

NEWS 2023

DIRECTORS' LETTER



Kent Hall, home of the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies.

Dear Friends,

AS MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS and the Columbia campus emerge from the depths of winter, so, too, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies continues its resurgence after several years of fallout from the COVID pandemic. The 2022–2023 year has been one of vibrancy, growth, and excitement at the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies. We’ve returned to hosting in-person events at our space in Kent Hall, teaching continues to be fully in-person, and we’ve welcomed two new full-time staff members at the IIJS office.

We are so thankful to be able to provide a home and community for Israel and Jewish Studies on campus—one that welcomes undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and community members to experience the breadth of our offerings. In Hebrew, one refers to a center for Jewish study as a *beit midrash*, a “house of learning,” and to a school as a *beit sefer*, a “house of books.” The Institute is, and ought to be, a *bayit*, a home, for all of these groups. As the sole representative of Israel Studies and Jewish Studies at Columbia, it is incumbent on us to educate and inspire broadly.

In this year’s edition of our magazine, we hope to showcase the ways in which the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies acts as a home for students, for faculty, for the community, and as a house of scholarship. Within its pages, you’ll hear from undergraduates, graduate students, alumni, and faculty about the importance of the IIJS during their time at Columbia and beyond. This magazine will also highlight the educational opportunities available to our students, the exciting research being conducted under the aegis of the IIJS, and the public programming available to our Morningside Heights community and beyond.

We want to thank you for your support of the Institute and for being a part of our work. With events now offered in-person and via Zoom, there are more ways than ever to stay involved with the IIJS and we hope that you’ll join us soon for one of our many events. Just as so many students, faculty, and locals have already found a home at the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies, we want to ensure that you can, too.

Wishing you all the best,

Elisheva Carlebach

Salo Wittmayer Baron Professor of Jewish History, Culture and Society
Co-Director, Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies

Rebecca Kobrin

Russell and Bettina Knapp Associate Professor of American Jewish History
Co-Director, Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies

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Congratulations to our Undergraduate Seniors!

The Institute is pleased to congratulate **Sam Beyda** and **Daniel Meadvin**, who will be graduating from Columbia College this spring with a Special Concentration in Jewish Studies! Learn about Daniel's path to the Special Concentration below, and turn to page 9 for an interview with Sam Beyda.



"Two of my favorite courses from IIJS were 'Jewish Culture in Translation in Medieval Iberia' with Dr. Isabelle Levy and 'Between Tradition and Innovation: Readings in Hasidic Texts' with Dr. Elly Moseson. Two highlights from 'Jewish Culture in Translation' were Professor Levy's multidisciplinary curriculum and a paper I wrote on the Kabbalistic imagery in Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Task of the Translator.' I loved 'Hasidic Texts' because of Professor Moseson's thoughtful framing of Hasidism as simultaneously being radically traditional and radically innovative (as suggested by the course title) and because I got to apply some of my Yiddish skills (also acquired through IIJS coursework)."

Daniel Meadvin, Columbia College '22

Daniel has accepted a full-time position as an investor at Insight Partners, a software investment firm with offices in New York and Tel Aviv.

The 2022 Undergraduate Israel Fellowship

EVERY SUMMER, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies selects a cohort of undergraduate students from Columbia College, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, the School of General Studies, and Barnard College for its Undergraduate Israel Fellowship. The Fellows receive funding towards an educational or professional experience in Israel during the summer, such as an accelerated course at Tel Aviv University or an internship with an Israeli tech firm. The Fellows also participate in a number of exclusive events designed to provide unique insight into Israeli history, society, and culture while strengthening the bonds within the cohort.

THE 2022 EVENTS INCLUDED:

- a dinner in Tel Aviv with **Afif Abu Much**, a journalist, computer engineer, publicist & political activist who works to promote Arab voices in the Israeli media;
- a film screening at the home of **Aner Preminger**, an Israeli film director, producer, and academic;
- and a seminar discussion with **Anat Kurz**, Director of Research at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies graduate programs in the United States and abroad.

My summer in Israel was deeply enriched by being able to reunite with my student peers to hear from fascinating speakers that we would not otherwise have had the chance to learn from. I appreciated the variety of disciplines the speakers touched upon, allowing the Israel fellows to engage with a wide range of topics within contemporary Israeli society. My most memorable part of the fellowship in Israel was our second event, where we were privileged enough to visit with filmmaker and professor Aner Preminger in his home in Jerusalem. We watched the Israeli film The Cakemaker, and held a brief discussion about its commentary on the Israeli experience. We all felt very lucky to be hosted and have a meaningful experience together exploring aspects of Israeli life firsthand.

MA'AYAN NOY, Barnard College '24

This summer, I spent twelve weeks working as an Applied Scientist Intern at Microsoft Israel in Herzliya. The IIJS Fellowship helped pay for my flight, allowing me to spend a summer working in Israel, as I had long desired to do. I was able to improve my Hebrew in a professional setting and develop close professional ties in Israel, while also spending time with my family in Tel Aviv. The IIJS events added an additional dimension to my summer as well—they provided opportunities to explore parts of Israel that I may not have explored otherwise, and provided bonding opportunities with the rest of the cohort. This summer was truly an unforgettable experience, and IIJS played a vital role in making it happen.

TAL ZUSSMAN, School of Engineering and Applied Sciences '23



2022 Undergraduate Israel Fellows reconvening in the fall at the Institute

The IIJS Fellowship is truly the best way for Columbia students to supplement a summer in Israel pursuing an internship or research. The highlight for me was certainly the Cakemaker event with Aner Preminger. Professor Preminger welcomed us into his home with snacks and screened the film—which was a captivating and powerful story of love, culture, and Israeli culture—in an evening that was truly a highlight of my summer. In addition to my internship experience, the Fellowship offered a grounding group of peers from Columbia to turn to during the summer to discuss current events, navigating the country, and the programming. I would highly recommend taking advantage of this opportunity to anyone thinking of spending a summer in Israel.

SOLOMON FOX, School of General Studies '24

The Naomi Fellowship

AS IN 2020 AND 2021, the 2022 cohort of Naomi Prawer Kadar Fellows faced extraordinary circumstances that radically changed what the Fellowship looks like. This year, however, students were prevented from traveling abroad not due to a global pandemic, but due to Russia's unprecedented and escalating invasion of Ukraine.

Typically, the Fellows visit "Yiddishland" in Poland before participating in Tel Aviv University's Naomi Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer program, but safety concerns forced the Fellowship's coordinator, **Dr. Agnieszka Legutko**, to rethink how they might be able to experience "Yiddishland." Fortunately, the Naomi Fellows did not have to go very far to do so—New York has historically been, and continues to be, "Yiddishland" in its own right. Dr. Legutko and the fellows visited Borough Park in Brooklyn, Manhattan's Lower East Side, the Yiddish Book Center in the Berkshires, and the Yiddish Farm Education Center in Goshen, NY.

In all of these places, Fellows participated in unique and exciting events, including:

- a walking tour of the Lower East Side with Yiddish actress, director, writer, and translator Caraid O'Brien, followed by dinner at Katz's Delicatessen
- a literary workshop and dinner with renowned Yiddish poet, activist, and academic Irena Klepfisz
- and private viewing of the New York Public Library's Yiddish collections and a songwriting workshop with Yiddish singer Sarah Gordon

Following the "Exploring Yiddishland" experience, Fellows participated in Tel Aviv University's Naomi Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program, an intensive language program taught exclusively in Yiddish.

Students who participate in the Naomi Fellowship partake in three semesters of Yiddish Language Studies at Columbia and receive this wonderful opportunity thanks to the support of the Naomi Foundation.

"Devoting six full days to focusing on where and how Yiddish lives in New York amplified for me that Yiddishland is here, not just far away in Poland and Eastern Europe. That trip would have introduced me to a very different Yiddishland, and while I'm sure I would have found connection and meaning in a more distant part of my cultural heritage, this adjusted version reminded me that I live, study, and enjoy Yiddishland every day."

The week we spent in New York was jam packed with workshops, tours, and special sessions with local Yiddish greats. Each night, I slept soundly after a full day of walking, listening, shmuesing, and growing my appreciation for the open arms of the Yiddish kehillah. One highlight was a song workshop with Sarah Gordon, lead singer of the rock band Yiddish Princess. At the end of the first full day, we sat circled around in armchairs, singing viglider (lullabies) and protest songs, lyrical poems and classics. After rounds and rounds of repetition, these songs took on a hypnotic quality, and we sat together, soothed by the sounds of our own voices, singing in this language we were dedicating our summers to learning. It was a terrific way to begin the week."



Walking around the Lower East side of Manhattan with a particular attention to the landmarks of former Yiddish cultural centers was rather new for me. Like I've mentioned, I'd always been aware of the Yiddishkeit imbued in these streets and neighborhoods, but it wasn't until this in-depth walking tour that I realized the extent of what has disappeared over the last century. We walked past frozen yogurt shops, banks, hotels, and any number of other unassuming multi-storied buildings that once housed grandiose Yiddish theatres, which at one time could seat a few thousand guests for their enjoyment of Yiddish plays and musicals. The Yiddish walk of fame, home to almost 30 stars declaring the names of the foremothers and fathers of Yiddish theatre, lays just outside a Bank of America, or the former home of the 2nd Avenue Deli. Yiddish history seems to be crammed into a growing and changing Manhattan, some of it visible and some buried by the inevitable shift of property ownership, and time."

ELLA MERANUS, Barnard College '24, majoring in Sociology and Yiddish

Clockwise from left image: Song and dance at Tel Aviv's Yung Yiddish community library; A bespoke "Yiddish Monopoly" from the collections of Yung Yiddish; The Naomi Fellows relaxing at the Yiddish Farm; Naomi Fellows visited the Eldridge Street Synagogue.

HOLOCAUST STUDIES AT COLUMBIA: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

by Trey Greenough

Trey Greenough is an undergraduate senior in the School of General Studies.

AT PRESENT, historiography is undergoing a massive overhaul in an effort to unearth the nuances of underexplored facets of American history. Previous research, analyses, and conceptual frameworks have given preferential consideration to sources that are inherently biased and exclusionary. The tendency to prioritize empirical data and “cold, hard facts” over individual experience, coupled with a strong reliance on historical archives that marginalize and mute entire groups, has resulted in a number of distortions within the dominant narrative of American history. Luckily, however, these bastions of selective historiography have been the target of much scrutiny in the twenty-first century, which has produced a new wave of pedagogy that seeks to supplant the incomplete sketch of America’s narrative that leaves many young adults benighted as they emerge from secondary school. Courses like “Holocaust, Genocide, and American Cul-

ture” are springing up at the forefront of this new pedagogical renaissance, effectively recrafting the art of historical research and writing. The course, which I took at Columbia in the fall of 2021 with Dr. Rebecca Kobrin, is indicative of this shift and exemplifies the evolution of historiography. Rather than conform to previous norms, “Holocaust, Genocide, and American Culture” sought to dissolve the universality of rigid archives and to place seemingly peripheral events—at least within the scope of my high school history classes—at the epicenter of American history and culture. Ultimately, this course shed light on the myriad ways in which the Holocaust influenced and shaped America, and the world.

From the first day of class, my peers and I were challenged to rethink what we thought we knew and the mechanisms, both internal and external, that had guided our manner of thinking about the Holocaust. As soon as class

began that first Thursday, prior to skimming any readings, Dr. Kobrin probed the class with a set of simple questions that garnered an alarming response. “What is the Holocaust?” “What is its legacy in the United States?” One would think that with such a softball question an army of hands would have shot up, each among us eager to begin the course with an eloquent showcasing of our intellect. Instead, we collectively leaned back, crossed our arms, and stared into the distance hoping to pull something insightful from the deepest recesses of our minds. Once or twice, silence gave way to a barebones definition that swept everything under the umbrella of Adolf Hitler, Nazism, concentration camps, and the death of millions of Jews. Unanimously, we affirmed our ignorance to be a byproduct of the American education system and its exceptionalism. The scant response we produced was a fairly accurate regurgitation of the cursory coverage the Holocaust was



afforded during our high school educations. In a way, we were the perfect canvas for the course; we had been primed with a base coat that consisted of empirical data and the mise-en-scene, however, our understanding lacked complexity and consideration.

To remedy the pedagogical injustice that had left us ill-equipped to grapple with those simple questions on day one, the course offered a panoramic view of the Holocaust that was both insightful and provocative. Within this seminar setting, we were exposed to various readings that facilitated weekly discussions about the Holocaust and the progression of Holocaust discourse. Scholars like Theodore Abel and Hannah Arendt highlighted the social and political environments that fueled the rise of Nazism in Germany. These interpretations of totalitarianism and the Holocaust led us to analyze other oppressive regimes around the world, both past and present, in an

effort to determine if the political system was unique to Nazi Germany.

Alongside objective legacies of the Holocaust, like the concept of a “genocide” that was coined by Raphael Lemkin and provided a legal basis during the Nuremberg Trials, the course took a comparative approach that highlighted the conflicting nature of historiography in its wake. According to Peter Novick, a Columbia alumnus and former Professor of History at the University of Chicago, the American Jewry and the United States government paid little mind to the persecution of Jews in Europe. Novick argues that, while the Nazis were viewed as a global protagonist, the persecution and murder of European Jews were dwarfed by mainstream coverage of other events, such as conflict in the Pacific. In contrast, our class read Kirsten Fermaglich’s *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares* and Hasia Diner’s *We Remember with Reverence and Love*. Both accounts dispel the myth that Jews in America chose to ignore the mass murder of European Jews in Nazi Germany. Instead, they demonstrate, through sources that can appear somewhat unconventional, that the opposite was true. These sources analyze media, independent publications, and personal accounts to draw new conclusions. Together, the books subscribe to the new wave of historical research that acknowledges the worth and utility of sources outside the constraints of the traditional archive, advancing Holocaust history in an inclusive and accurate way.

Likewise, the “Holocaust, Genocide, and American Culture” course compelled my peers and me to reconsider what we deemed authoritative sources. We were introduced to oral history repositories like the Spielberg Shoah Foundation’s website, which

contains thousands of testimonials from survivors of the Holocaust. Additionally, touring The Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City stressed the role of material objects in the creating and maintaining of culture. Material culture often furnishes remembrance and memorialization efforts. While these sources are not new, they are relatively underutilized and may patch the holes in more traditional archives.

Sadly, not all resources can be encased in glass and preserved within digital archives. So, historians must avail themselves of contemporary resources and opportunities. At this very moment, there are still living survivors of the Holocaust, some willing to share their experiences and sentiments. Through what was dubbed the “service-learning” component of the course, we were expected to “engage in related community service outside of the classroom with Holocaust survivors.” DOROT, a social service agency that services a number of elderly clients in Manhattan, introduced each of us to one or two individuals who were survivors of the Holocaust. First and foremost, our goal was to remedy the social isolation that often accompanies a life long lived. However, the experience also provided a unique opportunity to discuss the Holocaust and its legacy in America with someone who bore witness to the events as they unfolded in real time. Yes, there is an impressive cache of oral histories from survivors, but they are driven by interviewers with their own questions and objectives. When I spoke to Mrs. J (a pseudonym used for anonymity), the trajectory of the conversation was not predetermined. Every week, I could bring the concepts from class that I was grappling with and bounce them off of her. I could pick her brain about specific details that a reading

had glossed over. My experience with Mrs. J was transformative, to say the least. Her humor and positivity guided our conversations with ease and her willingness to indulge me furthered my understanding of the Holocaust on many levels. Getting to know her has been a blessing and our friendship has ascribed a personal quality to a history to which I otherwise felt unconnected.

in which people of color have been excluded. Often, when racecraft in the United States is surveyed, the voices of African-Americans are forgotten. However, I discovered that the Holocaust acted as a comparative lens within the African-American community. Mainstream periodicals in the 20th century were geared toward largely white audiences and their brand of

across the Atlantic. Holocaust discourse provided a platform from which African-Americans generated upward mobility by advancing individual and public understanding of the Black experience. Frequently, *The Chicago Defender* utilized this platform to serve a complex function that highlighted similarities between the Holocaust and American racism, spotlighted Black victims, and promoted examples of Black heroism in the war. Thus, combating racial biases and historical inaccuracies for the benefit of the race and their position within American society. Furthermore, Black intellectuals, like James Baldwin and W.E.B. Du Bois, utilized the Holocaust and their interactions with the Jewish population in the postwar period as a vehicle to develop and rethink their theories about race in the United States. Prior to taking "Holocaust, Genocide, and American Culture," I hadn't considered that the legacy of the Holocaust could be traced to the core of the African-American identity.

In essence, courses like "Holocaust, Genocide, and American Culture" are breaking from the pedagogical norms that have left American history, as it is broadly conceptualized, devoid of the complexities that make it exceptional. Definitive histories are hard to defend and are readily replaced with thoughtful, more thorough explorations within sub-specialties like Holocaust Studies, which arguably produce a more truthful narrative. Through a comparative study of interpretive variations, I have learned that American culture is still wrestling to conceptualize the Holocaust and its legacy. Moreover, the continual process of reconceptualization generates new lenses through which American culture is interpreted, giving rise to new variations and phenomena along the way.

"From the first day of class, my peers and I were challenged to rethink what we thought we knew and the mechanisms, both internal and external, that had guided our manner of thinking about the Holocaust."

The service-learning component of the course has been my most enjoyable memory at Columbia thus far.

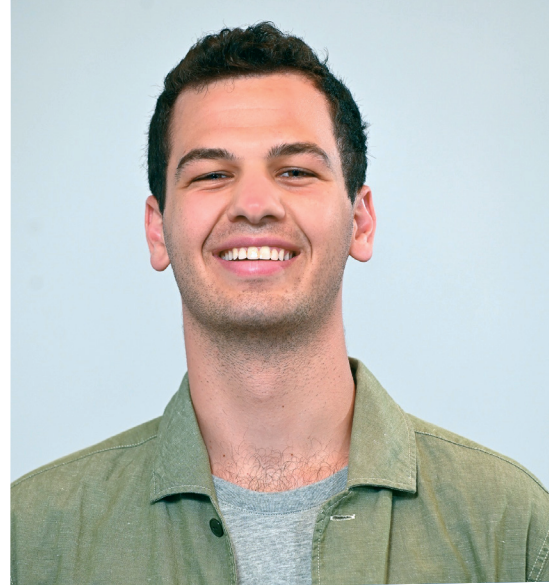
Much like my discussions with Mrs. J, the readings of the course and Dr. Kobrin also inspired me to select a research topic for my final paper that connected the course to my identity. As an African-American student, I am particularly interested in spaces

reporting included a racist lexicon that was unappealing to Black readers. In response, Black-owned and operated periodicals blossomed into one of the foremost shapers of the African American identity within Black communities. As early as the 1930s, Black journalists from *The Chicago Defender* identified with the struggles of European Jews and began to compare the racial reality in the United States to the situation

GETTING TO KNOW...

SAM BEYDA

Sam Beyda is a senior in Columbia College and was a 2022 IIJS Undergraduate Israel Fellow. He is graduating with a Special Concentration in Jewish Studies.



01 *How did you get involved with Israel and Jewish Studies?*

My first class was Professor Levy's Iberian translation class, which was really, really great. I later joined the summer fellowship in Israel, which brought me into a much deeper level of involvement with IIJS. Since then, I've taken another class or two in the department and did an independent study with Professor Levy.

In the independent study, Professor Levy and I were able to explore my Syrian Jewish heritage—Syria has its own unique Jewish traditions and history that I wanted to learn more about and explore academically. We did so by examining *pizmonim*, which are a type of devotional poem or prayer recited at Syrian Jewish life cycle events, like bar mitzvahs and weddings. This was a great lens through which we could explore the richness and depth of Syrian Jewish culture, of my culture.

02 *How has Israel and Jewish Studies impacted your college career?*

I like to think of Jewish Studies as a personal concentration of mine during my time at Columbia—in addition to the Special Concentration in Jewish Studies that I've completed. I'm an economics major, but having this flavor of Israel and Jewish Studies in my academic mix has been very interesting and rewarding. For sure, ten years from now, what I'll remember most from my time studying at Columbia will be the classes I took at the IIJS. It's also been like a second home for me on campus at Columbia, I'm there all the time and love just coming by, spending time at the beautiful IIJS facility in Kent Hall. I feel very welcome there and I'm always excited to go there for a

class or for an event. I also met a few very close friends during my time in the Undergrad Israel Fellowship, people who I wouldn't have met if it weren't for the IIJS. So, I'm very thankful for the role the IIJS has played in my time at Columbia.

03 *Can you share a highlight from your classes with IIJS?*

Aside from the independent study with Prof. Levy that I mentioned before, I would say that one of my favorite courses is actually one that I'm in this semester. I'm taking "History of Modern Israel" with Prof. Avi Shilon, who's a guest lecturer at Columbia [brought to campus by the IIJS] this semester. The class has a lot of Israelis, a lot of American Jews, and a lot of different perspectives. We recently sat down to discuss the proposed judicial reform—or overhaul, whatever you want to call it—in Israel and the movement against it, right as the controversy came to a head and shut down Israel for a few days. We had a really vocal and interactive class where, for over two hours, every single student was able to speak about their personal experience and what this meant to them. This discussion was really able to color this global event, which was unfolding right before our eyes, in an entire new way. It was like we were experiencing it together as a class, which was really interesting. I would honestly say that was the best individual class session I've had at any point throughout college.

04 *What are your post-college plans?*

I am going to be working at Oliver Wyman, the consulting firm, after I graduate. Then, hopefully, I'll be making *aliyah* one day soon—not imminently, but in a couple of years.



PUBLIC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

THE NAOMI PRAWER KADAR ANNUAL MEMORIAL LECTURE:

“Adventures in Yiddish Storytelling and Their Consequences” with Dara Horn

On December 7, 2022, the Institute and the Naomi Foundation hosted **bestselling author and scholar Dara Horn**—and over 250 attendees—via Zoom for the Naomi Prawer Kadar Annual Memorial Lecture. Horn’s lecture discussed the works and style of writer Pinchas Kahanovich, who wrote under the pseudonym Der Nister (“The Hidden One”), a seminal figure in twentieth century Yiddish literature. By examining plot structures in Yiddish stories and the challenges Der Nister and many others brought to that tradition, Horn took viewers for a deep dive into our own expectations for what stories should do, their role in Jewish life, and the disturbing possibility that stories actually can’t save us. She highlighted, in particular, the story “Fun mayne giter” (“From My Estates”), a powerful allegory for Der Nister’s firsthand experience of Jewish persecution in the Soviet Union in which a man’s home is overrun by bears who slowly eat his body away. Thank you to the Naomi Foundation for their continued support of Yiddish at Columbia and for the opportunity to memorialize and continue the legacy of Naomi Prawer Kadar.

LECTURE WITH MARK PODWAL, IN COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY:

“Drawing On My Eastern European Roots”

On January 25, 2023, the IJIS hosted **renowned artist Mark Podwal** in-person at the Institute for its first event of the Spring 2023 semester. In a lecture titled “Drawing On My Eastern European Roots,” Podwal spoke about his ongoing work commemorating the Holocaust in Eastern Europe and the United States through art, frequently in collaboration with Eastern European communities. With International

Holocaust Remembrance Day falling Friday, January 27, Podwal’s lecture and works proved a prescient demonstration of art’s power to preserve Eastern European Jewish heritage—and to serve as a way to process the tragedy that befell Eastern European Jewry in the Holocaust.

Mark Podwal is an acclaimed artist whose works have been exhibited and published worldwide. His presentation showed images from his collaborations with Elie Wiesel, Harold Bloom, and Francine Prose. Works showcased also included his series “Kaddish for Dąbrowa Białostocka,” the Polish shtetl where his mother was born, as well as an image of the 13-foot mural he was asked to design for Dąbrowa’s high school wall. Moreover, his textiles for Prague’s gothic Altneuschul and Renaissance High Synagogue were discussed along with his current series, “Reimagining Polish Synagogues as Jewish Ceremonial Objects.”

Special thanks to the Radov and Kaye families, whose support made this lecture possible.

JOURNALISM PANEL DISCUSSION:

“Does It Matter She’s Jewish (or Muslim? or Mormon?)”

The Institute, in collaboration with the Columbia University School of Journalism, hosted a panel of scholars and journalists for a discussion at the School of Journalism’s World Room on March 29, 2023.

When should a journalist include the religion or ethnicity of a politician, celebrity, or businessperson? This is a practical and ethical question that journalists regularly face but don’t always articulate. When is it essential to note a person’s identity in your reporting, when is it an option, and when is it offensive?

Prof. Samuel Freedman of the Columbia Journalism School, as well as journalists **Emma Green** (*The New Yorker*) and **Arun Venugopal** (WNYC), tackled the above questions in a panel discussion moderated by **Jane Eisner** of



From left: Dara Horn lecturing via Zoom; Mark Podwal and IIJS Co-Director Rebecca Kobrin pose next to his painting, "Brightest Flower," on display at the Institute; Sarah Abrevaya Stein (center) with IIJS faculty members Isabelle Levy (left) and Rebecca Kobrin (right); (Left-right) Jane Eisner, Arun Venugopal, Emma Green, and Samuel Freedman; Joshua Cohen (center) with IIJS faculty members Clémence Boulouque (left) and Rebecca Kobrin (right).



the Columbia Journalism School, with an introduction by **Gershon Gorenberg**.

Special thanks to the Knapp family, whose support made this lecture possible.

BOOK TALK:

Joshua Cohen, The Netanyahus

On Wednesday, September 14, the Institute welcomed **Joshua Cohen, recipient of the 2022 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction** for his book *The Netanyahus, An Account of a Minor and Ultimately Even Negligible Episode in the History of a Very Famous Family*.

Joshua Cohen spoke to IIJS students, faculty, and friends about *The Netanyahus*. Below is a brief synopsis of the book:

*Corbin College, not quite upstate New York, winter 1959-1960: Ruben Blum, a Jewish historian—but not an historian of the Jews—is co-opted onto a hiring committee to review the application of an exiled Israeli scholar specializing in the Spanish Inquisition. When Benzion Netanyahu shows up for an interview, family unexpectedly in tow, Blum plays the reluctant host to guests who proceed to lay waste to his American complacencies. Mixing fiction with nonfiction, the campus novel with the lecture, *The Netanyahus* is a wildly inventive, genre-bending comedy of blending, identity, and politics that finds Joshua Cohen at the height of his powers.*

Special thanks to the Radov and Kaye families, whose support made this possible

2023 YOSEF YERUSHALMI ANNUAL MEMORIAL LECTURE

Sarah Abrevaya Stein, “Eating on the Ground: Picnicking at the End of Empire”

On January 29, 2023, the Institute welcomed award-winning author and historian **Sarah Abrevaya Stein** in-person at Kent Hall for the 2023 Yosef Yerushalmi Annual Memorial Lecture. The lecture honored the memory of Professor Yosef Yerushalmi, who held the Salo Wittmayer Baron Chair in Jewish History, Culture and Society at Columbia University from 1980 until 2008 and directed the Center for Israel and Jewish Studies—which would later become the IIJS—for those 28 years.

This year’s lecture highlighted exciting new research approaches from a scholar building upon Prof. Yerushalmi’s legacy in Sephardic Studies. Dr. Sarah Abrevaya Stein is one of the world’s leading scholars on Sephardic, Middle Eastern, and North African Jewry, as well as the Ladino language. In her lecture, Dr. Stein discussed the novel approach that characterizes her current project: using archival photographs and photo albums to reconstruct Sephardic Jewish daily life in the late Ottoman Empire and in the post-Ottoman Balkans.

Special thanks to the Knapp and Kaye families, whose support made this lecture possible.

THE JEWS OF CORFU

Between the Adriatic and the Ionian

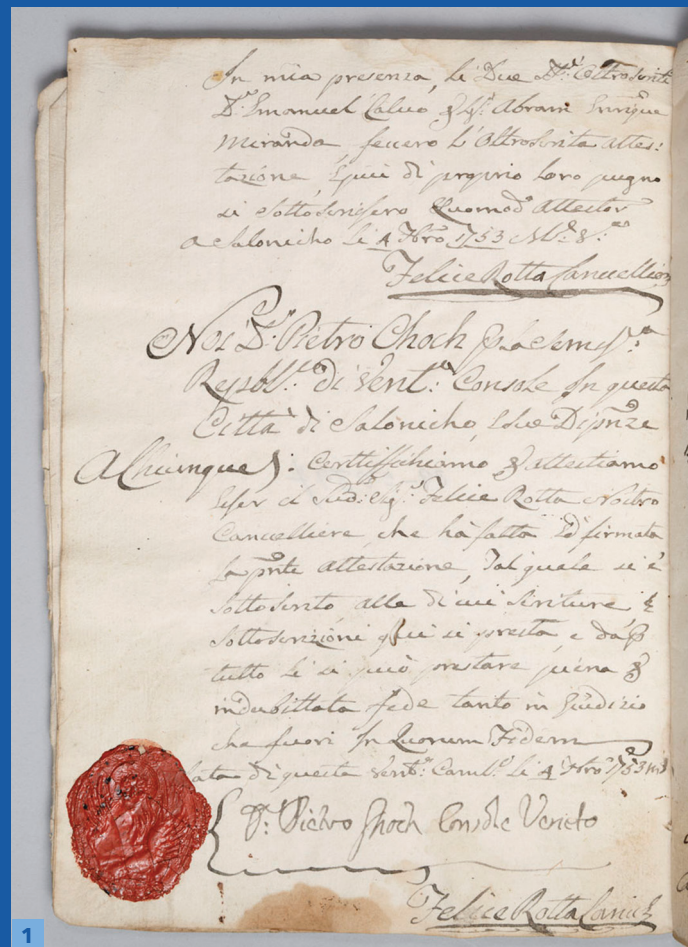
From August 22, 2022 through December 16, 2022, the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, together with the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), hosted an exhibition on the historic Jewish community of Corfu, in Greece. The Jewish communities in Corfu date back millennia, but due to its devastation by the Nazis during World War II, this vibrant and unique community is not very well known today. The exhibit featured illuminated ketubbot (marriage contracts), decorated prayer books, communal documents, and government legislation over the communities of Corfu from both of the libraries’ collections.

The Corfu Jewish community, the Jewish Theological Seminary and Columbia University Libraries—in partnership with the Jewish Museum of Greece (JMG)—held an event on Monday, October 31 called “The Jews of Corfu: Past and Present.” The event highlighted a recent digital exhibition by the JMG on the Jews of Corfu, the exhibition at Columbia and JTS, and a conversation with members of the community on Jewish life in Corfu today. The following week, on Monday, November 7, the JTS and Columbia Libraries hosted an event focused on the technical efforts that made this exhibit possible, called “Red Inks and Gold Leaf, Parchment and Paper: Conservation of the Corfu Manuscripts.” This panel featured **Morgan Adams** and **Katherine Parks**, members of the conservation team that worked to make the materials safe for exhibition.

FROM THE STACKS... THE JEWS OF CORFU

by *Michelle Margolis*

Michelle Margolis is the Norman E. Alexander Jewish Studies Librarian at Columbia University.



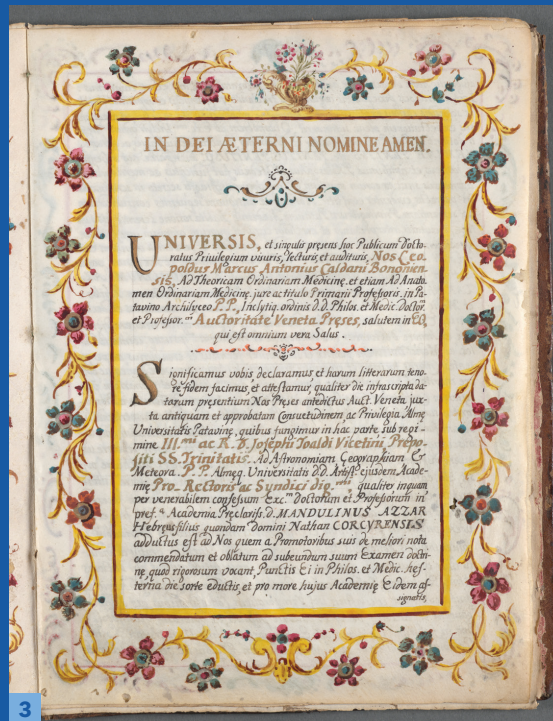
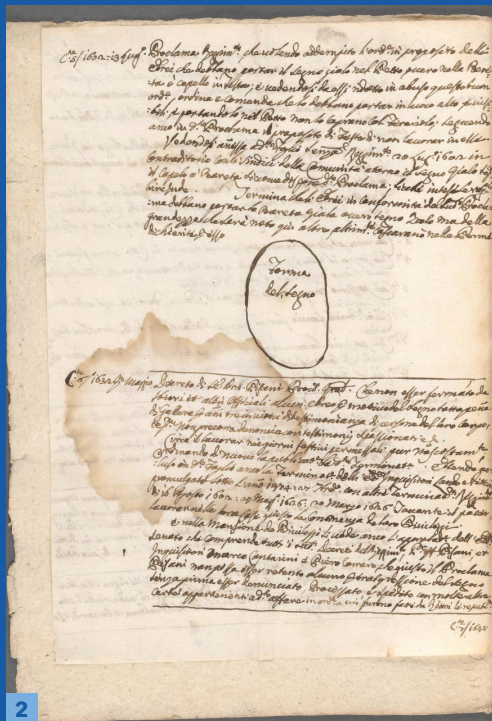
NINETY YEARS AGO, barely two years into his position as the first Miller Chair of Jewish History at Columbia, Professor Salo Baron decided to acquire a remarkable collection of Judaica from David Fraenkel, a bookdealer in Vienna. Among the 700 or so manuscripts acquired for Columbia were, according to the Librarian's report for that year, "a section that covers Jewish communal life in Greece from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. The printed catalogue of this section lists eighty manuscripts and forty printed volumes." Baron recognized the importance of this collection as a separate unit from the remainder of the manuscripts he bought. He wrote multiple articles describing the unique and fascinating communities of Greece—and in particular, of the island of Corfu.

Jewish settlement on the island of Corfu dates back over 1000 years. The first record of a Jew on the Greek island was noted by Benjamin of Tudela in 1148, and its Greek community dates itself back even farther. As early as the 14th century, when the state of Venice assumed jurisdiction of the island, the Jewish community of Corfu was already prominent enough that a Jew named David Sem was part of a six person delegation sent from the island to Venice to

swear fealty to the new rulers. The community of the island would reach its peak in the mid-19th century at around 6000 people. Unfortunately, the community of Corfu was almost entirely annihilated by the Nazis, so few people know about the long and creative history of the Jews on this island. Our recent exhibition of materials from Columbia University Libraries and Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary at both locations has brought significant new attention to this unique and understudied group.

There were two main Jewish communities in Corfu. The Romaniote (Greek-speaking) community was the older one, although it was smaller and more insular than its counterpart. Italian Jews came to Corfu by the 14th century, first from Sicily and Naples, which ruled the island prior to Venetian occupation, and then from other areas in Italy. The Italians also welcomed Sephardic and Ashkenazic refugees fleeing eastward to the relatively tolerant Ottoman Empire into their community.

The exhibit featured prayer books, communal and legislative documents, and ten *ketubbot* (Jewish marriage contracts). The stories featured include an international dispute in Jewish law regarding the acceptability of a musi-



Left to right: Figure 1, Volume of responsa addressing the whether one could sing the shema prayer (Columbia MS X893 Sh354); Figure 2, Document discussing whether the Jews should have to wear the “yellow badge” (illustrated) in Corfu (Columbia MS X893.19 Se34); Figure 3, Diploma for Menahem di Natan Azzar from the Colleges of Padua and Venice, 1761 (Columbia MS X893.19 Az9); Figure 4: Prayers for a victory following a property dispute, 1781 (Columbia MS X893 El4). Below: Ketubbah marking the marriage of Zamila, daughter of Avraham Karidi and Yitshak Hay, son of Shemu’el Ga’on on August 4, 1764.

cal rendition of the *Shema* prayer in the Italian synagogue (figure 1); governmental legislation about the Corfu Jews’ requirement to wear the yellow badge (figure 2) and potential expulsion from the island; prayers for various holidays, penance, a property dispute, a synagogue theft; and documents relating Jewish doctors (figure 3) and education in Corfu.

As the communities were relatively small, names appear multiple times—the Aboab, Caridi, and Cohen families are ubiquitous in the exhibition. Moses the son of Shabetai Mazza, whose 1710 wedding was memorialized in a *ketubbah* at the Jewish Theological Seminary, may have been an ancestor of Rafa’el Mazza, a mohel (or ritual circumciser) whose book, held by Columbia, was written a century later. Eliyahu Cohen used the distinctive symbol from the priestly blessing on a book that he wrote commemorating a successful result in a property dispute (figure 4).

“The Jews of Corfu: Between the Adriatic and the Ionian” was on display at Columbia’s Chang Gallery and the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary between August and December of 2022. An online version of the exhibition can be found at exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/jews_corfu.



FROM A COURSE ABOUT BOOKS TO A BOOK ABOUT BOOKS: RABBI JOSEPH SKLOOT AND “THE JEWISH BOOK IN THE EARLY MODERN WORLD”

by Nathaniel Dinu Askanase

IN 2010, PROFESSOR ELISHEVA CARLEBACH, now the Co-Director of the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies, offered a new course in Jewish Studies for both undergraduate and graduate students that was unlike anything else offered at Columbia at the time. Dr. Carlebach's new class sought to guide students through Jewish history, the story of the “People of the Book,” through the lens of Jewish books. She would do so via the medium of Columbia's library, which contained a Jewish Studies collection primarily composed of a core that was, at the turn of the twentieth century, the largest in the United States. The course later met in the University's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library, where students could pore over contemporary copies of the historic texts they discussed in class.

The same year Dr. Carlebach began teaching the class, a \$4 million endowment created the Norman E. Alexander Library for Jewish Studies and the position of Jewish Studies Librarian, to which Michelle Margolis, who would later co-teach the course, was appointed. Indeed, the course grew out of the work Margolis began as Librarian, cataloguing the massive, century-old collection that comprises, alongside expansions thanks to the Alexander endowment, over 125,000 volumes—the largest Judaica manuscript library at a secular university in the United States. “It was a desert before she came,” Dr. Carlebach said in 2019, “there was no way to know what manuscripts we had here without getting on a plane and looking at a catalogue in the basement of the Hebrew University.”





During that first year, as Dr. Carlebach and her students explored the Judaica treasures of the Library, one of the group was Joseph Skloot, a recently ordained rabbi and Columbia Ph.D. student. Nearly a decade and a half later, **Rabbi Joseph Skloot, Ph.D., the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Assistant Professor of Modern Jewish Intellectual History at Hebrew Union College**, would release his first book, *First Impressions: Sefer Hasidim and Early Modern Hebrew Printing* (Brandeis University Press, 2023). We recently had the chance to meet Rabbi Skloot and discuss what he describes as his “book about books,” as well as how his time at Columbia and in Dr. Carlebach’s course, “The Jewish Book in the Early Modern World,” impacted his academic work.

After speaking with Rabbi Skloot, Dr. Carlebach and Michelle Margolis invited us to sit in on one of the course’s meetings this semester, where students discussed and viewed texts related to censorship and distribution in early modern Jewish printing. An abridged version of our interview with Rabbi Skloot and photographs taken during the class meeting on February 21, 2023 follow.

Tell us a bit about your new book.

My book is about textual transformation and the people who made those textual transformations. As a professor, I very often edit my students’ work, something that I didn’t actually realize I would do so much. I find that I am regularly transforming sentences from the passive voice into the active voice, and I’ve come to see that my mission as a historian is very much the same thing. That is to say, I’m transforming sentences that are passive into the active voice. Someone made this text what it is now because of the changes that he introduced into the text. I am, on the most microscopic level, trying to trace the metamorphoses that Jewish texts underwent in the process of printing. What printers did to those texts made them what they are today and those printers gave these modified texts the halo of canonicity. As a result, Jewish culture has become what it is.

Is there a specific case study or example?

My book is a book about books, and one book in particular called *Sefer Hasidim*. The *Sefer Hasidim* is a twelfth- and thirteenth-century Franco-German corpus of manuscripts that are associated with each other, but the printers of that book made a whole host of choices that made the *Sefer Hasidim* as we know it today. In Jewish culture in the subse-

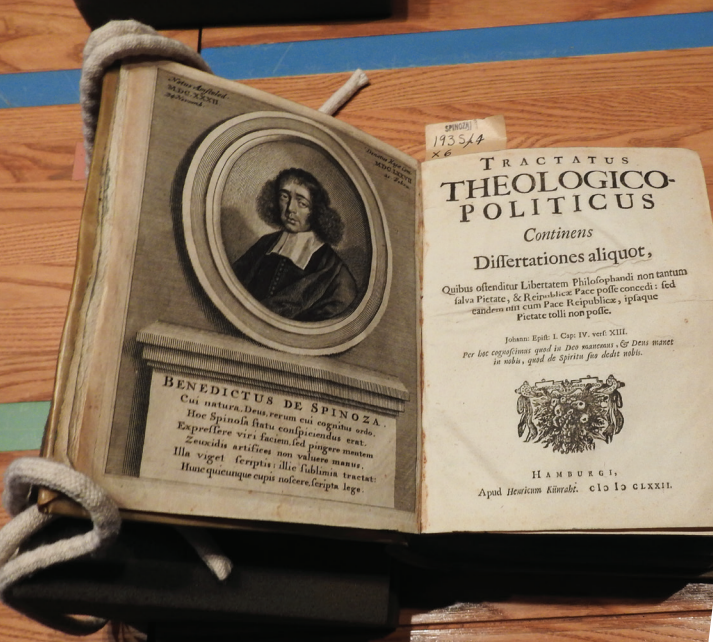
quent centuries, *Sefer Hasidim* has acquired a very important place as a manual of piety for Jews. Primarily as a result of Hasidism, it has accrued great authority, though it wasn’t Hasidic in the modern sense of Hasidic; it’s Hasidic in the medieval sense of Hasidic. Modern Hasidim read it and care about it, as well as some circles in liberal Judaism. It has become, I would argue, a canonical Jewish book, because of printing. That’s what my book is about.

Other scholars at this moment, and in recent years, have done similar work—not exactly with the kind of microscopic lens that I’ve taken—but, for instance, Professor Daniel Abrams, who’s a scholar of the *Zohar*, has made a very similar claim about the *Zohar*, that the *Zohar* wasn’t “the *Zohar*” as we know it until it was printed in the print shops of Northern Italy. I have a colleague in Israel I [Yaakov Meir], who recently produced a book about the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, the Palestinian Talmud, arguing that it only became the Palestinian Talmud as a result of the work of its editors in Bomberg’s workshop in the sixteenth century. My work is part of a broader trend in Jewish studies of elevating the prominence of printers as actors in shaping Jewish culture.

Jewish culture tends to assume that the books that we have on our bookshelves, the ones on our walls that look all nice, came down from Mount Sinai as they are and as we have them. Instead, the work of making these texts seem as if they have come down from Mount Sinai was accomplished by individual actors.

Was the process at all informed by your experiences in Dr. Carlebach’s class?

Yes, I was in the first iteration of Professor Carlebach’s seminar on the history of the Jewish book, which at the time she taught by herself. When I started at Columbia in 2010, Professor Carlebach taught that class for the first time and I was in that first seminar. Much of the course was captivated by this question of printing and the fact that Jews became engaged in the work of printing. There are, evidently, many scholars in Jewish studies who have grappled with these questions before, but this course made it clear to me that the subject was ripe for a kind of intensive analysis. That seminar dealt with a whole host of issues around the Hebrew and Jewish book: manuscript production, digitization, censorship, and changes to text over time, which are all questions that appear in my book and are important in my research. That seminar was really the jumping off point for my interest in the field.



I also want to additionally emphasize that Professor Carlebach is the jumping off point for my research—her guidance on these questions, her interest in this field, and her own work in this field. During my time at Columbia, she was writing her book on the Jewish Calendar and a very significant portion of that book deals with the printed Jewish calendar. The innovations of one particular printer come up in the book; in fact, he also features in my book, a fellow named Israel Zifroni, who produced Hebrew calendars in Northern Italy and was a real innovator in Jewish printing. He also produced an edition of the book that I study.

While I was studying at Columbia with Professor Carlebach and she was working on that project, I found my way to this topic on a sort of parallel track, ultimately focusing on the *Sefer Hasidim* for a number of reasons. It came out in numerous editions, including two very important ones in the sixteenth century, in very different places, from very different printing houses. It also turned out that Peter Schäfer, a professor under whom I studied in college, directed what became known as the Princeton *Sefer Hasidim* project, which is an international collaboration studying *Sefer Hasidim* and its manuscripts.

When the class met in the seminar room in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at Columbia, we would look over the treasures of the Columbia Library—actually, the two editions of the book that I’m studying are in the Columbia collection. A significant portion of Columbia’s core collection came from the Congregation Emanu-El of New York’s library. They were given to Columbia from the synagogue as a gift because Richard Gottheil, the first professor of Rabbinic Literature and Semitic Languages at Columbia, arguably the first professor of Jewish Studies at Columbia, was the son of Rabbi Gustav Gottheil of Congregation Ema-

nu-El. The Congregation has actually been a patron of my scholarship at various points over the last several years and I even had an appointment there as a scholar for a few years. The fact that those treasures of the collection, which made themselves apparent in the seminar room, were actually connected to Emanu-El, where I later worked, is a very nice synergy, too. In fact, the works that I was looking at were from that original Emanu-El collection. The first printing of the book that I study was in Bologna, and the press in Bologna publishes just under ten books, most of which are found in the Columbia collection thanks to their preservation in that much older Emanu-El collection.

What’s next?

I’m working on a project now that’s dealing with the 1578-1580 edition of the Talmud published in Basel, which features in my book, by a Christian printer, looking at the ways that that text was adapted and glossed. I published an article, coming out next year, about digitization in Jewish culture, another area I am studying. I also led a conference on digitization, in which Columbia’s Jewish Studies Librarian Michelle Margolis participated, earlier this year. I’m interested in digitization as a theological and a practical concern in Jewish study and scholarship, the topic of another paper on that will ultimately be published. As you can see, digitization is the next frontier after printing, in some ways. One of the claims that I make in the paper that’s coming out soon is that the digitization process is not all that different from the process of printing, it’s not as much of an innovation as it has been perceived to be. I also have a number of other little projects on the side that I’m working on, but those are the key ones right now.

Nathaniel Dinu Askanase is the Communications Manager at the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies.



GETTING TO KNOW... ELLY MOSESON

Elly Moseson is the 2022-2023 Warren and Susan Stern Postdoctoral Fellow in Jewish Thought at the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies and Lecturer in the Religion department at Columbia University.

01 | *How did you get involved with Jewish Studies? What was your path to academia?*

I was raised in a traditional Jewish community. I had a yeshiva education, with very little secular studies, but at some point I realized I wanted to go to college. I had all these interests I wanted to explore—I eventually did that, and I ended up studying English literature and Philosophy at Columbia, just because it was what I was most curious about. I took some Jewish studies classes while I was at Columbia—whatever was being offered at the time—and when I graduated I thought I'd like to continue in academia, and I realized that I loved literature, but I didn't feel like I had much to contribute to the study of English literature.

I also realized, though, that I maintained a strong interest in Jewish history, Jewish literature, Jewish mysticism in particular, and Hasidism. So, I thought that it would make more sense to pursue a graduate degree focusing on an area where I had certain unique strengths and skills and a greater interest, so that's what I did. I did a doctorate in Religious Studies, focusing my dissertation on the Hasidic movement.

02 *What are you currently researching and working on?*

A number of projects! The main project is a monograph that is, basically, a history of Hasidic literature—how this tradition began, what it is about, and what it can tell us about the nature of Hasidism, how it grew, and how it was disseminated? I'm focusing primarily on the literary aspects of the movement, the history of which hasn't received much attention. A great deal can be learned from looking at the texts, figuring out where they're coming from, how they're being copied and printed, and how they're being read and evaluated—both inside the movement and outside.

I've also been working on some new directions in my research, particularly on Jewish magical traditions, somewhat related to Hasidism, but going a little more broadly into the nature of Jewish magic and the role it played in Jewish society; how it related to other cultures in which Jews lived. It's a really fascinating topic.

03 *What books are you reading now?*

I've been writing mostly, but I've been reading some magic books, including one that is basically a magic manuscript. It's two volumes; one is a transcription and one is a facsimile of the actual manuscript. It details Kabbalistic magical traditions of various sorts and is from the fifteenth century. I've just been going through it and trying to understand all these things—what was collected and what people thought to record, and what these rituals were about. This manuscript also has annotations, with comparisons to other sources, and an introduction by Gideon Bohak, who's one of the major experts in Jewish magic.

04 *What are you most looking forward to?*

I'm looking forward to finishing my monograph, but also to really focusing on my project on Jewish magic. Hopefully, I'll have more opportunities to teach, which I've been enjoying greatly. So I'm looking forward to those possibilities and, then, maybe traveling to conferences or libraries in some nice areas of the world.

05 *You're hosting a dinner party—who would you invite from any point in history?*

Hosting a dinner party, I don't know! Well, I can't host the dinner party with just one person, but I'm curious to meet the Besht [an abbreviation for "Baal Shem Tov," the name given to the eighteenth-century Ukrainian rabbi Israel ben Eliezer, a key figure in early Hasidic Judaism], who I've done so much research about and who remains a real enigma as far as his personality is concerned. It would probably go a long way in trying to understand him, just to see him and get a sense of his mannerisms—because my sense is that he was a very strange kind of person and I'd like to get an idea of that strangeness.



GETTING TO KNOW... MONICA KLEYMAN

Monica Kleyman is an MA student at the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies at Columbia University. Her research interests include the history of Jews in the Soviet Union, as well as the emigration patterns and processes of Soviet Jews.

01 *How did you get involved in Jewish Studies?*

My interest in Jewish Studies starts with my background: I was born to a secular Jewish family from the former Soviet Union and was the first in my family to be born in the United States. Even though we didn't practice or have anything Jewish in the house, my parents always said, "You aren't Russian or Ukrainian, you're Jewish." When I began my undergraduate studies, I wasn't sure about my major at all, but I gravitated towards classes about Judaism, Israel, and the Middle East—I ended up graduating with majors in History and Economics, with a strong focus on Jewish history in the former.

While I was in undergrad, I also began to engage with the area of research that would some day develop into my MA thesis. I really wanted to write about the stories of Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union, but found that my desired scope was overly ambitious for an undergraduate thesis. My thesis advisor suggested that I might be better off working on a study of the organizations that helped Soviet Jews emigrate and resettle, something on which scholarship and sources were far more readily available. I wanted to represent individual refugees' and families' stories. I was disappointed, though, that the stories of individual immigrants weren't really represented in this research.

02 *How did you continue this work at the postgraduate level?*

Firstly, when deciding where I wanted to pursue a Masters' degree, I knew that I wanted to work somewhere secular and be a part of a secular scholarly community. I was very fortunate to find the IIJS program at Columbia, which allowed me to continue my focus on Jewish history within a secular context.

As I thought about my thesis, I knew that I wanted to continue telling the stories of Soviet Jewish refugees, a story that I think is not well known to Jewish audiences or even to the children of Soviet Jews. I did research at the archives of the Center for Jewish History (CJH) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS). I focus on HIAS in particular throughout the thesis, since it was the only organization dedicated more broadly to immigrants' and human rights that fought for Soviet Jewry—they saw them as humans first and as Jews second.

My thesis is centered around the years of 1987 through 1993, known as the "crisis years" for refugee resettlement organizations and the U.S. government. Under the USSR's new glasnost liberalization policies, emigration suddenly became a possibility for millions of Soviet citizens. Jews had been fleeing the Soviet Union in significant numbers since the 1960s, but 1987 was a real watershed year: one million Jews left the USSR, 90% of whom wished to move to the United States.

The American government reacted by quickly changing its immigration laws to restrict the entry of Soviet Jewish migrants. They would not enjoy asylum status, as in the past, and now had to "prove" that they were persecuted in order to gain entry. This thesis examines the stories of individuals and families who tried and succeeded—or failed—to gain entry into the United States through this process. The second section, in fact, is titled "Not Persecuted Enough" as a nod to the denial of asylum status for the applicants featured. Ultimately, the paper addresses three central questions: who is a refugee? Who is persecuted enough? Who gets to decide?

03

What was unique about being at the IIJS and at Columbia while working on this research?

To be honest, I'm not sure I would have even been able to do this research the way I wanted if I weren't at Columbia. Working on this thesis was the first time I was able to actually find individual stories and cases of Jewish refugees and their families, thanks to the access I had to archives. As I mentioned earlier, I used the archives of HIAS at the CJH, working with documents in English and in Russian. Being at Columbia, I was able to literally just go to these archives as often as necessary—it made a very difficult research process a bit easier. I also had the help of my thesis advisor, Ofer Dynes [Leonard Kaye Assistant Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, Dept. of Slavic Languages].

04

What's next for you?

Well, I'm really hoping to continue my work on this project in a PhD program. There's still so much I want to investigate and explore that I haven't been able to as of yet. For example, I'd like to focus further on the experiences of Jews from Central Europe, the Bukharian, Georgian, and Tajik Jews. I also want to do more work with the archives of the JDC [American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee], which I anticipate will tell a very different story than the HIAS archives. The JDC was explicitly Zionist and focused specifically on Jewish issues, unlike the universalist aims of HIAS' work. I also want to examine how Russian and Soviet Jews were absorbed into American Jewry when they arrived in the states.

Moreover, I think that continuing to do this research is incredibly important, as this is a woefully under-discussed topic. I help run an affinity group for Russian Jews at the Jewish Federations of North America and, for many participants, hearing about my research is the first time they'll be hearing about this background from which their families came. So, in addition to my scholarship, I am very interested in teaching and advocacy around this issue. Within and outside of Russia, there's also an important need to combat denialism and apologetics about antisemitism under the Soviet regime.

FACULTY NEWS

BETH BERKOWITZ

My article on “The Rhetoric of the Mishnah” came out recently in *What Is the Mishnah?*, edited by Shaye Cohen and published by Harvard University Press, and my annotated bibliography “Jews and Animals” on the intersection between animal studies and Jewish studies should be out shortly in the online series *Oxford Bibliographies in Jewish Studies*. I’ll be giving a paper in May 2023 on “Animal Studies and the Talmud” in a conference on the Babylonian Talmud sponsored by the Harvard Law School, which has plans to publish a volume from the conference papers. Upcoming writing projects include “Biblical Animals in Early Rabbinic Texts” in the *Oxford Handbook of the Bible and Animals* and an in-progress book manuscript called *What Animals Teach Us about Families: Kinship and Species in the Bible and Rabbinic Literature*. I co-chaired a conference this past fall sponsored by the Jewish Law Association called “The Big in Jewish Law.” I continue to serve out my three-year term on the Association of Jewish Studies Program Committee and will be chairing a two-year task force exploring innovations to the conference program. I gave the keynote address in March for the online conference “Humanimal: The Bible and ‘Animal’ Others.”

CLÉMENCE BOULOUQUE

Clémence Boulouque, the Carl and Bernice Witten Assistant Professor of Jewish and Israel Studies, was granted tenure this year!

ELISHEVA CARLEBACH

Elisheva Carlebach published “Character and Community: Aspects of Jewish Identity in early-modern Germany,” in the volume *Baron Award Lectures*, eds. Rachel Blumenthal, Daniel M. Herskowitz, and Kerstin Mayerhofer; and an article on women’s *hevrot kadisha*, “Sacred Sororities: Devotion and Death in Early Modern Jewish Communities,” in *Jewish History*, co-authored with Debra Kaplan. In the Fall, she represented IJJS as co-sponsor of the conference “Yiddish in the Heights;” participated in the online conference at York University, Toronto, “New Takes on the Past; Contemporary Perspectives on Medieval Judaism;” delivered the George Mosse Lecture Series at University of Wisconsin-Madison on the topic of “Gender and the Jewish Archive;” and in the Spring, participated in a long deferred celebration of the appearance of her edited volume for the Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization, held at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Shearith Israel.

JEREMY DAUBER

Jeremy Dauber’s latest book, *Mel Brooks: Disobedient Jew*, was released through Yale University Press on March 7, 2023 as part of their “Jewish Lives” biography series.

In *Mel Brooks: Disobedient Jew*, Jeremy Dauber considers Brooks’s extensive body of work, illuminating the man behind *Your Show of Shows*, *Blazing Saddles*, *Young Frankenstein*, and *Spaceballs*. Dr. Dauber argues that Brooks has seen the most success when he has found a balance between his unflagging, subversive, manic energy and the constraints imposed by comedic partners, the Hollywood system, and American cultural mores.

Dr. Dauber also explores how Brooks’s American Jewish humor went from being solely for niche audiences to an essential part of the American mainstream, paving the way for generations of Jewish (and other) comedians to come. This is a book for anyone interested in movies, humor, American culture, or Jewishness.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

AGNIESZKA LEGUTKO

IT HAS BEEN A BUSY YEAR FOR AGNIESZKA LEGUTKO, the Director of Yiddish Studies in the Department of Germanic Languages. Dr. Legutko received the 2022-2023 Office of the Provost's Teaching and Learning Grants for the redesign of her "Magic and Monsters in Yiddish Literature" course. A key component of the grant is to create a new online archive, *Dybbuk Afterlives 1920-2022*, dedicated to the production history of Shalom Ansky's play, *The Dybbuk, Or Between Two Worlds*. *The Dybbuk*, which Dr. Legutko describes as a "Jewish Romeo and Juliet crossed with The Exorcist," was written sometime between 1914 and 1917 and is the most frequently staged play in the history of Jewish theater. Since its world premiere in 1920, there have been over a hundred productions and adaptations of—or works inspired by—Ansky's masterpiece, which is a testimony to its ongoing cultural impact. Throughout the Spring semester, students in the Magic and Monsters course have engaged in archival research in order to create entries for the archive.

In November 2022, Dr. Legutko also took part in two conferences. She was one of the key organiz-

ers of "Yiddish in the Heights: Exploring Yiddish Academia and Activism in Postwar New York," a conference marking the 15th yortsayt of Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter, an immigrant who spearheaded a new wave of Yiddish activism in New York. This conference honored Dr. Schaechter by exploring his legacy at Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary, the two Morningside Heights institutions with which he was affiliated. Moreover, the conference examined the place of Yiddish in American academia—its past, the current state of the field, and its future—set against a larger Jewish-American context.

Dr. Legutko also participated in "Di froyen, Celebrating Women in Jewish Literature," a conference hosted by the Yiddish Book Center to celebrate Yiddish women, translators, and scholars. Dr. Legutko was featured at an event in conversation with Irena Klepfisz, the famed Yiddishist, poet, and academic, reflecting on the original 1995 *Di froyen* conference and the growing prominence of Yiddish women writers, translators, artists, and scholars from the beginnings of the modern feminist movement until today.



Students at the YIVO summer intensive Yiddish program, hosted at Columbia during the 1960s and 1970s, with Dr. Mordkhe Schaechter (center, in the white shirt).

COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

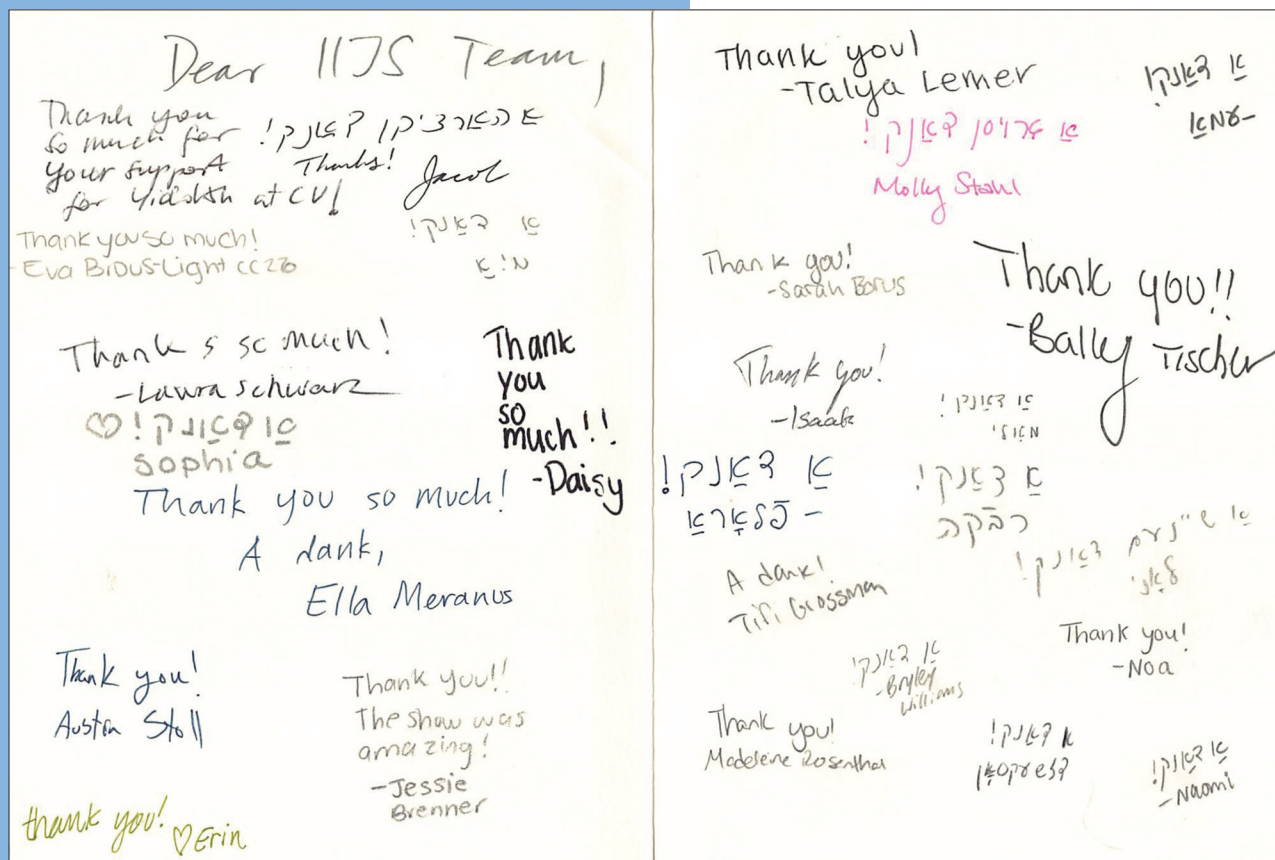
Students in Prof. Agi Legutko's undergraduate Yiddish class thanked the IJIS for funding off-campus experiential learning

Spring 2023

- JEWISH IDENTITIES IN FRANCE
- A GLOBAL HISTORY OF JEWISH MIGRATION AND THE STATE
- JEWISH CULTURE IN TRANSLATION IN MEDIEVAL IBERIA
- MAGIC AND MONSTERS IN YIDDISH LITERATURE
- HISTORY OF MODERN ISRAEL

Fall 2023

- MEMORY AND TRAUMA IN YIDDISH LITERATURE
- IMMIGRANT NEW YORK
- JEWISH MUSIC IN NEW YORK
- ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS
- READINGS IN JEWISH LITERATURE: HUMOR IN MODERN JEWISH LIT



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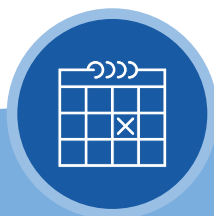
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