

# THE Chronicle

FALL 2018



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**THE CHRONICLE** is published by the  
National Office of Communications and Public Affairs

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**Cover:** Rabbi Aaron Panken, Ph.D., z"l, leading the Board of Governors, alumni, and students in a Torah processional to the Kotel, in celebration of the ordination of the 100th graduate of HUC-JIR's Israeli Rabbinical Program, November 16, 2017.

# President's Message

In rabbinic literature, no figure was more exemplary or beloved than Aaron the High Priest. Rabbi Hillel instructed, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, love your fellow creatures, and bring them near to Torah!" The rabbis state that Aaron was a peacemaker who could reconcile husband and wife when they were estranged, bring neighbors together when they quarreled, and cause people to turn from destructive ways through a kind and supportive word. For this reason, Midrash Tanhuma, a rabbinic commentary on the Bible, says that after the leaders of each tribe brought their offerings to the Tabernacle, God said to Moses, "Say to your brother Aaron – your gift is greater than the gifts of these leaders. For you are called upon to kindle the light. While the sacrifices will last as long as the Tabernacle stands, your light will endure forever!"

Our Aaron was the embodiment of each of these virtues and qualities, and his influence upon us was, and will remain, enduring. This issue of *The*



Rabbi David Ellenson '77, Ph.D.  
and Rabbi Aaron Panken '91, Ph.D., z"l

**"The values Rabbi Aaron Panken championed, the leadership he demonstrated, and the wisdom he offered remain a permanent part of this College-Institute he so loved."**

*Chronicle* is dedicated to *Rabeinu Aaron*, our Rabbi Aaron Panken – the kindly and inspiring character he displayed as our teacher and the everlasting and meaningful lights he kindled through his service as President of our *beit midrash*. His sudden and tragic death last May remains a shock to all of us. We miss his irreplaceable physical presence, his knowledge, his humor, his determination, his embrace. Yet, the values he championed, the leadership he demonstrated, and the wisdom he offered remain a permanent part of this Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion he so loved. His service and his vision are evidenced on every page of this edition of *The Chronicle*.

This issue begins by highlighting the selection of Sue Neuman Hochberg as Chair of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors. The second woman in history to occupy this position, Sue has been a long-time supporter of the College-Institute through her service as Chair of the Western Region Board of Overseers

This magazine went to press just as the murderous violence at **Eitz Chaim Synagogue in Pittsburgh** took place. Not only was the joy of Shabbat shattered, but the celebration of life marked by a *bris* – the entrance of a newborn infant into the Covenant of our people – was savagely ruptured. The outrage and sadness evoked by this event exceeds our capacity for words as we recall our fallen sisters and brothers in this Household of Israel who were killed in this horrifically unconscionable act. *Tehyannah nafshoteihen tzrurot bi-tzror hahayim* – may the souls of those murdered in Pittsburgh be bound up in the bond of eternal life.

The scourge of antisemitism and racial hatred that we witnessed last year in Charlottesville has not yet been extinguished in our nation; nor has an atmosphere that promotes such violence by an appalling vilification of the press and political opponents been diminished. We look to a day of healing from the toxicity plaguing our world and the crudeness and hatred marring our nation. I hope that each and every one of us will recognize the role we play as a community and as individuals in repairing our nation and our world.

**“Rabbi Panken fortified the foundations of our *beit midrash* so that we could face the future with confidence.”**

and as a member of the Board of Governors for more than a decade. She follows Andrew Berger, who led our institution along with Rabbi Panken with such vision and commitment through these past four years, and will surely build upon their legacy. Sue brings to her post a fierce intelligence and unbounded love of HUC-JIR and its mission of providing leadership for the Reform Movement and the Jewish people as well as unqualified devotion to the State of Israel. Sue is the mother of Rabbi Laurie Neuman Rice '01 and mother-in-law of Rabbi Philip Rice '01 of Nashville, and she and her husband Larry are generous donors to HUC-JIR. She will surely lead the College-Institute with distinction as we move into the future.

*The Chronicle* then appropriately features the life and legacy of Rabbi Panken. His achievements during his tragically-shortened presidency were so many, and the strength of HUC-JIR today and our ability to face the next decade with confidence are unquestionably the result of his efforts, along with those of his wife Lisa Messinger, who was his partner in life and in this enterprise in every way. I believe readers will both mourn and learn as they reflect upon his life and the heritage he both inherited and bequeathed us.

A major part of that heritage are the alumni and students of the College-Institute and the values and commitments they display through their deeds in the larger world and in the Jewish community. HUC-JIR graduates have been at the center of the response to the tragedy last year in Parkland, the fight for the rights of immigrants in this country, and the struggle on behalf of asylum seekers in Israel. These alumni, along with three of our current students in Israel, tell of their experiences to share the vision and reach of HUC-JIR with you. They certainly fulfill the prophetic message adopted by our founder Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, “*Hatum torah b’li-mu’dei* – seal the teaching within my students,” as the motto of the College-Institute by bringing the teachings and highest values of Torah to life.

Aaron Panken was devoted to bringing the benefits of cutting-edge technology and social media to HUC-JIR so as to better serve the Reform Movement and the Jewish people. An article on our students’ social media initiatives indicates how their creativity has begun to move ahead on this frontier. Other pieces focus on the recent accomplishments of the Pines School of Graduate Studies and our programs in the School of Education as well as the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management to provide

some sense of the scope of activity that has taken place at HUC-JIR during this past year due to the leadership Rabbi Panken provided.

Rabbi Panken was also devoted to the Jewish community beyond the borders of the United States and Canada. The exciting program sponsored by Jane Weitzman and conducted in conjunction with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) brings our students to Jewish communities worldwide, and the work of our alumni and students in Israel and on behalf of the Zionist enterprise testify to this devotion. In addition, the influence of the College-Institute to attract students worldwide and to prepare them for careers of service to the Jewish people is reflected in an article on cantorial students from Great Britain and Australia who currently study in the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music.

The initiatives Rabbi Panken undertook to speak to Reform college-age students and others are also seen in pieces on the Founders’ Fellowship program he began as well as through the work of our alumni and students as Reform Senior Jewish Educators and Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein Fellows – Reform Hillel Interns on American college campuses. The accomplishments of these students and alumni are supplemented by reports on the ongoing work of the American Jewish Archives under the direction of Rabbi Gary P. Zola, Ph.D., the Klau Library directed by Yoram Bitton, and the teaching of Dr. Wendy Zierler on a recent trip to the Ukraine. Finally, the ongoing strength and vitality of HUC-JIR are addressed through the announcements of new academic and administrative appointments that took place over the last few months as well as the reports of ongoing vital scholarship produced by our professors and our HUC Press during this past year.

In sum, the breadth of visions and deeds Aaron Panken had for the College-Institute was all-encompassing. During this time of tragic and unexpected transition, *The Chronicle* indicates how strongly he fortified the foundations of our *beit midrash* so that we could face the future with confidence. Even as we lament his passing, we are grateful for the many gifts his leadership provided. Paraphrasing the words of Tanhuma, the lights of Rabbi Aaron Panken are enduring!

Rabbi David Ellenson '77, Ph.D.  
*Interim President; Chancellor Emeritus*

November 2018 Kislev 5779

# SUE NEUMAN HOCHBERG

## ELECTED CHAIR OF HUC-JIR BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Sue Neuman Hochberg, a distinguished philanthropist and officer of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors, was elected Chair at its meeting in New York on June 4, 2018 and installed at its meeting in Cincinnati on October 21, 2018.

“A beloved lay leader of our institution for nearly two decades, Sue Neuman Hochberg is devoted to our sacred mission of preparing leaders to ensure the Jewish future,” stated Rabbi David Ellenson ’77, Ph.D., HUC-JIR Interim President and Chancellor Emeritus. “Her commitment is rooted in her children’s rabbinical education at our Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York campuses and their vital roles as builders of Jewish communities and catalysts for Jewish education. Her dedication to sustaining our academic excellence and strengthening our leadership development capacity is a source of guidance and inspiration as we educate the rabbis, cantors, educators, nonprofit executives, and scholars for the Reform Movement and the global Jewish people.”

“It is an honor and joy to work together with the administration, faculty, students, and alumni of the College-Institute to strengthen Jewish life today and for the generations to come,” said Hochberg. “Reform Judaism’s inclusivity, innovation, and modernity are key to securing the Jewish future. We are the source of the professional leaders who have the



**Sue Neuman Hochberg (at left)  
with her daughter, Rabbi Laurie Rice ’01.**

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**“REFORM JUDAISM’S INCLUSIVITY,  
INNOVATION, AND MODERNITY ARE KEY  
TO SECURING THE JEWISH FUTURE.”**

**—SUE NEUMAN HOCHBERG, CHAIR, HUC-JIR BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

creativity to engage all those seeking Jewish spiritual and cultural meaning and the vision to work with others of all faiths and backgrounds to help build a better world.”

A member of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors since 2009 who served as Secretary of the Board, she is the second woman to be its Chair in its 143-year history. Hochberg joined HUC-JIR’s Western Region Board of Overseers in 2000, and served as its Chair from 2009 to 2015.

Hochberg is a leader in the Los Angeles philanthropic community. She has served on the Board of Directors of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center and their Executive Committee, is past President (1992-1994) of the John Wayne Cancer Institute Auxiliary, and has held numerous positions with the Jewish Federation in Los Angeles.

In her professional life, Hochberg worked as Comptroller for Demographic Research Company, which created software programs for the direct mail industry. During that time, she served on the National Board of the Direct Mail Industry.

She is married to Larry Hochberg, the founder and developer of Sportmart store, who has a long history of involvement in the Jewish philanthropic world.

Sue Hochberg’s daughter, Laurie Rice, and Laurie’s husband, Philip Rice, were ordained in 2001 at HUC-JIR in New York. They currently serve as Co-Senior Rabbis of Congregation Micah in Nashville, TN. Her son Bobby is in racing management.

Sue and Larry Hochberg divide their time between Chicago and Los Angeles, and are members of Congregation Micah in Nashville, TN and Temple Akiba in Culver City, CA. ■

# IN MEMORIAM: RABBI AARON D. PANKEN, PH.D.

“We who are given the gift of life, no matter how short or long it happens to be, do best by imbuing its every moment with meaningful actions that are complete, whole, and innocent. If we can have the strength to do so (and it is far from easy), then we, too, can one day face death with deeds that speak to our life’s goodness and the way we lived it well.”

—Rabbi Aaron D. Panken, Ph.D., z”l



Rabbi Panken teaching a Talmud class.

The tragic death of our beloved friend, teacher, leader, and President, Rabbi Aaron D. Panken, Ph.D., at the age of 53, in a plane crash on May 5, 2018, signifies the loss of one of contemporary world Jewry’s great leaders.

Rabbi Panken served as the 12th President in HUC-JIR’s 143-year history with characteristic vigor, integrity, compassion, and joyful enthusiasm. As a distinguished rabbi and Talmud scholar, dedicated teacher, and renowned Reform Movement leader for nearly three decades, he had both the vision and intellectual acuity to advance HUC-JIR’s academic excellence and sacred mission. He was deeply committed to securing the College-Institute’s recognition as the premier

institution of Jewish higher education in North America and Israel. He saw HUC-JIR as an incubator of innovation that was grounded in tradition, generating new ideas that would contribute to creating a better world.

**“Our mission is to help our students grow into authentic Jewish thought leaders, able to articulate and advance their own visions of a rich Jewish life for a new and rapidly changing religious landscape,” he explained. “We are shaping a compelling message that will have an impact on the largest denomination of Jews in North America and the growing Progressive Jewish community in Israel and worldwide.”**

A self-described “liberal practicing

religious person,” he wanted Reform Jews to be deeply connected within the mosaic of Jewish peoplehood. He believed in the infinite capacity of leadership and creativity to effect unity, without uniformity.

## STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Rabbi Panken’s passionate commitment to Reform Judaism, to the State of Israel, and to the Jewish people worldwide was exemplified by the strategic initiatives he implemented during his four years as President. Aided by a new team of senior staff and program directors who embraced his vision and worked closely with him to achieve its implementation, he articulated five key pillars – recruitment, financial sustainability, thought leadership, curriculum, and Israel.

He spurred HUC-JIR to strengthen recruitment and revamp scholarship policies to yield the largest incoming classes in a decade. He launched the Founders' Fellowship to invigorate Jewish life on college campuses and attract prospective students to HUC-JIR. His vision inspired a new visual identity program and innovative marketing initiatives. With over \$93 million raised during his four-year tenure, he supported

to the faculty, reviewed the rabbinical curriculum, strengthened the teaching of Hebrew, brought on Israel engagement faculty, and achieved a successful, single institution accreditation.

His appreciation for culture as a portal of Jewish engagement led to the reopening of the Skirball Museum in Cincinnati, the naming of the Dr. Bernard Heller Museum in New York, and the acquisition

**integration of Reform Jews worldwide with our Jewish State and with all our global partners."**

He secured the naming of the Taube Family Campus in Jerusalem to transform it into a dynamic center for community outreach, welcoming many visiting North American Reform congregations and hosting the Reform Movement's Israel programs and the Rabbi Amy and Gary



**The dedication of the Taube Family Campus in Jerusalem: (from right) Tad Taube, Rabbi Panken, Taube Philanthropies Executive Director Shana Penn, and Rabbi Naamah Kelman, Dean.**

the faculty, created new programs, and renovated facilities. He launched thought leadership projects that engaged the broader public (Symposium 1 and 2, convening leading thinkers on issues in the changing religious and political landscape), enhanced continuing learning for alumni (AlumniLearn and *Bekhol Levavkha* Jewish Spiritual Direction), and utilized online media to educate congregations and learners (College Commons).

His leadership invigorated HUC-JIR's academic stature by dedicating the Pines School of Graduate Studies in Cincinnati and the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management in Los Angeles. He appointed new world-class scholars

of the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Museum Collection and B'nai B'rith International Archive. His belief in the role of religion in the public square supported the rallying of scholars of all faiths to express their "American Values, Religious Voices" to the new administration (see page 41).

#### **ISRAEL AND PEOPLEHOOD**

An ardent supporter of Progressive Judaism in Israel, Rabbi Panken said **"As the only North American seminary with a full campus and programs in Israel, we are uniquely positioned to influence both Israeli and North American society, and to ensure that the relationship between these two great centers of Jewish life continues and thrives. We will work hard to improve the understanding and**

Perlin Offices of the Israel Religious Action Center. He initiated the Teachers' Lounge, with the Shira Banki Family Foundation and the support of the U.S. Embassy, to train Jewish, Christian, and Muslim educators to teach tolerance throughout Jerusalem's schools. He partnered with the Healing Hatred program as an innovative model for interreligious dialogue to communicate about the core spiritual and moral dilemmas that lie at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As a staunch advocate for religious pluralism in Israel, he was proud to have ordained the 100th Israeli Reform rabbi graduating from HUC-JIR's Israeli Rabbinical Program on November 16, 2017.

He exponentially increased the number of Israelis studying on the Taube Family Campus in Jerusalem for the rabbinate and as educators and pastoral caregivers. Deeply committed to strengthening the ties binding Israeli and North American Jewry, he initiated the annual Ministry of Foreign Affairs mission to Israel for recent stateside alumni and promoted the Golden Family Hanassi Fellowships to bring HUC-JIR's Israeli rabbinical students to North American Reform congregations.

Jewish peoplehood was a core value for Rabbi Panken, who took special pride in HUC-JIR's global impact through its alumni. He strove to instill HUC-JIR's students with a stronger connection to Jewish communities worldwide through spearheading the Weitzman-JDC Fellowship Program and supporting the Weitzman-JDC Entwine student missions to Argentina, Georgia, and Azerbaijan over the past two years.

#### DEVOTION TO HUC-JIR

Rabbi Panken became HUC-JIR President as a product of the Reform Movement – from URJ Eisner Camp, where he met his adored future wife, Lisa Messinger; to his Presidency of CRAFTY (NFTY's New York City region); to his accomplished rabbinical studies at HUC-JIR. He devoted his career to the institution where he was ordained in 1991 and began teaching in 1995, focusing on Rabbinic and Second Temple Literature, with research interests in the historical development of legal concepts and terms; narrative development; and development of holiday observances. These academic interests were the subject of his scholarly book, *The Rhetoric of Innovation* (University Press of America, 2005), which explored legal change in Rabbinic texts, and of many articles in leading academic journals and scholarly volumes. His co-edited volume *Engaging Torah: Modern Perspectives on the Hebrew Bible* (see page 41) has just been published posthumously by HUC Press. He was deeply immersed in writing his next book about Hanukkah at the time of his demise.

**Right: Rabbi Panken at Ordination Ceremonies.**



When Rabbi Panken was elected President by the Board of Governors on July 31, 2013, he was well prepared to lead HUC-JIR after his years as the Dean of Students (1996-1998) and Dean of the New York Campus (1998-2007), and as Vice President for Strategic Initiatives (2007-2010). Through these appointments, he developed the essential administrative and entrepreneurial experience to bring HUC-JIR into the 21st century technologically, academically, and spiritually. Among his achievements were the creation of the Gerech Family Institute on Outreach and Conversion, e-classrooms for cross-campus courses team-taught by faculty across HUC-JIR's four campuses, information systems that supported student learning and assessment, and the Jewish Studies Portal that provided students with electronic access to the full scope of Jewish text sources.

His methodical approach to problem solving at HUC-JIR – planning, building, testing, and revising – was the product of his training in electrical engineering at Johns Hopkins University. At the same time, his commitment to applying the values of tradition and innovation at HUC-JIR were rooted in his doctorate in Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University as a Wexner Graduate Fellow.

#### REFORM MOVEMENT PARTNERSHIP

At his Inauguration Convocation at Plum Street Temple in Cincinnati on June 8, 2014, Rabbi Panken stated, **“For me, Reform Judaism has always symbolized what I consider to be the best of Judaism – firmly rooted in our tradition, yet egalitarian, inclusive of patrilineal Jews and intermarried families, welcoming to the LGBT community, politically active, and respectful of other faiths and ideologies.”**

Rabbi Panken was dedicated to strengthening HUC-JIR's collaboration with the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ), Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ), American Conference of Cantors (ACC), and the other arms of the Reform Movement. One of his first achievements

as President was providing a home for the URJ's Youth Division on HUC-JIR's New York Campus. He was honored to be a featured speaker at the URJ Biennial conventions, where he presented HUC-JIR's service to the Movement through its faculty thought leaders, students, alumni, and global impact. He served on the Editorial Board of *Reform Judaism* magazine, the Rabbinical Placement Commission, the Birthright Education Committee, and the CCAR Ethics Committee, and in a variety of other leadership roles within the Reform Movement and the greater Jewish community.

### A CALL TO ACTION

Only two days before his untimely passing, his Graduation Address in New York was a fervent call to action: **“Our celebration comes, this year, amidst a particularly challenging and painful world, one that in many respects transcends anything I have seen in my lifetime. We now live in a world in which truth is distorted, basic institutions of American life like the press, the courts, the electoral system, the FBI, the beautiful mosaic of immigration that made this country what it is, the dignity and value of public leadership and civil service, egalitarianism and a woman’s right to choose, and so many others, are threatened in ways we simply could not have imagined a mere two years ago. We see countries long civilized reverting to policies of nationalism and tactics of scapegoating reminiscent of our darkest times. We labor under the challenges of privacy and the ability for noxious leaders to spread their message ever more broadly and more efficiently through warped use of social media, cynical and often violent supremacist protests, and through targeting innocent immigrants as vicious criminals. But here’s the thing: the Jewish people, and our religious friends of other faiths, have seen this before, and we have lived through it and thrived and built again and again and again. We are a people of action and courage, of innovation and fearlessness, of adaptation and endless creativity.”**



Left: Presenting the plenary address at the 2017 URJ Biennial in Boston.

Middle: Convening a meeting of the Board of Governors with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in 2014.

Below: Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Selma to Montgomery March and the 1965 Voting Rights Act at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in 2015.



Rabbi Panken is mourned by his beloved wife, Lisa Messinger, who was his indispensable partner and advisor in all of his endeavors; their adored children Eli and Samantha; his loving parents Beverly and Peter; his cherished sister Rabbi Melinda Panken '96, her husband Glenn Cohen, and their children Ariella and Micah; the extended Panken-Messinger family; the entire HUC-JIR community; and the many friends, students, and colleagues who treasured his warmth, humor, and welcoming smile. His legacy of optimism, gratitude, and hope for the future will continue to thrive at HUC-JIR and inspire all those who seek to build a better world. ■



# May We All Be Disciples of Our Aaron

## **Rabbi Rick Jacobs '82, President, Union for Reform Judaism:**

Aaron Panken was cut from the same cloth as our [biblical] ancestor; the depth of his heart matched, if not exceeded, the breadth of his brilliant mind. In the past few years, Rabbi Panken has not only recruited, taught, mentored, ordained, and graduated a new generation of Jewish leaders, but, more significantly, he has modeled for each of them how to live a Jewish life of depth and integrity, embodying instead of merely espousing our Torah's timeless teachings. Greatness and goodness flowed forth from this remarkable man.

Aaron knew from his experience and his vision that Reform Judaism is truly a movement, not merely a collection of organizations, and his leadership covered every part of it. You could have dropped him into any role anywhere in our movement – camp, campus, youth group, pulpit, scholarly seminar, social justice rally, Israel, chaplaincy, you name it; he possessed all of God's leadership gifts, especially humility and kindness...

In Pirkei Avot 1:12, it states that the disciples of Aaron spend their days “loving peace and pursuing peace, loving their fellow creatures and bringing them close to the Torah.” The biblical Aaron and our Aaron inspire us to bring many others to the deep water of Torah and from there, find strength and inspiration to pursue peace and love all of God's children – not just the ones who are just like us. Indeed, that was Aaron Panken's way. May we all be disciples of our Aaron; may we never stop teaching and living his Torah.

## **Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman '69, Ph.D., Friedman Professor of Liturgy, Spirituality and Worship, HUC-JIR:**

The day before he died, Aaron was planning his ordination talk with, naturally, a Talmudic text – in this case, the familiar one, a version of which appears above many synagogue arks, “*da lifnei mi atah omed*. Know before whom you stand.” Aaron was going to remind the ordines that they would always be standing before God. But “standing,” he was going to add, implies actually “taking a stand;” so the new rabbis and cantors should take stands on what matters, commit themselves to a better world.

It was to be the last sermon he would plan, the one he never finished, and the one he would never give. So Aaron, on behalf of this College-Institute which you adored, we will complete the sermon for you, and give it to ourselves... we will remember who it was who charged us to go deeply into Torah, to see the College-Institute as the center of the Reform Jewish project, and to reengineer that project with integrity, wholeheartedness, and vision.



**Rabbi Panken (at left) with rabbinical student Madeline Cooper '21 at the Torah service held at the egalitarian prayer area at Robinson's Arch, in celebration of the ordination of the 100th graduate of the Israeli Rabbinical Program.**



**Rabbi Aaron Panken (center) with his sister Rabbi Melinda Panken '96 (left) and sister-in-law Rabbi Sarah Messinger '87 (right).**

**Rabbi Melinda Panken '96, Senior Rabbi, Congregation Shaari Emeth, Manalapan, NJ; Rabbi Panken's Sister:**

My eight-year-old son Micah said it best: "Mom, your job is to finish Uncle Aaron's work and do what was important to him." And really, that is what Aaron would want. For us to continue to bring his vision to life. And to ensure that the Reform Movement as a whole continues to change the world.

**Peter Panken, Father of Rabbi Aaron Panken:**

On graduating college with a degree in electrical engineering and a minor in biomedical engineering, Aaron asked himself, "What do I want to do during the rest of my life?" And he answered, "I want a vocation which requires lifelong learning. I want to spend my time helping other people. I want to teach and to mentor other people." Aaron wanted to be a force for good in the world, a community leader...He decided that the things he wanted to do, and he always was a doer, were at the heart of the rabbi's profession.

**Rabbi David Stern '89, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis:**

He was warm and delightful and fun, and an engineer – so as a strategist, he was sober and unsentimental; and as a scholar, he valued precision over polemic...That sobriety was an important quality in his leadership. He never jumped on a bandwagon, or went in for inexact rhetorical flourishes. And that is what made his emerging public moral voice, especially over recent months, so powerful. He had just begun to speak out against the perils of this political culture, just begun to show us how to bring the authentic and complex voice of our tradition to bear on the toxicities of our own day...Smart, kind, caring, compassionate, learned in Torah, committed to the Jewish people to the fiber of his being, serious in his vision and joyous in his days. He was the best of us.

**Rabbi Sarah Messinger '87, Rabbi, Congregation Shireinu, Gladwyne, PA; Rabbi Panken's Sister-in-Law:**

Aaron loved every fiber of Lisa's soul. He valued who she was. He valued her dreams and achievements, and she decorated his life with love and laughter. There was nothing more sacred in Aaron's life than his children. Eli and Samantha were the jewels that adorned their father's heart. Aaron modeled a heart of wisdom. Every day was filled with humility and love for those who are most important to him. He will always be with them, because they are each the best parts of him and their mother.



**Rabbi Panken and Lisa Messinger (center) with their son Eli and daughter Samantha (at left) and his parents Beverly and Peter Panken (at right).**

# THE RABBI AARON D. PANKEN MEMORIAL CAMPAIGN



“HUC-JIR was Aaron’s second home and, aside from his family, the love of his life, so it’s especially stirring that this extraordinary institution has decided to honor Aaron’s legacy by ensuring, in a very concrete and immediate way, that the intellectual rigor and daily empathy he embodied will live on in future generations of HUC-JIR students, graduates, and faculty.

I could not be more moved that HUC-JIR has committed to raising adequate funds to endow four Professorships in Aaron’s name — one on each of the four HUC-JIR campuses. This endowment will not only recognize the fundamental necessity of memorable, world-class teachers, which Aaron prioritized as President and felt the power of while an HUC-JIR student himself. But these Panken Professorships will also signal a bold, unwavering investment in the Reform Movement’s leaders of tomorrow — the next bright generation of Jewish rabbis, cantors, authors, professors, pastors, activists, preachers, innovators, and yes, seminary presidents.

This indefatigably hopeful project reminds me that good things can emerge from terrible ones, and that Aaron’s memory and legacy might endure — not in a building, but in the people he cared most about: our young Jewish visionaries of the next decades, and the teachers who are so essential to inspiring them.”

To participate in the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Memorial Campaign, please go to [donate.huc.edu/panken](https://donate.huc.edu/panken) or contact Andrea Kann at 212-824-2255 or [akann@huc.edu](mailto:akann@huc.edu)

**Lisa Messinger**

## LEARNING IN MEMORY OF RABBI PANKEN

**IN HIS OWN WORDS** [SELECTED WRITINGS] • **JEWISH TEXTS MATTER** [PODCAST] • **THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL JUDAISM IN NORTH AMERICA** [VIDEO] • **ACCESSING THE DIVINE: ONE MOMENT OF WONDER** [VIDEO] • and **30 MINUTES OF LEARNING ON THE SHELOSHIM OF RABBI PANKEN WITH HUC-JIR FACULTY:**

*Dr. Alyssa Gray, Emily S. and Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman Chair in Rabbinics; Professor of Codes and Responsa Literature*

*Rabbi Dalia Marx ’02, Ph.D., Professor of Liturgy and Midrash*

*Rabbi Mark Washofsky ’80, Ph.D. ’87, Solomon B. Freehof Professor of Jewish Law and Practice*

*Rabbi Dvora Weisberg ’11, Ph.D., Professor of Rabbinics*

[huc.edu/panken/learning](https://huc.edu/panken/learning)

## THE WEXNER FOUNDATION: LEARNING IN MEMORY OF RABBI AARON PANKEN, ז”ל – ONLINE LEARNING LECTURES

*Rabbi B. Elka Abrahamson ’85, President, The Wexner Foundation*

In our grief and overwhelming sadness, our Wexner community of Jewish leaders, volunteers, and professionals, North Americans and Israelis, coalesced around the idea of learning the Talmud texts our beloved teacher and friend, Rabbi Aaron Panken, ז”ל, taught to his students at HUC-JIR. Using the syllabus from his course, “Twelve Tremendous Texts,” we invited a dozen teachers who spanned President Panken’s circles of influence at The Wexner Foundation to teach a 30-minute webinar in tribute to him, exploring some of his favorite texts. The webinars were facilitated by faculty from HUC-JIR, by Wexner classmates and colleagues including Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative rabbis, and by professors from other institutions. Each teacher reflected on how the Talmudic text spoke to Aaron’s character and leadership. Rabbi David Ellenson taught the final session, which he closed with a powerful *Kaddish de Rabbanan*, which honors teachers, their students, their student’s students, and all those who engage in the study of Torah. May our teacher’s Torah and *menschlichkeit* shine through all of us continuing to make his memory an enduring blessing.

[huc.edu/panken/wexner](https://huc.edu/panken/wexner)





ALUMNI  
IMPACT

Campers at URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy East hold one of the healing tallitot sent to URJ camps.

# Parkland: A Community Heals

On February 14, a gunman burst into Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) in Parkland, FL, taking the lives of 17 students and staff. In the days that followed, Rabbi Bradd Boxman '86 and Rabbi Melissa Stollman '10, MARE '08 of Congregation Kol Tikvah, and Rabbi Marci Bloch '03 of Temple Beth Orr, became "Spiritual First Responders" to their communities. As a new school year began, they reflected on how far they've come and how far they still have to go.

"In some ways, life returns to a somewhat normal pace," said Rabbi Boxman. "But now we're dealing with the longer-term effects. We have children who are afraid to go to school, not just regular school, but religious school."

"A lot of it is ongoing anxiety," Rabbi Stollman explained. "What used to be sort of 'normal' is not. Everyone is hyperalert. Parents get texts all day long."

Rabbi Stollman had just come from meeting with a parent whose ninth-grader was having trouble getting through just two periods of the school day. "The word safety means something different. I wish we could say it's all better, but it's never going to be all better. It's going to take a long time to heal."

Rabbi Bloch's community in Coral Springs is focused on taking action. "We have made it our mission at our congregation to work so that our kids can go to school safely."

In June, a group gathered to roll blessings for the students at MSD. The small scrolls read "In Remembrance There Is Life," and were handed out by teachers, several of whom are Beth Orr members, when the new school year began.

A member of Beth Orr was a senior at MSD and was shot several times on that tragic day in February. In August, he attended services and received blessings from Rabbi Bloch and the community to celebrate his recovery and his impending departure for the Honors Program at The University of Michigan. "It was such a huge blessing for the entire community to see him recover, almost fully, and help send him off to college."

Over the summer, the congregations partnered with URJ Camp Coleman to send 17 "healing tallitot" to the seventeen URJ camps, where campers learned about gun violence, healing, and speaking up. These same tallitot were returned to the congregations to be used at Rosh Hashanah. At Temple Beth Orr's service, the tallitot were wrapped around the MSD survivors and their families. At Congregation Kol Tikvah, they were used to cover the entire sanctuary as a symbol of healing and connection to fellow Jews throughout North America.

"The reason we're able to support our community is because of our colleagues from across the country who lifted us up when we needed it most," said Rabbi Stolman. "To know we had other people to call on personally and professionally was invaluable."

Rabbi Boxman was particularly touched by the concern expressed by Rabbi Aaron Panken, z"l, "who was incredibly supportive to me, personally and professionally. He and Lisa came to visit for Purim two weeks after the tragedy, and he would call every week to check on me personally and the congregation."

As these rabbis continue the healing process, they find solace in each other and the beautiful ways their community has come together. "There's no roadmap for this as a rabbi," Rabbi Bloch said. "My work is to make sure we continue to hold our members and love them and be there as they heal and go through this journey." ■

# DREAMING OF AMERICA



Rabbi Claudio Kogan '03, M.D., until recently the leader of Temple Emanuel in McAllen, TX, has been deeply involved in the immigration storm since its inception in 2013, when he joined forces with Catholic Bishop Daniel Flores, S.T.D. and Sister Norma Pimentel in the Rio Grande Valley.

He has not only met with detainees in the detention camp, but has visited El Salvador and Guatemala to witness the poverty and threat of certain death at the hands of MS-13 criminals and drug cartels across the border. He has visited the shelters in Mexico and heard the desperation of those dreaming of safety and opportunity in America. He has participated in Congressional panels in Washington, DC, where he has discussed medical ethics and healthcare for

immigrants. He has also offered vital spiritual support to McAllen's law enforcement officers, Jews and non-Jews

alike, who struggle with the heart-wrenching job of separating immigrant families.

"Neither open borders nor building a wall are the answer," he explains. "Traveling through Latin America, I know there is a real threat and we have to secure our borders to protect our democracy. At the same time, we need to balance our security with compassion for those seeking freedom and welcome immigrants so that they can be here legally?"

Kogan immigrated to the U.S. from Argentina, where he earned his medical degree from the University of Buenos Aires-School of Medicine. He was inspired by Rabbi Marshall Meyer, founder of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano, to study to become

a rabbi at HUC-JIR. He also earned a Master of Education at Xavier University and a Master of Bioethics from the University of Pennsylvania, and was a member of the Institutional Review Board at the Yale University School of Medicine.

In July, Rabbi Kogan was named Director of The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Medicine's new Institute for Bioethics and Social Justice.

He will continue to serve as a chaplain for various law enforcement agencies and hospital systems throughout the area, as well as a *mohel* for Jews, Catholics, and evangelicals in the North Mexico/South Texas region, where he offers an introduction to Judaism in Spanish to descendants of Conversos who escaped the Inquisition in 1492. "They light candles on Friday nights and don't eat pork, but don't know why."

"It was HUC-JIR that welcomed me to this country and gave me my American dream. Our ancestors all came to this country with different languages and experienced bias. Let's do better. Let's welcome immigrants and help them fulfill *their* American dream." ■



# “If You Save One Life, You Save the Entire World”

An interview with  
Rabbi Susan Silverman '94

## Why did you take on the cause of the African refugees in Israel?

We had tens of thousands of people who had risked their lives to escape tyranny and seek sanctuary in Israel. And our leaders were determined to deport them, using a fiction to hide the fact that they were going to be sent back to the refugee trail where they would be at risk of human-trafficking and death. Although I wanted to focus on my organization, *Second Nurture: Every Child Deserves a Family and a Community*, too much was at stake: tens of thousands of lives and the soul of Israel.

**What was the scope of your activism?** I started by writing about it a lot and using social media to raise the Israeli public's awareness, and by being a surrogate family for an asylum seeker the age of our oldest child, early twenties. But when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that African asylum seekers would be forced to choose between deportation and prison, that was the last straw. I joined with two colleagues, Rabbi Nava Hefetz '06 and Rabbi Tamara (Tati) Schagas '15, and we launched Miklat Israel. Miklat Israel was originally a sanctuary movement of thousands of Israelis and dozens of kibbutzim who would hide asylum seekers who would otherwise be imprisoned or deported. We held regional trainings for households who signed up and created constellations of support to serve the 90 locations represented nationally.



Rabbi Susan Silverman '94 is the founder of **SECOND NURTURE: EVERY CHILD DESERVES A FAMILY AND A COMMUNITY**, which educates about international foster care, facilitates adoption, and addresses issues such as physical and mental health, identity development, and belonging. It develops materials that integrate adoption into community life and enrich the shared conversation and experience for everyone.

## What impact has your activism had to date?

Miklat Israel is now an NGO and our mission is to assist the State of Israel in creating a sustainable solution for asylum seekers residing in the country. We are interested in creating a holistic, nationwide infrastructure within which asylum seekers can live in dignity and contribute to society. But beyond that, we want to think systemically – and not just within the borders of Israel. Israel is the Start-Up Nation. We aim to launch Start-Up Nation University for refugees, training people in Israeli technologies. And then to export that curriculum to the million-and-a-half Eritreans worldwide. When it's safe to return to Eritrea, there will be tens of thousands of people ready to create a Start-Up Nation at home.

**How does your identity as a rabbi influence your leadership role in this cause?** As a rabbi, I need to help steer us to living our values and becoming strong through our ancient texts. The Reform Movement holds up prophetic ideals and *mitzvot* as building blocks toward the prophetic vision of a just and compassionate society. We need to continually seek to fulfill our covenant with God by living the values that matter to us. Caring for the stranger is an essential value. Being a light unto the nations is our purpose. Let's think like God's partners in changing the world. ■

# HUC-JIR's Year-In-Israel Program 2018-2019

The new Year-In-Israel class is the largest in more than seven years. These Koret Foundation Scholars are of an exceedingly high caliber and wonderfully diverse, representing a wide spectrum of identities, with nearly a third of the incoming class representing the broader Jewish community with affiliations primarily outside the Reform Movement.”

—Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi '95, Ph.D., National Director of Recruitment and Admissions, HUC-JIR

## MEET SAMMY KANTER '23

Born in Cincinnati, Sammy received his B.A. in Journalism from the Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University and worked professionally as Operations Director for the New York Fringe Festival and Management Associate with Theatreworks USA. He most recently directed the Ruben Center for 20s and 30s and Out at the Meyerson JCC Manhattan, and previously led the Becker Center at the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati. When he experienced illegal discrimination on the basis of his sexual orientation in Jerusalem, he enlisted the support of the Israel Religious Action Center (IRAC), which has sued for up to 50,000 NIS in damages on his behalf.

“It was a late Friday afternoon in early August, and I was walking with three fellow rabbinical students from HUC-JIR. We had arrived one month earlier to spend a year studying in Jerusalem, in preparation for becoming Reform rabbis back in North America. This particular day, we were celebrating the LGBTQ+ Pride weekend in Jerusalem. That morning, I had put on a tank top that my sister bought for me as a going away present. It was a white shirt with “Cincy,” the nickname of my beloved hometown, spelled out in rainbow letters.



[From left] Sammy Kanter with classmates Ben Rosen, Tess Plona (Ben's fiancée), Yaakov Calamaro (Anna's husband), Anna Calamaro, Raquel Merlot, and Julia Berg just before the pizza shop incident.

After entering the pizza shop, an employee greeted us and handed out menus. Immediately after looking at my shirt, his demeanor shifted. He asked me if I was gay. After responding in the affirmative, he simply said, ‘Get out.’ He proceeded to repeat that phrase as we stammered stunned responses, and another imposing employee followed us until we were down the block.

I'm proud that I am able to contribute to Israeli society by bringing awareness to the struggles of the LGBTQ community here. I hope for the rest of the year that I can continue to immerse myself in all sides of Israeli culture, and I hope to grow both spiritually and professionally alongside my amazing class!”

*Rabbinical student Sammy Kanter '23 is a Koret Foundation Scholar, Weitzman-JDC Fellow, and recipient of the Atara Merit Scholarship.*

**28**  
average age

**3.8**  
average  
graduate  
GPA

**3.5**  
average  
undergraduate  
GPA

**35%**  
received a  
graduate degree  
or certificate

**27%**  
have/had affiliations  
outside the Reform  
Movement

# MEET SHOSHANNA NAMBI '23

Born in Kenya, Shoshanna received her B.A. in Business Administration at Kampala International University, Uganda (2011) and has worked professionally in the areas of agronomy, global health, and HIV counseling and community education. She raised funds with Kulanu in support of the Jewish elementary and upper school for the Abayudaya Jewish community of Uganda; attended international Jewish leadership and study programs; co-founded Marom Uganda, a Shabbat and Jewish holiday prayer and celebration group for Jewish students in Kampala; and became actively engaged with Reform Judaism during her two summers working at URJ Camp Coleman. She just completed a year of study at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and a Hebrew Ulpan in Jerusalem.



**Shoshanna Nambi**

“I was born in Kenya to a Jewish mother and grew up with my two brothers and my grandparents in Uganda in a small house made from mud, with no electricity or running water. Most families in our village were subsistence farmers, as were my grandparents. We grew beans, peanuts, maize, potatoes, and coffee as a cash crop. I lived a ten-minute walk down dusty,

unpaved roads from the synagogue, where I attended prayers regularly. As a young girl, my friends and I took the younger kids outside during the Torah reading to entertain them and teach them Hebrew songs. Most of these songs I learned from volunteers from the U.S. and Israel. I also developed a love of the drums that were sounded during the singing of the Luganda-translated psalms.

My family’s Jewish practice goes back to my great-grandfather who worked with the founder of Judaism in Uganda, Semei Kakungulu. Kakungulu was a Ugandan chief who collaborated with the British about colonial rule and was sent to Eastern Uganda to help establish British governance. One of his jobs was to spread Christianity in these regions but he fell in love with the Torah. He did this in 1919 without any knowledge of Jews in the world. Kakungulu was a charismatic leader and many people followed his teachings. People practiced this biblical Judaism until recent times.

The community particularly suffered during the 1970’s with the dictatorship regime of Idi Amin Dada. He wanted only Islam and tolerated Christianity because it was the majority but disapproved of any other religion. This left most people to pray in hiding, scared for their lives. During this time, the number of Jews decreased drastically; the current community is still very tiny with less than 2,000 people.

In 2002, my community underwent the first official conversion (with a Beit Din led by four Conservative rabbis and two rabbinical students from the U.S.), which the community called a confirmation because we had lived as Jews for as long as we could remember.”

*Rabbinical student Shoshanna Nambi '23 is a Koret Foundation Scholar and recipient of the Atara Merit Scholarship.*

**70%**

**enrolled more than one year after completing undergraduate studies**

## SELECTED UNDERGRADUATE/GRADUATE SCHOOLS WHERE THEY STUDIED

**Bates | Brandeis | Brown | Bryn Mawr | Clark | Columbia | Cornell | George Washington | Harvard | Hebrew University | Indiana | Jewish Theological Seminary | Miami | Michigan | Middlebury | Muhlenberg | Northwestern | Princeton | Skidmore | Syracuse | Washington & Lee | Wellesley**

# MEET RACHEL WESTON '23

A performer, song-leader, teacher, and researcher of Yiddish folk and art music, Rachel received an undergraduate degree in philosophy, a national vocational qualification in health and social care, a diploma in opera and performance, and a postgraduate degree in performance. Mentored by Cantor Zoe Jacobs '09, she worked as a cantorial soloist and chorister at Edgware and Hendon Reform Synagogue in North London, ran community music groups in London Jewish day centers and synagogues for people with dementia and their caregivers, and worked in social care housing with people with profound disabilities.

"I grew up in a United (British Orthodox) Synagogue where the women sat separately and had no active role in the service, so I internalized all of the melodies but never sang them. I left Judaism at the age of 15 and my experience of coming back to it was a direct consequence of beginning to learn, research, perform, and teach Yiddish folk, contemporary, and art songs ten years ago. I started going to language, song, and klezmer courses in the U.K., Europe, the U.S., and Canada, and became devoted to the revival of Yiddish music. I am fascinated by the ways in which the music charts the movement and migration of Ashkenazi Jews and every aspect of human experience.



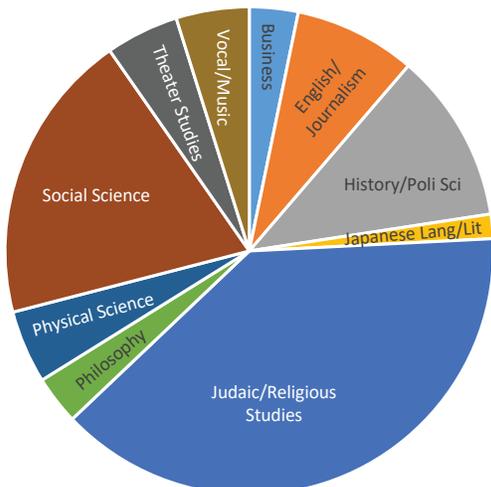
Rachel Weston (center) with (from left) Cantor Tamar Havilio '96, Head of Cantorial Studies for the Year-In-Israel program, and classmates Kalix Jacobson, Gabe Snyder, Agnes Barroll, and Emily Hoolihan.

I've had some amazing experiences working with individuals with dementia, for whom music can be important and useful. Whilst individuals may struggle with everyday practical tasks, it's quite normal for people to remember many songs in their entirety from earlier in life. Gathering solely for music can be a really joyful experience and a step out of

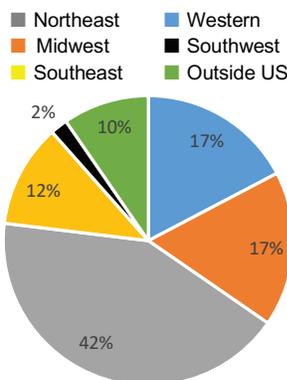
functional routines. The entire group may spontaneously get up and start dancing, or someone who has been silent for a year may suddenly start to sing. It has taught me a lot about improvisatory facilitation." ■

*Cantorial student Rachel Weston '23 is a Koret Foundation Scholar and recipient of the Atara Merit Scholarship.*

## UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR



## REGIONS OF INCOMING CLASS



**52**  
students

**63%** female

**31%** male

**4%** gender nonconforming

**2%** transgender

# STUDENT JOURNEYS

## Studying Professional Ethics

## AT AUSCHWITZ

Deena Gottlieb '20

Visiting Auschwitz, Krakow, and Berlin with a group of interfaith seminary and medical students in the Fellowship at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE) was an incredibly powerful experience. Although no one can ever truly process or understand the devastation of the Holocaust, this two-week journey allowed us all to see the ways in which religious doctrine and ethical principles can be used to justify enormous evil.

I learned that not only did the Nazis employ ethical principles and values to perpetrate their brutal crimes, but that German professionals – clergy, doctors, scholars – played a large role in creating and validating these principles. Our cohort of FASPE Fellows studied the role of these professionals to examine our own ethical

principles and our power in shaping public opinion as future clergy and doctors.

As a rabbinical student, I was shocked to learn about the role of pastors and priests during the Holocaust. Some brazenly supported the Nazis and actively employed historic Christian antisemitism, which includes the notion that the Jews were responsible for killing Jesus, to promote Nazi ideology. For them, being a Nazi and being a good Christian were not mutually exclusive. Other clergy members were more wary of Nazism. However, because they did not want to lose the support of their congregants nor want their churches to be censored or shut down by the Nazis, they remained silent and became complicit with Nazi crimes.

After learning about the role of clergy during the Holocaust, we examined

modern ethical issues that can arise for clergy, from conflicts between religion and state, to situations in which confidentiality can or should be broken. We also discussed ways in which clergy can abuse their power in both overt and subtle ways. With the medical Fellows, we discussed modern research ethics, public health concerns, and end-of-life issues.

FASPE has helped me to see that, as a religious leader, it is my responsibility to ensure that my moral compass is dependent not upon the political or social climate, but upon steady religious and philosophical grounds. ■

*Rabbinical student Deena Gottlieb '20 is a Tisch Fellow, recipient of the Women of Reform Judaism Scholarship, and the Rabbinical Intern at Jewish Community Project of Lower Manhattan.*



FASPE seminary and medical students at Auschwitz-Birkenau.



## Creating Reform Zionist Leaders

When Rabbi Maya Glasser '18 served as the Rabbinical Intern at ARZA (Association of Reform Zionists of America), she worked with ARZA President, Rabbi Josh Weinberg '13, to launch the HUC-JIR ARZA Fellowship. Six cantorial and rabbinical students joined her for its inaugural cohort.

"I wanted ARZA to be a part of the conversation as the liberal Zionist branch of our own Movement," said Glasser. "I also wanted future clergy and professionals to be aware of ARZA and develop a relationship with it, so that when they went out into their congregations and communities, they would know where to go for resources. I thought it would be mutually beneficial for ARZA and HUC-JIR students to be connected."

The Fellows met monthly for in-depth discussions with the heads of Zionist organizations in North America, including the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; World Zionist Organization; Shalom Hartman Institute of North America; Israel Action Network (JFNA); Jewish National Fund;

**ARZA President Rabbi Josh Weinberg '13 and URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs '82 (center) with ARZA Fellows: (from left) Sarah Berman '20, Alexandra Kurland '20, Rabbi Maya Glasser '18, Jenn Queen '19, Andrew Oberstein '21, and Emily Aronson '21**

**"ARZA has given me space to feel confident in reclaiming Zionism by ensuring that there is a place at the table for those of us who care about Israel and also believe in pluralism, equality, and justice."**

**—Andrew Oberstein '21, Wexner Graduate Fellow, AIPAC Lefell Fellow, and Rabbinical Intern, Columbia/Barnard Hillel**

and with Rabbi Rick Jacobs '82, URJ President. They also engaged in text study before each meeting to frame their conversations with words of Torah.

"The ARZA Fellowship has helped me maintain my strong relationship with Israel, allowing me to listen, learn, engage, and wrestle with the ideas and realities of the Jewish State and thereby forge an even richer attachment," said Sarah Berman '20, Tisch Rabbinical Intern, Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York.

Many of the current Fellows will go on to a second year of the program, which will involve more learning as a cohort, as well as an Israel-related project to implement what they have learned at their internships or in another fieldwork setting. A second cohort of Fellows will begin the program later this year, all with the goal of fostering a better understanding of the American-Israel relationship. ■

*Rabbi Maya Glasser '18 received the Meyer and Lenore Tobin Schattner Memorial Endowed Scholarship throughout her four years of stateside rabbinical studies.*



HUC-JIR students visiting a mosque in Baku, Azerbaijan.

## WEITZMAN-JDC GLOBAL LEADERS JOURNEY TO AZERBAIJAN AND GEORGIA

As part of the Weitzman – JDC – HUC-JIR Fellowship for Global Jewish Leadership, HUC-JIR partnered with JDC Entwine, the growing young professionals platform of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), to bring a mission of 30 HUC-JIR students to Baku and Quba, Azerbaijan, and Tbilisi, Georgia this summer. The mission connected them with the Jewish communities of the Central Asian Republics & Caucasus Region. These ancient communities are comprised of two groups: those who trace their history in the region back thousands of years and the newer arrivals, predominantly Ashkenazi Jews, who settled there during and after World War II. While centers of Jewish life are concentrated in the larger cities, there are some 400 smaller Jewish communities across this region.

The group included several Weitzman-JDC Fellows who are among a cohort of up-and-coming rabbinical, cantorial, and Jewish education students being trained to help advocate and foster activism in the Jewish community to respond to global issues. This program was established by Jane Weitzman, a JDC Board Member and Jewish community and philanthropic leader, together with her husband, shoe designer Stuart Weitzman.

Weitzman-JDC Fellow and rabbinical student Michael Lewis '21 explains, "I wanted to experience JDC's direct assistance in smaller, remote Jewish communities, and how they are supporting the renaissance of Jewish communities in places outside of Israel and the United States."

**“IT’S MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER THAT OUR JEWISH COMMUNITIES ARE ENGAGED IN JEWISH ISSUES, BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD, AND I CAN THINK OF NO MORE POWERFUL WAY TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN THAN THROUGH EMPOWERING OUR FUTURE RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERS TO LEAD THOSE CONVERSATIONS. AS JEWS, WE HAVE A DUTY TO REPAIR THE WORLD AND WE SHOULD MAKE SURE THAT JEWISH NEEDS ARE ALSO INCLUDED IN THESE EFFORTS.”**

**— JANE WEITZMAN, VICE PRESIDENT, JDC**

Jewish life in Azerbaijan, which has historically been centered in Baku, dates back hundreds of years. The Jewish community of Baku, and the smaller community in the city of Quba, flourished well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until the rise of Communism ruled out Jewish expression. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought the opportunity for revival of Jewish life, but also left the country in economic ruin. With JDC’s help, the Jews of Azerbaijan are working to further the welfare of the neediest and to preserve the community’s Jewish heritage.

Georgia continues to deal with the devastating impact of its August 2008 armed conflict with Russia and to grapple with an unemployment rate of over 16%. Steep increases in the cost of energy and many other staples exacerbate the situation of the poor and elderly. Social welfare systems are, for the most part, non-existent or rudimentary, and state pensions are among the lowest in the former Soviet Union. JDC deploys both relief services for poor Jews and also invests in Jewish community programming like JCCs, Jewish educational and cultural initiatives, and holiday celebrations.

“In Tbilisi, Georgia, we met a large cohort of young Jews in their college years eager to welcome us and celebrate Shabbat,” recalls Weitzman-JDC Fellow and rabbinical student Avi Steindel ’22. “While language and culture could have presented barriers, any social tension that might have existed vanished as we



broke into song, singing traditional Jewish tunes peppered with secular classics. The vibrancy of the youth movements in both countries was uplifting and inspiring.”

Lewis says, “My most memorable experience was meeting with the Jewish community in Gori, Georgia, in the Hesed House, which essentially serves as the JCC and social service center for the community. The children taught us traditional Georgian dances, and then a choir came out and sang songs in Hebrew, English, and Georgian. I was brought to tears when they sang “Go Down Moses,” as I realized that these young Jews were singing an African-American folk song about the foundational story of the Jewish people eleven time zones away from where I grew up in California. It became abundantly clear that these children

**[From left] Rabbi Stephanie Crawley '18, Rabbi Jesse Paikin '18, Michael Lewis '21, and JDC Entwine Staffer Jamie Fleishman with an elderly member of the Baku Jewish community aided by the JDC.**

typically go to school hungry and are fed and have support primarily from the JDC and their work at the Hesed House. In this community that was hit particularly hard by the 2008 war, it is the JDC that provides hope for the Jewish children.”

Steindel concludes, “This trip will live in my memory as a powerful touch-point for Jewish peoplehood and global connection, which have always been at the forefront of my Jewish identity. It further invigorated my personal commitments to help strengthen global Jewry.” ■



Tobias Glaser '20 leading his practicum on traditional S'lichot

## THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH MUSICAL INVASION

An increasing number of students from Great Britain (see page 11) and Australia are realizing their dreams of becoming a cantor at HUC-JIR. The Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music (DFSSM) is enriched by their pioneering aspirations and musical talents.

Star Cantorial Fellow Sarah Grabiner '19 of London and Messinger Family Endowed Scholarship recipient Tobias Glaser '20 of Melbourne share their stories:

### WHAT MAKES THE DFSSM SPECIAL?

**TG:** At the DFSSM you learn about the history of Israeli music in the Year-In-Israel Program, the traditional *nusach* of Western and Eastern Europe as well as Sephardic melodies, the American Jewish folk tradition, and contemporary American cantorial music, which unites these disparate melodies into the sound of Reform Judaism. Studying with professors who themselves studied with the great cantors of the 20th century places me in a chain of Jewish musical heritage and tradition that wouldn't be possible at any other institution in the world.

**SG:** Israel and Progressive Zionism have been important parts of my Jewish identity since I was a teenager. Experiencing these aspects of my life through a new and different lens during the Year-In-Israel Program was an enlightening opportunity. From the poetry of psalms and biblical commentaries, to *nusach* for every imaginable occasion and singing in the HUC-JIR Choir, to the history of Jewish education and Israeli literature's relationship

to prayer, I feel so grateful and inspired by the faculty and their teaching.

### WHAT HAS BEEN MOST MEANINGFUL ABOUT YOUR STUDENT PULPIT?

**SG:** I am blessed to be part of a clergy team at Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn, leading a vibrant, musical, and spiritually-engaged community. Preparing approximately 50 students for becoming *b'nai mitzvah* and being part of their families' Jewish lives at such meaningful milestones has been a privilege and a joy.

**TG:** Planning and executing meaningful Jewish programming for Tribe, a millennials group at Congregation Rodeph Sholom in Manhattan, has been particularly amazing. We run a monthly Shabbat service at a bar in midtown, as well as other Shabbat dinners and holiday programming throughout the year. There are usually around 100 young people seeking to reconnect with their Judaism and experience Shabbat together on their own terms.

**“Using my voice to serve others as a vehicle toward Jewish identity and practice is something that cannot be replicated outside of the cantorate and enables me to make a positive difference in the world.”**

— Tobias Glaser '20



(From right) Senior cantorial students Sarah Grabiner, Harriet Dunkerley, Mariel Guarrera (seated), and Leah Shafritz.

**WHAT IS THE SUBJECT OF YOUR SENIOR THESIS?**

**SG:** I am exploring ancient Greek texts and subsequent commentaries that describe how the cosmos resonates with different pitches and how those frequencies and sounds are felt and echoed in the universe and on earth. I am collecting various biblical, rabbinic, and medieval Jewish texts in which these ideas are resonant. My recital will be a collection of musical settings of the most prominent verses and text that I find in my research.

**WHERE WILL YOU SERVE AFTER ORDINATION?**

**SG:** I will join Radlett Reform Synagogue, a dynamic, growing congregation. I am excited to take all that I've learned at HUC-JIR back to the U.K., to the Reform Movement in which I grew up, and to be part of building and strengthening the musical and spiritual life of my community. ■

**DEBBIE FRIEDMAN SCHOOL OF SACRED MUSIC SENIOR RECITALS**

*Generously supported by the David Facher Iselin Senior Recital Fund*

**Please join us at our New York campus or watch on the livestream:**

**December 5, 2018: SARAH GRABINER '19**

***Hashamayim M'saprim K'vod Eil: Singing the Music of the Heavenly Spheres***

[huc.edu/chronicle18/grabiner](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/grabiner)

**March 6, 2019: LEAH SHAFRITZ '19**

***Performance and Prayer: Classical Singing and the Cantorial Art***

[huc.edu/chronicle18/shafritz](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/shafritz)

**April 3, 2019: HARRIET DUNKERLEY '19**

***Music as Memory: Voices from Inside the Camps***

[huc.edu/chronicle18/dunkerley](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/dunkerley)

**April 10, 2019: MARIEL GUARRERA '19**

***Forget Me Not: Voices of Second Avenue***

[huc.edu/chronicle18/guarrera](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/guarrera)

# Social Media Initiatives

HUC-JIR students have taken to social media to share their unique perspectives on Judaism. Whether it's Judaism with a feminist twist, *divrei Torah* expressed through challah baking, or sharing a behind-the-scenes look at rabbinical school, these future leaders are making a name for themselves.

## @Modern\_Ritual

Tisch Fellows Samantha Frank '19 and Rena Singer '20 started @Modern\_Ritual in May 2017: Here's what the two friends and future rabbis had to say:

### Why use social media?

We were motivated by the lack of feminist, content-forward, beautiful Jewish Instagram accounts on the fastest-growing social media platform. Rena noticed that our religious school students spent a lot of time on Instagram, and felt that this could be a medium through which we could share all that we love about Judaism with people who are often less engaged in synagogue life: teens and young adults.

We are really grateful to HUC-JIR's Be Wise Fellowship in Jewish Entrepreneurialism, established by Elizabeth and Steven Gruber. This grant provided us with support and the means to widen our reach, as well as work with consultants to discern and define Modern Ritual's goals, vision, and next steps.

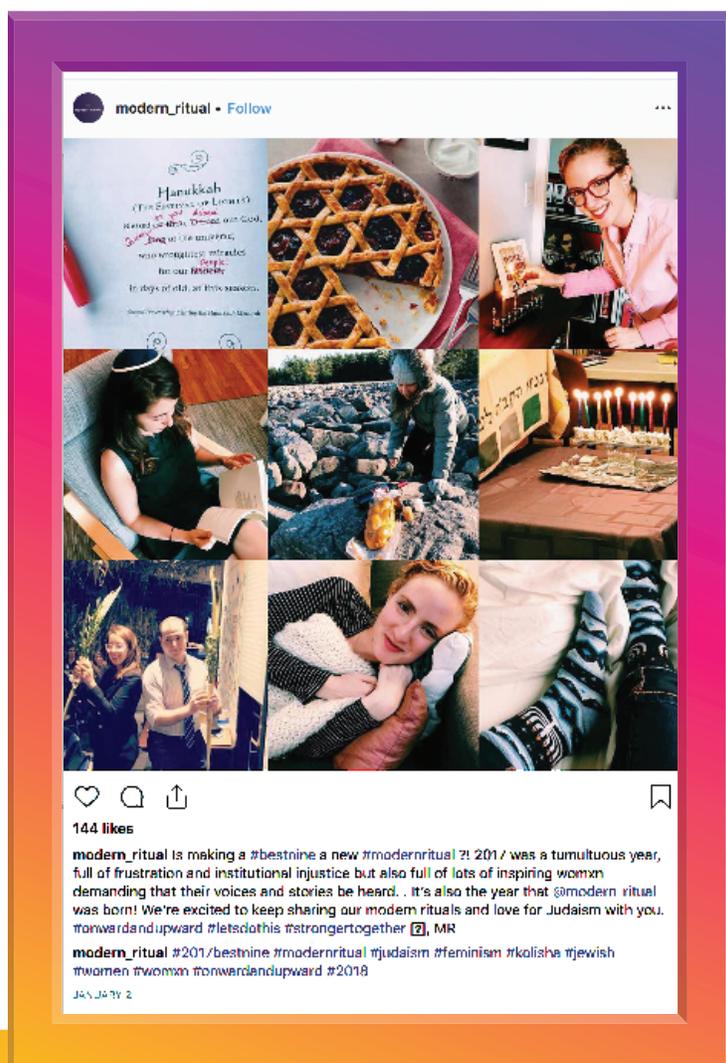
We choose what to post based on the Jewish calendar, our own learning and experiences, and Jewish wisdom that we feel we need

to share! We try to model living Jewishly and to help people see that seeking Jewish knowledge is right in the palm of their hand.

### What have you learned?

We've learned that people on Instagram are looking for deeper, honest learning about Judaism, identity, and Israel. We've learned – and are still learning – how to balance rabbinical and pastoral care on an online platform, while maintaining boundaries. We're learning how to make Judaism accessible in short form via a screen! People message us every day asking questions about Judaism: how to find local communities, how it relates to their lives, etc. There is so much opportunity for growth in the Jewish social media world at this moment.

Follow @Modern\_Ritual on Instagram:  
[instagram.com/Modern\\_Ritual](https://www.instagram.com/Modern_Ritual)



## @lechlechallah

Rabbinical student Vanessa Harper '22 found a way to incorporate her love of baking challah with her love of Torah through her Instagram account

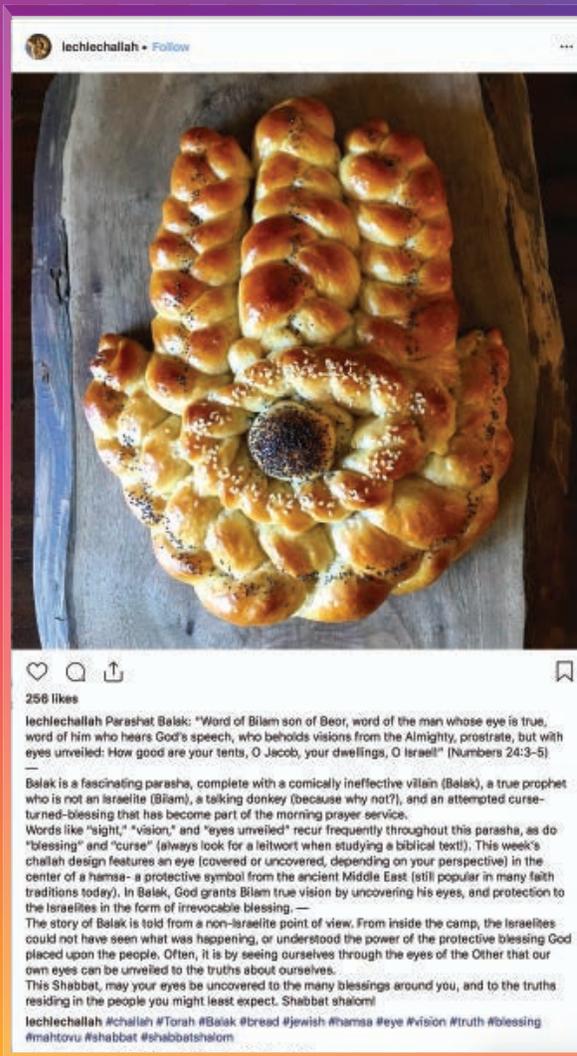
@lechlechallah. She describes the account as “a rabbinical student making challah themed for the week’s Torah portion, every Friday in 5778. Where there’s bread, there’s Torah.”

### How did you come up with the idea to combine your love of Torah with your love of baking?

I’ve always loved to bake, but decided last summer to improve my bread-making skills by making challah every week. It just so happened that I was going to an HUC-JIR Shabbaton on *Shabbat Noah*, and thought it would be fun and timely to bring a rainbow challah to share. Rabbi David Adelson, Dean of the New York campus, asked, “Do you theme your *challot* to the *parsha* every week?” and I thought to myself, “Could I pull that off?”

### Where do you find inspiration?

I start with a careful reading of the Torah portion, looking for verses that invoke a really clear visual. When these also happen to be verses that are particularly interesting or timely to *d’rash* on, that’s a real bonus, but I have to let the abilities of the bread dough determine the direction



I take. Some weeks, I have a carefully sketched out design. Other weeks, I’m not sure what I’m going to make until my hands are in the risen dough. As for my personal inspiration each week – I could not have anticipated the audience of devoted followers that this project has attracted. When I hear from someone that she had an incredible conversation about feminism with her daughter sparked by a challah design, or that they were inspired to start baking their own interpretive challah every week, or that he was deeply touched by an interpretation that I offered, that makes it totally worthwhile.

### Which challah has been your favorite creation?

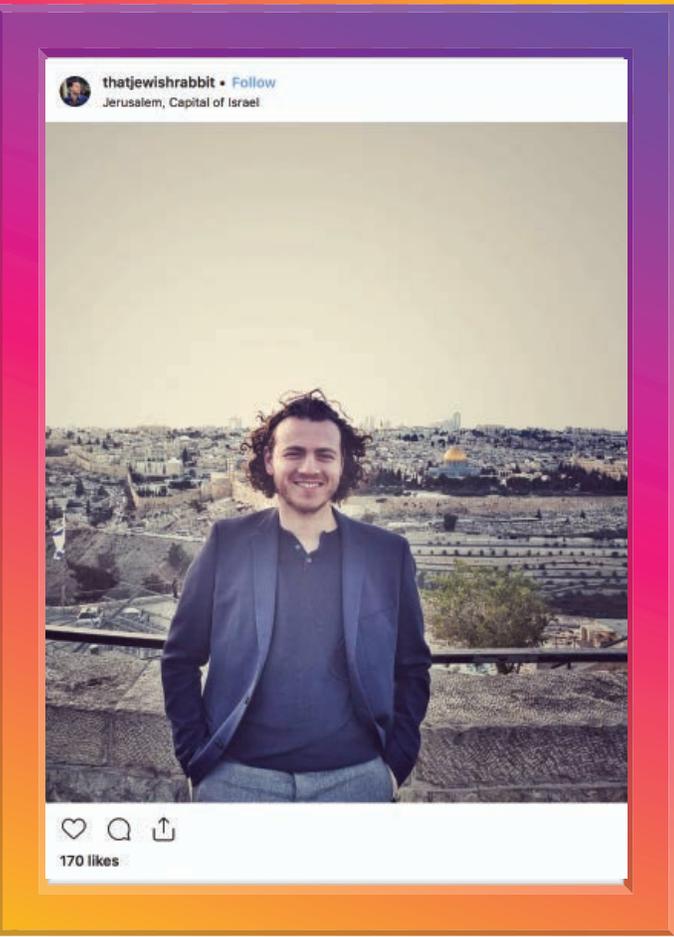
I can’t pick a favorite, but I am particularly fond of *Toldot* (a raspberry Esau and goat cheese Jacob entwined in the womb), *Mikeitz* (a thin challah swallowing a full challah), *Naso* (the priestly blessing hand gesture), and *Chukat* (water erupting from a rock). The crowd favorites have been *Beha’alotcha* (a flock of quails) and *Balak* (a *hamsa*) (pictured at left).

### What have you learned?

I’ve found that people came for the bread and stayed for the Torah. When I started to venture a few words of *d’rash* somewhere in the book of Exodus, the response was overwhelmingly positive, and people who wouldn’t have sought out a *parsha* commentary otherwise were expressing gratitude for learning something new. I’ve been learning how to deliver a point briefly (a challenge for a wordy writer like me!) and I’m gaining confidence in my rabbinical voice. This project has been gratifying in that it has confirmed something I hold deeply as an educator – that there are hundreds of languages through which people learn and express themselves, and bread-making is its own language for learning, interpreting, and teaching Torah. The more points of access and expression we can offer to our learners, the more Torah will manifest itself through them.

*Vanessa Harper '22 is the recipient of the Gruber Family Endowed Scholarship.*

Follow @lechlechallah on Instagram: [instagram.com/lechlechallah](https://www.instagram.com/lechlechallah)



Follow Rabbi\* T: [facebook.com/thatjewishrabbit](https://facebook.com/thatjewishrabbit)  
[instagram.com/thatjewishrabbit](https://instagram.com/thatjewishrabbit)  
 YouTube: [goo.gl/ZuQGop](https://goo.gl/ZuQGop) [twitter.com/jewishrabbit](https://twitter.com/jewishrabbit)

## Rabbi\* T (\*In-Training)

Rabbinical student Tobias Divack Moss '19 shares his journey to becoming a rabbi through his digital presence – **Rabbi\* T (\*In-Training)**. On Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram, he explores Torah, community, and the intersection between Judaism and technology. He describes his inspiration and goals:

“Our tradition praises Ezra for an ancient innovation: the public reading of Torah on market days when the people were gathered together. Today, the people are gathered on their devices and their computer screens, and it is the responsibility of Jewish leaders to once more bring Torah to them.

In early 2017, I noticed that there was incredible educational content on YouTube, but when it came to religion, there were very few worthwhile offerings. That’s when I decided to start building my toolkit so that I could contribute to online Jewish learning and community.

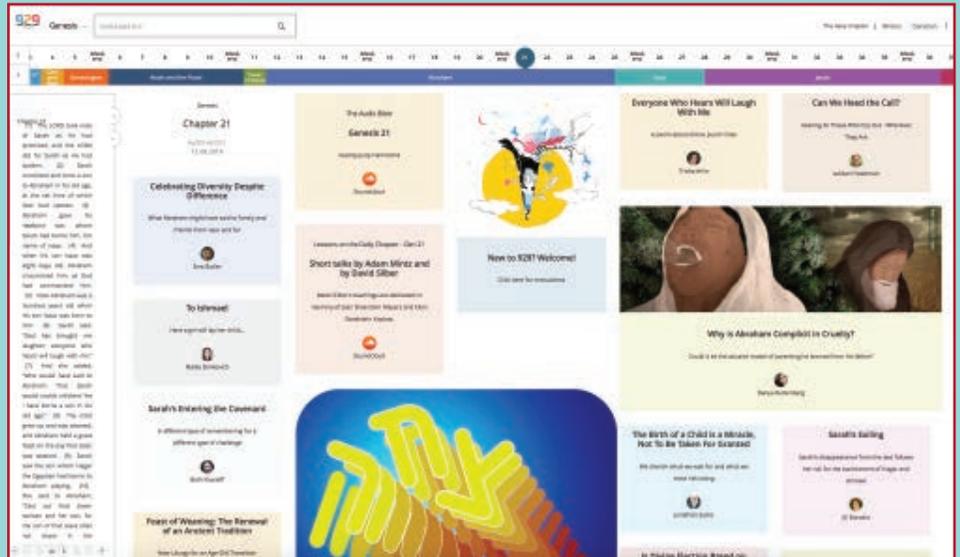
When I began rabbinical school, I had only a vague idea about what that really entailed. With *Rabbi\* T*, I’m able to expose potential students to the excitement and challenges of rabbinical training. Many prospective clergy have reached out to ask further questions or make a personal connection.

Social media offers an unprecedented opportunity to be in conversation and community with Jews around the world. Increasingly, we will see identity-formation, debate, and even ritual occurring in digital spaces. I want to be part of this ongoing transformation.” ■

*Tobias Divack Moss '19 is the recipient of the Lois and Richard England Endowed Scholarship and the Friedman Family Endowed Rabbinical Scholarship.*

## THE 929-ENGLISH PROJECT:

HUC-JIR students are actively participating in a project that seeks to create a global Jewish conversation about the Hebrew Bible’s 929 chapters. Their commentaries appear among the one chapter per day, five chapters per week postings that offer a pluralistic approach to interpreting the core text of the Jewish people. Growing out of the phenomenal success of its Hebrew multi-media prototype over the past three-and-a-half years, 929-English strives to illuminate issues within society, ethical dilemmas, questions of gender and social justice, and democracy and governance as understood through the text of the Tanakh. Follow our students’ postings weekly at: [929.org.il/lang/en/today](https://929.org.il/lang/en/today)





## Dr. Bernard Heller Museum Dedicated

The Dr. Bernard Heller Museum at HUC-JIR/ New York was dedicated on September 6, 2018. It was the vision of Rabbi Aaron Panken, Ph.D., z”l, that brought forth this transformative naming gift of \$1.68 million by the Dr. Bernard Heller Foundation.

Rabbi David Ellenson, Ph.D., Interim President and Chancellor Emeritus, stated, “It is an honor to memorialize our distinguished alumnus, Dr. Bernard Heller ’20, z”l, who was so deeply concerned with the survival of the Jewish people and with the transmission of Jewish religious and cultural heritage. We are enormously grateful to Ruth O. Freedlander, Co-Trustee of the Heller Foundation, who has spearheaded the Foundation’s transformative philanthropy of nearly \$7.5 million over more than three decades to support our students, expand the work of our faculty, strengthen our programs, and enhance our campuses. It is a privilege to honor Laura Kruger, the Museum’s

visionary curator, whose connoisseurship and devotion ensure that the visual interpretation of Judaism is thriving here at the College-Institute.”

Since its founding in 1983 as the Joseph Gallery under the leadership of Reva Godlove Kirschberg, z”l, the Museum has mounted over 140 exhibitions that have illuminated Jewish text, values, and history. The current exhibition, “TERRA inFIRMA,” presents Jewish environmental action as a sacred opportunity and an act of faith.

The Museum has organized more than thirty traveling exhibitions that are presented in Jewish museums, university art galleries, synagogues, and community centers throughout North America each year. It has developed an art collection of over 2,500 works spanning the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries and published scores of exhibition catalogs. Docents lead adult and school groups throughout the year, and an

internship program mentors high school, college, and graduate students. During the course of the past 35 years, the Museum has offered powerful learning experiences for over a million visitors to the Museum and its travelling exhibitions.

The Museum’s exhibitions and publications are supported by George, z”l, and Mildred Weissman and presented by the Irma L. and Abram S. Croll Center for Jewish Learning and Culture. ■

To bring the Museum’s traveling exhibitions to your community, please call 212-824-2218; email [museumnyc@huc.edu](mailto:museumnyc@huc.edu), or go to [huc.edu/museums/traveling-exhibitions](http://huc.edu/museums/traveling-exhibitions)

**(Above) Dr. Bernard Heller Foundation Co-Trustee Ruth O. Freedlander (left), who was presented with the American Jewish Distinguished Service Award, with Jean Bloch Rosensaft, Museum Director.**



**Curator Laura Kruger (center), who was presented with the Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*, with her team: (from right) Senior Curatorial Assistant Phyllis Freedman, Archivist Susan Rosenstein, Registrar Nancy Mantell, and Research Director Rose Starr.**

# The Pines School of Graduate Studies



## THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN ANTIQUITY

Michael Charles Lyons, Ph.D. '18

*Cincinnati* Michael Charles Lyons is the recipient of the first Pines Dissertation Publication Award. His topic is particularly timely, as it intersects with geological and meteorological studies that recently have been completed in Israel and throughout the region on the impact of famine on the collapse of regional states and empires. A major academic publisher has expressed interest in the manuscript.

### **What is the subject of your dissertation?**

I focused on two related issues: I created a methodology for how to discern famine language in ancient Near Eastern literature and the Bible, and I applied what I learned to discern the role famine played in the literature from the period of the Late Bronze Age collapse (ca. 1200 BCE).

### **Why is this timely?**

Scholars and scientists have been debating the causes behind this monumental collapse in ancient society. How did entire civilizations just fall apart? While climatologists have been suggesting that some kind of climate change played a role in the collapse, no scholar has tried to listen systematically to the ancient voices themselves. I was curious as to how the ancient Mediterranean cultures interpreted the events going on around them. This project offers scholars a fresh look into the textual

record to see how famine indeed played a significant role in the collapse. The literature I studied shows us how these ancient communities adapted to changing situations brought by famine (some successfully, some not successfully). My research will help future scholars discern famine in other ancient texts, where previously they might not have been aware of the famine language.

### **How does your research inform the present day?**

Ongoing discussions in our world about climate change indicate that, just like in the Late Bronze Age, we live in an interconnected world that could face danger if we don't interact in harmony with the world God put around us. According to Genesis 1, humanity is to be the image of God that represents his good and kind rule toward creation. ■

# RECORD-BREAKING PH.D. CLASS OF 2018

Nine graduates of the interfaith Pines School of Graduate Studies received their Ph.D. degrees at Graduation in Cincinnati:

## SARAH ELIZABETH BOLLINGER

**FIELD:** Bible and the Ancient Near East

**DISSERTATION:** Ritual Manipulation of Women's Hair in the Hebrew Bible

**POSITION:** Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Myerstown, PA, and Curator at its David A. Dorsey Museum of Biblical Archaeology

## THOMAS W. DILBECK

**FIELD:** Jewish and Christian Studies in the Greco-Roman World

**DISSERTATION:** *Non longe a veritate:* The Speech of Anchises in *Aeneid* 6 and the Formation of Latin Christian Theology

**POSITION:** Assistant Professor of New Testament at Florida College in Tampa, FL

## RABBI TAMAR DUVDEVANI '02

**FIELD:** Rabbinic Literature

**DISSERTATION:** Literary Aspects of Attribution in the Babylonian Talmud

**POSITION:** Head Librarian of the Abramov Library at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem and Instructor in the HUC-JIR Israeli Rabbinical Program and Year-In-Israel Program

## PAUL MARTIN CHEMNITZ ELLIOTT

**FIELD:** Jewish and Christian Studies in the Greco-Roman World

**DISSERTATION:** Ambrose of Milan and His Use of Philo of Alexandria in His Letters on the *Hexaemeron*

**POSITION:** Assistant Professor of Theology at Concordia University in Irvine, CA

## JORDAN WESLEY JONES

**FIELD:** Bible and the Ancient Near East

**DISSERTATION:** She Opens Her Hand to the Poor: Non-Ritual Gestures and Social Values in Proverbs and Ancient Near Eastern Parallels

**POSITION:** Senior Pastor of Belleview Baptist Church in Burlington, KY

## RABBI AUDREY RHONA KOROTKIN '99

**FIELD:** Rabbinic Literature

**DISSERTATION:** Supplicatory Prayer Gestures in Theory and Practice

**POSITION:** Rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Altoona, PA

## RYAN LUCAS KORSTANGE

**FIELD:** Jewish and Christian Studies in the Greco-Roman World

**DISSERTATION:** The Pre-Existence of the Human Soul in Philo of Alexandria

**POSITION:** Assistant Professor of University Studies at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, TN

## MICHAEL CHARLES LYONS (see p. 28)

**FIELD:** Bible and the Ancient Near East

**DISSERTATION:** Famine: Textual Evidence from Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age Mediterranean Cultures

**POSITION:** Minister of Discipleship at Evangelical Community Church in Cincinnati, OH

## GUY L. RIDGE IV

**FIELD:** Bible and the Ancient Near East

**DISSERTATION:** Interest-Bearing Loans in the Hebrew Bible and the Western Provinces of the Neo-Assyrian Empire

**POSITION:** Adjunct Professor, Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH



Pines School of Graduate Studies students excavating at Tel Dan during their Israel Seminar. HUC-JIR's excavations at Tel Dan are supported by Friends of Heritage Preservation, Suzanne Deal Booth, and Susan Stockel.

# FOCUS ON EDUCATION

## Building a Creative Society through Jewish Education

Miriam Heller Stern, Ph.D., *National Director, School of Education, HUC-JIR*

MIT Media Lab Researcher Dr. Mitchel Resnick (2017) writes in his visionary book, *Lifelong Kindergarten*, that education needs to prepare learners who can build a creative society: a society that is ready to solve the problems of its day with imagination, collaboration, empathy, and courage. “As the pace of change continues to accelerate, people must learn how to adapt to constantly changing conditions. Success in the future — for individuals, for communities, for companies, for nations as a whole — will be based on the ability to think and act creatively.”

At HUC-JIR, we believe that Jewish educators have an essential role to play in this effort. In every generation, the Jewish people have creatively adapted in order to survive. The challenge before us today is different because we have the privilege of using our Jewish creativity to strengthen the society around us. Jewish educators are uniquely positioned to lead the learning that informs this adaptation: they are the directors of lifelong learning in congregations, the founders of innovative Jewish learning programs, the directors of special interest science, arts, and sports summer camps, heads of youth movements,

administrators in day schools, curators in museums, early childhood directors, teachers, campus Hillel professionals, song-leaders, authors, theater makers, and artists. Be it on the front lines or in the leadership and administration, they are the concierges for Jewish learning from birth through the circle of life. We prepare educators to meet the needs of learners wherever they are. At HUC-JIR, we want Jewish wisdom and ways of thinking to be among the primary tools that the next generation uses to shape healthy curiosity, creative ideas, constructive debate, and community commitments.



In creating a truly national School of Education, linked closely to HUC-JIR's Taube Family Campus in Jerusalem, HUC-JIR is positioned to influence systemic change and innovation in Jewish education through its masters' degree programs and as an international center for progressive thought leadership in Jewish education.

We are redesigning our graduate curriculum to invite both emerging and mid-career professionals to seize the opportunity to transform their communities and the world around them through Jewish education. Our world-class faculty are inspiring our students to be change makers, giving them the tools to lead educational institutions, facilitate civil discourse, and “pray with their feet.” We have also engaged artists, including *theatre dybbuk* and Jewish Studio Project,



## THE EXECUTIVE M.A. PROGRAM IN JEWISH EDUCATION

“At HUC-JIR’s School of Education, we envision educators guiding the Jewish people in weaving Jewish wisdom into creative thinking that strengthens humanity and uplifts society,” stated Dr. Miriam Heller Stern, National Director of HUC-JIR’s School of Education. “The Executive M.A. prepares and emboldens mid-career professionals to achieve our mission of preparing top-tier leaders who can bring about a creative Jewish revolution through their work throughout the field of Jewish education and with a wide variety of learners.”

This program invites motivated Jewish educators to deepen their knowledge and strengthen their leadership capacity to transform Jewish education in their own institutions and beyond. The part-time 24-month program enables students to continue to live and work in their own communities throughout North America as they apply their graduate studies to their professional lives in real-time.

The 2018 launch of Cohort 7 marked the beginning of a newly reimagined program. Building on the strengths of earlier years, along with creative design partners *theatre dybbuk* and Jewish Studio Project, students are expanding their capacity for creativity and engaging with the arts more extensively as part of their leadership.

Ben Mazur, Director of Youth Engagement at Congregation B’nai B’rith, Santa Barbara, CA, stated, “By the end of our first course I could already feel a refreshed sense of confidence in my work. I gained new perspectives on how teachers and learners can progress towards fulfilling mutual needs, and these perspectives have helped me to shape new processes in my planning and goal-setting.”

Sarah DeWoskin, Director of the Jewish Children’s Museum of South Florida, shared, “I have already become a more confident leader in my Jewish community, gained an invaluable network of professionals around the country, and advanced as a more equipped educator in my work setting.”

HUC-JIR is currently inviting applicants to Cohort 8. To learn more, please contact Lesley Litman, Ed.D., Director of the Executive M.A. Program in Jewish Education, at [llitman@huc.edu](mailto:llitman@huc.edu). **Learn more:** [huc.edu/education/execma](http://huc.edu/education/execma)

*The Executive M.A. Program is made possible by a generous grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation’s Professional Development Initiative.*

who are guiding our students to expand their capacity to be bold, take risks, and design innovative educational programs. In Jerusalem, our Teachers’ Lounge project convenes Jewish and Arab teachers from the divided neighborhoods of Jerusalem to come together to explore their shared power as educators.

Jewish education is no longer just about the preservation of the past; it is about the transformation of the future. ■

**Left: Guided by renowned papercutting artist Isaac Brynjegard-Bialik and Rabbi Shawna Brynjegard-Bialik '02, DeLeT Fellows explore text and metaphor and cut up comics to create “paper midrash,” expressing the Jewish values that enliven their classrooms during their day school internships. DeLeT: Day School Teachers for a New Generation is made possible, in part, by the Jim Joseph Foundation and Moshe and Andrea Silagi, z”l.**

**Above: The Executive M.A. students took to the streets with other Jewish activists as an extension of studying Abraham Joshua Heschel in their Modern Jewish Thought class.**

# THE OTHER CONFLICT: Teaching Children to Understand Wedge Issues in Israeli Society

Sivan Zakai, Ph.D., Sara S. Lee Assistant Professor of Jewish Education, Jack H. Skirball Campus, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles



American children enjoying a hands-on engagement with Israel.

Ask an American Jewish adult what's been happening in Israel recently, and you're likely to hear a litany of woes. The arrest of Israeli Conservative Rabbi Dov Haiyun for performing wedding ceremonies outside of the Orthodox-controlled Israeli rabbinate and the detainment of prominent leftist American Jews at Ben Gurion Airport have many liberal American Jews concerned. A bill passed in the Knesset that expands surrogacy eligibility while excluding gay couples, and the new controversial nation-state law that proclaims "developing Jewish settlement as a national interest" trouble those who are committed to supporting Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Fires raging along the Gaza border due to incendiary devices

launched by kite and balloon, followed by renewed rocket attacks on Israeli border cities, portend both human suffering and ecological disaster.

Ask an American Jewish child about what's been happening in Israel recently, and you're likely to hear a very different story. For while the children's version of the story would probably include reflections on the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza, it would likely omit any discussion of the other conflict: ongoing tensions among Israeli Jews or between Israeli and American Jewish communities. That other conflict often eludes children, yet it ought to be a rich and meaningful source for Jewish education.

From a very early age, children are capable of understanding conflict, contention, and contested issues. I know this because for the past six years, I have been following a group of American Jewish children to learn from them what they know and how they feel about Israel. From the time they were in kindergarten until today, when they are rising sixth graders, the children have shared their evolving thoughts and feelings about Israel as part of the *Children's Learning About Israel Project*. From these children, I have learned that they know a lot about the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict, yet little about the conflicts that take place within the borders of the Israeli and Jewish worlds.

All of the children I have been following knew about the conflict between Israel and its neighbors even as 5-year-olds. In early elementary school, they framed this conflict as an ongoing war between "Israel and the other team," and they placed themselves squarely on Israel's team. By second grade, many of the children were able to offer detailed explanations of specific moments of heightened tension, and all were able to reflect on multiple root causes for the ongoing conflict. By fourth grade, the children began to distinguish between different neighbors with whom Israel fights, including Hamas and Iran, reflecting on the particular ways that the conflict plays out with each. By the end of elementary school, most children have begun to experiment with voicing aloud Arab, and especially Palestinian, views of the conflict, attempting to understand it from multiple perspectives even as they continue to side with Israel.

With increasing sophistication each year, the children have reflected on many of the key issues in the Israeli-Palestinian/Arab conflict.

By contrast, the children have little practice thinking about the key wedge issues in Israeli society, or the ongoing tensions between American and Israeli Jewish communities. Perhaps because Israel is often framed for children as the place that unites Jews around the world, the children are surprised – and often feel hurt by or angry at the adults in their lives – when they first encounter the internal conflicts of the Jewish world. For most children, this realization begins in third or fourth grade, and the children express frustration that, in the words of one girl, “no one told me before.” Echoing the concerns of many of their older peers, who have organized a

“You Never Told Me” campaign to protest what they perceive to be an organized attempt to withhold information about the occupation from young American Jews, these children are saying “you never told me” about the other conflicts with which Israel grapples.

Questions about the character of the Israeli state, its evolving relationship with Jewish communities outside of its borders, and its ongoing struggle to enact its dual commitments to Jewish and democratic principles are among the most pressing issues of the contemporary Jewish world. Children ought to be inducted into these conversations, and the questions that they raise about the kind of Jewish societies we are and

ought to be constructing. These questions are, to be sure, complex and contested. Yet children can handle, with increasing sophistication over time, thinking about unresolved and contentious matters.

Today’s children are current members and future leaders of the global Jewish community. As such, they must learn to take responsibility for the issues that matter most to the collective Jewish people. As the adults who are poised to have a positive impact on their lives – their educators, rabbis, parents, and grandparents – the responsibility to frame these conversations is ours. ■



The two-year program, requiring one day of study on campus each week, increases students’ capacities in four areas:

- Teaching and learning aspects of Jewish and Israeli culture in innovative and diverse ways;
- Enhancing the continuity of formal and informal Jewish education, forging links between educational institutions and the wider community;
- Discovering the diversity to be found within Israeli society, in Jewish and non-Jewish settings, while enriching education towards tolerance and coexistence; and
- Deepening acquaintance with and ties to the Jewish people across its geographical and denomination boundaries, while increasing a sense of identity and belonging.

RIKMA is supported by the Department of Jewish and Israeli Culture in the Israel Ministry of Education and Jewish Agency for Israel. Students receive an M.A. in Education from the Hebrew University upon successful completion of the program. To learn more, please contact Dr. Muszkat-Barkan at [mmbarkan@huc.edu](mailto:mmbarkan@huc.edu).

# RIKMA

## at the Taube Family Campus, HUC-JIR/Jerusalem

Michal Muszkat-Barkan, Ph.D., *Director, Department of Education and Professional Development, Taube Family Campus, HUC-JIR/Jerusalem*

*Rikma* (tapestry) is a specialized program focusing on educational leadership with an emphasis on pluralism and community that is offered in partnership with the Melton Centre at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The Hebrew word *rikma* connotes an embroidered fabric that brings together threads of different shades and texture to form a new whole. The word also includes an abbreviation of the central pillars of the program – *Rav-koliut* (pluralism), *Kehilah* (community), and *Manhigut* (leadership).

We hope that this program will empower young leaders to take responsibility for the renaissance of Jewish culture, the anchoring of education in communities, and the strengthening of ties between different sectors of Israeli society and within the Jewish people. At the heart of this program is the building of bridges between education and society, between Israel and the wider Jewish world, and between individual Jewish identity and Jewish peoplehood.

# Turning Passion into Action

## New Academic Offerings from the Zschool

**Making the world better is more than a trending topic. Our Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, known as the Zschool and recognized as a premier center for the education of Jewish professionals, helps leaders turn passion into action.**

**The Zschool recently launched two new academic programs:**

- **M.S. in Organizational Leadership & Innovation** (14 Months): This fast track is designed with a low residency requirement for working professionals seeking to maintain their career while completing a Master's degree or for students seeking to accelerate their education and launch a career.

- **Certificate in Jewish Organizational Leadership** (7 weeks, Summer): Designed for professionals seeking to take the next step in their career path, the curriculum provides theoretical and practical experience to prepare them to lead a Jewish nonprofit.

“What we are witnessing in the nonprofit sector is a conceptual shift toward leadership and innovation practices that are driving a new understanding of the business of Jewish life,” states Erik Ludwig, Director of the Zschool. “The coursework of the M.S. in Organizational Leadership & Innovation draws on business practices used in startups, such as our capstone course *Lean Launchpad for the Jewish Nonprofit*, which replicates the experience of a high-tech business accelerator in order to develop leaders who can innovate within existing organizations or launch their own startups.”

Menachem (Manny) Menchel '18 received the M.S. in Organizational Leadership & Innovation and currently serves as Program Officer, Jewish Education, at the William Davidson Foundation in Detroit, MI. Menchel noted, “Studying at the Zschool provided me a more nuanced understanding of the framework of Jewish organizational life and the ecosystem in which Jewish communal professionals, organizations, and consumers inhabit, perform, and coexist Jewishly.”

Menchel valued studying alongside rabbinical students, education students, social workers, and Israel advocates, where the varying backgrounds resulted in “a shared learning that raised us all collectively.” He explained, “It is particularly important to have a program like the Zschool function through a pluralistic platform, one that is open to and supportive of a wide range of Jewish expression, practice, and belief, as any communal professional will encounter all kinds of colleagues, lay leaders, and consumers who represent a similarly wide range of practice and observance. This is a value that is secured and celebrated by Zschool leadership and I think part of the ‘secret sauce’ that enables Zschool alumni to flourish in the field.” ■

*Menachem (Manny) Menchel '18 received the Howard and Marcie Zelikow Scholarship and the Ruth B. Ziegler Scholarship.*

**Learn more: [zsjnm.huc.edu](http://zsjnm.huc.edu)**

**Zschool students at the 2017 Innovation Bootcamp: (from left) Melissa (Missy) Goldstein, MAJN/MAED '18; rabbinical student Mira Weller '21, Certificate in JNM '18; David Kazdan, MAJNM '19.**



# Investing in College Students as Innovators of Jewish Life on Campus

Rabbi Ana Bonnheim '08,  
*Program Director, HUC-JIR Founders' Fellowship*



Founders' Fellows at their retreat in New York.

**“What’s the challenge you see in your Jewish experience on campus? And what are you going to do about it?”** These two questions are the foundation for the Founders’ Fellowship, a yearlong leadership incubator for college students, envisioned by Rabbi Aaron Panken, Ph.D., z”l.

Eighteen college students from throughout North America participated in Cohort 3 of the Founders’ Fellowship this past academic year. The Fellowship began with a four-day retreat at HUC-JIR/New York, where Fellows studied community organizing, storytelling, and design thinking to better implement their project visions. Fellows celebrated Shabbat

together, studied Torah, interacted with HUC-JIR students and faculty, and taught one another. After the retreat, Fellows returned to their own college campuses to execute their projects with continued mentorship and *hevruta* study (shared learning with another Fellow) to support them.

The Founders’ Fellowship introduces Jewish college students to HUC-JIR’s resources and vision for Reform Jewish life, supports the growth of new Jewish initiatives and the flourishing of Jewish life across North American college campuses, and invests in young Jewish leaders and their fellow Jewish college students.

Among the Fellows' projects:

### **Creating Deeper Interfaith**

**Relationships:** Ally Karpel, a senior at the University of Texas, worked with Jewish students and student leaders of nine other faith groups to reenergize the University Interfaith Council and led a shared day of text study and a service project to support the refugee community in Austin. Ally explains, "The Founders' Fellowship helped me move from a vague vision into taking tangible and measurable next steps to ensure this vision would come true."

### **Bridging the Jewish**

**Denominations:** Alona Weimer, a senior at Brandeis University, paired students from different Jewish backgrounds for a semester of *hevruta* study, as well as meals and discussions with the other study partners. This successful program has been adopted as a new Hillel program for the coming academic year. She states: "Participating in the Founders' Fellowship has helped me become a better leader, and inspired me to delve deeper into Jewish learning for personal and professional development."

### **Building Community through**

**Music:** Joe Blumberg, a junior at Yale University, brought together diverse members of Yale's Jewish community for a weekly *niggun* group for joyful, wordless song, offering an innovative, spiritual, and accessible way for students to explore their Jewish identity through the collective power of creating music together. Joe concludes: "The Founders' Fellowship was a great experience, and I will use the tools I learned for years to come!" ■

**Cohort 4 convenes in New York on November 15-18, 2018.**

Learn more:  
[huc.edu/founders-fellowship](http://huc.edu/founders-fellowship)

## The Central Synagogue – Hillel International – HUC-JIR Partnership

# Invigorating Reform Jewish Life on College Campuses

HUC-JIR is poised to have a more powerful impact on Jewish students on college campuses with the creation of new Reform Senior Jewish Educator and Reform Hillel Intern positions at Hillels across the country where currently Reform Jews are underrepresented on Hillel staffs. A new multi-year partnership with Hillel International will not only invigorate Reform Jewish campus life, but will provide training, placement, and support to HUC-JIR rabbinical graduates and students, thanks to a \$1.4 million grant from Central Synagogue's Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein Fund for the Renaissance of Reform Judaism.

Hillel International's research has shown that Senior Jewish Educators are critical

in engaging students and have the greatest impact on students' Jewish growth. On average, each educator connects more than 200 students per year with Jewish life, many of whom would not be engaged without their presence. The impact of an educator is much greater on a student with little or no prior involvement with Hillel or those with less structured Jewish backgrounds.

Newly ordained Rabbi Eric Abbott '18, MARE '16 is the new Reform Senior Jewish Educator at Johns Hopkins University Hillel in Baltimore, MD. Grateful for this opportunity, he says, "Judaism can change lives and better the world. I hope to lift up many voices to create a shared vision for Hopkins Hillel,

Rabbi Eric Abbott '18, MARE '16 is a past recipient of the Baltimore Associates Scholarship, the Lois and Richard England Endowed Scholarship, and a Jim Joseph Fellowship.



**Rob Friedman '20 is the first Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein Fellow and Reform Hillel Intern at Ohio State University.**



the Baltimore community, and beyond. I'm excited to partner with students in discovering new ways to be and do Jewish."

The HUC-JIR students serving as Reform Hillel Interns will be known as Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein Fellows. They will receive training and mentoring, both at HUC-JIR and at the Hillel International Global Assembly, to prepare them for potential careers in Hillel.

Rubinstein Fellow Rob Gleisser '20 is the first-ever Reform Hillel Intern at Ohio State University, his *alma mater*, where he will strengthen the Reform Jewish community on campus while learning, teaching, and gaining important skills in outreach and community building – all key components for a successful rabbinate. He will bring his extensive experience in building interfaith coalitions throughout Southwest Ohio, most notably as the Camp Director for Kids4Peace: Cincinnati and as a Jewish Foundation Fellow at the Brueggeman Center for Dialogue at Xavier University.

Rubinstein Fellow Rob Friedman '20 joins Hillel 818 – the only pluralistic and egalitarian organization serving over 6,500 Jewish students at California State



**Rob Gleisser '20 is the first Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein Fellow and Reform Hillel Intern at Hillel - 818.**



**Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein '69, Rabbi Emeritus, Central Synagogue.**

University Northridge, Pierce College, and LA Valley College. Bringing a wealth of knowledge and passion for working with college students as a Hillel student leader while an undergraduate at Vanderbilt, his Reform Hillel Intern work will broaden the number of Jewish students engaging with Hillel through regular learning opportunities and the weekly Shabbat experience.

"Central Synagogue is proud to provide funding to support Reform rabbis on college campuses because we know how important strong leadership is for building Jewish identity at this critical time," said Central Synagogue Senior Rabbi Angela W. Buchdahl '01, DFSSM '99. "In honor of our Rabbi Emeritus Peter J. Rubinstein '69, whose leadership elevated Central Synagogue and Reform Judaism worldwide, we established this fund to help Reform Judaism thrive into the future."

"This new partnership will allow us to provide rabbinical role models who feel familiar, accessible, and authentic to Reform Jewish students on campus," stated Eric D. Fingerhut, President and CEO of Hillel International. "The new Reform Senior Jewish Educators will help students to seamlessly transition to Jewish life on campus, while strengthening their connection to Jewish life, learning, and Israel through the lens of Reform Judaism." ■

*Rabbi Eric Abbott '18, MARE '16 received the Richard and Lois England Scholarship and the Jim Joseph Foundation Scholarship.*

*Rob Friedman '20 is the recipient of the Rabbi Leonard I. Beerman Endowed Rabbinical Scholarship and the Rabbis Richard S. Steinberger and Laszlo Berkowitz Endowed Scholarship.*

*Rob Gleisser '20 is a Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Sacred Service Learning Fellow and the recipient of Rabbinical Tuition Scholarships.*

# MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE: A JOURNEY FROM KIEV TO ODESSA

Wendy Zierler, Ph.D., *Sigmund Falk Professor of Modern Jewish Literature and Feminist Studies, HUC-JIR/New York*

Not since my gap year of study in Israel can I recall an extended travel experience as moving and multi-sensory as the Jewish literary tour of Galicia/Ukraine that my husband and I participated in together with a group from Beit Agnon (Agnon House) in Jerusalem. I had found out very incidentally that my colleague, Rabbi Jeffrey Saks, an Agnon scholar and editor of the Toby Press Agnon Library, was organizing a tour to Buczacz, Agnon's birthplace, with visits along the way to the hometowns of many other classic modern Jewish writers. How could I pass up such an opportunity?

For the past sixteen years, I have been teaching a required course in Modern Jewish Literature to rabbinical students at HUC-JIR in New York, one that covers so many of the writers who were to be represented on this tour. Not just that: one of my recent scholarly projects has been a comparative study of the writing of S.Y. Agnon (1887-1970) and his female contemporary, Devorah Baron (1887-1956), with a special emphasis on the stories about their hometowns. What's more, as a fiction writer, I have been working on a collection of linked stories based on the experiences of my father's family that emigrated after World War I from Galicia to Sarnia, Ontario, a refinery town on the Michigan-Ontario border. This trip would enable me not only to visit the literary stomping grounds of the writers I study and teach, but also that of my own family.

Over the course of nine transformative days our group toured Kiev, where Golda Meir was born and where Sholem Aleichem spent part of his career. We conducted a memorial service at Babi Yar, the ravine in Kiev where some 33,000 Jews were massacred by the Germans in 1941. We visited Haim Nahman Bialik's childhood home in Zhitomir, where I conversed in Yiddish with the current Jewish resident of Bialik's grandfather's apartment, a lovely and lonely woman, who held my hand and stroked my face



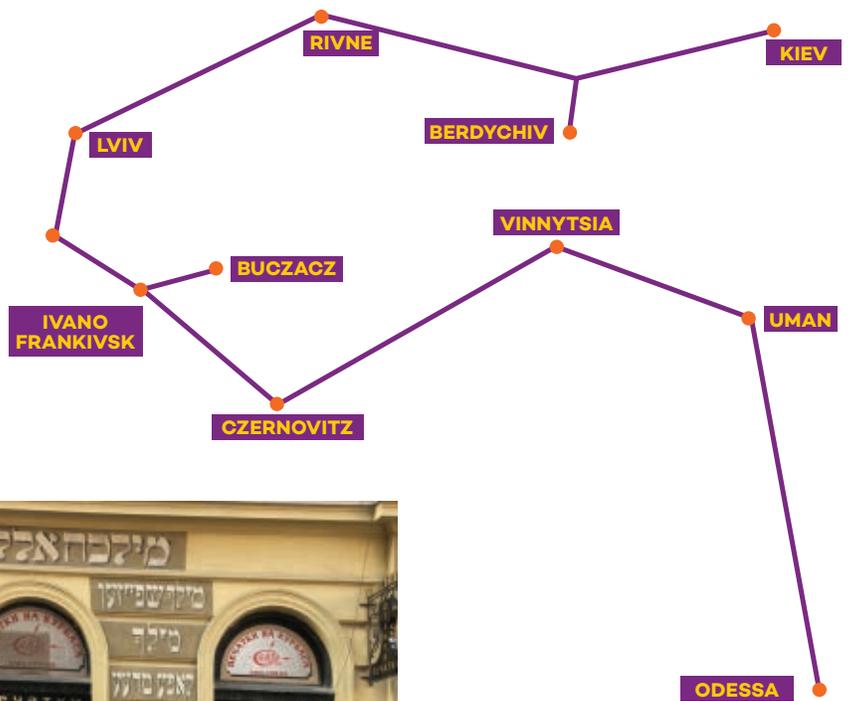
in gratitude for the chance to have a Yiddish conversation with a younger Jew from abroad.

We stayed overnight in Rovno/Rivne and visited the childhood home and school of Amos Oz's mother Fania Mussman, which Oz describes so movingly in his memoir/novel, *A Tale of Love and Darkness* (2002). We visited the Galician cities of Brody and walked through the old Jewish quarter of Lviv (Lemberg), where Rebbe Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810), the Hasidic rebbe and storyteller who begins modern Jewish fiction, sought medical treatment and carried on discussions with various *maskilim* (Jewish Enlighteners).

We passed through the oil and refinery region of Kalush, the closest town to the *dorf* (village) where my grandfather grew up. We walked the streets of Stanislaw (currently called Ivano-Frankivsk) and Drohobycz (birthplace of the Polish Jewish writer Bruno Schulz, who was murdered by an SS officer in 1942), a region my grandfather told my father was so rich with oil that it bubbled up from the streets. No wonder my grandfather's extended family chose to move to the refinery town of Sarnia, Ontario! Clearly, they were seeking out a region that reminded them of home, a place where Jews had found a way to build businesses around a newfound oil economy. How can I even describe the feeling of seeing the Carpathian mountains, referred to so many times in the stories my grandfather told my father and my father, in turn, has told me?



Our day visiting Agnon's Galician hometown of Buczacz was a singular highlight, in that we got to see the childhood home and local sites that figure so prominently in Agnon's work. As co-editor of *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*, I am currently assembling a special issue of the journal in memory of my colleague, Professor Alan Mintz, ז"ל, whose final book, published just days before his passing, was a study of Agnon's posthumously published monumental collection of stories about Buczacz, entitled *Ir umeloah* (A City in Its Fullness). How meaningful to be in the



midst of editing Buczacz-related articles and to actually visit Buczacz! Part of our visit to Buczacz included a stop at Agnon's childhood home, where we met Marianna Maksymiak, the current program director of the new Agnon Center in Buczacz. Marianna also accompanied us on a moving visit to the Buczacz Jewish cemetery, where we were the first Israeli delegation to see the newly-discovered gravestone of Agnon's mother, Esther Czaczkes. Several of the photos I took in Buczacz will now be included as illustrations in this volume, which is very gratifying indeed.

In addition to our remarkable pilgrimage to Buczacz, we spent a lovely Shabbat in Czernovitz, birthplace of the writer Aharon Appelfeld and the poets Paul Celan and Dan Pagis and the site of the 1908 Czernovitz Yiddish language conference, an event that I cover in my Modern Jewish Literature course. After Czernovitz, we saw the opulent *kloyz* (wealthy private house of study) of R. Israel of Ruzhiyn (1796-1850) in Sadigura, and prayed in the far more rustic and modest *beit midrash* of R. Israel Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) in Medzhibozh. We also visited the tomb of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810) in Uman, which hosts every Rosh Hashanah a yearly influx of some 50,000 *hasidim* and admirers of Breslov, who come to pray at the marker (*tsiyun*) of the Rebbe's grave. Last but not least was our multi-station tour of Odessa, the cradle of modern Hebrew and Yiddish literature and birthplace of the Hovevei Zion movement, which launched the First Zionist Aliyah.

This experience will surely impact every aspect of my teaching; an abstract literary world in my mind has now been rendered thoroughly tactile, visible, and vivid. I am eager to impart all of this to my students through texts, images, song, and travel too. While the fact of Jewish persecution and the



Holocaust informed our experience, the added element of literary study and reflection allowed us to focus not just on the devastation but also on the achievements of modern Jewish culture and Zionism. I have

already begun thinking about new ways of teaching old courses and about entirely new courses I might design together in collaboration with our tour leaders, including one that might take place in Odessa and cover such Odessa-based writers and Zionist thinkers as Mendele Moycher Seforim, Sholem Aleichem, Isaac Babel, Haim Nahman Bialik, Y.H. Ravnitzky, Saul Tchernichowsky, Vladimir Jabotinsky, Leon Pinsker, Ahad Ha'am (Asher Ginsburg), and Jewish women writers, who were conspicuously absent from our tour, including the poets Rachel (Bluwstein), Yokheved Bat Miriam, and Devoyre Fogel, and the prose writers Hava Shapiro and Clarice Lispector. I am so

grateful to HUC-JIR's Faculty Research and Travel Grant for supporting my participation on this journey. ■



**1. Teaching about Bialik in front of his apartment in Odessa.**

**2. Newly discovered gravestone of Esther Czaczkes, mother of S.Y. Agnon.**

**3. Jewish storefront in Lviv.**

**4. Agnon's childhood home in Buczacz.**

# Klau Library Launches Online Access to Manuscript Treasures

The extraordinary manuscript holdings of the Klau Library are now available online, expanding access to these rare treasures to scholars and the general public at [mss.huc.edu](http://mss.huc.edu)

Ranked among the finest in the world, these holdings contain some 2,500 manuscripts, broadsides, codices, fanfolds, and scrolls covering the full scope of Jewish life and knowledge. From illuminated medieval Bibles to elaborately decorated calendars, from liturgies of the Comtat Venaissin to wedding poems from Venice, the breadth of Jewish civilization is intricately recorded and preserved. The content encompasses Jewish history, universal texts, influential philosophies, and enduring art, at the same time recording the intimate joys and sorrows of individual Jews and their communities.



Digitized images include Meir Jaffe's inimitable illuminations of the world-renowned First Cincinnati Haggadah, dating from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (above); the unique 17<sup>th</sup>-century Yizkor Book of the Chinese Jewish community of Kaifeng; the Ibn Musa Bible of 1475, bound in one of only six known medieval Hebrew box bindings; and the Hebrew translation of the Epistle to the Hebrews made by Richard Bruarne, second Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, and presented as a gift to Henry VIII.

This digitization project was initiated by Dr. David Gilner with pilot funding from George Blumenthal. Ardon Bar-Hama, who digitized the Vatican, Julliard, and Oxford collections, implemented this project under the supervision of Yoram Bitton, Director of Libraries.

## A LANDMARK PARTNERSHIP WITH B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL

"When we decided to transfer the B'nai B'rith International (BBI) archives to the American Jewish Archives (AJA) on the campus of HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, we knew that our institutional heritage would be well cared for," stated Daniel S. Mariaschin, B'nai B'rith International Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, who visited Cincinnati last December to mark the opening of "B'nai B'rith at 175 Years," an exhibition of archival documents, letters, and posters on view at the AJA through 2018.



"Few organizations shaped modern American Jewish history more profoundly than B'nai B'rith," said Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the AJA and the Edward M. Ackerman Family Distinguished Professor of the American Jewish Experience at HUC-JIR (at left). "By studying these priceless records, scholars can trace the evolution of the whole of the American Jewish experience and its connections to Jewish communities across the globe."

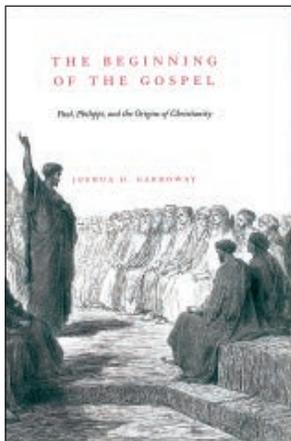
Augmenting B'nai B'rith's archives is the transfer of its Klutznick Museum collection to HUC-JIR's Skirball Museum in Cincinnati. Treasures of this collection of fine works of Judaica, Jewish art, and artifacts are on permanent display. ■

# NEW FACULTY & HUC-JIR BOOKS

## THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL: PAUL, PHILIPPI, AND THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

Rabbi Joshua D. Garroway '03, Ph.D.

Pallgrave Macmillan, 2018



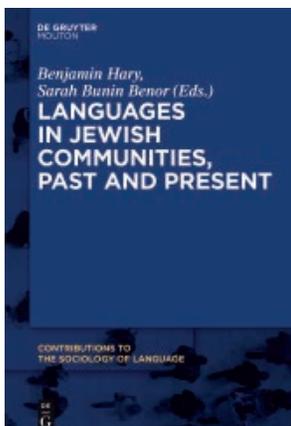
In this innovative study, Rabbi Joshua D. Garroway offers a revised account of the origin of the all-important Christian word “gospel,” yielding significant new insights into the development of early Christian history and literature. Long thought to have originated on the lips of Jesus or his disciples, “gospel” was in fact coined by Paul midway through his career to describe his controversial new interpretation of Jesus’ death and resurrection. For nearly a decade after the crucifixion, the thoroughly Jewish Jesus movement demanded circumcision and Law observance from Gentile converts. Only in the early 40s C.E. did Paul arrive at the belief that such observance was no longer

necessary, an insight he dubbed “the gospel,” or good news. The remainder of Paul’s career featured clashes with authorities over the legitimacy of the gospel, debates that continued after his death in the writings of Mark, Matthew, and Luke-Acts. These writings obscured the original context of the gospel, however, and in time the word lost its specific association with Paul and his scandalous notion of salvation outside the Law. ■

## LANGUAGES IN JEWISH COMMUNITIES, PAST AND PRESENT

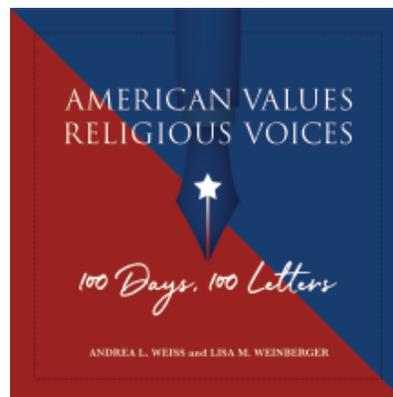
Sarah Bunin Benor, Ph.D. and Benjamin Hary, Editors

De Gruyter, 2018



How have Jews spoken and written throughout history? This book brings together structural and sociological research on 16 Jewish language varieties in many communities, highlighting the contemporary continuity of a millennia-old tradition of Jewish linguistic distinctiveness. The contributing scholars explore the unity and diversity of Jewish communities and linguistic practices, from the medieval Arab world to pre-modern Europe to contemporary Latin America. The book has three sections: historical, contemporary, and theoretical/comparative. The first two sections are organized geographically, offering

a tour of Jewish communities around the world. The historical section begins in the Middle East, docks briefly in North Africa, sails through Europe, and ends in India. The contemporary section begins in the Americas, flies to Europe, and lands in Israel. In the final section, a few theoretical and comparative essays deal with a phenomenon in multiple language varieties and several language varieties in a region. The final chapter details an agenda for comparative linguistic research on Jewish communities. ■



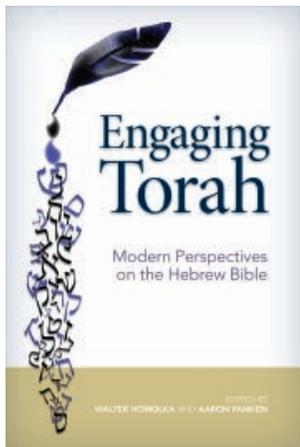
## AMERICAN VALUES, RELIGIOUS VOICES: 100 DAYS, 100 LETTERS

Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss '93, Ph.D. and  
Lisa M. Weinberger

University of Cincinnati Press, 2018

This publication of the *American Values, Religious Voices: 100 Days, 100 Letters* campaign project is the result of a unique partnership between a Bible scholar and a graphic designer who teamed up in the aftermath of the 2016 election. For the first 100 days of the Trump administration, *American Values, Religious Voices* sent letters from scholars of religion across the country to the President, Vice President, and Members of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. The letters articulated core American values connected to our diverse faith traditions. The book is dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Aaron Panken, z”l, who funded and championed the project, for it exemplified the type of “thought leadership” that was a hallmark of his presidency. In addition to the 100 letters, the book contains two new introductory essays telling the story of the campaign’s creation and two essays at the end reflecting on the project’s impact based on feedback from campaign followers and the letter writers. In addition, the book showcases much of the artwork that was created during the campaign. Nearly two years after the election, the letters prove how important it is to “raise your voice with power” (Isaiah 40:9), demanding that our elected leaders maintain the values and institutions that have always made our nation great. ■

# NEW FACULTY & HUC-JIR BOOKS



## ENGAGING TORAH: MODERN PERSPECTIVES ON THE HEBREW BIBLE

Edited by Walter Homolka and Rabbi Aaron Panken '91, Ph.D., z"l

Hebrew Union College Press, 2018

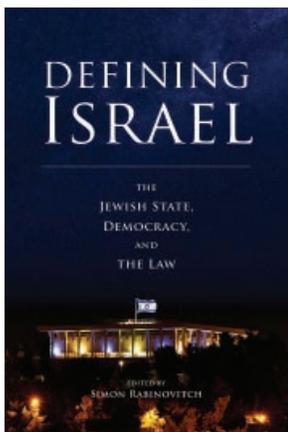
The Bible is undoubtedly the starting point of Judaism. Within its pages are the laws, ideals, narratives, and poetry that shape every generation of Jewish thought, initiating vast trajectories of interpretation, jurisprudence, argumentation, and literary and artistic creation – a process that began millennia ago and continues fervently today. Wherever Jews lived, whatever language Jews spoke, the Bible remained a core text read publicly and regularly, studied and taught incessantly, shaping a common cultural language that spanned generations and geography. Love for the Bible and the creative interpretive possibilities it brought into being carried Jews through times agreeable and awful, uniting them as a single people in service to their God. The volume's goal is to offer succinct, readable, yet high-level introductions to each of the books of the Torah and a general introduction to the Prophets and Writings. It is intended for readers who are

looking to learn more of the scholarly background that allows these texts to be read from an informed and contemporary perspective. It is written by respected scholars from around the world, including professors from the Abraham Geiger College, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, American Jewish University, Leo Baeck College, the Jewish Theological Seminary, as well as other fine institutions. It represents a global effort to provide vital background to the study of Bible that incorporates the learning of over nearly two centuries of modern Jewish scholarship. Only through such complete approaches to the text can meaning and truth, in their deepest sense, arise. [Excerpted from Rabbi Aaron Panken's Preface.] ■

## DEFINING ISRAEL: THE JEWISH STATE, DEMOCRACY, AND THE LAW

Edited by Simon Rabinovitch

Hebrew Union College Press, 2018



This is the first book in any language devoted to the controversial efforts in Israel's parliament to pass a "nation-state law." Israel has no constitution, and although it calls itself the Jewish state, there is no agreement among Israelis as to how that fact should be reflected in the government's laws or by its courts. Since the 1990s, civil society groups and legislators have drafted constitutions and proposed Basic Laws with constitutional standing that would clarify what it means for Israel to be a "Jewish and democratic state." The fight over the

nation-state law toppled the 19<sup>th</sup> Knesset's governing coalition and continues until today – even and perhaps especially after the recent (2018) passage of the law. *Defining Israel* brings together influential scholars, journalists, and politicians, observers and participants, opponents and proponents, Jews and Arabs, all debating the merits and meaning of Israel's proposed, and now passed, nation-state law. Together with translations of each draft law, the law as passed, and other key documents, the essays and sources in *Defining Israel* are essential to understand the ongoing debate over what it means for Israel to be a Jewish and democratic state. ■

## ABOUT TIME: JOURNEYS IN THE JEWISH-ISRAELI CALENDAR

Rabbi Dalia Marx, '02, Ph.D.

Yediot Sfarim, 2018



In surveying the Israeli Jewish religious year and its festivals and holidays, Rabbi Marx presents Judaism as characterized by a pluralistic tradition from its inception, in which conflicting traditions of interpretation coexist. This pluralism touch-

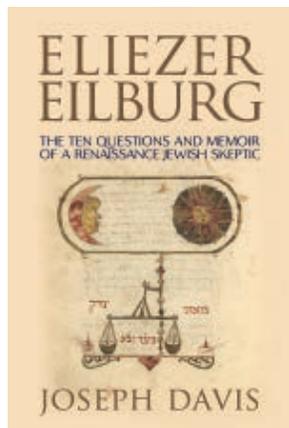
es on questions of identity and therefore questions of power. Applying a feminist lens, Rabbi Marx points to the ways in which Judaism has integrated a feminist dimension, as for example in the North African celebration of "Girls Festival" (*Rosh Chodesh Lebanot*) in the month of Tevet. This book explores the Hebrew calendar through Jewish traditions, Hebrew language, culture, and the experience of Israel – adding new light, insight, and joy. ■

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## ELIEZER EILBURG: THE TEN QUESTIONS AND MEMOIR OF A RENAISSANCE JEWISH SKEPTIC

Joseph Davis

Hebrew Union College Press, 2018



This volume makes available for the first time a bilingual edition of two key works by the Jewish skeptic, kabbalist, and memoirist, Eliezer Eilburg. *The Ten Questions* – addressed to the Maharal of Prague and two of his

colleagues – is one of the most radical statements of Jewish skepticism authored during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Published here in its entirety, this text is especially remarkable for its critical approach to the Bible, foreshadowing later intellectual trends. Although many of his opinions were considered heretical by Jewish authorities, Eilburg argued that his doubts were innocent, and that there was room within Judaism for his skepticism. He presented himself as a penitent whose eyes had been opened through the study of medicine and philosophy and who had merited angelic visions and kabbalistic dreams.

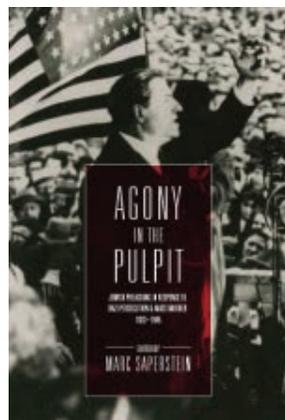
The second text, Eilburg's experimental memoir, is one of the very first modern Jewish efforts at autobiography. Put together from many smaller pieces, this patchwork of brag and bile is a unique document of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish life. It is a testimony, if not to the "emergence of the individual" in this period, then at least to the emergence of new Jewish ways of imagining and writing about the self. ■

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## AGONY IN THE PULPIT: JEWISH PREACHING IN RESPONSE TO NAZI PERSECUTION AND MASS MURDER, 1933-1945

Rabbi Marc Saperstein '72

Hebrew Union College Press, 2018

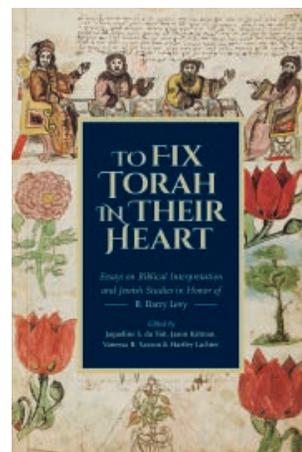


Many scholars have focused on contemporary sources pertaining to the Nazi persecution and mass murder of Jews between 1933 and 1945 – citing dated documents, newspapers, diaries, and letters – but the sermons delivered by rabbis describing and protesting against the ever-growing oppression of European Jews have been largely neglected. *Agony in the Pulpit* is a response to this neglect, and to the accusations made by respected figures that Jewish leaders remained silent in the wake of catastrophe. A central theme is how the preachers related the contemporary horrors to ancient examples of persecution. Did they present what was occurring under Hitler as a re-enactment of the murderous oppressions by Pharaoh, Amalek, Haman, Ahasuerus, the Crusaders, the Spanish Inquisition, the Russian Pogroms? When did they begin to articulate from their pulpits an awareness that current events were fundamentally unprecedented? No other book-length study has presented such abundant evidence of rabbis in all streams of Jewish religious life seeking to rouse and inspire their congregants to full awareness of the catastrophic realities that were taking shape in the world beyond their synagogues. ■

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## TO FIX TORAH IN THEIR HEART: ESSAYS ON BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION AND JEWISH STUDIES IN HONOR OF B. BARRY LEVY

Jaqueline S. du Toit, Dr. Jason Kalman, Hartley Lachter, and Vanessa R. Sasson, Editors



Hebrew Union College Press, 2018

Students of beloved teacher B. Barry Levy offer essays that reflect Levy's wide range of interest and expertise, including astronomical observations in the ancient Near East, the excesses of obedience and sacrifice as recounted in the stories of Abraham and Isaac and the Buddhist Vessantara Jātaka, and the evolution of the Dead Sea Scrolls from text and artifact to sacred object. ■

## ADMINISTRATION APPOINTMENTS

Laurie Beck, Peterson



**Rabbi Andrea Weiss '93, Ph.D.**

*Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Provost*

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**Rabbi Lisa D. Grant '17, Ph.D.**

*Director of the Rabbinical Program, New York*

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**Rabbi Jan Katzew '83, Ph.D.**

*Director of the Rabbinical Program, Cincinnati*

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**Rabbi Talia Avnon-Benveniste '09**

*Director of the Israeli Rabbinical Program, Taube Family Campus, Jerusalem*

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**Rabbi Jonathan Hecht '87, Ph.D.**

*Dean, Cincinnati*

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**Rabbi Andrew A. Goodman '08**

*Dean of Students, New York*

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**Rabbi Julie S. Schwartz '86**

*Associate Dean, Cincinnati*

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**Rabbi Tamar Duvdevani '02, Ph.D. '18**

*Librarian, S. Zalman and Ayala Abramov Library, Taube Family Campus, Jerusalem*

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## FACULTY APPOINTMENTS



**Abraham Jacob Berkovitz, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor of Liturgy, Worship, and Ritual, New York*

► [huc.edu/chronicle18/berkovitz](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/berkovitz)



**Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi '95, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor (Blended Track) of Jewish Thought and Ethics, Cincinnati*

► [huc.edu/chronicle18/sabath](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/sabath)



**Rabbi Joseph A. Skloot '10, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor of Modern Jewish Intellectual History, New York*

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**Miriam Heller Stern, Ph.D.**

*Associate Professor (Blended Track) of Jewish Education, Jack H. Skirball Campus, Los Angeles*

► [huc.edu/chronicle18/stern](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/stern)



**Christine N. Thomas, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible (Joint Appointment with Xavier University)*

► [huc.edu/chronicle18/thomas](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/thomas)



**Sivan Zakai, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor of Jewish Education and Sara S. Lee Chair in Jewish Education, Jack H. Skirball Campus, Los Angeles*

► [huc.edu/chronicle18/zakai](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/zakai)

## FACULTY PROMOTIONS



**Rabbi Michael Marmor '92, Ph.D.**

*Associate Professor of Jewish Theology, Taube Family Campus, Jerusalem*

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**Rabbi Dalia Marx '02, Ph.D.**

*Professor of Liturgy and Midrash, Taube Family Campus, Jerusalem*

► [huc.edu/chronicle18/marx](http://huc.edu/chronicle18/marx)

“Being a rabbi is the best way to combine my passion for Judaism, my creativity, and my relationship-building skills and to have a meaningful, positive impact on others. I’ve always felt that Judaism made sense to me, and I couldn’t understand why I would want to do anything else when I was growing up – why wouldn’t I want to become a rabbi!?”

Eliza McCarroll '22,  
Second-year Rabbinical Student  
at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati

Eliza *will* become a rabbi thanks to the generous scholarships that are making her dream possible as a Koret Foundation Scholar during her Year-In-Israel, as a Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Sacred Service Learning Fellow, and as the recipient of the Mark and Peggy Zilbermann Annual Scholarship.

For additional information,  
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