during the conference as I work towards publication of the paper.

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

I undertook an independent study on the character of the Zaddik in early Hasidism. At the conclusion of my research, I found a number of conceptual points in Hasidic conceptions of the Zaddik that are fruitful for comparison in Shi’i literature.

— Amitai Abouzaglo

During the spring semester, I undertook an independent study on the character of the Zaddik in early Hasidism. At the conclusion of my research, I found a number of conceptual points in Hasidic conceptions of the Zaddik that are fruitful for comparison in Shi’i literature. These include the unique intimacy of the Zaddik and the Torah (cf. the Imam and the Qur’an), the unique authority of the Zaddik’s interpretation of the Torah (cf. the Imam as the “Spoken Qur’an”), and the primordial affinity of souls between the Zaddik and his Hasidism (cf. the Imam and the Shi’a). I plan to continue this research project past graduation and am deeply thankful for the support of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies for giving me access to invest in the emergent field of Shi’i-Jewish studies.

— Amitai Abouzaglo
Harvard College, ’20

In partnership with Mohammad Sagha, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Chicago and an associate at the Weatherhead Center’s Project on Shiism and Global Affairs, I spent the summer working on a project of Jewish-Shi'i comparative theology. We focused on the moral characters of the Zaddik and the Imam respectively in Hasidic and Twelver Shi’i thought. With the support of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies’ J-term fellowship, I was able to travel to Israel and glean research insights from world-class scholars of Shi’ism including Professor Etan Kohlberg and Dr. Ehud Krinis. During the spring semester, I undertook an independent study on the character of the Zaddik in early Hasidism. At the conclusion of my research, I found a number of conceptual points in Hasidic conceptions of the Zaddik that are fruitful for comparison in Shi’i literature. These include the unique intimacy of the Zaddik and the Torah (cf. the Imam and the Qur’an), the unique authority of the Zaddik’s interpretation of the Torah (cf. the Imam as the “Spoken Qur’an”), and the primordial affinity of souls between the Zaddik and his Hasidism (cf. the Imam and the Shi’a). I plan to continue this research project past graduation and am deeply thankful for the support of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies for giving me access to invest in the emergent field of Shi’i-Jewish studies.

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“My paper examines how...we understand the notion of the freedom of the press in helping us conceptualize and discuss the challenges the press faces in the current moment of democratic crisis...borne out of...recent years in Israel, the U.S. and other liberal democracies, and no-longer-liberal democracies like Hungary.”

— Avishay Ben Sasson-Gordis
I am grateful for receiving a J-term fellowship from the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, which has granted me access to archival material essential for my research at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany. My dissertation recovers translations and poetics of the Bible from the late 18th to the early 20th century in order to trace the pervasive influence of biblical parallelism on modern European poetics, with chapters on Robert Lowth, Johann Gottfried Herder, Moses Mendelssohn, Gerald Manley Hopkins as well as on Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber. My goal is to demonstrate that ever since its “invention” in the middle of the 18th century, the parallelism of Biblical poetry has served, again and again, as a way of reading and writing poetic language.

— Márton Farkas
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Comparative Literature

I had the chance to consult the manuscripts and correspondence of Mendelssohn and Herder, two of Lowth’s immediate followers among scholars and translators of the Enlightenment Bible, as well as of Rosenzweig and Buber, co-authors of Die Schrift, a German-Jewish translation of the Tanakh. This support from the Center for Jewish Studies has greatly aided progress toward my doctoral dissertation, initiating a conversation on parallelism that will set novel, if necessarily parallel, ways to view German-Jewish literary history as well as for historiography, translation studies and Biblical poetics.

— Márton Farkas
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Comparative Literature

Many thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies for sponsoring my J-Term study, funded by the Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies. This generous grant allowed me to undertake archival research in Los Angeles for my dissertation. I spent my time at the USC Shoah Foundation, researching the survival of European Jews through video testimonies and personal narratives. My overall project seeks to provide a new lens through which to view Jewish survival in Vichy France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland (1941–1945).

Without an adequate analysis of the choices by those Jewish men, women, and children who survived, we indeed undervalue their impact in the unfolding of the Holocaust, ultimately leading to a one-sided conceptualization of Jews’ behaviors and, broadly speaking, victims’ agency in situations of genocide and mass violence. My project remedies this gap by using transgender and transnational perspectives to analyze patterns of Jewish survival in everyday choices, strategies, and social relations between Jews and non-Jews.

The J-Term grant allowed me to examine sixty video testimonies that will become part of my database. I am very grateful for the chance to discover Los Angeles and to get a good sense of the USC Shoah Foundation—with heartfelt thanks to the CJS!

— Jan Burzlaff
Ph.D. candidate, Department of History

My chavruta partner, Molly Silverstein, and I wanted to dive deeper into Talmud study together over the January term. Our interests were not only in Talmud, but especially in the pedagogical value and philosophical underpinnings of the practice of chavruta. The generous J-term (January) grant from the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies enabled us to research theories of chavruta—from museum exhibits to conversations with Jewish educators.

While we were mostly “in the field,” these inquiries were often held against the philosophical and religious writings of Martin Buber, especially in his work I and Thou. We used his work to ground our questions: what does it mean to learn through encounters? When an encounter changes you, what else changes? And when an encounter is over, how do you honor it?

— Erica Bogin & Molly Silverstein
MTS Candidates, Harvard Divinity School

“...ever since its ‘invention’ in the middle of the 18th century, the parallelism of Biblical poetry has served, again and again, as a way of reading and writing poetic language.”

— Márton Farkas
Anti-Semitism is once again on the rise; in 2018, the Anti-Defamation League recorded over 1,800 acts of anti-Semitic violence in the U.S. alone. A cursory glance at a website such as 4chan shows how narratives of the “powerful and evil Jew” continue to dominate our subcultures. My own brother, after telling his class casually that he was Jewish, became a victim of verbal and physical abuse and finally was forced to move schools. As a student of literature, the question of how we communicate this alarming new reality to others is especially urgent.

Thanks to the generosity of the Center of Jewish Studies’ Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies, I was able to use the 2020 J-term to begin work on a play that chronicles a few of the many cycles of violence in Jewish history. Under the guidance of the Center, I continued my work in an independent study program with Professor Debra Levine, Undergraduate Chair of the Harvard Theater, Dance, and Media department. The closure of campuses worldwide meant that the presentation of the play was cut short; however, Professor Levine and I feel confident enough in the potential of this play to continue our work into the summer.

The piece examines contemporary Jewish identity and how it connects to a cultural and historical heritage of persecution and exile, issues rarely addressed in the theater. Even a playwright as prolific as Tom Stoppard has only now given us a “Jewish” play, Leopoldstadt. In my case, I am interested in reaching even further back and memorializing forgotten oppressions. In particular, I intend to explore what happens to a people when they are forced from their homes over and over again through the millennia and the related loss to the wider community.

— Isaiah Michalski
Harvard College, ’21

“'I was able to use the 2020 J-term to begin work on a play that chronicles a few of the many cycles of violence in Jewish history.'”

— Isaiah Michalski

With the generous support of the Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund through the Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to take part in January@GSAS, Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences’ J-Term program. This program allows graduate students, during the winter break, to explore topics outside their usual fields of focus. GSAS students are invited to create a seminar, workshop, discussion group, or other activity designed to engage their graduate student classmates. This opportunity is designed especially for GSAS students, to help build professional skills and make the most of the winter break. Throughout January, I researched, presented, and led a four-part series of seminars entitled “Four Jewish Heretics Who Invented Modernity: Exploring the Legacies of Spinoza, Marx, Freud, and Derrida.” These seminars were attended by both Harvard students and curious members of the public, and the texts that we analysed opened up broad avenues of discussion regarding the contributions of these four titanic Jewish thinkers. We explored how Baruch Spinoza fundamentally altered our understanding of philosophy and religion, how Karl Marx revolutionised both politics and economics, how Sigmund Freud uncovered the murky world of the unconscious, and how Jacques Derrida compels us to think differently about every text we read.

Each seminar focused on one of these thinkers and centered around two major questions. First, the question of heresy: to what extent did each of these thinkers propose subversive ideas that challenged the very foundations of their societies? Second, the age-old Jewish question: to what extent were these thinkers influenced, inspired, or traumatised by their inescapable Jewish heritage? Through focusing on these issues, our group was able to delve deeply into some of the ideas and ideals that shaped not only the future of the Jewish people, but even the modern world itself.

Progress, within any society, is impossible without courageous thinkers who are willing to challenge the norms and assumptions that keep a civilisation stagnant. Through spending dozens of hours researching, discussing, and leading those seminars, I was able to both expand my own academic repertoire and also to raise the level of public discourse surrounding ideas that lie at the foundation of our modern lives.

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

The piece examines contemporary Jewish identity and how it connects to a cultural and historical heritage of persecution and exile, issues rarely addressed in the theater. Even a playwright as prolific as Tom Stoppard has only now given us a “Jewish” play, Leopoldstadt. In my case, I am interested in reaching even further back and memorializing forgotten oppressions. In particular, I intend to explore what happens to a people when they are forced from their homes over and over again through the millennia and the related loss to the wider community.

— Isaiah Michalski
Harvard College, ’21

“I was able to use the 2020 J-term to begin work on a play that chronicles a few of the many cycles of violence in Jewish history.”

— Isaiah Michalski
Over the 2020 J-term (January), I received a generous grant from the Center for Jewish Studies’ Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund to study at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem. At the CY, I spent my mornings studying Talmud and my afternoons in a variety of elective courses, ranging from “Second Temple Jewish Literature” to “Modern Issues in Halakhah.”

The program was my first exposure to Talmud study, and I loved it! I enjoyed teasing out the arguments in each sugya and discussing the concerns that might have motivated different positions. I also appreciated the CY’s eclectic pedagogical approach, which ranged from traditional yeshiva-style text study to the type of historical-critical analysis that one would expect to find in a secular university. This engagement with a wide variety of interpretive techniques helped me to understand the diverse ways in which rabbinic texts can be read, while the yeshiva’s intellectually open environment ensured that I did not have to leave any of my questions on the table. Thanks to the extraordinary instruction at the CY, my ability to read and understand a page of Talmud improved substantially over the course of the program, equipping me to study rabbinic texts and commentaries in more depth in the future.

Outside of Talmud study, my time at the CY exposed me to a wide variety of exciting texts and concepts. I learned from texts that I had never seen before, like the Book of Jubilees, while also encountering completely unfamiliar interpretations of texts that I know well. One of my favorite parts of the program was transitioning from Talmud study in the mornings to responsa by contemporary poskim in the afternoons; the afternoon session underscored the continued life of the Talmudic debates I studied each morning. My winter break at the CY was a phenomenal experience, and I am very grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies and its supporters for making it possible!

— Joshua Moriarty
Harvard College, ’20

I am beyond grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies for supporting my J-term (January) trip to Paris, France to interview Hélène Cixous (b. 1937). I spoke with Cixous, one of France’s most well-known thinkers and most prominent Jewish writers, about my thesis on her combined Jewish-female identity (entitled, “French’ Theory? The Intellectual Reverberations of Hélène Cixous’ Juiféminité”).

During our conversation, Cixous and I discussed her (lack of) Jewish practice, her parents’ Jewish beliefs, her relationship to her native Algeria, and her feelings of exclusion from France. She connected this impression of being less-than-French to her childhood experiences of anti-Semitism, and especially the loss of her French citizenship during the Vichy regime. Our interview also touched on contemporary topics, like climate change and the nationwide grève nationale. Perhaps through a desire to be “on the record” about the ongoing reception of her early work, Cixous also talked about her most famous early essay, “Le rire de la Meduse” [The Laugh of the Medusa]. This interview will have significance beyond the scope of my own thesis research. Ensuring the longevity of Cixous’s personal story is crucial because she is such an influential intellectual, and also she is one of an ever-fewer number of Jews who can recount their personal stories of life during WWII. A full transcript of the interview will be archived in Cixous’s papers in the French National Library, allowing future generations of scholars to benefit from our conversation. Thank you to the Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies for their generous funding of this project.

— Rebecca Thau
Harvard College, ’20
Thanks to generous funding from the Center for Jewish Studies and the Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund, I was able to spend the summer conducting research on European Jewish Community security. I had initially planned to travel to different Jewish communities across Europe to meet with leaders, security coordinators, and community members. Unfortunately, those plans could not come to fruition this summer. Instead, I was able to conduct background research online, and I have had some illuminating conversations over Zoom with Jewish community liaisons and security leaders from various locales.

The impetus for my research was multi-faceted. After years of relative calm and comfort, Jews in America are finally being forced to confront a rising tide of anti-Semitism, including violent attacks on Jewish communal institutions. European Jews, for their part, have been fortifying themselves against these kinds of attacks for decades (not to say centuries). I believe that American Jews have much to learn from our brothers and sisters across the ocean. On a deeper level, though, I was curious to study European Jewish community security as a case study in modern Jewish self-governance, a topic that I honed in my junior tutorial in Comparative Religion last spring. I wanted to understand not just the kind of security techniques that European Jews use, but also how they organize politically across community lines and between religious sects.

My research has yielded a variety of insights that will be helpful as I pursue a thesis on Jewish political philosophy and intellectual history—particularly modern Jewish responses to liberalism. I’ve learned about the differing degrees of localization and centralization of Jewish communities across Europe, the extent to which different local and national governments aid Jewish communities in their security efforts, and the various intra-community and cross-denominational initiatives for community security, even though European Jews tend to be less enthusiastically pluralistic than their American counterparts.

I’m extremely grateful to have had the opportunity to pursue this research, which has enriched my academic studies and even provided me with some practical knowledge about European Jewish security coordination that I can utilize in my own American Jewish communities going forward. More than that, these comparisons and contrasts with European Jewish communities have deepened my understanding of American Jewry, both its strengths and its shortcomings.

— Ben Simon
Harvard College, ’21
Thank you to the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies fund and the Lissner Jewish Research, Language and History Fund for the opportunity to learn Hebrew and Ladino this summer.

I studied Hebrew remotely at the Middlebury Summer Immersion Program, which included 4–5 hours in Zoom classes per day and co-curricular activities such as cooking and yoga. At the beginning of the six-week program, I could barely understand basic classroom instructions and had a hard time articulating myself in Hebrew. Throughout the program, my class grew closer together as we learned about each other and how to express ourselves in Hebrew. Our teacher, Nir, facilitated learning with creative and diverse activities to practice speaking, vocabulary, reading, and writing skills. By the end of the course, I was able to write a page about a trip I had been on, share my experiences with my classmates, and learn about memorable trips in their lives—all in Hebrew.

Ladino courses are a connection to the language and culture of my Sephardic roots. Professor David Bunis has taught me (remotely) so much about the origin of Ladino, its grammatical structure, and how to begin to read texts written in Ladino. I am writing while taking this class. By the end of the course I should be able to exchange a few works with my grandmother, who grew up speaking Ladino. So far, it has been beautiful to share with her what I’ve learned about the origin of the language, which she never learned.

I wish to thank the Center for Jewish Studies and the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship for the summer funding that I received. It provided me with a generous sum to undertake dissertation research safely from home. The outbreak of COVID-19 has upended any trip to archives in the foreseeable future, not to mention international travels altogether.

My dissertation provides a new lens through which to view Jewish survival in Vichy France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belarus, Ukraine, and Poland (1941–1945). By definition, transnational and therefore challenging in our times, my project intends to analyze patterns of Jewish survival in everyday choices, strategies, and social relations between Jews and non-Jews.

This award allowed me to order 24 manuscripts from the 1956 "Eyewitness Collection," individual survival stories from Brussels, Amsterdam, Lviv, and Krakow at the Wiener Holocaust Library, London. I was able to use these personal testimonies for a manuscript, now submitted, on a new social history of Jews in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands beyond Anne Frank, and an edited volume on the social sciences and the Holocaust, forthcoming with Cornell University Press. I am very grateful for this summer funding that allowed me to pursue my research agenda despite the ongoing pandemic. Many thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies and its supportive staff!

— Jan Burzlaff
Ph.D. candidate, Department of History

“By the end of the course I should be able to exchange a few works with my grandmother, who grew up speaking Ladino. So far, it has been beautiful to share with her what I’ve learned about the origin of the language, which she never learned.”

— Rebecca Thrope
Harvard College, ’22

“This award allowed me to order 24 manuscripts from the ‘Eyewitness Collection’ from Brussels, Amsterdam, Lviv, and Krakow. I was able to use these testimonies for a manuscript, now submitted, on a new social history of Jews in the Nazi-occupied Netherlands beyond Anne Frank...”

— Jan Burzlaff
When COVID-19 caused universities to go online and travel to shut down, I knew my anticipated summer plans, which had included attending a number of exciting international conferences, would no longer be possible. However, due to the Center for Jewish Studies and the extraordinary generosity of the Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund, a very different, very special summer has taken place. I took both an intensive virtual Ladino course with Ladino world expert David Bunis of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as an intensive virtual Spanish course through Harvard Summer School. These courses have expanded and deepened my language skills significantly, and they have also been the breeding ground for valuable friendships with my fellow classmates, many of whom had similarly not planned to take these courses until the pandemic hit. CJS provided an extraordinary silver lining to my summer, and I am so grateful.

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

Thanks to the generous support of the Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund and the Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to spend the summer studying Yiddish in the Uriel Weinreich Summer Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture. This intensive language program was administered by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and took place entirely on Zoom. Despite the unexpected shift to an online curriculum, I received exceptional instruction in advanced Yiddish grammar, literature and conversation. My Yiddish language proficiency progressed markedly, to the point that I can now perform archival research that will be vital to my dissertation project.

Beyond my time spent in formal language classes, I attended a series of lectures, with subject matter ranging from “A History of the Jewish Labour Bund” to “Food and Political Alignment in the Yiddish Press.” Additionally, I participated in a seminar series, “Yiddish Literature In, On, and From New York City,” as well as a practicum on Sh. Ansky’s famous play, The Dybbuk. Outside of the program, I used my improved Yiddish skills to begin a personal project to translate Peretz Markish’s epic poem, “The Forty-Year-Old Man,” into English. In a summer filled with uncertainties, the Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund and the Center for Jewish Studies allowed me to further hone my Yiddish skills and work towards identifying a dissertation topic within the broader field of Yiddish Modernism across the former Russian Empire and early Soviet Union. I return to Harvard better prepared to continue my Yiddish literature research, and I am most grateful for the generous support.

— Roy Ginsberg  
Ph.D. candidate,  
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

I am so grateful to the Center for Jewish Studies and the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship for their generous research support this summer. In the wake of COVID-19, many library resources became unavailable, which greatly inhibited my ability to prepare for my upcoming general exams. Because of this funding, I was able to access an important resource electronically for which I had previously relied on library access. This access allowed me to keep up with crucial aspects of my exam preparation and research, and I thank the CJS for their consideration and support of students during this trying time.

— Allison Hurst  
Ph.D. candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion
I am incredibly grateful for the support of the Center for Jewish Studies, especially during this challenging summer. Since September 2019, I have been living in Warsaw to conduct dissertation research on Yiddish publishing in Communist Poland. Choosing to remain here during the global pandemic, the Center’s support has given me the stability and security to continue my dissertation research and writing at this uncertain time.

In my dissertation, I explore how “Yiddishland” is depicted in post-Holocaust Yiddish literature. The places in Eastern Europe where Yiddish was spoken, and from where a rich culture and literature in the language emerged, may today seem like a kind of fictional world, a Yiddish Atlantis populated by colorful characters from the imagination of Sholem Aleichem or I.L. Peretz. But nearly every small town on the Polish map seems to have a rich Jewish history, and as a student of Yiddish literature, it has been particularly enriching to visit the places I’d heard of only in stories.

For example, I recently completed a short trip to the heart of Galicia in the southeastern part of the country. Stopping in small villages, shtetls, and local hub cities such as Sanok and Tarnów, I could imagine the experience of a young Jewish person in the early 20th century who might have moved from village to shtetl (town), and shtetl to city, an experience of many Yiddish authors often dramatized in their writing. Thinking about “Yiddishland” by going to Galicia, seeing the mountains and the trees, and looking at the remaining synagogues, wooden churches, and town squares has made me think more deeply about how people related to the places where they lived and what kinds of stories they told about them and why.

Similarly, living in Warsaw—a former capital of Yiddish letters and culture—has been transformational for me and my work. Walking in the streets once populated by avid readers of this literature carries real romance for me, and recognizing in the street signs the names of places I’d seen mentioned only in books has made the stories I study come alive. In addition to the prolific activities of the interwar Yiddish press here, under communism Yiddish cultural activists were also very active in Warsaw, as they tried to rebuild the city out of rubble and establish a new political—and cultural—order. I am grateful not only to be able to access archives with rare original materials, but also to write my dissertation in the place where so much of this literature was born. I thank the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund and the Charles H. Revson Foundation Grant in support of Graduate and Undergraduate Research and Supplemental Study in Jewish Studies for making my studies possible.

— Rachelle Grossman
Ph.D. candidate,
Department of Comparative Literature

“Choosing to remain [in Warsaw] during the global pandemic, the Center’s support has given me the stability and security to continue my dissertation research and writing...”

— Rachelle Grossman

The generous support of the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship from the Center for Jewish Studies allowed me to access books this summer that were not accessible online. Among the books that I purchased were Sasson Somekh’s Baghdad Yesterday, Hillel Cohen’s Good Arabs, and A Reference Grammar of Modern Hebrew (by Edna Amir Coffin and Shmuel Bolozky). These Hebrew books are crucial for my dissertation research, which focuses on the emergence of an Arab-Jewish border in early twentieth-century Palestine. I am very grateful to the CJS for its emergency support during a time when libraries in both Jerusalem and the United States were shut down because of COVID-19.

— Caroline Kahlenberg
Ph.D. candidate,
Department of History
I am very grateful to Center for Jewish Studies and the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship for the generous funding provided to purchase books. Although many books are available online, it has been challenging getting hold of older books and non-English ones. I was, therefore, excited to hear that CJS would help me acquire a number of books that I needed to read for my dissertation research. I have been putting them to good use and hope that others will, too, when I leave them for the Jewish Studies Reading Room collection in Widener Library once the pandemic is over!

— Rephael "Rafi" Stern
Ph.D. candidate, Department of History

This summer I received an award from the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund for my final summer project, through Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies. From May to the end of August, I worked on finishing two major projects. First, I was afforded the time to finish my Ph.D. thesis research and hand in a completed draft of my conclusion, a task that would have been impossible without this financial support. Second, I finished an article that focuses on re-conceptualizing the messianic career of Shabbtai Zvi as an Ottoman phenomenon, and not as an exclusively Jewish one. Not only has this summer been one of intense work and productivity, it has also been one of gratitude and nostalgia. I am grateful for the munificence of CJS and its donors, especially the Malloy Fund, over several years of research and learning. I am nostalgic because I will soon be taking my leave from the Center, with its amazing staff and faculty, and from a sense of community that carried me through the Ph.D. process. Thank you!

— Walter “Sasson” Chahanovich
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Thanks to the generosity of the Center for Jewish Studies and the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies fund, I found tremendous intellectual fulfillment this summer by enrolling remotely in a unique course: “Ladino Language and Culture” at the University of Washington.

Ladino, also known as Judezmo or Judaeo-Spanish, is a diasporic language derived from Old Spanish, traditionally spoken in the Sephardic minority communities of the Ottoman Empire. The near-extinct language survives with the help of a devoted academic and ancestral network, one I have yearned to join ever since I found out that my great-grandparents spoke Ladino at home. Since Harvard does not yet offer Ladino studies, UW’s pandemic-induced transition to an online format for its summer courses was a stroke of luck for me: I no longer had to travel to Seattle to engage with one of the most robust Sephardic Studies programs in the country.

The course was taught by David Bunis, a professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and arguably the world’s foremost expert in Judezmo studies. Even over Zoom, Professor Bunis fostered a warm and challenging classroom environment. After reviewing the Hebrew Rashi script (in which Ladino was widely written through the early 20th century) and learning the language’s basic phonemes and graphemes, we began working our way through everything from historical newspapers and traditional folktalest to classical ballads and satirical refrains. I was energized by the exchange of ideas among our group of undergrads, graduate students, and members of the Seattle Sephardic community, whose diverse interests highlighted just how dynamic and interdisciplinary Ladino can be. Thanks to Professor Bunis, we are all now plugged into the Judezmo-speaking world, renewed in our inter-generational commitment to this endangered language and culture.

I am eager to (one day) return to campus and start building a community of Ladino scholars and hobbyists alike at Harvard. Friends of CJS, do reach out if you’re interested!

— Amelia Roth-Dishy
Harvard College ’22
CJS Goes Green!

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