ISSUE 2 VOL 1 • FALL 2023

Sifron ספרון

A Klau Library Newsletter

IN THIS ISSUE

MISSION

The Klau Library, functions both as a campus library and as the main research library within the HUC-JIR Library system. Guided by the Mission Statement of the HUC-JIR Library system, the Cincinnati Library acquires, preserves and provides access to materials in printed, manuscript and other formats, supporting the teaching functions of the Rabbinic and Graduate programs and meeting the research needs of its various users: the faculty, students and staff of HUC-JIR Cincinnati; the residents of the Cincinnati metropolitan area; and the broader Judaic academic and general community both in the United States and abroad. As the main research library in the system, the Cincinnati Library provides both its depth of resources and various library services to the other HUC-JIR libraries.

Follow us on social media for more highlights from our collection event information, and updates from our campus libraries!

www.facebook.com/klaulibrary

www.instagram.com/klaulibrary

Message from Yoram Bitton, HUC-JIR Director of Libraries

Dear Friends,

We are excited to extend a warm welcome back to the library this semester, both in person and through our digital resources. We strongly encourage you to utilize both options to enhance your library experience. Our dedicated librarians are readily available to provide assistance with any of your resource needs.

This year promises to be filled with captivating events. In the previous year, we successfully organized fifteen engaging lectures and events via Zoom and hybrid formats, drawing the participation of several thousand attendees. Moreover, we proudly showcased numerous exhibitions featuring our cherished rare books and manuscripts. Additionally, we have expanded our social media presence. Last year alone, we reached a wide audience of 200,000 individuals through 200 posts on multiple platforms.

We extend heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Jordan Finkin, the Rare Book and Manuscript Librarian, on his recent appointment as the Deputy Director of Libraries for the HUC-JIR Libraries. This achievement highlights the exceptional talent within our library community.

Our primary objective is to ensure that students, faculty, and scholars can easily access the books and resources they require for their academic pursuits. We strive to foster a warm and welcoming environment that serves as the heart of the HUC-JIR community. As always, we eagerly anticipate providing our assistance and hearing your valuable suggestions. May you have a wonderful and successful year ahead.

Sincerely,

Message from Jordan Finkin, Deputy Director of Libraries

It is my great pleasure to write not only as the Rare Book and Manuscript Librarian but now also as the Deputy Director of Libraries. I step into the shoes of my most accomplished predecessors and hope only to add to the luster they have given to this illustrious Library.

As we move toward the second quarter of the 21st century, and as the seismic shifts of the COVID era ripple through the scholarly world, the Library looks forward to meeting the changing intellectual needs of its users—local, national, and international. Our Public and Technical Services staff members continue to work tirelessly to serve our patrons, and our program of digitization of rare printed and manuscript Judaica is proceedings apace (mss.huc.edu). We are happy that the Library has become a lively space not only for personal intellectual engagement with the vast array of scholarly and cultural resources we have to offer but also for in-person and virtual programming to explore those texts in depth. I invite you to explore the wealth of our holdings.

I look forward to welcoming you on your visit!

A Fond Farewell

This year we celebrated the cumulative 100+ years of service of Library Director, Laurel Wolfson; Computer Specialist, Lisa Ben-Hur; and Serials Coordinator, Margalit Tal, who have now retired from the Library. These women dedicated the better part of their careers to the Klau Library, and we are eternally grateful, as both their colleagues and members of the Jewish and academic communities, for the deep impact they have had on this world-renowned institution. At the retirement fête, attendees were treated to stories of the library's development and improvement at the hands of our honorees from Rabbi Jonathan Hecht, Cincinnati Campus Dean; David Gilner, Director of Libraries Emeritus; Yoram Bitton, the current Director of Libraries; and Jordan Finkin, Rare Book and Manuscript Librarian. Words of personal appreciation were shared by distinguished faculty members, including Dr. Michael Meyer (emeritus) and Dr. Richard Sarason. Laurel, Lisa, and Margalit all shared some of their fondest memories working in the Library and passed along parting words of advice and moral charge to the current and future wardens of the Klau's collection. We wish them all nothing but happiness in their retirement!

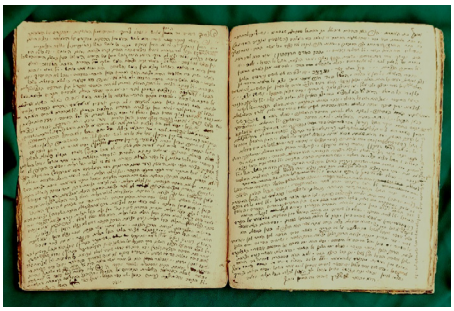
Klau Library

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Our mission is to preserve and provide access to one of the world's premiere collections of Judaica and Hebraica.

Your patronage is vital to that mission. Please consider supporting the library with a financial gift.

www.huc.edu/donate/klau



Shlomo Maimon's Givat ha-Moreh

Yoram Bitton, Director of HUC-JIR Libraries

In our work as librarians, we are surrounded by books every day. Some books are quite interesting and some less so. But as a librarian at HUC, which houses one of the most important collections in the Jewish world, including a large number of manuscripts and rare books, wandering in the library is a spiritual and almost mystical experience. One of the unique things about our library is not only that we have important treasures, but we also have all the research—books and articles—written about these treasures.

Recently, my eye caught a box of uncatalogued manuscripts in the Klau Library in Cincinnati. Inside, I found a few important manuscripts, one of which I will briefly describe here. I have no doubt that the publication of this manuscript will interest researchers and will lead to further research and publications.

The manuscript is entitled Givat ha-Moreh by Shlomo ben Yehoshua, also known as Shlomo Maimon (1753-1800). The manuscript is Shlomo Maimon's autograph, meaning that it is written in his own hand.

Shlomo Maimon engaged in philosophy, in particular, Maimonides's Guide for the Perplexed. Because of his love and respect for the teachings of Maimonides, he called himself by the name "Maimon." Born in Lithuania, he was recognized as an "illui," a genius in Torah learning. At 11 years old, his parents married him off to a girl, whom he saw for the first time under the wedding canopy. By the age of 14 he was already a father and had became a melamed, a Torah teacher. His relationship with his wife and mother-in-law deteriorated, so he ran away. He spent time with Dov Ber of Mezeritch, known as the Magid of Mezeritch, but was expelled because of his radical opinions. He was the first to write a description of the Hasidic group from an outsider's perspective.

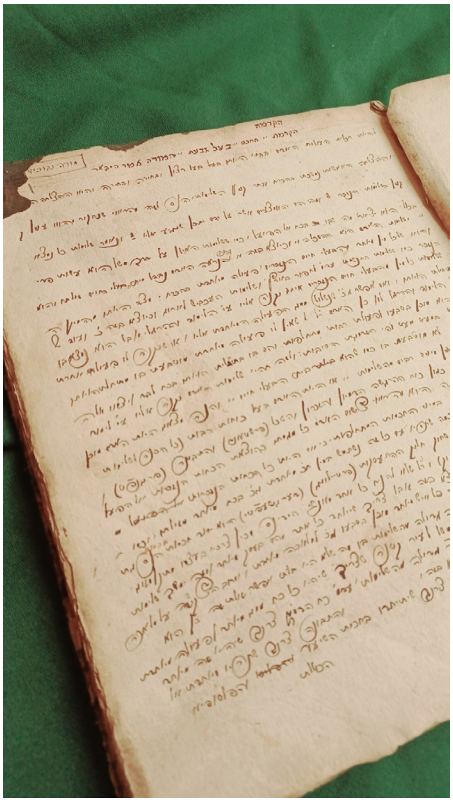
He came across a copy of Maimonides's Guide for the Perplexed, and began to study this book and other books of philosophy. He also realized he needed to know German in order to further his studies, so he learned German on his own, and began to delve into the thought of Spinoza, Immanuel Kant, and others.

In 1779, he arrived in Berlin where he was supported by Moses Mendelssohn, who was a philosopher and theologian, considered the father of the Jewish Enlightenment. Mendelssohn encouraged the wealthy members of the Berlin community to support Maimon in his studies. However, after some time he was once again expelled because of his radical views and went to Amsterdam. There, too, he was ostracized because of his heretical statements and was even stoned by a mob. According to his autobiographical essay, "The Life of Shlomo," he went to Hamburg and approached a Protestant priest and asked to convert to Christianity. When the priest asked him if he was sincere in his desire to convert to Christianity, he admitted that in in his opinion Judaism makes more sense than Christianity, but Christianity is more useful for moral practice. The priest refused to baptize him, and he remained Jewish.

Maimon wrote several books on philosophy, especially on Kant and Spinoza, but one of his most important books, which was printed during his lifetime, is Givat ha-Moreh, a commentary on The Guide for the Perplexed. In his book he also explains concepts from contemporary philosophers. The book was written in Hebrew and was published in 1791.

At the end of his days he lived with a nobleman, Count von Kalckreuth, on his estate, and died there from alcoholism. His body was brought to the city of Glogau, where he was buried outside the fence of the Jewish cemetery.

Hugo Bergmann and Nathan Rotenstreich published a critical edition of Givat ha-Moreh in 1965 and stated that their version is based on the second edition of the book. They wrote "as far as we know—no manuscript [of Givat ha-Moreh] has survived." I am happy to share that the manuscript does exist and is available in the Klau Library.



Israel Solomons: Jewish Bookplate Pioneer

Abigail Bacon, Head of Public Services and Outreach

Dr. Tom Stammers, Associate Professor in Modern European Cultural History at Durham University, came to Cincinnati for research on his project "Jewish Country Houses: Objects, Networks, People," which is run out of the University of Oxford. His main target for this visit, Israel Solomons (1860-1923), was an amateur historian and voracious bibliophile with a deep interest in the history of Jews in England. Solomons collected writings and letters of important Jewish historical figures from the Victorian era, like the Rothschilds and Montefiores, which are included in the Klau's collection. Solomons' varied interests extended from Judaica and anti-Jewish caricatures to the material evidence left behind by Britain's Jews in cemeteries and synagogues, which are carefully preserved in his collection through photographs and rubbings.

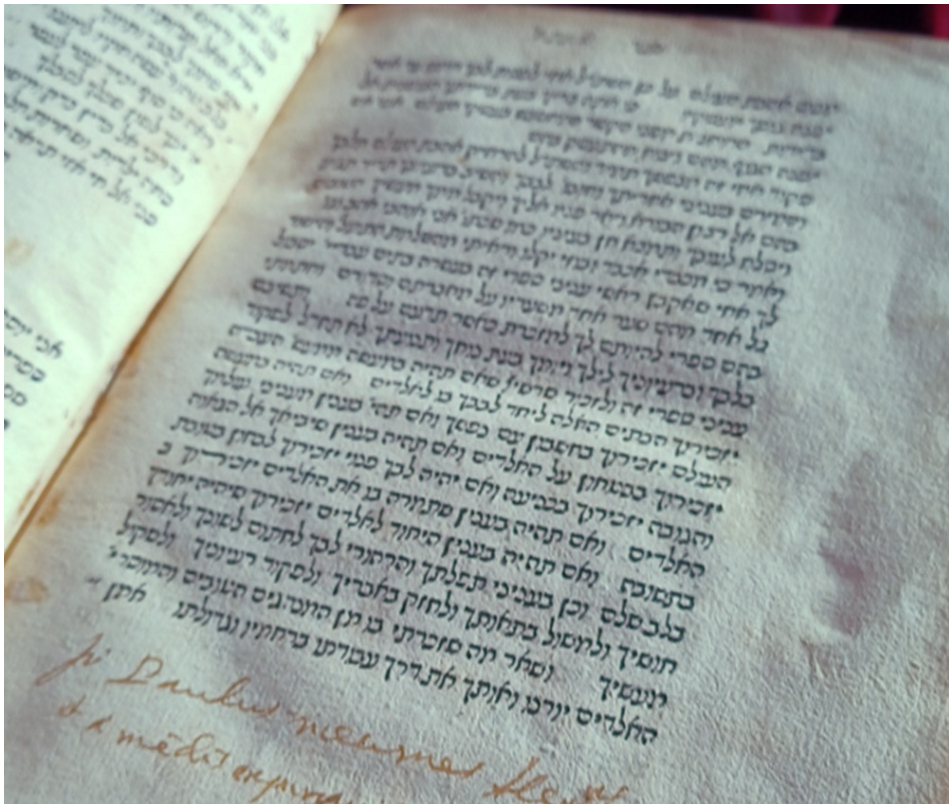
One of Solomons' most significant projects was his collection of bookplates. In the 1890s he was the first person in England to identify and collect Jewish bookplates as a genre in their own right. Also known as an "ex libris'," these small artistic works proclaiming a book's ownership often provided extensive clues to the owner's social standing and network. The coats of arms that typically adorned book plates in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reflected which families married into each other, serving as the basis for Solomons' studies into Jewish genealogy. In 1911, Solomons worked with his cousin to commission his very own bookplate, packed with private symbols (pictured above). It is noticeably Jewish, with specific Jewish iconography that one could not possibly mistake for the very secular coats of arms more prevalent among the aristocratic Jewish book owners Solomons studied (and critiqued for their lack of Jewish pride!). It also features key texts and portraits from Solomons' collections as a commentary on some of his intellectual heroes, like the controversial scholar and philosopher David Nieto, as well as on the progress of the Jews in England since they were permitted to return in the mid-seventeenth century.

Indeed, Israel Solomons was a person brimming with Jewish pride who frequently lent his Judaica and historical collections to major exhibitions, such as the Anglo-Jewish Exhibition in 1887, and the 1906 exhibition of Jewish art and antiquities in Whitechapel. The goal of these landmark exhibitions was to increase the visibility and understanding of Judaism at a time of growing tension around immigration, but also to assert the value of the Jewish tradition for Jews and non-Jews alike. Israel Solomons was also a regular contributor to the Jewish Historical Society of England, founded in 1893; its existence is a reminder of why these years were central to the development of new ideas about Jewish cultural heritage, both within England and beyond.

The pioneering collections of Israel Solomons were bought by Mortimer Schiff, who sought to bring these items from England to America, where they would be carefully preserved and studied. One section of the Solomons collections resides at the Jewish Theological Seminary, which Tom visited as well. Their collection includes nearly 1,800 rare books and 1,100 prints and engravings that reveal English stereotypes about Jews since the eighteenth century (the subject of an exhibition at JTS called "The Jew as Other"). The second Solomons collection was acquired for the Klau by Schiff in 1924 and features his autographs and manuscripts as well as some rare books and beloved bookplates. Tom hopes to glean from these papers a fuller sense of how Solomons engaged with other Jewish collectors and bookdealers throughout Europe, showing that Solomons' research into Anglo-Jewish history was profoundly shaped by materials sourced from the continent. This research will be included in Tom's forthcoming book about the collections and cultural politics of the Anglo-Jewish elite in the early twentieth century, which he hopes to complete during this sabbatical year. He is so grateful to the staff of the Klau and HUC for making his time in Cincinnati so pleasant and productive, and shared, "it's amazing to find so many interesting sources for the cultural history of English Jews on the other side of the Atlantic."

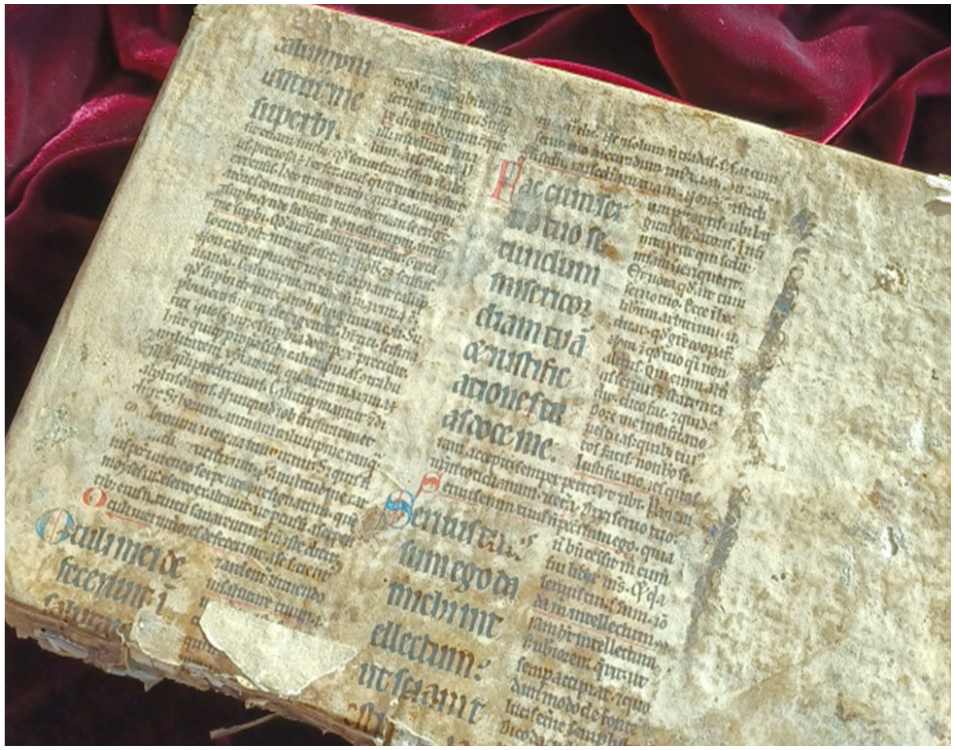
Footprints Project

Abigail Bacon with Thomas Carroll, Pines School Graduate Studies, Library Student Worker



The Klau Library is home to a world-class collection of rare books with an especially important collection of incunables—books printed before 1500. Thomas Carroll, a first year MAJS student who works in the library, has been entering many of these items into the Footprints database. Footprints: Jewish Books Through Time and Place, is a database which seeks to track the journey of all printed Jewish books using material clues provided by manuscript notes, stamps, bookplates, and other evidence that turn up in individual copies of books.

The item pictured here is a 1489 edition of Hovot Ha-Levavot printed in Naples, Italy. It is printed on paper, but the cover is bound in a Latin manuscript on parchment. In 1493, shortly after its printing, Avraham ben Yitshak Finzi of Mantua wrote an elegy for Avraham d'Urbino. Finzi is noted in the database as a "Viewer," and his handling of the item is its first "footprint." The book came into the ownership of Ya'akov ben Natan of Olmo, who probably lived in Italy in the late 16th century. Like many of the books from this period, our copy bears the mark of censors active during the Roman Inquisition. Though this book was not expurgated, there are signatures of three Italian censors: Dominico Hierosolomitano (1597), Giovanni Dominico Carretto (1618), and Paulus Vicecomes (n.d.). These censors are similarly each assigned a "footprint" entry. The next owner we can identify is Dr. Aron Freimann. Since we know his collection moved across the Atlantic in 1938, we have included footprint entries for both Germany and New York. The final movement noted in the database is its accession into our own collection. Using these pieces of evidence, we are able to track much of this book's journey through time and place, from its printing in Naples in 1489, until it was incorporated into our collection.



The Footprints project is a collaboration of researchers and scholars all over the world who will be able to use this data to study how many rare books circulated, where these items ended up, how they changed hands, which censors actively censored what items, and much more.

Hic Sunt Dracones

Jordan Finkin, Rare Book and Manuscript Librarian

There was a tradition among medieval cartographers of the imaginative ilk to draw poorly known or fantastical beasts in the uncharted places of the world. Hic sunt dracones—"here be dragons." So goes the now famous formulation (though in point of fact lions seem to have been more commonly adverted). In a different vein, in one of Job's early laments, trying to fathom his incomprehensible torment, he asks rhetorically of God, "Am I sea or dragon that you set a guard over me?" (Job 7:12) Whether they represent the unknown or the frightening, the concealed or the chaotic, dragons have long stood as provocations, both intellectual and imaginative.

The Library is no mythic space, to be sure, but here be dragons nevertheless. Many of them are purely decorative fancies, an overflowing of imagination onto the page. In a religious miscellany from Wernigerode, Germany, completed in 1393 (Ms. 652, far right), for example, the morning prayers (birkhot ha-shakhar) begin with a title page decorated with a medieval fortress. In the foreground two dragons sport, their necks intertwined. There seems to be no straightforward thematic reason why these particular prayers deserve such menacing treatment, but there they are. Or take a small mahzor for the Italian rite, also produced in the 14th century (Ms. 311, at right), most likely in Italy. It features a number of fanciful decorations scattered throughout the text, mostly in the margins.

The opening of the second chapter of Pirke Avot is punctuated by a bird-beaked dragon, threatening to devour the text. Why Rabbi's injunctions appear opposite a minatory dragon is anyone's guess. I am partial to focusing on the materiality of a text itself. So when Rabbi admonishes us at the end of that passage to remember that "all your deeds are written in a book," here we are simultaneously holding a book. Our bookish dragon perhaps is keeping us to task.

Sometimes, however, a dragon is actually a dragon. The Library has a large collection of broadsides—single sheet publications printed on one side—from the 18th century and earlier. Given the nature of these objects, they tend to be ephemeral and therefore rarities. These broadsides often functioned like posters and featured images to support the text. One in particular stands out in this regard (Broadsides 170, at left). In 1725, the area around a mountain—referred to by name as "Foresta"—some fourteen miles from Jerusalem seems to have been denuded of people and livestock, but for their bones and shreds of clothing.

A group of travelers was assaulted by a beast that appeared from within a cave. The lone survivor told some local villagers. A posse was rounded up to deal with the beast, but seventeen people were killed before the rest fled. Projectiles of various sorts had been deployed, but the monster's nacreous scales prevented it from suffering any harm. Fear mounted among the local peasantry until a troop of horsemen and soldiers sallied forth to neutralize the threat. But once again the monster ran amok, killing and maiming until finally one soldier tried a lance, which seemed to do the trick. The monster

was put on a wagon and carted off to Jerusalem. There it was described in detail: the size of a horse, it had the face of a lion with two oxhorns on its head; its nose terminated in an eagle's beak; it had lions' teeth but for two large canines like boars' tusks; it had four cow-like udders; and it had griffon's feet, a pointy basilisk's tail, rooster spurs on its back, and two formidable dragon wings.

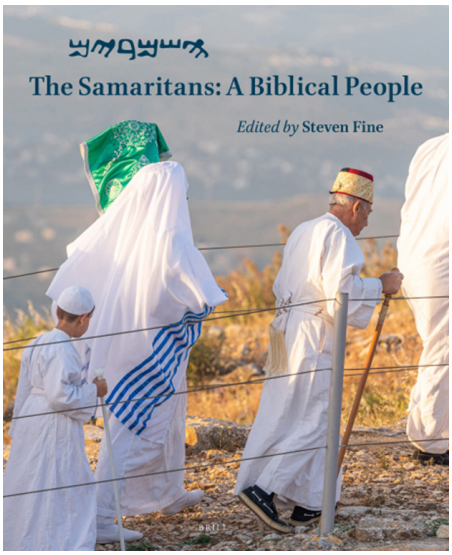
The extensive text, more than a thousand words long, only briefly mentions that the beast may have been sent by God as a sign to liberate Jerusalem from Turkish tyranny. However, the relish of the account itself far exceeds whatever meaning may have been attributed to it. Sometimes a good dragon tale is its own justification.

We cherish each of the dragons lurking in our Library and encourage the intellectual hunters who can coax them out of their caves and bring them into the light.

The Samaritan Tradition: Exploring the Other Israel

This March, the Klau Library, American Jewish Archives, and the Mayerson JCC partnered to create our most robust event series yet of the annual Feld Lecture Series. Dr. Steven Fine, Churgin Professor of Jewish History at Yeshiva University, was the featured speaker in this exciting series. The events began with a film screening of "The Samaritans: A Biblical People" produced by Moshe Alafi in partnership with Fine's Center for Israel Studies, and it examined the modern lives of the Samaritan communities in Israel. Descending from the ancient Israelites, the modern Samaritans retain their customs and traditions while embedded in the culture of their Israeli and Palestinian neighbors. Following the film, participants were treated to a lovely evening reception catered by the JCC's corporate catering company, while perusing the dynamic photography exhibit of images from Pittsburgh photographer Dale Lazar, who generously loaned his collection of over 30 works for this lecture series. Dr. Fine's lecture that evening "Good Samaritans? Jewish-Samaritan Relations in the Roman World" provided insight into how

the Samaritan people were viewed by the often more dominant rabbinic culture during the temple period. The following day, Dr. Fine's lecture "He Showed Him the Likeness of the Tabernacle: The Biblical Tabernacle in Samaritan Literature and Art," explored Samaritan mosaics, torah arks, and tabernacle drawings, giving participants a rich look into the materials created by Samaritans of their holiest worship emblem and compared it to the concurrent Jews' similar works using the same materials. On display for these events were the Klau's Deuteronomy scroll dating to 1140, the tabernacle scroll pictured below, various manuscripts and rare books created by the Samaritans, as well as modern works, including their monthly periodical "Aleph Bet," the Pentateuch commentaries of Benny Tsedaka, and the beautiful and newly published "The Samaritans: A Biblical People" by Steven Fine (Brill, 2022, pictured below).



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UPCOMING EVENTS AT THE KLAU LIBRARY

Register: huc.edu/libraries/events

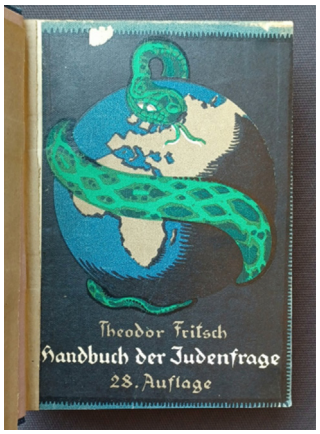
To view our archive of recorded lectures, visit our YouTube channel, huc.edu/library/youtube

September 5

Richard Sarason
The Different Rites That Unite Us: Mahzor Gems from the Klau Library

October 17

Michael Marmur
Heschel and the Spirit
(Zoom Only)



December 7

Panel Discussion
Backwards and Forwards: Facing Antisemitism Through Looking Back