

LIBRARY STAFF NEWS

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Library Book Talks Spring 2022

Joan G. Haahr

by Zvi Erenyi (copied with permission from the YU Library Blog)

On Feb. 16, 2022, the Yeshiva University Libraries Book Talks featured Dr. Joan Gluckauf Haahr, whose recently published *Prisoners of Memory: A Jewish Family from Nazi Germany* (Full Court Press, 2021) vividly recreated the history of her family before and after the Holocaust. The Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program co-sponsored the event that Eliezer H. Schnall, clinical professor of psychology (and a former student of Dr. Haahr), introduced. Dr. William Stenhouse, professor of history, served as moderator.

Dr. Haahr taught English at Yeshiva University for 42 years, 22 of which she served as chairman of her department until her retirement. An alumna of Harvard University, she did postdoctoral work at the University of Copenhagen. She was the recipient of a Fulbright and a Woodrow Wilson fellowship as well as numerous academic awards. Her book, that she began following her retirement, was based on more than 1,000 family letters, personal communications from family members and others, as well as on research in archives and elsewhere.



Dr. Haahr began her talk on Zoom by setting the initial scenes and background of her book. Her family originated in the small village of Zwingenburg an der Bergstrasse, in the German state of Haase between the cities of Darmstadt and Heidelberg, and not far from Frankfurt am Main.

The house in which her mother was born, located on one of the two main streets, had been in her family's possession since the 17th century; Jews, in fact, had been living there for 600 years.

By the early 20th century, the local Jews were quite assimilated. Nevertheless, they still observed the Sabbath, major holidays, kashruth, and lifecycle events. Interfaith relations were good; Jews were accepted and respected by their Christian neighbors. Her mother and her mother's siblings had many non-Jewish friends and they themselves attended secular schools, where her mother excelled in her studies.

All of this changed dramatically in 1933 with Hitler's accession to power. Within a short time, decrees limiting and then eliminating Jewish participation in economic and communal life were enacted. Living conditions became difficult, not to say dangerous. The author's grandfather, though a decorated World War I veteran, suffered several incarcerations.

Matters reached a crescendo on Nov. 10, 1938, in connection with the widespread riots of Kristallnacht. Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues were set on fire and looted. Dr. Haahr's mother and other siblings left Germany one by one. However, her grandparents, similar to other older German Jews, did not manage to do so; eventually they were deported to their deaths.

The second part of the book followed the fortunes of family members during and after the Holocaust. Unfortunately, time limitations prevented Dr. Haahr from delving into these aspects.

Peninnah Schram

by Zvi Erenyi (copied with permission from the YU Library Blog)

On March 1, 2022, Yeshiva University Libraries presented on Zoom a book lecture featuring Peninnah Schram, famed Jewish storyteller and Professor Emerita of Speech and Drama at Yeshiva University's Stern College for Women. Her successor, Prof. Reuven Russell, Professor of Speech and Drama and director of the dramatic societies at Yeshiva College and Stern College, served as moderator for the evening's program that revolved around a recently published biography of Prof. Schram by Caren Schnur Neile, entitled *Peninnah's World: A Jewish life in Stories* (Hamilton Books, 2021).

Prof. Russell remarked that stories such as those of Talmudic origin (*Ein Ya'akov*) can convey deep levels of meaning, differing from the strictly legalistic portions of the Talmud. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Ba'al ha-Tanya, urged his followers to devote time between Minchah and Ma'ariv (afternoon and evening prayers) to the study of Aggadah, because "most of the secrets of Torah are concealed within it."

Prof. Russell added, "As a storyteller, you must be able 'to see' the story in your mind's eye in order to enable your hearers to do the same." In response, Prof. Schram described her background and the circumstances which led to her coming to Stern College.

Peninnah Schram obtained her B.A. at the University of Connecticut and her M.A. at Columbia University. She described how from early childhood she loved to listen to stories told by her parents. Most of these were didactic in nature, designed to instill life lessons.



For example, her mother told her the following story to teach her the importance of restraining anger. A Jewish young man, drafted into the Czar's army, had to leave behind his wife, who was pregnant with their first child. Returning home after many years, he found the door to his house open and heard the voice of his wife and that of another man. Overcome with anger, he burst in with his pistol drawn ready to shoot the man, when, at the last moment, he heard the man utter the word "Mommy" and realized that the latter was the son he had never met. Prof. Schram noted that after later finding the same story in outline in the 13th century *Sefer Hasidim*, she understood that stories can be repeated and adapted down the generations to fit the needs of each era.

After the traumatic loss of her husband, leaving her alone to care for her two young children, the new widow had little inclination for social engagements. However, an inner voice she identified with her late father's urged her to attend a wedding to which she had been invited. It was there that she was introduced to Prof. Abraham Tauber, founder and Chairman of the Speech and Drama Department at Yeshiva University. He later called to offer her a position at Yeshiva College, the men's undergraduate division. She felt unready to accept it at that early point in her career, but a year later he again called. This time he offered her a position at Stern College, the women's undergraduate division, to which she felt she was well suited and which became her second home.

Prof. Schram's development as a storyteller continued with her volunteer work at the Jewish Braille Institute, where she recorded entire books for the visually impaired. One of these was a collection of children's stories by famed Yiddish author Isaac Bashevis Singer. She then realized that she wanted to tell such stories to a wider audience, and she proposed a program to the 92nd Street Y. Following the success of this venture, she became Jewish Storyteller in Residence at the Jewish Museum, where she presented monthly shows, each based on an object in the museum's collections.

Author of 13 books and a CD, and recipient of numerous awards, Prof. Schram merited to meet with numerous celebrities and Nobel Prize winners. She considers famed humanitarian and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel z"l to have been one of her mentors, whose lectures and presentations she carefully observed.

Prof. Schram concluded by quoting the last line of the Storyteller's Prayer by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Apter Rav: "Dear G-d, give me good listeners." In our world, she said, we need good listeners, those with compassionate and understanding hearts, and those who will retell and write stories and life experiences for us and for the future.

Best of all, seeing how she was running out of time, she offered to do another interview at a later date.

This book talk can be viewed on the YU YouTube channel through the Library Home Page.

HOW WE PLAYED "ONLINE"

BEFORE THE INTERNET!



TRANSITIONS

Jay Rosen to Brooklyn

Jay Rosen has accepted a position as Adult Librarian at the Brooklyn Public Library. His job involves providing reference, programming, and collection development to adult patrons. Good luck in your new job, Jay!

"Hard to say good-bye" Elinor Grumet retires

by Chaya Sarah (Hallie) Cantor

It was the second week of the winter break. Quietly Elinor Grumet gathered round her co-workers with the news: she was retiring. Three days later, desk and office cleared, she walked out of Beren Campus for the last time.

We were saddened over the departure, let alone its suddenness, of a very private individual who for nearly three decades played a very public role at Hedi Steinberg Library. Elinor was the expert at fielding patron requests and hosting webinars; the go-to for emergencies from faulty printers to frantic professors; and the trooper who six days a week appeared at her desk with little time off and in all kinds of weather.

Over the years as Research and Instruction Librarian, Elinor watched her workplace's steady transition from date stamps and file cards to Zoom chats and online databases. She shouldered numerous tasks--reference, classes, book talks, syllabi, renovations, administration, and collection development --all with enough "Patience and Fortitude" to match any lion outside NYPL. Few of us ever knew of her own scholarly achievements--Ph.D., author, and editor-that she modestly downplayed even while the depth and breadth of her intellect shone through. Nothing in her personal life mattered; instead, she focused totally on the needs of Stern College.

Ultimately Elinor will be remembered for far more than her diligence. An ecard signed by faculty and department members repeatedly lauds her kindness, intelligence, warmth, humor, and stoicism. Excerpts below (slightly edited) from current library staff, ranging from simple words of appreciation to an acrostic poem by Marlene Schiffman, pay tribute to Elinor's enormous impact on Yeshiva University and the enormous void left behind. Indeed, to quote the e-card's opening words, "A legend has retired."

The Legend Herself sent a cyber hello, adding that she misses us. For sure, she too will be missed. We wish Elinor Grumet all the best and thank her for so many years of selfless service.

From Hedi Steinberg:

It has been a wonderful 30 years working with you. Your graciousness, integrity, kindness, professionalism, warmth, humor, will be sorely missed. You personify the instruction of Ethics of Our Fathers 1:15: "Receive all with a pleasant countenance."

Edith Lubetski

I'm still trying to cope with your empty desk. Not seeing you eating a simple yogurt and apple at that little table. Not hearing you call your mom on the phone, explaining the special meals you made for her. Not saying good night to you before leaving. You were always our dependable "Rock of Gibraltar," no matter the weather. The best of the best librarians and a wonderful person. Humble and kind: You never disclosed your Ph.D. status, and your co-workers have no idea of the depth of your humanity and kindness. You're an irreplaceable gem. We all love and miss you, EG.

Hindishe Lee

Your departure marks the end of an era, one I felt privileged to share for nearly 30 years. More than a co-worker, you were someone to lean on, someone to cry on, someone to look up to. Your dedication was amazing; I can't even imagine the library without you. Nevertheless, you leave us filled with many wonderful memories.

Chaya Sarah (Hallie) Cantor

Thank you for all your support over the years; we will miss you.

Shlomo and Alona Shevach

Thank you for teaching me so much about how to work in the library. It was great to work with you.

Rina Krautwirth

Although we overlapped only briefly during my time at the library, you were always a supportive and kind presence here. I fondly remember the lessons you imparted to me, especially your *shpiel* on the Dewey Decimal and LOC systems.

Ethan Fraenkel

You were the first person who greeted me at security and gave me the rundown of the library. I am grateful for the advice and wisdom you were so willing to share.

Emily Apterbach

And from "Uptown:"

I will so miss working with you. Every assignment you took on you managed with a calm intelligence that has been a model for us all. You attended to every detail and balanced those efforts with a sensible and rational approach, of which the highly successful virtual Open Houses were evidence. Your openness and receptivity to innovation have helped advance the libraries in important ways.

Paul Glassman

I have not forgotten your warm welcome to me when I first started YU several years back. You've always been a friendly and supportive colleague, and you will be sorely missed!

Wendy Kosakoff

You often thanked me for my wisdom when actually it was a two-way wisdom impartment.

You got me off to a running start with the Book Talks. Your good-naturedness and positive attitude during the frenetic EBSCO renewal season was a calming influence.

Shulamis Hes

Elinor, it has been both a pleasure and an honor to work with you. I owe a debt of gratitude to your steadfast loyalty and professionalism.

Stephanie Gross

It was both an honor and a pleasure to share so many years of library work, and I am grateful for your unfailing help and good humor.

Zvi Erenyi

You are a wonderful, professional colleague We will somehow have to soldier on, but you will be sorely missed.

Moshe Schapiro

I will miss working with you, Elinor, and miss your sense of humor, your forbearance, and a host of other qualities!

Yosef Cohen

We'll miss you so! I am sorry to see you leave us. It always was a pleasure interacting with you, and I appreciated your patience and gentle ways.

Carla Hanauer

Thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience.

Tina Weiss

It has been a pleasure working with you. I will miss your warmth and patience!

Chriss Dalen

May this chapter of your Book of Life be wonderful.

Bernice Katz

May your retirement bring you some well-deserved rest and relaxation. Enjoy each day to the fullest; you will be missed! ^(C)

Ursuline Destouche

Congratulations on the next phase of your life. Best wishes!

Hao Zeng

It's hard to say goodbye to a treasured colleague, but it's also exciting as you move on to your next stage. I hope it will be rewarding and joyful.

Deena Schwimmer

Ever willing to understand. Lending me a helping hand. In a pinch you wrote for me -No editing even necessary. Oh, the newsletter won't be the same—so Really sorry to see you go.

Guess all good things must come to an end. Retirement wishes I must send. Understand we'll all miss you. Memories will see us through. Ever warm friendship we will hold. Then may a great future for you unfold!

Marlene Schiffman



Keyla Lora Joins Library

Keyla was born in the Dominican Republic but moved to New York at an early age. She attended the College of New Rochelle where she majored in History and Spanish and earned a certificate in Latin American/Caribbean Studies. Last May she completed her Masters in Museum Studies at New York University with an interest in archives. She is presently a library clerk in Pollack on weekends and also a Visitor Services Ambassador at the Intrepid Sea, Air, & Space Museum three days a week. Welcome, Keyla!



Intrepid Sea, Air, & Space Museum at Pier 86 on the Hudson River



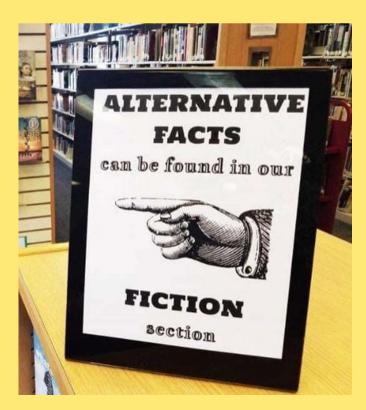


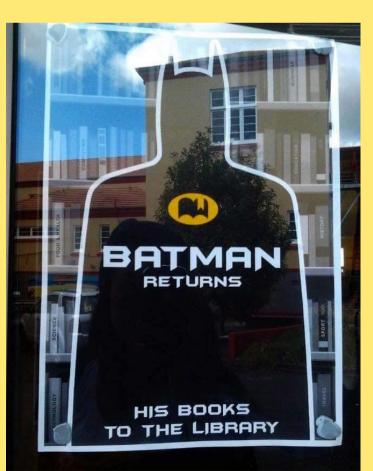
Library Humor





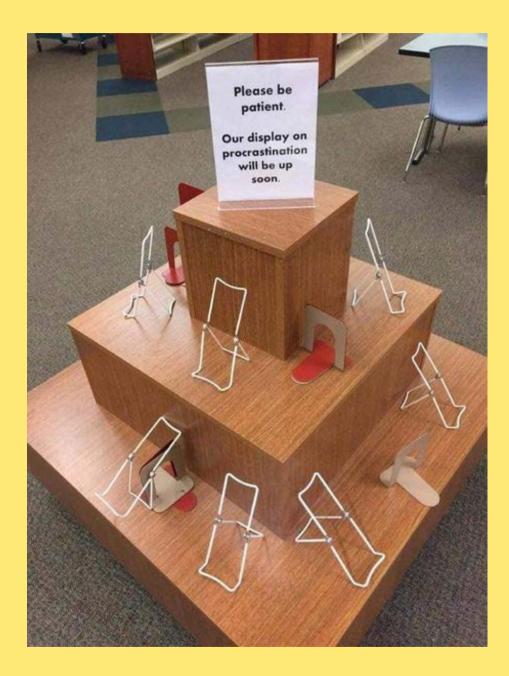






A new reading display is coming soon!

Meanwhile, please enjoy our large selection of invisible books.



Library Shorts



The 2022 Catalog of University Authors in now in preparation.

The Student Library Research Award for undergraduates submission deadline is April 12.

The Zoltan Erenyi Charitable Fund purchased a color portrait of Rabbi Abraham Gombiner (ca. 1637-1683), known as the Magen Avraham. The portrait was probably produced in the early 20th century from earlier prints.



2022 Mini-Symposium

by Marlene Schiffman



After Paul's opening remarks, Sandy moderated reports by the various groups who detailed their accomplishments towards the fulfillment of the Strategic Plan. Then, the newest format to be included in the annual mini-symposium was rolled out. It was YU Libraries Speed Dating in which each staff member was allotted just a few timed sentences in which to describe his/her role and duties in the library. The aim was to get to know one another and also to guide staff members to the right person who might be of help for a specific question or service.

The mini-symposium continued with three simultaneous sessions summarized here.

Session A: The Makor College Experience

Dr. Stephen Glicksman, Director of Clinical Innovation at Makor Disability Services and founder of the Makor College Experience Program, came to YU as an undergraduate in 1986 and never left. He earned a Ph.D. in developmental psychology at Ferkauf and is now on the faculty of YU. Makor provides services for people with disabilities in all age groups, and its care and services network spans dozens of community residences. Makor pays YU to run its program on campus for men with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

At YU, Makor participants have a typical college day with Torah studies in the morning and secular studies in the afternoon, taught by their own faculty. They also are taught life skills such as communication, writing, cultural literacy, professionalism, and career exploration. Since their experiences are often limited, Makor students often do not understand what career possibilities are available to them. Hence, the program aims to expose them to different worksites. It also instills a sense of independence while being part of campus life. The participants go to the synagogue, attend events, eat in the cafeteria, join clubs, vote in elections, and make friends within the campus community. They have apartments off campus, although some people commute. Makor teaches that there are dialectics, that is, two things in opposition to one another that can both be true. For example, a person must learn to accept himself as he is but still want to change. Other dialectics are mainstreaming vs. specialized instruction; independence vs. safety; personal choice vs. inclusion. A person must never be labeled "disabled," for though he might have a disability, that is not the whole person.

Prof. Glicksman explained that sometimes disabilities are culturally constructed. For example, having vision problems is a disability, but so many people have this disability, and it is easily corrected by eyeglasses, that it is no longer regarded as a limitation. Other inventions were originally made for people with disabilities but benefit everyone. Ramps allowed accessibility to wheelchairs, but benefit mothers with baby strollers. Computer touch screens, flexible straws, closed captioning, and lower water fountains were all originally invented to aid those with disabilities. Even airports are a form of compensating for a disability--the human inability to fly.

In the library, some students will need more help than others, but don't characterize these needs as "not normal." *Chesed*, kindness, is a pillar of Judaism, but sometimes it can be overdone. When people lack social skills, they might speak too loudly or interrupt. We must respond appropriately and not put people in a category of "charity cases." In former times we fought prejudice, ignorance, and exclusion. Now we have to fight against *chesed*.

In the Q&A, Chaya Sarah brought up the fact that there is no equivalent women's program. Prof. Glicksman said there has been an attempt to establish one, but that the costs associated with the location of SCW in Midtown have so far prevented it. Marlene Austin-Francis and Carla expressed their positive encounters with the Makor men.

Stephen Glicksman can be reached at sglicksm@yu.edu or 347 390 -1315.



Stephen Glicksman



Cara Berg

Session B: Library Instruction Assessment

The next session dealt with the use of assessment to determine future goals and projects and as a way to demonstrate the value of the library to the campus community. Cara Berg of the Business Library at William Paterson University and Co-coordinator of User Education at the David and Lorraine Cheng Library as well as Assistant Professor, explained her role in devising assessment tools.

Her program started as an assessment of a new method of instruction for firstyear students and later developed for all instructional sessions. After each class, the librarians asked the students to fill out an assessment. The University has an Academic Assessment Council to which the instruction Program Coordinators report at its semi-annual meetings. Prof. Berg compiles data on goals, targets, and objectives and works closely with faculty.

The assessment produces a target set for a certain number of instruction sessions, reference questions, and outreach activities and the implementation of programs such as OER presentations and pop up libraries (library tables that appear where the students are: in the cafeteria, in various buildings, etc. made to interact with students as a form of outreach). It measures the number of classes taught and the number of students taught. It asks what is the impact on students? Did it affect their work? Will they use it? Do they feel more confident about the library resources? Do the faculty feel that it helps their educational goals?

The assessment covers a general instruction survey of all students receiving instruction, a survey of first-year students, and a biennial survey of faculty who requested library instruction. Since all this was very time-consuming to analyze, Dr. Berg now uses the ACRL Project Outcome Instruction Survey. It covers several different subject areas, generates comparisons with other institutions, and facilitates putting the results into the library report. It features standard questions such as: Did you learn about library resources? Are you going to apply what you learned? but it also has open-ended, customized questions.

In the first-year experience, students have a mandatory, non-credit course that has a different theme each week. Librarians give multiple classes at once on the same day and utilize the same PowerPoint. There is a take-home activity on the different steps in the research process, for example, how to find a book on the library website.

The biennial faculty survey asks if students used the resources that the librarians showed them and if their work benefited. This assessment can be used for marketing and improved instruction. By surveying those who did not request instruction for their students, it was found that 33% didn't know that the library offered this service. Direct emails were then sent to them explaining the program.

Prof. Berg suggested that it is important to be clear about what the goals of the assessment are, to have others review the survey instrument, and to distribute the results to the interested stakeholders. To get librarians to cooperate, its value must be explained to them and it must be easy to use with quickly accessible URLs, location on the website, email reminders, and shared results. Faculty must be brought onboard as well by keeping them updated and stressing that assessment is beneficial for them. Students must also be encouraged by telling them that it will help improve the program.

Some things that were helpful in this process were campus discussions, national and regional library assessment groups, a support network including librarians more experienced in assessment methods, conference proceedings, and other publications. Prof. Berg shared some publications she has written on assessment.

In the Q&A, Edith suggested that by looking at the syllabi, one could target the faculty who assign research papers. Paul suggested that these assessments would be very useful, particularly at this time, for the upcoming Middle States evaluation.

Sessions A & B can be seen in their entirety by accessing the Staff Guide on the Library Home Page.

Session C: A Tale of Two Rabbis

by Rina Krautwirth and Hindishe Lee

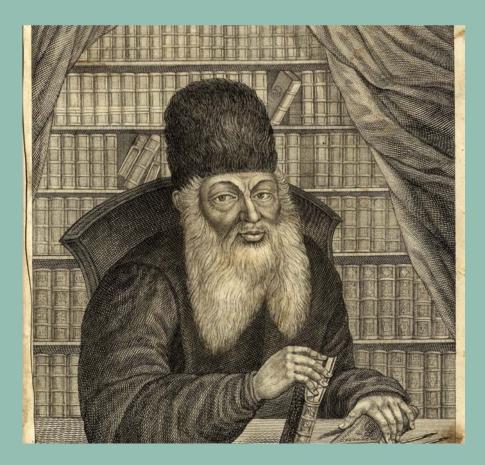
Dr. Sid Leiman, Jewish historian and scholar, took us back in time to 18th century Europe, to a controversy that shook the Jewish world and even received notoriety in the newspapers of that day, a scandal that continues to be debated and discussed until this very day. Dr. Leiman first set the stage by outlining the basic history of the Sabbatean movement, a movement based on the belief that a charismatic personality named Shabbtai Tzvi was the Messiah. After the deaths of this false messiah in 1676 and his disciple, Nathan of Gaza, four years later, various Sabbatean sects emerged, most prominently the Donmeh in Salonika and the Frankists in Germany, Russia, and Poland. The former overtly practiced Islam but secretly lived as Jews. A third, more moderate sect, which included distinguished rabbis-predominantly in Turkey, Italy, and Poland—discreetly harbored belief in Shabbtai Tzvi as the Messiah who would ultimately be reincarnated. These Sabbateans preached and practiced ascetism and extreme piety. Eventually, differentiating between those who identified as a Sabbatean and those who did not, as well as to which sect they belonged, became increasingly difficult.

Dr. Leiman then emphasized that the eighteenth century was an extremely prolific and flourishing time for Rabbinic Judaism, challenging us—the audience—to name famous rabbis who came to mind, such as the Vilna Gaon, the Baal Shem Tov, the Ramchal, the Chida, and Moses Mendelsohn, to name a few. Against this backdrop, Rabbi Jonathan Eybeschutz emerged as a leading rabbinic figure who served as Chief Rabbi of the prominent Altona/Hamburg/ Wandsbeck community. Concomitantly, Rabbi Yaakov Emden, another giant of Torah scholarship and master of Kabbalah, lived but a few houses away from Rabbi Eybeschutz. Even so, the two rabbinic legends met but once, resulting in a most disagreeable experience. Ironically, the lives of both celebrated rabbis were incessantly intertwined in a vicious battle for many years. To understand this feud better, Dr. Leiman elaborated on the stellar qualities of both men—but also on Rabbi Emden's rather cantankerous and antisocial character. He was so disliked by the community that he was granted permission by the elders to have a private *minyan* (prayer quorum) in his home—a rarity in those days before the advent of *"shteibels."* Against these character clashes, Rabbi Emden felt dutybound to continue his father's holy work of undoing the heretical Sabbateans and all they represented.

Now to the pivotal moment in this story: In 1751, Rabbi Yaakov Emden publicly declared to his small minyan that an amulet written by Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz-who was known for creating kabbalistic amulets-revealed in esoteric code that he was a secret Sabbatean. Rabbi Emden's possession of a printing press in his home facilitated the publication of pamphlets denouncing Rabbi Eybeschutz as a hidden heretic. Despite the fact that Rabbi Eybeschutz had many loyal followers, a volatile controversy ensued that escalated via the power of Rabbi Emden's massive publication campaign. Each of the two famed rabbis sentenced the other and his followers to cherem (excommunication); all of European Jewry became embroiled in the controversy. No less than the Chief Rabbi of Prague, Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, suggested a compromise: Rabbi Eybeschutz even agreed to swear on the Torah scroll that he was not a Sabbatean if Rabbi Emden would stop defaming him. Rabbi Emden stubbornly refused. Indeed, a year after the death of Rabbi Eybeschutz's beloved wife, Rabbi Emden proclaimed that her gravestone was encrypted with Sabbatean messages.

Dr. Leiman closed with an amusing anecdote about his encounter with two descendants of the eminent rabbis on separate occasions. He had met a lawyer, Mr. Emden, and fifteen years later, a Judge Eybeschutz. The judge told Dr. Leiman this story. In a weird twist of fate, the judge and the attorney interacted in court. When Attorney Emden became rather carried away in his presentation, Judge Eybeschutz called him over and asked him *sotto voce* if he was a progeny of the famous rabbi. When he answered in the affirmative, Judge Eybeschutz declared his own prestigious kinship, adding that it was now "pay back day!"

Additionally, Dr. Leiman stressed the importance of library materials in his research. He mentioned the fact that YU owns an exceptional collection of Rabbi Emden's pamphlets. All in all, this fascinating lecture illustrated how access to primary sources found in the libraries can not only support scholarship but bring history to life.



Rabbi Eybeschutz from the YU Archives

HAPPY SPRING HOLIDAYS!

Editor: Marlene Schiffman Proofreading: Shulamis Hes

