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CONGRATULATIONS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JULIS-RABINOWITZ PROGRAM IN JEWISH AND ISRAELI LAW AT HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

The Center for Jewish Studies is pleased to share the news of the establishment of a new program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard Law School. Noah Feldman, the Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, and member of the Center for Jewish Studies Advisory Committee, will serve as the program’s inaugural director.

WELCOME, DAVID STERN

by Shaye J.D. Cohen, Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy
Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

DAVID STERN is Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Jewish and Hebrew Literature, with joint appointments in the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and the Department of Comparative Literature. Professor Stern joined the Harvard faculty in July 2015, after teaching at the University of Pennsylvania for many years. For David, returning to Harvard was something of a homecoming, since he received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Harvard, was a Junior Fellow in Harvard’s Society of Fellows, and, more recently, was a Fellow at Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute. Over the years he has won many honors and awards.

The main subject of Professor Stern’s scholarly work is the history of Jewish literary creativity within its larger historical and cultural contexts, and he has written articles, essays, and books on works from virtually every period of Jewish literary history from the early post-Biblical to the contemporary. His scholarship has focused on two areas: first, classical and medieval Hebrew literature, especially Biblical interpretation (Rabbinic midrash in particular); and second, on the history of the Jewish book. On these and other topics David has written numerous books and articles; he is generally recognized as one of the leading experts in the application of literary theory to the study of classical Jewish texts, and one of the pioneer scholars in the emerging field of the history of the Jewish book.

Professor Stern’s teaching focuses on the reading of primary sources, whether in the original language or in translation. In the former case, classes concentrate on foundational Jewish texts like Midrash and Talmud. Among the translation courses, several (e.g. “Catastrophe and Continuity in Jewish Literature” and “The Binding of Isaac”) span the entire length of Jewish literary history, from the Bible to the present. Other courses in translation include “Great Books of Judaism” (Talmud, Bible commentary, the prayerbook, and the Passover Haggadah), and “Ancient Biblical Interpreters,” which tracks the comparative history of ancient and medieval Jewish and Christian biblical interpretation. These courses will be offered by the two departments with which he is affiliated.

The Center for Jewish Studies is delighted to welcome David Stern to our ranks and we look forward to many years of happy association. We are also delighted that his wife, Prof. Kathryn Hellerstein, a professor of Yiddish at the University of Pennsylvania, is spending this year at Harvard with him as a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard and as a Scholar in Residence at the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute.

(For further information about David Stern, including a listing of his major publications, go to http://nelc.fas.harvard.edu/people/david- stern.)
YURI VEDENYAPIN
Preceptor in Yiddish

YURI VEDENYAPIN returned this fall to the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations as Preceptor in Yiddish after a few years in the UK, where he had taught a Yiddish course at Cambridge University and conducted research on the use of Yiddish among London’s Hasidic population. Yuri is currently teaching three levels of Yiddish language courses (elementary, intermediate and advanced) and is also advising an independent study on approaches to Yiddish creative writing. Harvard College students may take Yiddish to satisfy their foreign language requirement. Yuri explains that Yiddish students come from many different academic backgrounds, including linguistics, history, comparative literature, anthropology, theater, and music. “For some of them,” he says, “Yiddish is an essential part of family history; for others it is something more exotic.” He has taught Yiddish for over a decade and has “never stopped marveling at the diversity of [his] students’ motivations and personal stories.”

Yuri’s own story, which began in Moscow, Russia, has a few of the same elements as those of his students. He was drawn to Yiddish at a young age, even though the main language spoken in his family was Russian. As a child, he spent a lot of time with his great-grandmother, who was the last living member of his family to have been brought up in a shtetl in the so-called “Pale of Settlement.” To Yuri, Yiddish felt both intimately familiar and strangely mysterious (almost like the stories from
the eight volumes of *A Thousand and One Nights* that he read in their entirety in his early teens). As a musician, he was also attracted to Yiddish songs. He began playing guitar and singing at the age of ten, and Yiddish songs quickly became one of the most popular parts of his repertoire.

It was not always easy to find native Yiddish speakers in Moscow, but Yuri did discover a few, including actors, writers, and rabbis. While in Kiev, Ukraine, in the late 1990s, he met the Vilna-born Yiddish writer Avrom Karpinovitch, whose “sophisticated literary Yiddish, charming personality, and encouragement” inspired Yuri to start a Yiddish student society and to begin offering Yiddish language classes. Around the same time, he took a few trips to Israel, which allowed him to meet a much larger community of Yiddish-speaking intellectuals. Most of these people were in their eighties or nineties, and he felt fortunate to be able to use what felt “like the last opportunity to connect with the past in this direct and personal way by interacting (of course, always in Yiddish) with authentic representatives of Yiddish culture.”

Yuri first visited the United States to participate in the summer program at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. He had “the good fortune to study with some of the leading scholars in the field of Yiddish studies,” including Mor-dkhe Schaechter, Joshua Fishman, and Abraham Novershtern. He later attended Harvard College, where, as a NELC concentrator, he studied Yiddish literature with Professor Ruth Wisse. He feels extremely fortunate to have had such a mentor. Upon graduating from Harvard, Yuri continued his studies in a Ph.D. program at Columbia University with Professor Wisse’s former student, Professor Jeremy Dauber.

Yuri’s current research is on Yiddish travel literature. One of his goals is to explore ways in which the experience of travel affected inter-war Yiddish writers’ understanding of their identity and the notions of home, homelessness, and homecoming. He feels that he “learned so much from reading Yiddish travelogues—whether it’s about a visit to the Western Wall in Jerusalem in 1921, a meeting with Rabindranath Tagore in India in the late 1920s, or an encounter with the only Jewish immigrant of the Pacific island of Rarotonga.”

In addition to his teaching and research, Yuri has been working on some unusual songwriting collaborations. One recent project was with the New York-based group, the Klezmatics. Frank London, the band’s founder, discovered an old klezmer instrumental piece and felt that this tune must be turned into a song with brand-new Yiddish lyrics. He approached Yuri with it, and a new Yiddish song was thus born.

Given his interest in travel and languages, Yuri enjoys creating musical links between Yiddish and other cultures: he translated the lyrics of a famous song associated with the Catalan independence movement, also at the request of the Klezmatics. Another time, Yuri worked with a student from China to translate a Chinese song into Yiddish, attempting to convey the rhythm (and even specific sounds) of the Chinese original. Last October, this project was featured in The Forward, (http://forward.com/culture/music/323094/the-first-chinese-yiddish-song/). His other song projects and collaborations involved Russian, Ukrainian, Hebrew, and German. Yuri’s experience in theater (he studied acting in Moscow) comes in useful both in his teaching and on the stage. Later this year, as part of a conference commemorating the 100th yahrzeit of Sholem Aleichem, he will appear in a three-person play based on Sholem Aleichem’s works.

Yuri enjoys teaching each of the three levels of Yiddish classes offered at Harvard. “I am so impressed by my students’ hard work and genuine desire for learning.” He likes to introduce students to as many aspects of the Yiddish world as possible and to help them discover ways in which the knowledge of Yiddish can enrich their lives outside of class. “I try to tailor the classes to the students’ specific needs and interests where possible,” he explains and adds that he, too, learns a lot from his students. He is proud of his former students’ achievements; some of them have gone on to pursue doctoral work in Yiddish and have themselves become Yiddish language and literature educators.

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“For some, Yiddish is an essential part of family history; for others, it is something more exotic.”

—Yuri Vedenyapin

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FALL 2015 LECTURES & EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 10, 2015

The People of the Book: The Politics of Writing in Jewish Modernity

ANDREAS KILCHER
Professor of Literary and Cultural Studies, ETH Zurich
Yanoff Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

OCTOBER 14, 2015

The “GEDOILIM”: A New Type of Haredi Spiritual Leadership

IMMANUEL ETKES
Professor Emeritus, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Leon I. Mirell Lecture Fund with the Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar at the Mahindra Humanities Center

OCTOBER 23, 2015

The Mystery of the Hebrew Detective

DROR A. MISHANI
Award-winning Israeli crime writer, translator and literary scholar; author of The Missing File and A Possibility of Violence
Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund with the Consulate General of Israel to New England

DROR MISHANI and IRIT AHARONY

IMMANUEL ETKES
OCTOBER 28, 2015
What We Don’t Talk About When We Talk About the Holocaust: Poland After Jedwabne

ANNA BIKONT
Journalist and Writer, Gazeta Wyborcza

RESPONDENT: ANTONY POLONSKY
Emeritus Professor of Holocaust Studies, Brandeis University; Chief Historian, Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Warsaw
Estelle and Howard Rubin Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Study Group, Center for European Studies

NOVEMBER 7, 2015
Film Screening and Q&A with the Director
US Premiere of THE HEBREW SUPERHERO

ASAF GALAY
Director
Jewish Studies Center for Hebrew Culture Foundation Fund with the Boston Jewish Film Festival

NOVEMBER 9, 2015
The Seam-Line That Passes Through Haifa and The Works of Sami Michael

NILI GOLD
Associate Professor of Modern Hebrew Language and Literature, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania
William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Israeli Law, Literature, and Society Seminar, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

DECEMBER 1, 2015
Governing Along Religious Lines: Jews, Muslims, and Christian Settlers in French Algeria, 1830-1870

RACHEL EVA SCHLEY
Research Associate, Harvard University
William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund with the Jews in Modern Europe Study Group, Center for European Studies
NAMED FUNDS IN JEWISH STUDIES

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

NAMED STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS AND PRIZES IN JEWISH STUDIES

Mandell L. Berman Fellowship
Barney and Essie Cantor Scholarship Fund
Harry Edison Fund
Anna Marnoy Feldberg Financial Aid Fund
Leo Flax Fellowship
Goldhirsh-Yellin Foundation Fund for Undergraduate and Graduate Travel to Israel
Hertog Undergraduate Study Abroad Fund
Edward H. Kavinosky Fellowship
Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund
Raphael and Deborah Melamed Fellowship in Jewish Studies
Aaron and Clara Rabinowitz Trust Fellowship
Lewis and Alice Schimberg Graduate Student Fellowship Fund
Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies
Sidney L. Solomon Fellowship
Sosland Family Fellowship
Harry and Cecile Starr Prizes in Jewish Studies
Alan M. and Katherine W. Stroock Family Fellowship for Advanced Research in Judaica Studies
Isadore Twersky Fellowship

NAMED TEACHING AND RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation Yiddish Language Instruction Fund
Joseph Engel Fund
Suzanne and Dr. Lawrence Fishman Fellowship Fund
Freed Research Fund in the Center for Jewish Studies
Isaac-Melech, Icla and Zelma Rykles Memorial Fund
Edwin Lichtig, Jr. Research and Teaching Fund
Joseph Morton Miller Endowed Fund for Yiddish Studies

NAMED LECTURE AND PUBLICATION FUNDS

Yigal Allon Memorial Fund
Abraham and Rachel Bornstein Fund
Alan and Elisabeth Doft Lecture and Publication Fund
Robert and Florence Dreben Lecture and Publication Fund
Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund
William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund
Leon I. Mirell Lecture Fund
Estelle and Howard Rubin Fund
Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund
Harry A. Wolfson Publication Fund
Yanoff-Taylor Lecture and Publication Fund

OTHER NAMED FUNDS

Center for Jewish Studies Fund
Suzanne R. and Dr. Lawrence M. Fishman Endowed Fund for Jewish Studies
Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies
Josephine and Martin Gang Memorial Fund
Jeanette and Ludwig Goldschmidt Bequest for the Benefit of the Center for Jewish Studies
Judith and David Lobel Fund for the Center for Jewish Studies

MARIA METZLER (R), BENEFICIARY OF THE BARNEY AND ANNE B. MALLOY MEMORIAL FUND (2013)
FRIENDS OF THE CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

In December 1984, Peter Solomon (AB ’60, MBA ’63) announced the establishment of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies. The Friends of CJS seeks to provide an ongoing base of support for the Center and to enable it to expand its present areas of activity. Annual support from the Friends helps shape the future of Jewish Studies and sustains the Center as an influential, multifaceted enterprise at Harvard.

YOU ARE INVITED

Show your interest in Jewish Studies at Harvard by joining the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies in one of four categories listed in the box above. Friends receive invitations to lectures, symposia and colloquia, copies of the newsletter, and selected publications published by the Center.

If you know anyone who might be interested in joining the Friends, please notify the Center at (617-495-4326) or cjs@fas.harvard.edu, so that we may contact and acquaint them with the Center’s mission.

SOME OF THE PROJECTS SPONSORED BY THE FRIENDS INCLUDE:

- student research projects (both undergraduate and graduate, school year and summer);
- graduate student fellowships;
- research-related expenses for visiting scholars;
- public lectures and class presentations by distinguished scholars;
- doctoral dissertation advising by specialized scholars from outside Harvard;
- group discussions of research in progress for Harvard faculty and students in Jewish studies at the Harvard Jewish Studies Workshop.

HOW TO GIVE

ONLINE: To make a gift by credit card to the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, please click HERE (https://community.alumni.harvard.edu/give/16040850) for Harvard University's online giving form and follow the instructions.

Click on “Select a School/Affiliate” and scroll to UNIVERSITY from the dropdown list. Then under “Select a Fund,” choose OTHER-Harvard University. Under “Gift details,” enter Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies (or the name of another fund of your choice), Center for Jewish Studies.

GIFTS BY CHECK MAY BE MAILED TO:

Center for Jewish Studies, Harvard University
6 Divinity Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138

Please make checks payable to “The President and Fellows of Harvard College” and include a note in the memo line of the check that this is for the “Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies” (or the name of the other fund of your choice).
“I also had the chance to participate in several workshops and to deepen relationships with Spanish colleagues in my field...”

—Joshua Cohen

Ph.D. candidate, Study of Religion

“I had a very fruitful summer, splitting my time between Madrid and Berlin. In Madrid, I conducted archival research at several national libraries essential to my work on the literatures of Morisco and Converso communities—i.e., communities of Muslims and Jews forcibly converted to Christianity—in late medieval and early modern Spain. As an affiliate of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), I also had the chance to participate in several workshops and (over many coffees) to deepen relationships with Spanish colleagues in my field. In Berlin, I undertook intensive German study, which will be essential to the more philosophy-oriented part of my doctoral research. I don’t know what I would have done without generosity of the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship and the Center for Jewish Studies.

—Joshua Cohen

Ph.D. candidate, Study of Religion

I am really grateful for the financial support from the Center for Jewish Studies and the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship this past summer, which allowed me to attend a 3-week Yiddish summer course at the Paris Yiddish Center Medem Library.

I was enrolled in the advanced level classes, co-taught by Khayele Beer (UCL) and Yitskhok Niborski (INALCO-Medem Library). It was a wonderful experience to study Yiddish language and literature under the expert guidance of these incredibly knowledgeable professors, both highly regarded scholars in the field of Yiddish studies and native speakers of Yiddish. We read wonderful poems by Yisroel Shtern, witty short stories by Yossel Birstein, and playful avant-garde poems by Benjamin Harshav. Classes were complemented by a full range of cultural activities, curated by the savvy new director of the Paris Yiddish Center, Tal Hever-Chybowski. It included a series of talks, film screenings, and even an improv theater workshop in Yiddish.

I particularly enjoyed meeting the other students from the program, a wonderfully diverse and motivated group coming from the four corners of Yiddishkeit: Los Angeles, New York, Saint Petersburg, Berlin, Tel Aviv, and even Melbourne! The program provided the rare opportunity to use Yiddish not only in the classroom, but also for daily interactions, which I think allowed participants to make spectacular progress in a relatively short period of time. Last but not least, of course, the jokes were priceless. My personal favorite among the idiomatic expressions we learned during the program (of a particularly long poem): "lang vi der yidisher goles", “long, like the Jewish Exile.”

—Raphael Koenig

Ph.D. candidate, Comparative Literature
The Barry Shrage Travel and Research Fund for Jewish Studies was originally given to me to conduct archival research into the formation of Algerian-Jewish identity under French colonialism. But as the summer approached, the topic changed as I read more and found a related subject that more closely aligned with my interests—trends in Jewish republicanism, as seen in the work of one intellectual, Alain Finkielkraut. The central idea of the thesis is that while a commitment to the Republic and the French Revolution has remained as a constant in the Jewish intellectual firmament, perceptions about where those values fall on the political spectrum have shifted. Republicanism has in many ways come to be seen as an ideology of the right.

I spent my time in Paris reading histories of the Jewish community in France, the evolution of republicanism as an ideology there, and the relationship between Jews and Muslims in the post-war period. This brought me to the capital’s research libraries at the National Archives and the Alliance Israélite Universelle, as well as to its bookstores.

The Shrage fellowship also helped me to engage with Paris’s robust Jewish life. I attended religious services at the city’s Grand Synagogue and looked at the Chagalls in the local Jewish museum. One day I took a trip out to Drancy, the internment camp on the Paris outskirts where so many French Jews passed through on their way to Auschwitz. I treasured the time I spent in Paris, both academically and personally. Many thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies and the Shrage fellowship for giving me this opportunity.

—Daniel Solomon
Harvard College ’16

“The Shrage fellowship also helped me to engage with Paris’s robust Jewish life...”

—Daniel Solomon

With the generous assistance of the Center for Jewish Studies and the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship, I spent the summer of 2015 studying at CUNY’s Latin/Greek Institute in the Upper Level Greek program, reading works by Lysias, Plato, Aristophanes, and Thucydides. The course helped me to gain more intimacy with Ancient Greek which I hope will allow me greater access to Patristic and Hellenistic Jewish texts in their original language.

—Jesse Mirotznik
Ph.D. Candidate,
Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
Last summer, with the generous support of the Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship and the Center for Jewish Studies, I traveled to Berlin and to Buenos Aires. In Berlin, where I stayed for about six weeks, I helped to organize and participate in an international exchange seminar at the Humboldt University. The seminar was centered on the study of ancient Judaism and early Christianity and was attended by students from Harvard, Berlin, and Jerusalem. I also took part in the goings-on of the department—lectures, defenses, and workshops. And together with the other members of the seminar, I explored the fascinating city with an organized cultural program that included tours of the Jewish Museum, the Berlin Cathedral and the Berlin Wall Memorial. After these stimulating six weeks, I headed for Buenos Aires, where I presented a paper related to my dissertation at the International Society for Biblical Literature Conference, the first of its kind in South America. And although my stay in Argentina was only about a week, it was quite rich and rewarding. I received interesting and helpful feedback on my work at the conference. I also listened to very thought-provoking papers, centered mainly on the relationship between political activism and theology. Overall my trip was quite helpful, confronting me with new ideas and giving me new opportunities to present and discuss my work. I would once again like to thank the CJS and the Kavinoky Fellowship for its generous and kind support!

—Gabriel Hornung
Ph.D. candidate, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

I spent last summer studying Arabic in Jerusalem. Thanks to the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship from the Center for Jewish Studies, I was able to concentrate on mastering the difficult forms of literary Arabic as well as improving my spoken colloquial Arabic. This set of skills and experience has opened up new research possibilities, and it will be invaluable as I continue to gain familiarity with the traditions of Judeo-Arabic political thought dominant in the Middle Ages. I’m very grateful to the Malloy fellowship and the Center for Jewish Studies for allowing me to expand my skills as a student of Jewish thought and for allowing me to spend a memorable summer on Mt. Scopus—I hope to return and continue my research soon!

—Jacob Abolafia
Ph.D. candidate, Government

“I was able to concentrate on mastering the difficult forms of literary Arabic as well as improving my spoken colloquial Arabic.”

—Jacob Abolafia
Once again, the Center for Jewish Studies was integral in moving the ball forward on my dissertation project. I am very grateful to have been awarded the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship to pursue my research of contemporary Zionism and its relation to trends in aliyah and anti-Semitism, as well as the contemporary Israeli experience. My summer fellowship allowed me to visit France, work on my language skills, and interact with the French community in Paris, which is currently on the front lines of this vortex of concepts and conundrums. This enabled me to apply my conceptual and theoretical map to lived experience and real narratives.

I was able to continue this work in Israel, which is the other significant player in this drama. Time spent with the French Jewish community there, both tourist and expatriate, further expanded my perspective on how to write compellingly about the contours of the contemporary discourse about diaspora and homeland. As I finish a dissertation on this subject, the CJS grant and the Malloy fund fellowship have both given me the ability to improve the texture of my current work and envision new research avenues to explore.

—Ari Hoffman
Ph.D. candidate, English Department

Thanks to the Center for Jewish Studies and the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship, I was able to travel to Israel this past summer and spend two intensive months studying Israeli poetry in general, and the rise of Mizrahi-Israeli poetry in particular. In addition, I established a personal and professional connection with one of Israel’s leading scholars of Hebrew poetry, Dr. Lilach Lachman at the University of Haifa. Dr. Lachman allowed me to sit in on several graduate-level Hebrew poetry courses, and to thereby make connections with some of Israel’s young literature scholars. This was an especially fruitful connection because I am now in professional contact with an Israeli graduate student currently working on the poetry of Israel’s prize-winning laureate, Erez Biton.

As a result of these encounters, I say with sincere thanks that the CJS and the Malloy Memorial Fund helped me establish the basis for continuing my research on contemporary Mizrahi-Israeli poetry at Harvard and for preparing for a Ph.D. general examination in Modern Hebrew Literature. I am very grateful.

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

“I was able to travel to Israel this past summer and spend two intensive months studying Israeli poetry...”

—Sasson Chahanovich
Over the summer of 2015 I completed original research in France and Israel and learned a new language, Yiddish. The research venture was split into three parts. I spent one month in Paris, three weeks in Jerusalem, and one month in Vilnius, the “Jerusalem of Lithuania.”

In the French and Israeli archives I was looking for answers to research questions I had found throughout my first year as a graduate student studying 19th and 20th century Jewish and European History in the Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations Department at Harvard. I am fascinated by questions of nationality and identity, and through my research have discovered various family archives which provide powerful illustrations of how European Jews assimilated into and interacted with the general French and German societies.

In Paris I worked at the National Archives, the National Library of France (Richelieu and Tolbiac sites), and the archives of the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU), the last of the three being an organization founded in 1860 to protect and connect Jews internationally. I looked through police archives, family archives, civil archives and more on a quest to formalize my thesis topic. Though I still have at least a year to complete my dissertation prospectus, last summer provided key material possibilities for work on European Jewish community, identity, and national history.

On the second leg of my summer journey I went to Israel from July 1-18 to work at the National Library of Israel and the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (CAHJP). They hold archives and material in Hebrew, French, and German that pertain to my questions on nationality and identity, including primary source material such as newspapers, letters, and memoranda. My stint in these two archives was particularly fruitful, as I discovered various family archives that had never before been consulted by other historians.

I ended the summer in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the internationally renowned Vilnius Yiddish Institute. I went there to learn Yiddish, after coming across source material I was unable to read at the National Archives of France. Hidden beneath piles of family letters in French, I stumbled upon a page with Hebrew lettering. Examining the page carefully, I realized it was in Yiddish, not Hebrew, as I initially believed. I was frustrated with my inability to use, interpret, or even address anything written in Yiddish. Remembering that moment, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s celebrated comment comes to mind: “The limits of my language means the limits of my world.” Indeed, language abilities define the horizons of knowledge to which the historian has access.

Yiddish bridges language barriers of Jews who move from one country to the next. As Allison Schachter correctly notes in her work on Jewish history, Yiddish is a key component of the transnational network that European Jews formed. I was impressed by the quality of teaching at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, especially regarding two teachers, Karolina Szymaniak and Abraham Lichtenbaum. The former had a particularly special ability to convey grammar rules in a clear and memorable fashion, while no professor I have ever had parallels the level of knowledge and pedagogy of “Avrom” Lichtenbaum.

I could not have completed a fraction of my research and language study this semester without funding from the Barney and Anne B. Malloy Memorial Fund fellowship and the backing of the Center for Jewish Studies. I am incredibly grateful for their support.

—Tal Grebel, Ph.D. candidate, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
ETHAN SCHWARTZ

Ph.D. candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion’s Hebrew Bible

Ethan Schwartz grew up in Chicago and stayed there for college, graduating from the University of Chicago in 2012 with a double major in Philosophy and Jewish studies. Following graduation, Ethan moved to New York, where he earned his master’s degree in Hebrew Bible at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Even before college, he knew that he had “an intellectual relationship with Jewish texts” that he wanted to pursue in higher education. Currently a second year Ph.D. candidate in the Committee on the Study of Religion’s Hebrew Bible program, Ethan is completing his required coursework and beginning to think about a dissertation topic. His research focuses both on the Hebrew Bible in its ancient Near East setting and the history of biblical interpretation across many time periods, from ancient to modern. “I am interested,” he says, “in the intellectual history of academic biblical scholarship, especially as practiced by observant Jews in the twentieth century.”

Ethan’s secondary field, a requirement for the doctoral program in the Committee on the Study of Religion, is the study of New Testament. “I am beginning to focus more on the New Testament as an example of ancient Jewish biblical interpretation.” He is grateful for the particular training he will receive in the Committee on the Study of Religion, including two semesters of coursework on theories and methods in religious studies. He believes that this training will be helpful both to his scholarship and his search for an academic position in the future. “Today,” he says, “Jewish studies is often located within departments of religion.”

Ethan came to Harvard looking for a program that would provide a solid training in the Hebrew Bible; the languages, religions, and history of antiquity; and modern intellectual history. He also hoped to work with Prof. Jon D. Levenson, who is now his advisor. Prof. Levenson “writes about the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation in a variety of Jewish and Christian settings and is interested in the philosophical issues at stake in biblical interpretation and modern biblical studies.” In addition, Ethan finds that there is “a lot going on” in Jewish studies at Harvard both “across disciplinary boundaries and historical periods.” Not only does Harvard have a large faculty in Jewish studies, but there are also a number of students in other departments doing related work. Ethan is excited about the new program on Jewish Law coming to Harvard Law School. He also enjoys being part of the local Jewish community in Cambridge.

Ethan hopes one day to “teach at a research university that would give me the chance both to train graduate students and to teach undergraduates … in a liberal arts context.” He explains that he is invested in the role of biblical studies as part of a liberal arts and humanities curriculum. He also cares about education in the broader Jewish community, teaching lay people as well as university students. Ethan has enjoyed opportunities in graduate school to teach in Jewish communal settings and is looking into more opportunities in this area. Here at Harvard, he has also been instrumental in reviving the Harvard Jewish Studies Workshop (see next page).
A DISCUSSION WITH ETHAN SCHWARTZ ON

THE HARVARD JEWISH STUDIES WORKSHOP

Last year, two graduate students in Jewish studies revived the former Jewish Studies Student Colloquium series as the Harvard Jewish Studies Workshop after a long hiatus. Ethan Schwartz and Matthew Hass (Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) organized the series last year, and Rephael (Rafi) Stern (Ph.D. candidate in History) has joined Ethan to continue the program this year. According to Ethan, the goal of the Student Colloquium is to gather people from across Harvard doing work in Jewish studies, in any time period or discipline, to share their work and meet each other.

Ethan believes there are many benefits to Harvard’s system of housing Jewish studies students in a number of academic departments, rather than having a separate department of Jewish studies. Ph.D. students working on Jewish studies enroll in doctoral programs in departments including Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, the Study of Religion, Comparative Literature, History, Government, and more. Ethan “thinks it’s a good thing [for Jewish studies] not to become too isolated,” believing that putting all Jewish studies students together in a single department does not necessarily guarantee that they will engage with one another. “For example, I may have more to talk about [academically] with someone doing Assyriology than modern Jewish studies, and that person may have more in common with a student in modern European thought.”

At the same time, students in Jewish studies at Harvard began to express a desire to form an intellectual community with students from other areas of the field. The result was the Workshop, which brings together Jewish studies students that might otherwise be separate from one another. Graduate students (and some undergraduates as well) present their work in progress and offer each other feedback. They sometimes also arrange discussions of current literature in the field, exposing Jewish studies students to research with which they might not otherwise engage. For example, Miriam-Simma Walfish (Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations) spoke at a recent workshop meeting about her research on ancient Jewish liturgical poetry. Professors David Stern and Shaye J. D. Cohen, who attended, offered feedback based on their expertise working with similar material. The feedback was useful to Miriam-Simma as she prepared to present this paper at the Society of Biblical Literature’s annual conference last November. Furthermore, students in attendance who work in other fields, such as modern Jewish history or literature, had the opportunity to learn about a new subject.

Ethan is excited about the Workshop’s plans for the spring semester. Three student presentations are already scheduled for February that represent the diversity of work in the field of Jewish studies: one presentation on the Hebrew Bible, one on late antiquity and medieval studies, and another on modern Israel studies. He notes that the meetings have been well attended by both students and faculty.

“We have also invited Jewish studies students from the greater Boston area to attend,” Ethan explains. “We want to make this a place for collaboration in Jewish studies beyond Harvard. Some schools may have relatively few students in Jewish studies, and they may feel isolated.” Ethan hopes that this collaboration with students from other institutions will help to lay the groundwork for a regional student-run conference in Jewish studies that the Center for Jewish Studies plans to host next year.

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JEWISH STUDIES COURSES 2015-16

GENERAL EDUCATION/INTRODUCTORY CLASSES
Culture and Belief 23: From the Hebrew Bible to Judaism, From the Old Testament to Christianity
Culture and Belief 39: The Hebrew Bible

BIBLICAL/ANCIENT NEAR EAST
Ancient Near East 103: Ancient Lives
Ancient Near East 111: Law in the World of the Bible
Ancient Near East 117: Biblical Archaeology
Ancient Near East 120A: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 1: Pentateuch and Former Prophets
Ancient Near East 120B: Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 2: Latter Prophets and Writings
Ancient Near East 131: Readings in the Septuagint
Ancient Near East 222: History of the Study of the Hebrew Bible: From the Renaissance to the Present: Seminar
Comparative Literature 258: Ancient Interpretation of the Bible
Hebrew 130: Scriptural Interpretation in Ancient Israel: Inner-Biblical Exegesis
Hebrew 205: The Psalms
Hebrew 218: The Joseph Story and the Book of Esther: Seminar
Hebrew 245: The Book of Jeremiah: Composition and Reception
Semitic Philology 151: Introduction to Northwest Semitic Epigraphy
Semitic Philology 220R: Northwest Semitic Epigraphy: Seminar

CLASSICAL, RABBINIC, MEDIEVAL AND MODERN JEWISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE
Comparative Literature 140: Catastrophe and Continuity in Jewish Literature from the Bible to Today
Comparative Literature 277: Literature, Diaspora, and Global Trauma
Expository Writing 20 215: Expository Writing 20
Expository Writing 20 216: Expository Writing 20
Hebrew 243: Critical Study of Midrash
Jewish History 157: The Binding of Isaac in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Tradition
Jewish History 170: Job and the Problem of Suffering
Modern Hebrew 241R: Advanced Seminar in Modern Hebrew: Israeli Culture: Cinema & Literature

JEWSH STUDIES, SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICS
African and African American Studies 180X: Race, Class and the Making of American Religion
Government 94OF: Law and Politics in Multicultural Democracies
Government 1219: Arab-Israeli Conflict

RELIGION
Religion 13: Scriptures and Classics
Religion 25: Judaism: Text and Tradition
Religion 112A: Dreams and the Dreaming
Harvard Divinity School 2024: The Veil in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam
Harvard Divinity School 2825: Religion, Conflict, and Peace

CLASSICAL AND MODERN HEBREW LANGUAGE COURSES
Classical Hebrew AA: Elementary Classical Hebrew
Classical Hebrew AB: Elementary Classical Hebrew
Classical Hebrew 120A: Intermediate Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 120B: Intermediate Classical Hebrew II
Classical Hebrew 130AR: Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew I
Classical Hebrew 130BR: Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew BA: Elementary Modern Hebrew
Modern Hebrew BB: Elementary Modern Hebrew
Modern Hebrew 120A: Intermediate Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 120B: Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
Modern Hebrew 130A: Advanced Modern Hebrew I
Modern Hebrew 130B: Advanced Modern Hebrew II

YIDDISH COURSES
Yiddish AA: Elementary Yiddish
Yiddish AB: Elementary Yiddish
Yiddish BA: Intermediate Yiddish I
Yiddish BB: Intermediate Yiddish II
Yiddish CA: Advanced Yiddish I
Yiddish CB: Advanced Yiddish II

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