

**Canadian Society for Jewish Studies annual conference**  
**Conférence annuelle de la Société canadienne d'études juives**  
York University, May 29-31, 2023 / Université York, 29-31 mai 2023

*Program at a glance / Programme en un coup d'oeil*

Light snacks will be available before each morning session and during breaks; a light lunch will be available after each morning session. All will be kosher.

Des collations légères seront disponibles avant chaque session du matin et pendant les pauses; un dîner léger sera disponible après chaque session du matin. Tout sera cachère.

**Monday: York Lanes, room 280N / lundi: salle 280N, York Lanes**

10:30-12: Rabbinics I – Antiquity

14h-15h: Panel francophone

4-5:30: Encounters Across Cultures

*Optional: dinner at Aish Tanoor kosher restaurant (see next page).*

*En option: souper au restaurant casher Aish Tanoor (voir la page suivante).*

**Tuesday: Kaneff Tower, room 519 / mardi, salle 519, Kaneff Tower**

10-11:30: Zoom Panel (panelists on Zoom – audience in room 519)

1-2:30: Bible – New Perspectives

3:00-5:00: Rabbinics II – Medieval to Modern

*CSJS presenters are invited to dinner at the home of CSJS president Laura Wiseman.*

*Les présentateurs de la SCÉJ sont invités à souper chez notre présidente, Laura Wiseman.*

**Wednesday: York Lanes, room 280N / mercredi: salle 280N, York Lanes**

10-11:30 / 10h-11h30 : Annual General Meeting / Assemblée générale annuelle

1-2:30: Ritual, Dance, and Story

3:00-4:30: Centring Women

*York University president's reception 5:00-7:00 at Scott Library*

*Réception de la rectrice de l'Université York, 17h-19h, bibliothèque Scott*

*Locations:* Our conference room on Monday and Wednesday is York Lanes room 280N. Our conference room on Tuesday is Kaneff Tower room 519. York Lanes and Kaneff Tower are adjacent and connected buildings.

*Lieux :* Notre salle de conférence le lundi et le mercredi sera York Lanes 280N. Notre salle de conférence le mardi sera la salle 519 de Kaneff Tower. York Lanes et Kaneff Tower sont des édifices voisins et connectés.

## DAILY SCHEDULE / HORAIRE QUOTIDIEN

**Monday May 29: York Lanes, room 280N**

**lundi 29 mai: York Lanes, salle 280N**

Light snacks will be available before the morning session and during breaks; a light lunch will be available after the morning session. / Des collations légères seront disponibles avant la session du matin et pendant les pauses; un dîner léger sera disponible après la session du matin.

### **Monday May 29, 10:30-12: Rabbinics I – Antiquity**

Chair: Simcha Fishbane (Touro University)

Daniel Maoz (Wilfrid Laurier University): Differentiating Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Jewish Tradition in Yerushalmi, Challah 16a

Harry Fox (University of Toronto): Do Classical Jewish Sources Have an Idea of The Ugly?

Carla Sulzbach (independent scholar): Is the 1873 Hirsch-Hoffmann Controversy still Relevant Today?

### **lundi 29 mai, 14h-15h (Monday May 29, 2-3): Panel francophone**

Présidente: Lélia Young (Université York)

Jonathan Bourgel (Université Laval): Hérode le Grand, ou du bon usage des constructions monumentales

Olga Hazan (Université du Québec à Montréal): Stratégies figuratives dans la haggadah dite Hispano-Moresque

### **Monday May 29, 4-5:30: Encounters Across Cultures**

Chair: Daniel Maoz (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Lily An Kim (McMaster Divinity College): Dearly Departed: Retracing Harbin Jews, Diplomatic Heroes, and Women of the Russian Far East

Ber Kotlerman (Bar-Ilan University): Geishas, Kabuki, and Harakiri: Esther Shumiatcher and Peretz Hirshbein in Japanese Theatre

Rohee Dasgupta (St. Paul University / Carleton University): Reconciliation and Resonance: Assessing Canadian Jewish and Indigenous Dialogues

*Optional dinner together:* Meet in the glass lobby of Kaneff Tower at 6 pm to travel together by subway to Aish Tanoor kosher restaurant, or come directly to the restaurant for 6:45 pm.

Location, menu options (meat, fish, and vegetarian) and prices can be found at

<https://aishtanoor.com/>.

*En option, souper ensemble:* Rendez-vous dans le hall d'entrée de Kaneff Tower à 18h pour voyager ensemble en métro au restaurant casher Aish Tanoor, ou venez-y directement pour 18h45. L'emplacement du restaurant, les options de menu (viande, poisson et végétarien) et les prix peuvent être trouvés sur <https://aishtanoor.com/>.

DAILY SCHEDULE CONTINUED / HORAIRE QUOTIDIEN, SUITE

**Tuesday May 30: Kaneff Tower, room 519**  
**mardi 30 mai: Kaneff Tower, salle 519**

Light snacks and lunch will be available in the foyer of room 519. Lunch will be for CSJS participants and our colleagues from the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies (ACJS). / Les collations et le dîner léger seront dans le foyer de la salle 519. Le dîner sera pour les participants de la SCÉJ et nos collègues de l'Association d'études juives canadiennes (AÉJC).

**Tuesday May 30, 10-11:30: Zoom Panel**

(panelists will be on screen via Zoom – audience in room 519)

Chair: Jonathan Bourgel (Université Laval)

Ira Robinson (Concordia University): The Montreal Yeshiva: an Early Experiment in Talmudic Education in North America,

James Magee (Vancouver School of Theology): 'I'm (not) a Jew!': The Be(com)ing of the Jewish + Child's Identities in Holocaust Cinema

Emily Kopley (McGill University): Berta Rosenbaum Golahny, Between Prophet and Psalmist

**Tuesday May 30, 1-2:30: Bible – New Perspectives**

Chair: Carl Stephan Ehrlich (York University)

Meir Lubetski (City University of New York): *Tahmas*: What are you?

PV (Meylekh) Viswanath (Pace University): Priestly Gifts as Sin Transference: Brahmins and Cohanim

Yair Elmakyas (Ariel University): הקרב על העיר שומרון כמקרה בוחן של ישראל הקדום: עקרונות המלחמה  
[in Hebrew]

**Tuesday May 30, 3:00-5:00: Rabbinics II – Medieval to Modern**

Chair: Justin Jaron Lewis (University of Manitoba)

Natalie Polzer (University of Louisville): Avot de Rabbi Natan A: The Islamic Context of Its Medieval Transmission

Eric Lawee (Bar-Ilan University): Nahmanides' Commentary on the Torah: On the Reception History of a Jewish Commentarial Classic

Joel West (University of Toronto): Where is Mendelssohn's Jerusalem?

Simcha Fishbane (Touro University): Print Power: The Establishment of Rabbinic Authority through the Printed Word

*CSJS participants are cordially invited to dinner, from 6:30 on, at the home of CSJS president Laura Wiseman, 11 Clyde Ave Toronto M5M 4G2. From York University, take the subway southbound to Wilson West Station and bus 96 or 165 eastbound across Wilson to Clyde (a ten-minute ride) and walk south on Clyde to number 11 (or take a taxi or rideshare from the subway). / Les participants de la SCÉJ sont cordialement invités à souper, à partir de 18h30, chez notre présidente, Laura Wiseman, 11 ave Clyde, Toronto M5M 4G2. De l'Université York, prenez le métro vers le sud jusqu'à la station Wilson West et le bus 96 ou 165 vers l'est via Wilson jusqu'à l'avenue Clyde (un trajet de dix minutes) et allez vers le sud sur Clyde jusqu'au numéro 11 (ou prenez un taxi ou un service du covoiturage depuis le métro).*

DAILY SCHEDULE CONTINUED / HORAIRE QUOTIDIEN, SUITE

**Wednesday May 31: York Lanes, room 280N**  
**mercredi 31 mai: York Lanes, salle 280N**

Today, snacks will be available here in room 280N, but lunch will be in the foyer of Kaneff Tower room 519, for CSJS and ACJS participants. / Aujourd'hui, les collations seront disponibles ici dans la salle 280N, mais le dîner sera dans le foyer de la salle 519 de Kaneff Tower, pour les participants de la SCÉJ et de l'AÉJC.

**Wednesday May 31, 10-11:30 / mercredi 31 mai, 10h-11h30**

Annual General Meeting of CSJS /  
Assemblée générale annuelle de la SCÉJ

(Light lunch in the foyer of Kaneff Tower 519 / Dîner léger dans le foyer de Kaneff Tower 519.  
Return to York Lanes 280N for the afternoon. / De retour à York Lanes 280N pour l'après-midi.)

**Wednesday May 31, 1-2:30: Ritual, Dance, and Story**

Chair: Laura Wiseman (York University)

Roderick Richardson (University of Manitoba / University of Winnipeg): Folk Practices and  
Religious Authority

Gdalit Neuman (York University): Hora in the Framework of Hashomer Hatzair in Hungary:  
Togetherness, Transgression, Transcendence, Transformation

Catherine van Reenen (University of Manitoba): Bending Space and Time in (and through)  
Hasidic Stories

**Wednesday May 31, 3:00-4:30: Centring Women**

Chair: Catherine van Reenen (University of Manitoba)

Tirzah Meacham (University of Toronto): A Hebrew Book of Hours: A Text in Service of the  
Conversion of Female Jews in Italy

Amanda Hohmann (York University): Eishet Chayil: Orthodox Judaism, Feminism, and the  
Search for Meaning in Motherhood

Laura Wiseman (York University): *Moda Ani*: A Prayer Poem of Childbirth

*York University President's Reception: CSJS participants are invited to this evening's reception in the Scott Library atrium (up the escalator) from 5 to 7 pm. Here you can use the drink ticket you received at registration; there will also be ample food (though not with kosher certification).*

*Réception de la rectrice de l'Université York: Les participant.es de la SCÉJ sont invité.es à la réception de ce soir dans l'atrium de la bibliothèque Scott (en haut de l'escalier roulant) de 17h à 19h. C'est là que vous pourrez utiliser le bon pour une boisson que vous avez reçu lors de votre inscription; il y aura aussi beaucoup à manger (cependant, sans certification cachère).*

**Bon voyage! See you next year. À l'année prochaine!**

## BIOGRAPHIES AND ABSTRACTS \* BIOGRAPHIES ET RÉSUMÉS

**Jonathan Bourgel:**

**Hérode le Grand, ou du bon usage des constructions monumentales**

Panel francophone, lundi 29 mai, 14h-15h

JONATHAN BOURGEL est Professeur adjoint à la Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses de l'Université Laval. „Mes travaux de recherche portent principalement sur la fin de la période dite du Second Temple de Jérusalem, alors que la Judée était soumise à la domination romaine (63 AEC - 135 EC). Cette époque déterminante dans l'histoire du peuple juif a vu la fin de l'indépendance politique juive instaurée par les Hasmonéens (63 AEC), la destruction du Second Temple de Jérusalem (70 EC) et l'amorce de l'affirmation du Judaïsme rabbinique, dont l'immense majorité des Juifs se réclame aujourd'hui. Non moins essentielle est l'apparition du mouvement chrétien qui, de courant juif devait se muer, au terme d'un processus complexe, en une religion distincte. Je m'intéresse aux questions relatives à la formation des identités religieuses (juive, chrétienne et samaritaine) dans la Judée des premiers siècles. Par ailleurs, étant féru d'archéologie, j'ai consacré certains de mes travaux à au roi bâtisseur Hérode le Grand.”

Hérode le Grand régna sur la Judée de 37 à 4 AEC pour le compte de Rome. En tant que roi-client, l'étendue de ses prérogatives était réduite à la gestion des affaires internes de son royaume, les autorités romaines se réservant le contrôle absolu de la politique étrangère. En dépit de ces limitations, Hérode parvint à se distinguer sur les scènes locale et internationale, notamment en initiant de nombreuses constructions monumentales.

Dans cette présentation, nous chercherons à illustrer la façon dont Hérode mit en oeuvre une habile politique architecturale afin de promouvoir ses divers intérêts, en nous intéressant plus spécifiquement au site de l'Hérodiûm situé à 12km au sud de Jérusalem. Tout à la fois forteresse, palais, capitale régionale et tombeau, nous verrons comment Hérode a façonné ce monument au gré des événements marquants de son règne. Nous nous fonderons non seulement sur les écrits circonstanciés de Flavius Josèphe mais aussi sur les récentes découvertes archéologiques qui permettent de jeter sur l'histoire de l'Hérodiûm un jour nouveau.

**Rohee Dasgupta:**

**Reconciliation and Resonance – Assessing Canadian Jewish and Indigenous Dialogues**

“Encounters Across Cultures,” Monday May 29, 4-5:30

ROHEE DASGUPTA is an anthropologist of Jewish Culture and Identity, who has conducted ethnographic studies in Poland, Israel, and the USA. She teaches advanced graduate courses on Identity and Conflict at The School of Conflict Studies, Saint Paul University and is a fellow at the Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies at Carleton University. She holds a PhD in Law and MA in Diplomatic Studies from Keele University in the United Kingdom, a second MA in Jewish Education from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel and a BA in English from Calcutta University, India. She has fifteen years of academic teaching experience in the UK, India and

Canada. Additionally, Rohee has held various international research fellowships in Europe, US and Canada related to Jewish culture and history. She is based in Ottawa, Canada.

In this paper, I weave together stories of Jewish and Indigenous relations/exchange through events and discussions in Canada that I have attended (both in person and online). Most of these intercultural dialogues had an assertion of identity adjustments and rebuilding after transitions whether traumatic and/or migratory. From an anthropological perspective, the study is also an inquiry into understanding Canadian Jewish values through the study of this cultural politics. Drawing on anthropological theories on indigeneity and some theories of Jewishness, the paper addresses four constructs that are crucial to understanding what resonates between the two groups – a shared approach to trauma; historical projection of survival and loss by responding to the colonial/authoritarian past; rethinking indigeneity by revisiting the comparative ideas of land and peoplehood; and building cosmopolitan legacies of truth and coexistence. The paper asks how Jewish-Indigenous relations in Canada can be leveraged to produce futures. What types of globality are rendered into the conversation between Canadian Jews and First Peoples in imagining and renegotiating their Canadian identity? What lessons of empowerment and citizenship can be drawn from this identity politics of ethnic/religious coalition building?

### **Carl Stephan Ehrlich**

Panel chair, “Bible – New Perspectives,” Tuesday May 30, 1-2:30

CARL S. EHRLICH (Ph.D. Harvard '91) is University Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel, Departments of History and Humanities, and former Director, Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University. Among his interests are synchronic, diachronic, and contextual approaches to the biblical text and Israelite civilization. Recent publications include the (co-)edited collections *From an Antique Land: An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Literature* (2009) and *Premodern Jewish Studies: A Handbook* (2023). Current projects include a cultural history of Moses and a commentary on Chronicles.

### **Yair Elmakyas**

יאיר אלמקיס

עקרונות המלחמה של הצבא הישראלי הקדום: הקרב על העיר שומרון כמקרה בוחן  
[in Hebrew]

“Bible – New Perspectives,” Tuesday May 30, 1-2:30

YAIR ELMAKYAS is a Ph.D. student in archeology and history at Ariel University, located in the land of the ancient Kingdom of Israel, the subject of his paper.

Ahab, king of Israel, is the second king of the house of Omri in the kingdom of Israel. This dynasty made a very significant impression on biblical history. My study deals extensively with this dynasty and the character of Ahab in particular.

An issue that has not been sufficiently examined in scholarship is the analysis of all the battles in which Ahab participated. It seems that a great deal can be learned about his personality from the different combat situations in which he took part. This is one of the earliest stages in the history of Israel in which we can assess the capabilities of an organized Israelite army, which

operates under a central government and is mentioned both in the Bible and in extra-biblical sources. The variety of sources (Mesha inscription, Tel Dan inscription, and inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, like the Black Obelisk) turns the study into a mosaic work of understanding the connections between the various sources.

This study examines and analyzes the martial approach of the house of Omri in general and Ahab in particular. I look into the methods of operation of the Israelite army as well as Ahab's qualities as a military commander, comparing the data with the principles of warfare familiar to us today, as well as with what we know about the adversaries of the Kingdom of Israel in the ninth century BCE.

This paper takes one battle as a representative for this research: The “Battle of the City of Samaria” in Chapter 19 of the Book of Kings. The paper will analyze the course of the battle in light of ancient and modern fighting tactics.

### **Simcha Fishbane:**

#### **Print Power: The Establishment of Rabbinic Authority through the Printed Word**

“Rabbinics II – Medieval to Modern,” Tuesday May 30, 3:00-5:00

Professor SIMCHA FISHBANE has been a mainstay of the Canadian Society for Jewish Studies since its earliest days. He earned his rabbinical ordination at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York City, and his Ph.D. in Social Anthropology of Religion at Concordia University in Montreal. He was the founding Dean of the College of Jewish Studies, Touro College Moscow, and has continued his career at Touro University’s campuses in Paris and New York. His many publications include the recent books *Beyond a Code of Jewish Law: Rabbi Avraham’s Haya Adam* (2021) and *Exploring Mishnah’s World(s): Social Scientific Approaches* (with Calvin Goldschneider and Jack Lightstone, 2020).

Writing is an obvious means of influencing people and events. Thus, it is not necessarily the charisma or authority of the individual but the impact and influence of their written word. In fact, it is through the written word from which the author will often later receive authority and thus as a leader. Following this line of thought, I will show that when rabbinical authority is attained by a halakhic decisor one possible way it can be realized is through the written word and thus the writer’s recognition or acceptance as a rabbinical authoritative figure.

I will focus on three leading rabbinical authorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Eastern Europe whose writings established their leadership and authority during their lifetimes, and posthumously continued to bring them to the forefront of Jewish life and halakhic behavior. Their stated goal was to respond to the needs of halakhically observant layman who required legal guidance. The three Rabbis are Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748-1820), Rabbi Yisrael Meir Hacoen, and Rabbi Yechiel Mechel HaLevi Epstein. Each are popularly referred to by the names of their publications, Rabbi Danzig, the *Haya Adam*, Rabbi Hacoen, *The Hafetz Haim* or the *Mishnah Berurah*, and Rabbi Epstein, the *Arukh Hashulhan*.

I will show by examining both writings and position in the Jewish world of 19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Europe how it was their publications that allowed them to become authoritative Jewish leaders, and the role they played in influencing the lives and behaviour of their readers.

**Harry Fox:****Do Classical Jewish Sources Have an Idea of The Ugly?**

“Rabbinics I – Antiquity,” Monday May 29, 10:30-12

Professor HARRY FOX earned his Ph.D. from the Hebrew University and teaches in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations and the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. His areas of research and publication include rabbinic biographies, early Jewish family rabbinic law, early Yiddish literature, Modern Hebrew Literature, peace studies and aesthetics. “I believe in the unity of knowledge which results in seeking answers to our research questions both in well-known texts and entirely different fields. My goal is to generate hypotheses, create models with predictive values and therefore testability. These models are applied to rabbinic, literary, and philosophical texts in order to understand the underlying unity in world cultures. I engage in classical problems of philology including word studies such as when, where and who the authors of anonymously presented literature are.”

One of the major debates in recent discussions of aesthetics is whether art possesses an idea of The Ugly. This grows out of a realization that much of what is considered the best of art, say in Picasso, Lucian Freud, or even Hieronymus Bosch, was initially considered “ugly” by a considerable number of critics, or even “degenerate” by Soviet or Chinese Idealist standards.

In Scripture the war on art begins with an attack on idolatry. Wherever possible the idols, the planted tree groves, and other aesthetic forms were to be utterly destroyed. Archaeological evidence of such zealous endeavor exists in the destruction of Hatzor mentioned in the Bible. The early rabbinic sages continue this biblical idea with discussions of the disposal of destroyed idolatrous works. What constitutes proper landfill and where is the correct place for such remains? Yet, how were Jews to accommodate the existence of idolatry once statues and other symbols of the hegemony of external powers ruled over their existence, even their holy places?

The question I hope to address in this paper is how, given this mindset of *longue durée*, do the sages accommodate the existence of (Graeco-) Roman idolatry either in the public sphere in city squares or in the public bathhouses? I shall focus on Rabban Gamliel’s accommodation of a statue of Aphrodite/Venus in a public bathhouse of Caesarea (a place where today two headless Roman statues stare at each other in an entrance to a Roman stadium). I shall then address our findings for the Hebrew root for ugliness כַּעַר and ultimately focus on one rabbinic anecdote dealing with the concept of ugliness. Phrased differently, how is it that anything created by God be ugly? If so, what makes it ugly and can ugliness be universalized to account for The Ugly?

**Olga Hazan:****Stratégies figuratives dans la haggadah dite Hispano-Moresque**

Panel francophone, lundi 29 mai, 14h-15h

OLGA HAZAN est professeure associée au Département de sciences des religions de l’Université du Québec à Montréal. Parmi ses publications sur le judaïsme on compte : *Stratégies figuratives dans l’art juif* [I] : étude de trois haggadot sépharades du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle et II : *Autour de Moïse* (Les PUM, 2017 et 2020), et « Les femmes salvatrices dans le cycle imagé de la synagogue de Doura-Europos », *Studies in Religion / Sciences religieuses*, 49-2, 2020, 193-215.



Conservée aujourd'hui à la British Library, la *haggadah* dite « Hispano-Moresque » (ici nommée *haggadah de Castille* ou ms. Or. 2737) est sans doute la plus ancienne des *haggadot* sépharades imagées encore connues de nos jours. Cette *haggadah* ayant été produite autour de 1300, sinon plus tôt, son ancienneté et sa proximité avec un Moyen Âge encore déconsidéré expliquent sans doute l'intérêt minime qu'elle aura suscité chez les auteurs, dont plusieurs demeurent attachés à l'idée que l'art progresse avec le temps. Le cycle imagé de cette *haggadah*, dont l'étendue et la structure la différencient de ses consœurs les plus connues (dont la *haggadah de Sarajevo*, la *haggadah d'or* et la *haggadah* Or. 2884), se distingue surtout par les stratégies figuratives auxquelles ont recours ses illustrateurs.

Quatre d'entre elles sont dignes de mention : (1) la communication entre ses protagonistes, leur expressivité autant corporelle que faciale et la présence exceptionnelle de scènes de négociation entre Moïse/Aaron et Pharaon, (2) la conversion de son espace de représentation en espace scénique que traversent des personnages, des animaux ou des objets, (3) la manipulation des temps du récit, représentés comme simultanés, enchaînés, suspendus ou inversés, et, enfin, (4), l'importance de Dieu, qui y est représenté et évoqué sous diverses formes, explicites et implicites. Ces stratégies contribuent, dans leur ensemble, à transformer le récit de l'Exode en une pièce de théâtre, laquelle s'avère conforme aux principales fonctions du *sēder de pesaḥ*. Ainsi, la lecture de la *haggadah* et la consultation du cycle imagé se métamorphosent, par la parole, le chant et la consommation de nourriture, en une performance rituelle, qui vise, chaque année, à faire revivre aux célébrants la sortie d'Égypte des Hébreux.

**Amanda Hohmann:**

**Eishet Chayil: Orthodox Judaism, Feminism, and the Search for Meaning in Motherhood**  
“Centring Women,” Wednesday May 31, 3:00-4:30

AMANDA HOHMANN is a PhD Candidate at York University. She holds an honours BA in sociology & anthropology from Laurentian University (2003), and a MA in cultural studies from Athabasca University (2010). Her doctoral work at York focuses on the history of childbirth, feminist health policy, and the professionalization of obstetrics. Prior to beginning her doctoral work, Amanda worked for several years as the National Director of the League for Human Rights, the Canadian sister organization to the ADL. She has published extensively on antisemitism and contemporary Jewish life in Canada, and her work has been cited by governments (both Canadian and international), NGOs and academic institutions.

Since the rise of contemporary feminist movements in the 1950's and 1960's, the birth rate in western, developed nations has fallen dramatically. Fewer and fewer women, it seems, are choosing to become mothers. At the same time, affiliation with Orthodox Judaism (in comparison to other streams of Jewish observance) has risen. Julia Kristeva, in her paper *Women's Time* (1981), argues that one of the greatest failings of modern feminism is its refusal to acknowledge the importance that many women place on maternity, motherhood and the raising of children. Elsewhere, Kristeva argues that where feminism and academia have frequently told women that they should not be mothers, and that motherhood and maternity are the source of women's oppression, they have offered nothing with which to replace it. She argues that if we ignore the 'creative' impulse (i.e. motherhood), we are destined to return to a

religious or mystical way of viewing the world, since it is religion that has historically been the safe haven for motherhood (and the social identity related to it).

From the perspective of modern Orthodox Judaism, there seems to be some merit to this perspective. Today, educated, feminist, formerly-secular Jews are turning to Orthodoxy in unprecedented numbers. And while many secular feminists believe that Judaism is deeply entrenched in patriarchy and archaic views of womanhood/motherhood, this paper will argue, using a matricentric feminist perspective, that Judaism is (or can be) a deeply feminist place from which to raise children and develop an identity as ‘mother’.

This paper makes a contribution to the fields of both Jewish studies and motherhood studies, since little has been written on feminist mothering from an Orthodox Jewish perspective, and certainly not from a matricentric feminist perspective addressing problems in secularism.

**Lily An Kim:**

**Dearly Departed: Retracing Harbin Jews, Diplomatic Heroes, and Women of the Russian Far East**

“Encounters Across Cultures,” Monday May 29, 4-5:30

LILY AN KIM is a disability and refugee advocate who has served at Women's Community House, Romero and Global House (CCLC). Lily sits on the board of ALPHA Education / Asia-Pacific Peace Museum; and as Co-Chair of Holocaust Education Week, she was on the advisory committee of UJA Federation's Toronto Holocaust Museum as well. She is a Doctor of Practical Theology candidate at McMaster Divinity College, and is completing her book, *Missing and Murdered Esther: Metis Queen of the Munsee-Delawares* (Rowman & Littlefield).

Asian history of the interwar period in trans-Pacific migration focusses on imperial or military systems, but often with little mention of the colonized and Jewish women who lived in Russia and the Far East. Reflection on the Harbin diaspora requires an understanding of the relationships and lived experience of the women who influenced the “Jewish Far-East Paradise.”

An honest retrospective appraisal warrants recognizing the cultural opposition and patterns of meaning in minority suffering, which is conducive to capturing the lived realities of ethnic women and disappearances in forgotten *micro-diasporas*. From Harbin and Vladivostok to Shanghai, diplomatic traces unearth the involuntary migrations of Jewish and Korean exiles that overlapped with Red / White Russians’ and Chinese wartime realities. Therefore, by investigating history with both original documents and qualitative research, this paper aims to fill in some gaps of histories and threads that connected a diverse micro-diaspora.

Identifying lived displacement can contribute to reconciling social identities with shared and painful pasts. In political and representational contestation, this does not limit itself to cross-Atlantic refugee movements and Trans-Pacific identities in formation. A fuller recovery would acknowledge journeys of refugees to Siberia, Harbin, or Shanghai, often due to covert diplomatic interventions by heroes such as Dr. Feng Shan Ho, Chiune Sugihara, Nils Kallin, and Raoul Wallenberg. Under the rising rule of imperial Japan (following the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and Russo-Japanese War), multicultural figures interacted with Koreans, Chinese, or Jewish and Eastern European exiles of the Russian Empire in Asia. Viewing their turbulent years of migration can help in providing a useful backdrop to understanding the gendered or cultural representations and tragedies that persisted through the World War period in Asia.

**Emily Kopley:**

**Berta Rosenbaum Golahny, Between Prophet and Psalmist**

Zoom panel, Tuesday May 30, 10-11:30

EMILY KOPLEY received her BA from Yale and her PhD from Stanford. She works in two fields: British literature and, independently, literature and art related to Judaism. She is the author of articles in both fields as well as the monograph *Virginia Woolf and Poetry* (Oxford UP, 2021). She is currently a Course Lecturer in Jewish Studies at McGill University.

Berta Rosenbaum Golahny (1925-2005) was a Jewish-American painter and printmaker who blended abstraction and realism, often in a single work. Her oeuvre was at once a protest and an exultation. Like Ben Shahn, who awarded Golahny the 1950 Painting Prize at the University of Iowa, and like William Blake, whose poetry informed her work, Golahny felt it her responsibility to give geometry and color to injustice and so to help redress it. Her paintings and prints depict children in poverty, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Korean war, the Holocaust, the Biafran war, and the terrorist attacks in America on September 11, 2001. Certain work makes explicit her sense of a prophetic vocation, such as the painting that Shahn admired, *The Resurrection*, which depicts the “dry bones” of Ezekiel, and *Isaiah Stele #1* and *#2*, long vertical paintings that feature God’s assertion of singularity at Isaiah 45:5-7. But much of Golahny’s work praises the world, too. She was full of wonder at God and nature and humanity. Certain work reveals Golahny’s identification with the psalmist, such as a mid-career series of engravings on boxwood that illustrate the Psalms, and the late copper engraving *Psalm VIII, Verse 5 [...What is Man That Thou Art Mindful of him...]*. This art-historical paper considers Golahny’s dual roles and concludes by considering the temporal dimension of prophetic work—can visual art that calls for action achieve an effect long after its initial creation?

**Ber Kotlerman:**

**Geishas, Kabuki, and Harakiri: Esther Shumiatcher and Peretz Hirshbein in Japanese Theatre**

“Encounters Across Cultures,” Monday May 29, 4-5:30

BER KOTLERMAN is Professor of Yiddish studies at the Department of Literature of the Jewish People, Bar Ilan University, Israel. Since 2019, he holds the Sznajderman Chair in Yiddish Culture and Hasidism. He also served as scholar-in-residence or visiting professor at the Yeshiva University, Kokushikan University in Tokyo, the University of Cape Town, and Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania. He is the author of a number of monographs in the field of Yiddish culture, among them *Broken Heart / Broken Wholeness: The Post-Holocaust Plea for Jewish Reconstruction of the Soviet Yiddish Writer Der Nister* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2017) and *Disenchanted Tailor in 'Illusion': Sholem Aleichem behind the Scenes of Early Jewish Cinema, 1913-16* (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2014).

The Yiddish writing couple, the Calgary raised poet Esther Shumiatcher and the Russian-American playwright and essayist Peretz Hirshbein, are well known for their yearslong wanderings around the globe. From Oceania to New Zealand and Australia, from South Africa to Eastern Europe, from South America to Asia, and from the Mandatory Palestine to the USSR –

all those wanderings Hirshbein described in detail in numerous travel notes, while Shumiatcher dedicated to them dozens of exotic poems. The paper will show the connection between Shumiatcher's poems and Hirshbein's essays (where the first can serve as a kind of poetic epigraph to the second) based on the essays dedicated to Japanese theatre from rather distinct, unorthodox perspectives, after they spent about six months in Japan in spring-summer 1926.

Though a substantial part of Hirshbein's travel notes were published in book form, the Japanese essays did not reach the general public. Some forty Japanese essays I have collected from the Yiddish press and from Hirshbein-Shumiatcher archive at the YIVO Institute in New York, demonstrate Hirshbein's deep interest in Japanese theatre, both the avant-garde and the traditional kabuki theatres. To all appearances, this is the only serious and profound contact between representatives of Jewish literature and Japanese culture and art.

**Eric Lawee:**

**Nahmanides' Commentary on the Torah: On the Reception History of a Jewish Commentarial Classic**

“Rabbinics II – Medieval to Modern,” Tuesday May 30, 3:00-5:00

ERIC LAWEE is a full professor in the Department of Bible at Bar-Ilan University. He holds the Rabbi Asher Weiser Chair for Medieval Biblical Commentary Research and directs Bar-Ilan's Institute for Jewish Bible Interpretation. Research interests include Jewish biblical scholarship and medieval and early modern Jewish thought. His book *Rashi's Commentary on the Torah: Canonization and Resistance in the Reception of a Jewish Classic* (Oxford University Press) won the 2019 Jewish Book Award in the category of Scholarship of the Jewish Book Council. Forthcoming work includes “How Would He Not Protest God's Putting to Death the Righteous Child?”: Maimonides, His Interlocutors, and Eleazar Ashkenazi Read the Akedah, *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, 2023.

The reception of Nahmanides's commentary on the Torah, the second most important classical work of Jewish biblical interpretation, is a subject as incontestably historic as it is surprisingly little researched. Evidence of the work's popularity and influence is abundant and varied. Consider that the commentary appeared in three incunable editions, the earliest one among the first eight Hebrew books ever printed. A vast supercommentary tradition came to surround the work, one of three exegetical tracts to gain this form of canonizing recognition. The work was, likely more than any other, responsible for Kabbalah's legitimization as an authentic tradition of Judaism. Yet with rare exceptions, the commentary's afterlife is little charted.

My paper seeks to remedy this situation—not, of course, by providing a comprehensive account but by laying out key questions and methodologies that should prove fruitful in addressing them. The paper illustrates both older disciplines (e.g., intellectual history) and newer ones (e.g., reception theory, material book culture) that help to recapture the rich afterlife of Nahmanides' work in a holistic way. Along the way, examples concretize broad trends and unexpected outliers, including a hitherto unknown astonishingly vituperative critique of the commentary from Byzantium. To illustrate the topic's ongoing salience, we conclude with consideration of the Mesorah (“Artscroll”) version of the commentary and Aaron Lichtenstein's declaration at the beginning of the twenty-first century that the loss of the commentary would have been nothing less than a “catastrophe” for the Jewish people.

**Meir Lubetski:**

***Tahmas: What are you?***

“Bible – New Perspectives,” Tuesday May 30, 1-2:30

MEIR LUBETSKI is a Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature, Baruch College, CUNY. He has focused on making the Bible, in its ancient context, intelligible to scholars, students and a general public. He has lectured and published nationally and internationally, showing how artifacts and inscriptions affect how the Bible is read and understood. He has applied his extensive knowledge of ancient Near Eastern culture as well as rabbinic material to explain many difficult verses. Among his publications are: *New Seals and Inscriptions, Hebrew, Idumean & Cuneiform* (2007) and *Epigraphy, Iconography, and the Bible* (2022). A Festschrift, *Visions of Life in Biblical Times*, was published in his honour in 2015.

The dietary laws in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 contain a list of animals whose flesh is allowed or prohibited to consume. The identity of some of the creatures is unclear due to the fact that few, if any, details, are provided in order to determine their zoological category. Translations and commentaries, both ancient and modern, struggle to illuminate the nature of the creatures, but, to date, there is no definitive description of several of them. One such animal is טמח *tahmas*, the subject of my presentation.

*Tahmas* is mentioned twice in the list of unclean animals, in Leviticus 11:16 and in Deuteronomy 14:15. This paper tackles the search for this forbidden animal through overlooked texts found in Egyptian literature. A linguistic analysis shows correspondence with Egyptian terminology, which provides the necessary clue for explaining this hapax. In addition, the Aramaic translation further helps in rendering a new meaning to a very old word.

**James Magee:**

**“I’m (not) a Jew!”: The Be(com)ing of the Jewish+ Child’s Identities in Holocaust Cinema**  
Zoom panel, Tuesday May 30, 10-11:30

JAMES MAGEE JR. holds MA degrees in theological and biblical studies and is a research affiliate with the Vancouver School of Theology. He has published essays focused on the intersections of religion, film and childhood and is currently co-editing a volume on the subject of religion and violence in Wipf & Stock's Religious Pluralism and Public Life series.

Childhood studies scholars have challenged the widely-held idea of childhood as a temporal space of *becoming* by championing children’s *being* and capacities for agency, whereas scholars working on identity have understood the concept as more complex than *being*, arguing for an ongoing process of *becoming* over the life course. This tension between different disciplines within the social sciences is ripe for further exploration. I will utilize a cultural studies lens to focus on depictions of Jewish children hiding in Holocaust cinema, the dominant medium today for representing the stories of victims and survivors of the Nazis’ genocidal program. Identity plays a crucial role in these narratives with concealment of Jewishness often precipitating disavowal and renegotiations with other overlapping identities. I will argue that neither being nor becoming is sufficient to account for the experiences of Jewish children who lived through or perished in the Holocaust in terms of how they self-identified or were identified

by others. A more intricate and interdisciplinary framework for the theorizing of identity in childhood and across the life course is required and will be advanced based on the screened memories and imaginings of young Jews caught up in the Holocaust, findings that should fruitfully inform the interrelated fields of Jewish, childhood, identity, film and cultural studies.

**Daniel Maoz:**

**Differentiating Hermeneutics, Exegesis, and Jewish Tradition in Yerushalmi, Challah 16a**  
“Rabbinics I – Antiquity,” Monday May 29, 10:30-12

DANIEL MAOZ earned the *Doctorat ès sciences religieuses* at the Université de Strasbourg, France. He is Jewish Scholar in Residence and Professor of Hebrew Scriptures at Martin Luther University College, Wilfrid Laurier University, in Waterloo, Ontario. Daniel views life from a number of Jewish perspectives as a member of a modern Orthodox Congregation, a Reform Temple, and Chabad of Waterloo. He is an active member of the executive of the Canadian Society for Jewish Studies and a member of the Advisory Board for the academic journal, *Studies in Judaism, the Humanities, and the Social Sciences*. His research interests and recent publications address Jewish mysticism, Aggadic Midrash, and interfaith dialogue.

Biblical scholarship employs exegesis to arrive at insights within the domains of higher and lower criticism. It further applies hermeneutics to attain viable applications to biblical texts. Both of these methodologies have a long history and nuanced evolution in serving the advancement of understanding of literary texts. Traditional Jewish reading of the Tanakh employs a variety of interpretive lenses, sometimes appearing to overlap those from exegetical and hermeneutical principles. Otherwise, Rabbinic tradition follows its own path.

This study traces the history of exegetical and hermeneutical methods in seeking to define and distinguish before and including biblical scholarly application in order to clarify the two fields of exegesis and hermeneutics before comparing and contrasting Rabbinic method(s) of reading sacred texts using *Yerushalmi*, Challah 16a (Guggenheimer edition) as a case study. It is hoped that the results of the study will explain how non-Jewish methodological processes often became blurred, misunderstood, or treated as synonymous within past historical contexts.

**Tirzah Meacham:**

**A Hebrew Book of Hours: A Text in Service of the Conversion of Female Jews in Italy**  
“Centring Women,” Wednesday May 31, 3:00-4:30

Prof. TIRZAH MEACHAM earned her Ph.D. from the Hebrew University, and teaches in the Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations at the University of Toronto. She is a contributor to the many-volumed *Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud*. “My chief area of research is law dealing with constructions of gender, sexuality, childhood, marriage, autonomy, and non-standard bodies as found in early rabbinic texts. I attempt to uncover constructs and any agenda held by their authors and legal development within and after these texts. This means working out their ideas of anatomy, physiology, bodily processes, their court procedures, modes of authority and how sex, gender and parallel cultures may have impacted them.”

In the course of examining some 100 Hebrew Italian manuscripts from the Renaissance and onwards in libraries all over the world, I discovered one different than all the others: a Hebrew Book of Hours with some instructions in Latin as well. Interestingly this Book of Hours is based on liturgical borrowing from the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service for Erev Shabbat (Friday evening). It nonetheless contains important Christian prayers, “appropriating” those connected to Mary. In this context devotion to Mary is transformed by the Sabbath context to the equivalent of Queen Sabbath as the figure of the Divine *Shekhinah*, the female emanation (attribute) of God. The successful conversions of the Jews, particularly women, was an important part of the Catholic mission to the Jews. The liturgical borrowing from the Jewish Sabbath service for Friday night, however, is a surprise. As far as I am aware, it had not been the custom for Jewish women to attend such evening services, at least that is Orthodox practice today. Hence one could expect that they would not be so familiar with this service. So how could one have expected that this feature would make a potential Jewish female convert to Catholicism feel comfortable with her newfound religion? As well these clearly seem to have the requisite literacy required to read either the liturgical prayer book or its translocation and transmutation into this Hebrew Book of Hours. As likely as not, this must be seen as a by-product of urbanization in which Jews and Christians, including women, were brought into close proximity and dialogue. One further speculation seems plausible. The target of the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service is quite likely due to interest by Christian Hebraist mystics in a mystical Jewish service introduced as it was by the mystics of Isaac Luria’s circle. It seems fair to conclude that the women involved in such a Jewish service, or their husbands, may have had mystical proclivities. Elsewhere I have demonstrated the egalitarian mystical features of *Tehinot*, Hebrew petitionary prayers for women especially as expressed prior to sexual intimacy and after purification in ritual baths (*Miqva’ot*).

**Gdalit Neuman:**

**Hora in the Framework of Hashomer Hatzair in Hungary: Togetherness,  
Transgression, Transcendence, Transformation**

“Ritual, Dance, and Story,” Wednesday May 31, 1-2:30

GDALIT NEUMAN is a PhD candidate in the Department of Dance at York University and is proudly affiliated with the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies. She is currently completing a dissertation on the little-known Zionist and socialist choreographies of Israel's Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company founder, the late Yehudit Arnon, in the framework of Hashomer Hatzair Zionist youth movement in Hungary in the immediate post-war period, and with child Holocaust survivors.

The Land of Israel hora has been analyzed by several Jewish and Israel Dance Studies scholars. My research on this topic provides a wealth of new insights on the meanings, messages and manipulations therein. Using written accounts and archival sources such as Zionist youth movement song books, as well as newspaper clippings, I hope to contribute to understanding of the hora’s powerful impact on Jewish youth, national self-determination and nation building in the Land of Israel, as well as the Jewish Diaspora, in the first half of the twentieth century.

Though often misrepresented in the West, and just as often conflated with Israeli folk dance, the hora has a distinct history within the Zionist framework. As my research reveals, embodiment of the hora had a transformative effect on Jews living in the Diaspora, and was a

vehicle for Zionist ideology and resistance under British rule in Mandate Palestine and beyond. This paper will mainly focus on hora dancing in Hungary before the Holocaust, and in the immediate post-war period, as an integral part of the culture of the *Hashomer Hatzair* (The Young Guard) Zionist youth movement. Rare archival photographs and never-before published personal accounts of hora dancing as an informal initiation into the movement are highlights of the talk. The true significance and symbolism of the hora in its heyday is still largely unknown and I look forward to sharing my findings with conference participants this spring.

**Natalie Polzer:**

***Avot de Rabbi Natan A: The Islamic Context of Its Medieval Transmission***

“Rabbinics II – Medieval to Modern,” Tuesday May 30, 3:00-5:00

NATALIE POLZER is Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and Religious Studies in the Department of Comparative Humanities at the University of Louisville. Trained in Rabbinics, her interdisciplinary research falls in two distinct fields: (1) midrash and classical rabbinic literature, most specifically, *Avot de Rabbi Natan*; (2) cultural practice of burial and commemoration of the dead, specifically, in Palermo, Sicily. Her research is unified by the eclectic application of a range of cultural and literary theories. Recent 2022 publications include: “Eve in Avot de Rabbi Natan” and “The Bakhtinian chronotope in the destruction narrative in the Fathers of Rabbi Nathan B.” She is working on a volume on *Mishnah Avot and Eduyyot* for the *Feminist Commentary on the Babylonian Talmud* project.

Despite the proverbial obscure transmission history of the aggadic work *Avot de Rabbi Natan*, both clear cut and circumstantial evidence support a Muslim cultural context of later development for one of its two recensions, *Avot de Rabbi Natan A*. Clear cut evidence includes: (1) paraphrased traditions from *ARNA 19* in two different early Muslim texts: a manual of ethical advice by the 11<sup>th</sup> century Iraqi Shafi’i jurist and political philosopher Abu Hasan Ali al-Mawardi, and an ethical work by the 10<sup>th</sup> century Iranian Shi’i hadith scholar Al-Shaykh al-Şadduq; (2) the tradition history of four unique narratives in *ARNA 16* show that they only were incorporated in late Jewish anthological works that were composed in unequivocal Muslim contexts. Circumstantial evidence includes: (1) shared motifs in *ARNA* and Muslim sources (the Qurān, the Hadith and early biographies of Muhammed); (2) shared thematic and ethical concerns regarding male sexual control in the *ARNA 16* narratives and medieval Muslim ethical sources; (3) the prioritization of Rabbi Eliezer as the master of sexual control in *ARNA 16*. All of the above evidence appears in the *ARNA* recension alone, perhaps shedding light on the different transmission histories of the two recensions of *ARN*.

**Roderick Richardson:**

***Folk Practices and Religious Authority***

“Ritual, Dance, and Story,” Wednesday May 31, 1-2:30

RODERICK (RORY) RICHARDSON is an M.A. student in the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg Joint Masters Program in Religion. His thesis will take a long view of Jewish responses to plagues and pandemics.



Religious actions are active in the margins. Through religion people try to understand the misfortune of some and the blessing of others as contingent on following a divine being or person with magical powers from a divine source.

My paper seeks to analyze these themes found in the Hasidic story “Wedding Presents” (translated in Lewis, *Imagining Holiness*, 27-31, from A. H. Michelson’s *Meqor Hayim*, published 1911) using a qualitative approach. My paper analyzes the balance found in this Hasidic story in celebrating practices common in the community, the black wedding, with preserving the power of the rebbe in times of crisis. My paper analyzes the theme of reconciling disenfranchised people with the wheel of fate through the words of Rebbes. The Rebbes show an understanding of the wheel of fate both in the frame story and inner story as they relate to a wheel of fate changing in people’s lives. The Rebbes’ understanding of the wheel of fate and the tension between community practices versus established practices ensure their influence in the community and show their dependency on the community’s actions for their legitimacy.

Given the recent COVID-19 pandemic we have seen people respond to the pandemic in a myriad of ways with people either trying to reverse the pandemic or understand why the pandemic happened. My paper helps to understand the balance between community religion and official religious responses. We can see in this tension how official religious figures depend on the folk practices of people as a source for preserving the community and their authority.

**Ira Robinson:**

**The Montreal Yeshiva: an Early Experiment in Talmudic Education in North America**

Zoom panel, Tuesday May 30, 10-11:30

IRA ROBINSON is Emeritus Professor of Judaic studies in the Department of Religion of Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec. He is the founder and Past President of the Canadian Society for Jewish Studies, past President of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies (formerly the Canadian Jewish Historical Society) and past President of the Jewish Public Library of Montreal. Prof. Robinson taught at Concordia University beginning in 1979 and served as the Chair of the Department of Religion, Chair in Canadian Jewish Studies, and Director of the Concordia University Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies. The author of many publications and mentor of many students, Prof. Robinson was awarded the *Louis Rosenberg Canadian Jewish Studies Distinguished Service Award* by the Association of Canadian Jewish Studies in recognition of his lifelong contribution to the study of Canadian Jewry.

There is a scholarly consensus that the Lithuanian-style yeshiva, offering advanced Talmudic education to young men, had its modest beginnings in North America with the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in New York in 1915 and the Hebrew Theological College in Chicago (1922). Because these institutions enjoyed success and continuity, their history is relatively well documented. There were, however, other attempts to create yeshivot in North America in the 1920s and 1930s that were short-lived and are not well known. An example of this is the New Haven Yeshiva (New Haven, CT and Cleveland, OH, 1923-1937). Another is the Yeshiva of Montreal, founded in the 1920s in affiliation with Montreal’s United Talmud Torahs.

This presentation will attempt to reconstruct the history of the Montreal Yeshiva primarily from the pages of the Montreal Yiddish newspaper, *Der Keneder Adler*, as well as from archival material of the United Talmud Torahs of Montreal and other sources. It will thus

contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the early history of advanced Talmudic education in North America in the early twentieth century.

**Carla Sulzbach:**

**Is the 1873 Hirsch-Hoffmann Controversy still Relevant Today?**

“Rabbinics I – Antiquity,” Monday May 29, 10:30-12

CARLA SULZBACH (independent researcher) graduated in Semitic Languages at the University of Amsterdam (1987). She earned her M.A in Jewish Studies at McGill under Prof. B. Barry Levy, with a thesis on D. Z. Hoffmann's critique of Wellhausen's biblical criticism (1996), and her Ph.D. in Religious Studies (Early Judaism) with a dissertation on Temple Imagery in the Book of Daniel, under Prof. Gerbern Oegema (2009). She has taught Biblical Hebrew and a course on the Dead Sea Scrolls at McGill's School of Religious Studies, presented her research at various conferences including SBL, ISBL, Enoch Seminar, and AJS, and published articles in Biblical studies and urban studies. She is currently working on the revision of her thesis on Hoffmann with the intent of publication.

Born in 1843 in Verbo (Slovakia), David Zwi Hoffmann became a student of Rabbi Dr. Esriel Hildesheimer at his yeshivah in Eisenstadt (Austria) in 1860. He studied under some of the luminaries in Orthodox Jewish learning of his time as well as becoming adept in secular studies. In 1873 he graduated from the University of Tübingen in Germany with a dissertation on the life and works of the first generation Babylonian Amora and head of the academy in Nehardea, Mar Shmuel. Meanwhile, in 1871, he had accepted a teaching position at the Realschule in Frankfurt, founded by Samson Raphael Hirsch. Shortly thereafter, Hoffmann was invited to teach at Hilderheimer's Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin and eventually became his successor as principal.

In 1873, Hirsch famously refused to give an approbation to the publication of Hoffmann's doctoral thesis. The criticisms ran so deep that Hoffmann was accused of “kefirah”, heresy, for portraying Mar Shmuel as a normal human being who – worse - initiated creative thinking in his legal decisions. This accusation was usually reserved for those operating outside of strict Orthodoxy. Hoffmann's Orthodox credentials, however, were impeccable. What prompted Hirsch to render this verdict? And how did his criticisms compare to those hurled against contemporaries of more liberal persuasions? In this paper I will subject *Mar Shmuel* to a close reading and determine where the ways parted and what that may have signified for the development of later scholarship in Rabbinics. Following from this I will briefly address the question whether a rabbinic biography can be created without being reduced to a hagiography.

**Catherine van Reenen:**

**Bending Space and Time in (and through) Hasidic Stories**

“Ritual, Dance, and Story,” Wednesday May 31, 1-2:30

CATHERINE VAN REENEN is a second-year Ph.D. student in the University of Manitoba's Department of Religion. Her research straddles the boundaries between media history and religious studies by focusing on the specific practices of mediation through which analytic

categories central to modernity—namely, ‘religion,’ ‘science,’ ‘magic,’ and ‘technology’—are constructed, negotiated, and maintained.

This paper considers how hasidic tales reflect tensions between Hasidism and modern technology through a close reading of four hasidic stories that portray tsadikim as possessing a range of supernatural powers. These powers include foreknowledge and prophecy, the ability to act at a distance, instantaneous appearance as if by teleportation, and *kefitzat haderekh* or super swift travel. My analysis illustrates how tsadikim’s miraculous abilities both resemble and exceed those of modern technologies in their power to transcend space and time, a power that is likewise reflected (or, as I suggest, recreated) in the very act of storytelling through which tsadikim’s powers are attested. I argue that the figure of the tsadik functions as a technology whose transformative potential—much like that of the railway, the radio, and the internet—is a source of both comfort and anxiety for hasidim. In highlighting parallels between tsadikim and modern communication and transportation technologies as depicted in hasidic stories, I show how the apparent opposition between religion and technology serves as a productive source of tension through which Hasidism defines itself in relation to secular modernity. In addition to building on scholarship on hasidic storytelling, this paper contributes to scholarly critiques of modernity by troubling the epistemological boundaries between religion and technology.

**P.V. (Meylekh) Viswanath:**

**Priestly Gifts as Sin Transference: Brahmins and Cohanim**

“Bible – New Perspectives,” Tuesday May 30, 1-2:30

P.V. VISWANATH is Professor of Finance and Graduate Program chair in the Finance department at the Lubin School of Business at Pace University in New York City. His research is mainly in the area of corporate finance; and the role of finance in society. An important part of his research is in the intersection of religion, law and economics. A recent publication examines the nature of gifts in an ancient Buddhist vinaya text, while work in progress includes the economy of ancient India as reflected in the works of the medieval Indian poet, Kalidasa, sale and purchase contracts in ancient Hindu legal texts; and the nature of gifts described in eleventh century Cairo geniza correspondence among Jewish Indian ocean traders.

There is a rich literature on the nature of sacrifice in the Biblical tradition. Most of it, however, considers the sacrifice as a transaction between the sinner and God; there is relatively little attention paid to the role of the priest. As Geoffrey Miller (*Journal of Legal Studies*, 1993) points out, the Bible “prohibits self-help sacrifice—the conduct of sacrificial rituals outside of the cultic shrines and by persons other than the priests who served at the shrine.” Furthermore, most offerings – and sin offerings in particular – leave portions for priestly consumption. Hence it is worth examining sacrifices as methods of surplus extraction. Priests, however, are lacking in political power. As such, extraction of resources is not so easy and may have to be accompanied by negotiations where the sacrificing group may be able to extract something from the priestly group even if it is a concession in a different dimension.

Several Indologists have suggested a similar phenomenon to explain gifts to Brahmins. They suggest that Brahminical gifts are accompanied by the transference of the sin from the donor to the Brahmin. In this paper, I argue that there is suggestive evidence of such a

phenomenon supporting the sin-transferring nature of at least certain gifts given to the cohanim, particularly the meat of the sin offering. I present some general ideas regarding gifts, followed by evidence regarding sin transference and gifts to Brahmins. After developing the implications of such a theory, I compare priestly gifts in the Biblical and Brahminical tradition and argue that there is at least, a nascent – if undeveloped -- tendency of cohanic gifts to function as resource transfers with the quid pro quo being the transference of the sin.

**Joel West:**

**Where is Mendelssohn's Jerusalem?**

“Rabbinics II – Medieval to Modern,” Tuesday May 30, 3:00-5:00

JOEL WEST is a PhD student at the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at University of Toronto. His interests concern the manner in which we both understand and create meanings, how we encode them, how we decode them, and how we communicate them effectively. Past publications include such diverse subjects as Forensic Semiotics, Linguistic Anthropology and Semiotics which attempt to understand how it is that we understand ourselves and our surroundings using interdisciplinary methodologies but from a philosophical lens.

Moses Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem: On Religious Power and Judaism* (1783) is a curious document, since in the entire text he only mentions the city Jerusalem twice: once when he paraphrases Johann Lavater's challenge to refute arguments for Christianity, and once when he describes the fall of the city of Jerusalem to the Romans. In a closer reading of the text, the idea of Jerusalem about which Mendelssohn writes is unstable; it is an idealized vision of several different places at several times. One meaning Mendelssohn imparts is the ancient Jerusalem of the Hebrew Bible and the second meaning concerns an idealized future Jerusalem that exists, for Mendelssohn, as part of the upcoming Enlightenment; a Utopian place where Jews might occupy as part of an integral and working part of greater society without assimilating into that society. I conclude, via a text-based analysis based in a genealogical and a historical understanding of the text, that Mendelssohn's Jerusalem is an impractical place, if not impossible; that although Mendelssohn himself was an observant Jew who remained observant through his life, that his understanding of Judaism is naïve. This understanding of Mendelssohn's work is important because it allows us to contextualize Mendelssohn, a key figure in early Modern Judaism and Early Modern Jewish thought, as a visionary, who had a specific understanding of Judaism that was ultimately incompatible with the emancipation and the Enlightenment.

**Laura Wiseman:**

***Moda Ani: A Prayer Poem of Childbirth***

“Centring Women,” Wednesday May 31, 3:00-4:30

LAURA WISEMAN is professor of Education and Jewish Studies at York University, where she is Koschitzky Family Chair in Jewish Teacher Education. She also serves as President of the Canadian Society for Jewish Studies. Her primary research concentrates on intertextual echoes in layers of Hebrew language and literature. She particularly reads selected women's poetry as

nonlinear life writing. Laura has been working on a sequence of sacred and sensual love poems by Sivan Har-Shefi and is addressing the next sequence: a cluster of psalms and prayer-poems.

A set of psalms and prayer poems sings at the centre of Sivan Har-Shefi's 2010 volume, *Tehillim for Day of Thunder*. It follows the "Bride's Journey" sequence that keeps pace with a couple devoted to Jerusalem. The two dedicate their home as a modern microcosm of the temple and establish their love and lovemaking as sacred space.

The poems are lodged in a segment of the collection called "Beneath *Shulhan Ha-panim*" (beneath the table of the showbread), a title that perpetuates the sacred and sensual as the lovers' milieu. This paper makes use of literary analysis to study *Moda Ani* (I am grateful), a prayer that the speaker develops in childbirth. The analysis illustrates ways in which this *Moda Ani* develops from, and beyond, that of the of conventional liturgy and specific, proximate prayers. The paper directs attention to Har-Shefi's capacity to embed intertextual engagements that cause us to 'hear double.' The presentation reveals a metaphoric focus on the state of the heart as a metric for gauging the stages of labour. The study discerns the linguistic and contextual transitions and reversals that shift dark night's apprehension over the return of one's soul, to marvel over the conferral of a new one, instinctively drawn to the light of day.

### **Lélia Young**

présidente du panel francophone, lundi 29 mai, 14h-15h

LÉLIA YOUNG est poète, essayiste, nouvelliste, et professeure agrégée au département d'études françaises de l'Université York. Elle a vécu en Tunisie, en France, au Québec, au New Jersey, au Massachusetts et depuis 1976 à Toronto. Elle est l'auteure ou rédactrice de plusieurs ouvrages dont un livre sur l'écrivain haïtien, converti au judaïsme, Gérard Étienne : *Le Degré de la parole dans l'écriture : Portes ouvertes sur l'œuvre de Gérard Étienne* (Montréal: CIDHICA, 2022).