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ARGUING THE MODERN JEWISH CANON:
ESSAYS ON JEWISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE IN HONOR OF RUTH R. WISSE

Edited by Justin Camney, Dara Horn, Alyssa Quint, Rachel Rubinstein

MAIMONIDES AFTER 800 YEARS:
ESSAYS ON MAIMONIDES AND HIS INFLUENCE

Edited by Jay M. Harris

Distributed by Harvard University Press

Recent PUBLICATIONS

ARGUING THE MODERN JEWISH CANON

CENTRE FOR JEWISH STUDIES

DISTRIBUTED BY HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS

UNDERGRADUATE PRIZES

The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2009 Norman Podhoretz Prize in Jewish Studies and the 2009 Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies.

Jonathan Gould ’10, a junior in Eliot House, won this year’s Norman Podhoretz Prize in Jewish Studies for his essay, “Pluralism, Education, and Acculturation: The Scopes Trial and American Jewish Life in the 1920’s.” This award “is given to the Harvard University student who submits the best essay, feature article, or short story on a Jewish theme. A tribute to Norman Podhoretz, editor of Commentary magazine from 1960 to 1995, the prize is sponsored by the Ernest H. Wener Fund of the American Jewish Committee.”

Samuel Jacoby ’09, a senior in Pforzheimer House and Jacob Victor ’09, a senior in Leverett House, both won this year’s Selma and Lewis Weinstein Prize in Jewish Studies. Samuel Jacoby’s entry was “Rabbi Abendana’s Kuzari: The Story of a Book in 17th Century Amsterdam” and Jacob Victor’s entry was “A Sort of Columbus to Those Near-at-Hand: The Cultural Vision of Saul Bellow.” The Weinstein Prize, which is given to the Harvard University student or students who submit the best undergraduate essay in Jewish studies, was established by Lewis H. Weinstein, A.B. 1927, LL.B. 1930.

CONGRATULATIONS

The Center for Jewish Studies wishes to congratulate the following 2008-2009 Graduate

YEHUDA KURTZER, PH.D., JEWISH STUDIES

Cover photo: Professor James L. Kugel of Bar Ilan University gives the Alan and Elizabeth Doft Lecture in December 2008

MOORE COLLEGE OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY

SUMMER 2009
Asya Vaisman has always been interested in languages. Moving from Moscow to Chapel Hill, North Carolina at the age of seven, Asya had to learn English quickly. And while Russian was the main language at home, Asya explains that she “grew up with Yiddish,” her grandparents spoke Yiddish, and her parents, both of whom are scientists, maintain a major website on Yiddish culture. Partly because she grew up in such a multilingual environment, by the time Asya enrolled in Barnard College, she had a deep interest in Yiddish-language, culture and music, passions that still drive her today. At Barnard, she created her own undergraduate major in Yiddish and Linguistics.

Her PhD dissertation at Harvard reflects these interests and is entitled “Being Heard: The Singing Voices of Hasidic Women,” and it analyzes the Yiddish songs and singing practices of contemporary Hasidic women. Asya conducted fieldwork for this research project in Williamsburg and Borough Park, Brooklyn, Antwerp, Belgium, Jerusalem and Rehovoth, Israel, and London, UK. She interviewed Hasidic women, recorded them singing Yiddish songs, studied lyric sheets, and visited girls’ schools, performances, and rehearsals. “Almost all of these songs are new,” explains Asya. Before the Holocaust, women sang mostly secular songs. In the past half-century, however, there has been a shift to stricter religious observance, which has prompted a rejection of secular Yiddish culture. At the same time, the founding of Hasidic girls’ schools necessitated the creation of a new repertoire of religious and didactic Yiddish songs. These songs are unknown outside of the Hasidic community, because religious tradition prohibits men from hearing women’s voices, and thus there are no commercial recordings or public performances of Hasidic women’s song.

“It is great to be here [at Harvard],” says Asya. “The resources are unparalleled.” She has particularly enjoyed working with her advisor, Professor Ruth Wisse, making use of the Yiddish collection at Widener Library, and has benefited from funding from the Center for Jewish Studies that has supported her fieldwork. Asya has nearly completed her dissertation, and she hopes to defend shortly and receive her Ph.D. degree in November. In September, she will begin the Hazel D. Cole Post-Doctoral Fellowship at the University of Washington in Seattle, where she will teach a course and work on revising her dissertation for publication.

This summer, Asya will attend, perform, and teach at several Yiddish culture and Klezmer music festivals: the Montreal Yiddish Theater Festival, Yiddish Summer Weimar, and KlezKanada. In addition to studying Yiddish music, Asya is also an accomplished Yiddish singer and songwriter. She founded the Columbia Klezmer Band, cofounded the Harvard Klezmer Band, and performs with other small Klezmer groups. Last year, she toured with an original program of songs by composers and poets from Czernowitz (a historically important Jewish center in Eastern Europe) called Der Sod fun Mayn Hartsn (The Secret of My Heart), in New York, Washington, Ukraine and Israel. In addition to music, Asya enjoys Yiddish dance and other folk dancing, and she has recently danced with Greek and Moldovan groups.
The Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, Harvard Center for the Humanities and the Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies

JAMES L. KUGEL
Starr Professor of Hebrew Literature, Harvard University, 1982-2003, Director, Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible, Bar Ilan University

“The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud”
Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Yanoff-Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

The Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, Harvard Center for the Humanities and the Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies

EMANUELA TREVISAN SEMI
Professor of Hebrew and Modern Jewish Studies, Venice University, Italy

“A Jewish Community in Ethiopia Imagined into Existence in Nineteenth Century France”
Wednesday, November 12, 2008

Estelle and Howard Rubin Research Fund

The Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, Harvard Center for the Humanities and the Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies

JUSTIN CAMMY
Co-Director, Program in Jewish Studies; Programs in Comparative Literature, Middle East Studies, and American Studies, Smith College

“Between High and Low: Yiddish, Translation and the Canon” by two editors of the new volume Arguing the Modern Jewish Canon: Essays on Literature and Culture in Honor of Ruth Wisse
Tuesday, December 16, 2008

Abraham and Rachel Bernstein Fund and the Joseph Engel Fund
Tehilla Altshuler’s academic career has followed an unexpected path from legal studies to literature. She earned her doctorate in law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, focusing on concentration of ownership in the print media in Israel and other countries. After that, she was a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, where she was exposed to the problems of ownership in the new media market (Internet). She returned to Israel to teach at the New School for Public Policy at Hebrew University and to head the project on media and democracy at the Israel Democracy Institute.

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While completing her new book, she realized that “legal studies were about telling stories, and stories are what I really want to explore.” Tehilla began to research the connections between modern Israeli literature and the Hebrew Bible.

Dr. Altshuler is very excited about her current study of the Book of Jonah. She is exploring why this male character given the name of a female animal (meaning “dove”) and how this relates to other biblical “dove stories.” She will present her work at the Society of Biblical Literature conference this summer. She thanks the faculty members in Jewish studies here at Harvard, even outside the field of Biblical studies, who have been extremely helpful.

The most significant lesson she has learned at Harvard was a newfound appreciation of Biblical interpretation in languages other than Hebrew, particularly of the sensitivity of readings of Biblical sources by modern American scholars. Tehilla Altshuler has also enjoyed the “enormous” collection of Hebrew language books in Harvard’s libraries, “every modern Hebrew book you can think of.” She shared a story of how she borrowed several Haggadot from the library collection shortly before Passover, including one that was nearly 500 years old. She viewed them with her children, and was amazed that they could actually touch these texts, see the matza crumbs and the wine stains. Tehilla and her husband have three children, ages 14, 13 and 2.

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CJS COURSE Listings

Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Core Curriculum
Foreign Cultures 90: Tel Aviv: Urban Culture in Another Zone
Historical Study A44: Jews in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Emergence of Israel

Literature and Arts A93: The Hebrew Bible and Its Worlds—(New Course)

Freshman Seminars
*Freshman Seminar 33: Who is a Jew? Jewish Identity and Identity in the Modern World
*Freshman Seminar 49: The Holocaust, History and Reaction

Germanic Languages and Literature
German 273: German-Jewish Love Stories—(New Course)

Literature and Comparative Literature
Literature 157 (formerly Comparative Literature 111): From Typo to Self in the Middle Ages
Literature 163: Jewish Languages and Literature—(New Course)
Literature 166 (formerly Comparative Literature 166): The Comic Tradition in Jewish Culture
*Comparative Literature 211: Mythsicum and Literature: Seminar
Comparative Literature 277: Literature and Diaspora—(New Course)

History
*History 70A: Selves and Other Peoples in Classical Antiquity—(New Course)
*History 82: Formerly *History 1466: Vichy France in Comparative Perspective
History 1010 (formerly History 1085): The Roman Empire, Augustus to Constantine

History 1080 (formerly History 1159): The Jews in Muslim and Christian Spain
*History 2260 (formerly *History 2441): Central Europe: Seminar

Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Studies
Ancient Near East 120: Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures
Ancient Near East 128: Jewish Apocalypticism
Ancient Near East 135: Biblical Theology: Hebrew Bible
Ancient Near East 137: The Hebrew Prophets
Ancient Near East 138: The Bible and Politics
Ancient Near East 210: Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible
Ancient Near East 225: The Greek Bible in History and Theology: Seminar—(New Course)
Ancient Near East 230: Biblical Theology: Seminar—(New Course)

Postbiblical Jewish Studies
Jewish Studies 55: Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness
Jewish Studies 104: Introduction to Rabbinic Culture
Jewish Studies 112: The Poet as Translator
Jewish Studies 114: History versus Literature in Modern Jewish Texts
Jewish Studies 135: Jewish-Arab Encounters: the Classical Ages
Jewish Studies 140: Deconstruction and Questions of Jewish Identity: Seminar
Jewish Studies 145: Agnon’s Art of the Jewish Novel—(New Course)
Jewish Studies 146 (formerly Jewish Studies 215): Does Glikl Stand Alone? Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Autobiographical Writing
Jewish Studies 147: Introduction to Penteuch—(New Course)
Jewish Studies 154: Land, Center, and Diaspora in Ancient Judaism—(New Course)

Jewish Studies 160: History and Historiography in Rabbinic Literature—(New Course)
Jewish Studies 207: Rewriting Scripture in Jewish Antiquity: Seminar—(New Course)
*Jewish Studies 300: Reading and Research in Postbiblical Jewish Studies

Hebrew Language Courses
Classical Hebrew A: Elementary Classical Hebrew
Classical Hebrew 120a: Intermediate Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 120b: Intermediate Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 130a: Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 130b: Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 138: Historical Grammar of Biblical Hebrew
Modern Hebrew 8: Elementary Modern Hebrew
Modern Hebrew 120a: Intermediate Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 120b: Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew 125a: Advanced Modern Hebrew I: “All About Boys and Girls”
Modern Hebrew 125b: Advanced Modern Hebrew II: “Bible Now!”
Modern Hebrew 130a: Seminar in Advanced Modern Hebrew: A Cultural History of Israel
Modern Hebrew 134a: Seminar in Advanced Modern Hebrew: Israeli Humor and Satire
Modern Hebrew 130b (formerly Modern Hebrew 136a): Hebrew for Academic Reading
Modern Hebrew 130b (formerly Modern Hebrew 136b): Hebrew for Academic Reading—(New Course)

Hebrew Literature Courses
Hebrew 148 (formerly Hebrew 240): Rabbinic Stories and Rabbinic Thought: Seminar
Hebrew 160: The Origins and Development of the Classical Jewish Library
Hebrew 164: Hebrew City—(New Course)
Hebrew 171: The Problem of Language in Medieval Jewish Thought
Hebrew 191: From Jewish Literature to Israeli Literature: Seminar
*Hebrew 200: Problems in the Literature, History, and Religion of Israel: Seminar
Hebrew 211: Literature of Israel: Seminar
Hebrew 235: The Binding of Isaac: (Qebdad): Seminar
Hebrew 236: Song at the Sea: Seminar
*Hebrew 300: Classical Hebrew Language and Literature
*Hebrew 350: Postbiblical Hebrew Language and Literature

Yiddish
Yiddish A: Elementary Yiddish

Yiddish B: Intermediate Yiddish I
Yiddish Bb: Intermediate Yiddish II
Yiddish Ca: Advanced Yiddish I
Yiddish Cb: Advanced Yiddish II
Yiddish 108: Golden Atlantus: The Submerged Culture of Yiddish in America
Yiddish 110: Yiddish Drama on Stage and Screen—(New Course)
Yiddish 120: Modern Yiddish Classics: Seminar—(New Course)
Yiddish 210: Modern Yiddish Literature: Seminar—(New Course)
*Yiddish 300: Yiddish Language and Literature

The Study of Religion
Religion 1005: World Religions in Boston: Seminar
Religion 1007: Religion in Multicultural America: Case Studies in Religious Pluralism
Religion 1076: Religion and Politics in Current “Fundamentalist” Movements
Religion 1212a: Judaism: The Liturgical Year
Religion 1212b: Judaism: The Liturgical Year
Religion 1241: Classical Rabbinic Literature in Translation—(New Course)
Religion 1529: The Holocaust and the Churches, 1933-45—(New Course)
Religion 2641: Orthodoxy: Religion, Truth, and Authority: Seminar

Harvard Divinity School Courses
1469: Reading Midrash
2146, 4231: Advanced Greek: Alexandrana
4221: Intermediate Greek II

Harvard Law School Courses
Israel/Palestine Legal Issues
Jewish Law: The Legal Thought of Maimonides
Holocaust and the Law: Seminar (The)
Holocaust Litigation
Talmudic Law Advanced: The Rambam: Seminar
Talmudic Law for Beginners

Extension School Courses
HST E1152: History of Jewish-Christian Interaction from Jesus to the French Revolution
REU 1027: From the Hebrew Bible to Judaism, from the Old Testament to Christianity (13081)
REU 1029: The Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible (22944)