

# מדעי היהדות Jewish Studies



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

Department of Jewish Studies

Submitted by

Yael Halevi-Wise, Chair

June 1, 2018

## Faculty

### *Professors*

David Aberbach

Carlos Fraenkel (Joint appointment with Philosophy)

Gershon D. Hundert

B. Barry Levy

### *Associate Professors*

Eric Caplan (Joint appointment with the Faculty of Education)

Yael Halevi-Wise (Joint appointment with English)

Lawrence Kaplan

### *Assistant Professors*

Daniel K. Heller

Christopher Silver

### *Faculty Lecturers*

Lea Fima

Esther Frank

Yuri Vedenyapin

## **1. Research and Publications**

Two books were published this year by members of our department: David Aberbach's *The Bible and the 'Holy Poor': from the Tanakh to Les Misérables* with Routledge, and Daniel Heller's *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism*, which came out with Princeton University Press to wide acclaim in academic and mainstream media.

We also published prolifically in encyclopedias, edited volumes, and leading journals in Jewish Studies and interrelated fields: Carlos Fraenkel's entry on "Spinoza's Philosophy of Religion" appeared in the *Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, edited by Michael Della Rocca (Oxford University Press) and a German translation of his article on philosophy in a divided world appeared in *Über Gott und die Welt: Philosophieren in unruhiger Zeit*, edited by K.P. Liessmann (Szolnay Verlag). Yael Halevi-Wise published harbingers of her forthcoming book on A. B. Yehoshua in *Hebrew Studies* ("The Watchman's Stance in A. B. Yehoshua's Fiction") and *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* ("Holidays in A. B. Yehoshua's Opus and Ethos"). Gershon Hundert published a section of his important work on an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Jewish Galician wine merchant in a collection of essays in Honor of Richard I. Cohen, *Temunat avar*, edited by Ezra Mendelsohn and Eli Lederhendler (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel). Lawrence Kaplan published an article on "Yehezkel Kaufmann, R.

Nachman Krochmal, and the ‘Anxiety of Influence,’” in a volume dedicated to *Yehezkel Kaufmann and the Reinvention of Jewish Biblical Exegesis*, edited by B. Sommer, T. Staubli, and J. Jindo. (Academic Press Fribourg). He also wrote on “The Ethos of Submission, Union with the Spirit of the Torah, and Confronting the Challenges of the Time: R. Abraham Isaiah Karelitz, the Hazon Ish” in *The Gdoilim: Leaders who Shaped Israeli Haredi Jewry*, edited by Benjamin Brown and Nissim Leon (Magnes Press and Van Leer Institute). Members of the department contributed as well to book reviews, dictionary entries and scholarly forums, most notably Carlos Fraenkel’s review of Peter Adamson’s *Philosophy in the Islamic World* (July 29, 2017), which became one of *Los Angeles Review of Books*’ “Most-Read Essays of 2017.”

In 2017, the members of our department presented their research in a variety of locations around the world. Carlos Fraenkel was invited to give several named lectures including the Maimonides Lecture in Hamburg; the Elton lecture at George Washington University; and seminars at the University of St. Andrews and the Freie Universität of Berlin. Dan Heller was invited to deliver a talk about “Antisemitism and the Making of a Modern Tradition” at the Virginia Commonwealth University of Richmond. Lawrence Kaplan spoke about Maimonides and Soloveitchik at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. And Gershon Hundert delivered in Warsaw the keynote lecture at a conference on Space as a Category in Research on the History of Jews in Poland (16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries). In addition, members of our department gave papers and organized conference panels at the *MLA* (Modern Languages Association) and the *AJS* (Association of Jewish Studies); at home in collaboration with the Schulich School of Music and in a variety of congresses around the world, including Kraków, Jerusalem, Toronto and California.

Gershon Hundert continues to be one of three PR’s associated with a major European grant from the Rothschild Foundation on the “Recovering the Records of European Jewish Autonomy.” To complete her book on the poet Rochel Korn, Esther Frank received an ARIA grant in support of a summer intern and also funds from the Foundation for Yiddish Culture. Daniel Heller won an FRQSC for his new project on « Taming the Shtetl: Borderland Jews and the Politics of Relief and Reconstruction in Interwar Poland,” and held an Internal SSHRC Development Grant for new researchers at McGill. Our newest hire, Christopher Silver held a grant from the Posen Society and also benefited from a start-up grant from McGill’s Faculty of Arts, which he immediately put to good use.

**\*A full list of publications and other scholarly contributions of the department in 2017 is appended below.**

## **2. Teaching and Learning**

On the heels of winning the H. Noel Fieldhouse award for distinguished teaching in the Faculty of Arts last year, Daniel Heller received the *Principal’s Prize for Excellence in Teaching* in 2017. We are extremely proud of his achievement and grateful for his dedication to our students, both within the classroom and as Director of Undergraduate Studies during the Winter of 2017.

The Department of Jewish Studies continues to be committed to providing an excellent educational experience to McGill students. We offer, for example, concentrations in Biblical Studies (through Prof. Barry Levy), Jewish History (Profs. Dan Heller, Gershon Hundert, Christopher Silver), Jewish Thought (Profs. Carlos Fraenkel and Eric Caplan), Jewish Literatures (Profs. David Aberbach, Esther Frank and Yael Halevi-Wise), Rabbinic Studies (Prof. Lawrence Kaplan). While we offer courses pertaining to ancient, medieval, and early modern Jewish culture and civilization, courses on the modern era are a particular strength of our department. Our program also reflects the global scope of Jewish civilization, with courses that examine Jewish life in North Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

Rigorous language training is provided in Hebrew by Profs. Lea Fima and Rina Michaeli, and in Yiddish by our new hire, Prof. Yuri Vedenyapin, who has charmed students and is rebuilding the Yiddish language and culture curriculum on campus. Our language programs often link class discussions to events in the Yiddish and Hebrew-speaking communities of Montreal in order to stimulate interest outside of the classroom, and to offer students further opportunities to hear the languages spoken by native speakers.

In addition to the roster of courses offered by our permanent faculty, our course offerings are enriched by Course Lecturers in Jewish Music (Liane Alitowski) and Jewish Film (Garry Beitel). The Flegg Postdoctoral Fellows continue to be a very rich addition to the life of our department. This year was Ofer Dynes second and last year as a Flegg Postdoctoral Fellow. He taught two excellent courses during 2017 and submitted a book manuscript for publication under the guidance of his joint departmental supervisors, Profs. Dan Heller and Gershon Hundert. Our new postdoctoral fellow, ethnomusicologist Jessica Roda, taught jointly with her supervisor, Prof. Eric Caplan. We are delighted to report that both she and Ofer Dynes obtained excellent tenure-track positions in their fields. Ofer Dynes will become Assistant Professor of Jewish Literatures at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Jessica Roda will become Assistant Professor of Jewish Civilization at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington D.C. We are most delighted at their wonderful success!

This year only three graduate students were enrolled in the department: Bakinaz Abdalla, who is completing her PhD with Profs. Fraenkel and Kaplan; Irving Binik, who conducted his MA in the History of Jewish Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible under the supervision of Prof. Levy), and Soroosh Shahriari, who completed his MA with Prof. Fraenkel. However, if we take into consideration that JWST faculty members supervise graduate students across other departments on campus, the number and range of our supervisory responsibilities broadens significantly. For example, this year Gershon Hundert supervises a PhD in Jewish history under the rubric of McGill's History Department; Eric Caplan supervises two doctoral students in the Jewish Teacher's Training Program under the auspices of the Faculty of Education; and Yael Halevi-Wise co-supervises a PhD student in French literature under McGill's Département de langue et littérature françaises and another in Spanish literature in the Department of Hispanic Studies. In addition, our faculty members have supervisory responsibilities beyond McGill: Carlos Fraenkel supervised a number of MA students in Berlin and co-supervised a doctoral student at Tel Aviv University; Larry Kaplan co-supervises a Jewish Philosophy PhD at Yeshiva University, and so on.

Since the summer of 2011, our department has offered an intensive seminar on Eastern European Jewish music in partnership with KlezKanada, Canada's largest annual festival of Jewish/Yiddish culture and the arts. Taught by Hankus Netsky—professor of music at the New England Conservatory, leader of the Klezmer Conservatory Band, and musical director for Itzhak Perlman's recent recordings of Jewish music—this course combines intensive classes on Jewish music, introductory exposure to the field of ethnomusicology and personal encounters with important Jewish musicians on KlezKanada's premises during the festival. In 2017 about twenty McGill students attended the event for a full week in mid-August supplemented by written assignments due both before and after the festival.

A highlight for our students are guest lecturers who enrich the topics covered in our courses. In November, Prof. Dynes invited Karolina Szymaniak from the University of Wroclaw, Poland, to present a talk on, "The Jewish Female Voice between Yiddish and Polish: Rachel Auerbach's Cultural Politics (1920s – 1940s)." Earlier in the year, music students and the wider McGill community were treated to an evening organized by Prof. Eric Caplan and featuring Klezmer clarinetist David Krakauer at the Tanna Schulich Hall.

### **3. Public Engagement and Outreach**

Our annual Levites Lecture was delivered in 2017 by Prof. Dan Miron from Columbia University. His talk was well attended by students and faculty from within McGill as well as by a general public from outside the university. In addition, we collaborated with Montreal's Jewish Public Library to sponsor a second lecture by Prof. Miron, both talks focusing on the well-known Yiddish author, Sholem Aleichem of Fiddler-on-the-Roof fame.

Members of the department are often engaged for booktalks and other public outreach activities in Montreal and internationally. David Aberbach advised Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on a scholarly edition of the Siddur (Hebrew prayer book). Yael Halevi-Wise delivered the opening talk for "Sundays at the Shaar" (Shaar Shomayim Synagogue), and participated in a panel of experts responding to "talkbacks" on Oren Safdie's new play, "Mr. Goldberg Goes to Tel Aviv" at Montreal's *InfiniTheater*. She also led a series of workshops on "Biblical Recreations in Modern Hebrew Poetry and Prose" for KlezKanada's summer festival. Our newest hire, Chris Silver is already giving talks at the Sephardi Association of Ottawa and further afield, at the San Francisco Jewish Community Library, where he spoke about "Jews, Muslims, and North African Music in the 20th Century."

#### **4. Other**

This year our department underwent an onerous Cyclical Review process. Nevertheless, we found it to be a productive process, especially as a way of integrating two newest hires, Christopher Silver and Yuri Vedenyapin, and to review our background and expectations. The external reviewers concluded that this department “punches above its weight” in terms of research output, international presence, teaching excellence, and community involvement.

In terms of administrative support, the hub system continues to be a mixed blessing. On one hand, we have been blessed with a dedicated staff who work over and beyond expectations to cater to the needs of four units with varying needs and configurations; on the other hand, the bureaucratic expectations placed on chairs and administrators have continued to accumulate, making it quite impossible to achieve the smooth administrative rhythm to which we all aspire.

Looking forward, we are excited to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Jewish Studies at McGill: 1968-2018.

**Appendix**  
**Refereed Publications and other Scholarly Activities**  
**2017**

**1) ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH**

**Books**

Aberbach, David

- *The Bible and the 'Holy Poor': from the Tanakh to Les Misérables* (Routledge)

Heller, Daniel

- *Jabotinsky's Children: Polish Jews and the Rise of Right-Wing Zionism* (Princeton University Press)

**Book Chapters and Journal Articles**

Fraenkel, Carlos

- "Spinoza's Philosophy of Religion," in *Oxford Handbook of Spinoza*, ed. Michael Della Rocca (Oxford University Press), 377-407.
- "Vom Nutzen der Philosophie in einer zerrissenen Welt," in *Über Gott und die Welt: Philosophieren in unruhiger Zeit*, ed. K.P. Liessmann (München: Szolnay Verlag), 19-33.

Halevi-Wise, Yael

- "The Watchman's Stance in A. B. Yehoshua's Fiction." *Hebrew Studies* 58 (2017): 357-382.
- "Holidays in A. B. Yehoshua's Opus and Ethos." *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 35.2 (2017): 55-80.

Hundert, Gershon

- "Haḥush haḥazuti shel soḥer yayin yehudi ben hame'ah hashemoneh esreh migalitsiyah [The Visuality of a Jewish Galician Wine Merchant of the Eighteenth Century]. *Temunat avar: Shai leYerahmiel Kohen* [Picturing the Past: Essays in Honor of Richard I. Cohen], ed. Ezra Mendelsohn, Eli Lederhendler (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel), 273-287.

Kaplan, Lawrence

- “Yehezkel Kaufmann, R. Nachman Krochmal, and the ‘Anxiety of Influence,’” in *Yehezkel Kaufmann and the Reinvention of Jewish Biblical Exegesis*, edited by B. Sommer, T. Staubli, and J. Jindo. (Academic Press Fribourg), 122-146.
- “The Ethos of Submission, Union with the Spirit of the Torah, and Confronting the Challenges of the Time: R. Abraham Isaiah Karelitz, the Hazon Ish,” [Hebrew], in *The Gdoilim: Leaders who Shaped Israeli Haredi Jewry*, eds. Benjamin Brown and Nissim Leon (Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Van Leer Institute), 479-519.

### **Dictionary Entries, Book Reviews, Published Interventions in Scholarly Forums**

Aberbach, David

- “On the ‘Holy Poor’: from the Hebrew Bible to the Literature of Developing Countries, 1945,” The London School of Economics, Department of International Development

Fraenkel, Carlos

- “Deprovincializing Philosophy,” Review Essay of Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World* for the *Los Angeles Review of Books* (July 29, 2017). **One of the LARB’s “Most-Read Essays of 2017.”**
- “In Defense of Hierarchy,” co-authored essay with S. Angle, K.A. Appiah, J. Baggini, D. Bell, N. Berggruen, M. Bevir, J. Chan, S. Macedo, M. Puett, J. Qian, M. Risse, C. Romano, J. Tiwald, R. Wang, *Aeon* (March 22, 2017)
- “What, really, is the purpose of philosophy? A Reply to David Papineau,” *Times Literary Supplement*, September 1, 2017.

Heller, Dan

- “The Jewish User’s Guide to Terror and Retaliation” *AJS Perspectives* (Spring 2017): 4–5.

Hundert, Gershon

- *Common Wealth, Common Good: The Politics of Virtue in Early Modern Poland–Lithuania*, by Benedict Wagner-Rundell. *English Historical Review*, 132.554 (2017): 151-153.

Kaplan, Lawrence

- Response to Daniel Lasker, “Polemics, Religion, and Scepticism in Judah Halevi’s *Book of Kuzari*”, in *Yearbook 2017*, Maimonides Centre for Advanced Jewish Studies, University of Hamburg (De Gruyter), 215-221.



## **Invited Lectures**

Fraenkel, Carlos, “Metaphysical Skepticism and the Sufi Alternative: al-Ghazālī, Maimonides, and Abraham ben Maimonides,” **Maimonides-Lecture**, University of Hamburg, July 11, 2017

Fraenkel, Carlos, “Philosophy in a Divided World,” **Elton Lecture**, Department of Philosophy, George Washington University, February 24, 2017

Fraenkel, Carlos, “How much moral guidance can philosophy offer?” University of St. Andrews, November 4, 2017

Fraenkel, Carlos, “Universalism, Pluralism, Exclusivism: Maimonides in the Context of Medieval Arabic Philosophy,” Freie Universität Berlin, August 24, 2017

Fraenkel, Carlos, Discussion of *Mit Platon in Palästina* with Wolfgang Büscher at the Phil. Cologne, Cologne

Heller, Daniel, *Invited Lecture*: “Antisemitism and the Making of a Modern Tradition” Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (April 26, 2017)

Hundert, Gershon, Jewish Social Spaces in Early Modern Poland – Lithuania. **Keynote Lecture**. Conference on "Space as a Category in Research on the History of Jews in Poland (16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries)," sponsored by the German Historical Institute in Warsaw together with the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences and The Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Warsaw, September 2017

Kaplan, Lawrence, “Maimonides between Hesed and Halakhah in the View of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, Seminar at the Department of Jewish Thought, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May, 2017

## **Conference Presentations**

Caplan, Eric (Moderator, discussant and panel convener), “A Conversation with Klezmer Clarinetist David Krakauer,” McGill University, Schulich School of Music, October 6, 2017

Halevi-Wise, Yael (Respondent and panel organizer), “Three Hebrew Poets Wrestling with an Absent God,” *Modern Languages Association (MLA)* Philadelphia, January 2017

Halevi-Wise, Yael (Invited discussant/Respondent), “Jewish Politics, Zionism and the Fashioning of Sephardi Identities,” Association of Jewish Studies (AJS), Washington DC, Dec. 2017

Hundert, Gershon, "Jews and Other Poles: Problems of Language." *Polish Jewish History Revisited: Conference in Honor of Gershon Bacon and Moshe Rosman*. Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan Israel, November 2017

Hundert, Gershon, The Frames of Reference of an Eighteenth-Century Jewish Galician Merchant Based on the Writings of Dov Ber Birkenthal. *The Third International Congress of Polish History*. Kraków (Jagiellonian University), October 2017

Hundert, Gershon, "Sumptuary Laws and Surveillance." *17<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Jerusalem, Israel. August 2017

Kaplan, Lawrence, "The Gedolim of the Haredi Community as Contrasted with the Gedolim of the Modern Orthodox Community" [in Hebrew], Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, June 2017

Kaplan, Lawrence, "Leon Roth's Critique of *Imitatio Dei* as Foundation for Jewish Morality," International Conference on Leon Roth, University of Toronto, May 2017

Silver, Christopher, "Marching (and Waltzing) toward Independence: North African Jews and Music at Mid-Century," Spain-North Africa Project and Maghrib Studies Workshop, UC Santa Cruz, March 2017

## **2) RESEARCH GRANTS**

Frank, Esther, Aria Grant, McGill Summer Internship

Frank, Esther, Foundation for Yiddish Culture

Heller, Daniel, Le Fonds de recherche du Québec - Société et culture (FRQSC): Research Support for New Academic, « Taming the Shtetl: Borderland Jews and the Politics of Relief and Reconstruction in Interwar Poland»

Heller, Daniel, Internal SSHRC Social Sciences and Humanities Development Grant

Hundert, Gershon, SSHRC Paper Presentation Grant

Hundert, Gershon, one of three PR's associated with a major European grant for "Recovering the Records of European Jewish Autonomy," Rothschild Foundation, Leipzig

Silver, Christopher, Start-up Grant, Faculty of Arts

Silver, Christopher, Fellow of the Posen Society; "Of Harmony and Discord: Jews and North African Music in the Twentieth Century"

### 3) OTHER ACTIVITIES AND HONOURS

Aberbach, David, Senior Research Visiting Fellow, London School of Economics, Department of International Development

Caplan, Eric, Vice-President of the Mordecai M. Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood

Caplan, Eric, Steering Committee for the Reconstructionist Jewish Communities' Biennial Convention

Halevi-Wise, Yael, Advisory board member, "Israel and the Academy"

Halevi-Wise, Yael, *Klezkanada* boardmember

Heller, Daniel, **Principal's Prize for Excellence in Teaching** (Fall 2017)

Hundert, Gershon, Editorial Board, *Kwartalnik Historii Żydów* (Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw)

Hundert, Gershon, Editorial Board, *AJS Review* (Association for Jewish Studies)

Hundert, Gershon, Editorial Board, Bloomsbury Studies in Central and Eastern Europe

Hundert, Gershon, President, American Academy for Jewish Research

Silver, Christopher, Project Manager for the Sephardic Archive Initiative at UCLA

Silver, Christopher, Academic Advisor, Fondation Samy Elmaghribi, Montréal

#### Peer Reviewing

Halevi-Wise, Yael reviewer for *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* in the field of Hebrew literature/Israeli cultural studies

Heller, Daniel reviewer for the *Journal of Israeli History*

Hundert, Gershon, external reviewer of the Jewish Studies Program, University of Virginia

Hundert, Gershon, reviewer of doctoral scholarship and fellowship applications, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture

Hundert, Gershon, reviewer for dissertation competition, American Council of Learned Societies

Hundert, Gershon, reviewer of grant applications, Rothschild Foundation (HaNadiv), Europe

Hundert, Gershon, external reviewer for grant applications, Stanford Humanities Center

Hundert, Gershon, external Reviewer for grant applications, School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ

Kaplan, Lawrence, reviewer for Littman Library; the *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*; and the *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*

## **Public Engagement**

Aberbach, David, Adviser for *Siddur* (Hebrew prayerbook), Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (ed.)

Halevi-Wise, Yael, “Sundays at the Shaar series” (Shaar Shomayim Synagogue), “A. B. Yehoshua: A Major Israeli author and His International Influences, Agnon and Faulkner” (April 23, 2017)

Halevi-Wise, Yael, Montreal Book Club, “A. B. Yehoshua’s *The Extra*,” (October 15, 2017)

Halevi-Wise, Yael, Theater talk-back panels on Oren Safdie’s new play, “Mr. Goldberg Goes to Tel Aviv,” InfiniTheater (February 2 and 19, 2017)

Halevi-Wise, Yael, *Klezkanada* workshop sessions: “Biblical Recreations in Modern Hebrew Poetry and Prose,” (August 22-23, 2017)

Silver, Christopher, San Francisco Jewish Community Library: “Jews, Muslims, and North African Music in the Twentieth Century,” (April 23, 2017)

Silver, Christopher, Sephardi Association of Ottawa: “Jewish Life in the Arab World at Mid-Twentieth Century,” (November 30, 2017)