



Yeshiva University Libraries

LIBRARY STAFF NEWS

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Library Book Talks

Spring 2022

Illuminating Jewish Thought

by Zvi Erenyi

Tuesday, March 29, capped off the Yeshiva University Libraries Book Talks, as Rabbi Netanel (Nathaniel) Wiederblank--Instructor of Talmud, Halacha and Philosophy, RIETS-- discussed themes from his series Illuminating Jewish Thought (Maggid Books), currently in two volumes: Explorations of Free Will, the Afterlife, and the Messianic Era; and the recently published Faith, Philosophy, and Knowledge of God.

In the first part of his lecture, Rabbi Wiederblank set out reasons, from a Torah perspective, to refrain from predicting whether the war in Ukraine conferred any meaningful signals about the coming of the Messiah. He noted past attempts to associate events with apocalyptic passages in the Bible and to arrive at predictions about end times. About this matter, according to Maimonides (Rambam), neither do relevant Biblical verses provide clear statements, nor did our Sages possess firm traditions. Furthermore, Maimonides considered this preoccupation of little cardinal importance or practical application and, simply, a waste of time that detracted from the duty of love of God. Additionally, it could be dangerous: when a calculation for the "birth pangs" of the Messiah's arrival proved to be wrong, it could, and often did, lead to a loss of faith.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Wiederblank remarked that even notable sages, such as Rav Saadia Gaon, predicted dates because they felt that the dire contemporary circumstances of the Jews demanded this as a way of providing some hope. Maimonides emphasized that belief in the coming of the Messiah should not be a passive but an active longing, because his coming will usher in a true restoration, an opportunity to achieve religious goals currently unattainable in our diasporic condition. The prophecy of the “Dry Bones” in Ezekiel 37 concerns not the physical resurrection of the dead, rather a spiritual rejuvenation that will allow a better understanding of God and Torah--something not possible at present.

Rabbi Wiederblank devoted the second, shorter, part of his lecture to remarks about Gog and Magog. “Is there a direction to history?” he asked. He cited British historian Sir Herbert Butterfield’s notion that there is, indeed, such a progression, even if slow, and an optimism that bad past events would not recur. However, argued Rabbi Wiederblank, events such as the world wars and more recent conflicts have put the lie to this notion.

“Who is Gog?” Rabbi Wiederblank asked. The various possibilities offered by commentators leave the answer unclear. We all agree, however, on the outcome: the magnification of God’s name and the manifestation of His unity. While the direction leading to this outcome remains unclear, we must hope, said Rabbi Wiederblank, for peace and the revelation of His name.

Rina Returns to NYMA

by Chaya Sarah (Hallie) Cantor

After a two-year COVID hiatus, Rina Krautwirth, co-president of Association of Jewish Libraries, New York Metropolitan Area chapter (AJL-NYMA), kicked off the spring with "The Historical Jewish Press Project: Presenting Phase V." Three speakers from prominent NYC libraries (Bobst-NYU, Dorot-NYPL, and Butler-Columbia) discussed their digitization of Jewish-American periodicals dating from the 19th century to the modern era. Published in multiple languages, they reflected our burgeoning immigrant population and culture. This Zoom event, held Wednesday, May 4th, included many of our staff among the attendees. *Yasher koach*, Rina, and wishing you many more informative events.

No Red Sea, but Still a Drama: Leaky Ceiling @ HSL over Passover

by Chaya Sarah (Hallie) Cantor

At least there were no *gebrocks*!

A burst pipe caused minor flooding at Hedi Steinberg Library over Passover. After opening the North Wing Monday morning, Chol HaMoed, Emily went down to the lower level to do "the usual stuff," she said. "Turn on lights, do a routine walk through." Then she saw it: water dripping down the wall in one of the study rooms. "Fans had been set up," she added.

While not quite akin to the splitting of the Red Sea, there was still enough water to cascade over a periodical shelf and spread upward, seeping into the main floor and soaking a section filled with Judaica reference books.

Staff rushed in. All books and periodicals within range were swiftly removed. While Emily maintained constant contact with Edith over the progress, much of that week was spent paper-toweling wet pages and spreading them out to dry on desks or on tables in adjacent offices. Air conditioning went on full blast, and staff donned jackets in the Arctic temperature. "Just when we looked forward to a peaceful holiday," Emily sighed.

An Excel spreadsheet recorded the affected items - titles, issues, condition, ownership by Mendel Gottesman or Pollack Library, online availability. Luckily, most of the materials have been salvaged, some of the reference books—e.g. bibliographies of famous rabbis or scholars—being rare or esoteric. Maintenance was summoned to plaster the area and repair the leak, which might unfortunately indicate structural problems within an old building.

Yasher Koach, HSL crew, for saving the day - and a part of HSL's holdings.



Photos by Emily Apterbach



Flood Redux: Another Sprung Leak @ HSL

by Chaya Sarah (Hallie) Cantor

“Who'll stop the rain?”

Fresh on the heels of Chol HaMoed, Hedi Steinberg Library experienced another burst pipe, this one right after Shavuos and seeping from Koch Auditorium, located directly above the North Wing. Water cascaded down the Reserve desk area and back offices, leaving both a huge hole right above Rina's desk after a ceiling square collapsed, and an ominously large water stain right above Hindishe's desk.

This time it was Rina, and not Emily, who had noticed the calamity. However, Emily, who had already proven herself two months earlier, quickly offered her help. The two of them covered the Reserve area with plastic bags, while an apologetic maintenance crew, who had been doing work at Koch, rushed down to stop the spread. They even supplied Rina and Emily with stylish baseball caps, which Emily and Rina proudly donned, bearing the YU logo; afterwards, the two posed for a selfie.

“Next time we'll have to wear hardhats,” quipped Hindishe.

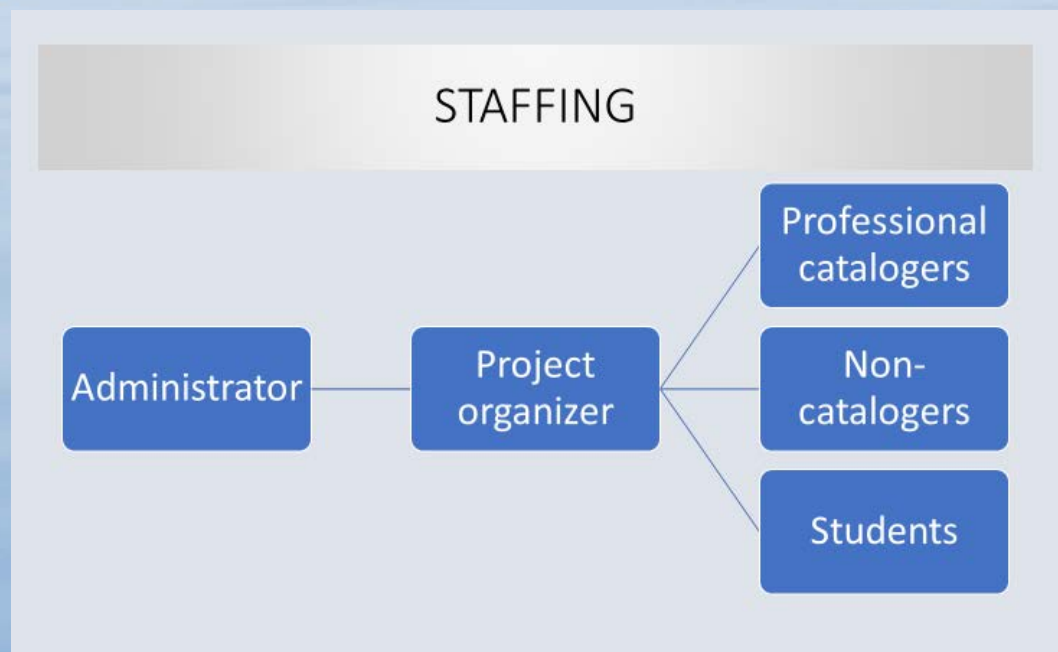


Emily, on the left, and Rina. Photo by Emiiy Apterbach

Soaring into the Future of Libraries: SUNYLA 2022

by Marlene Schiffman

Rebecca and Marlene of Metadata Services authored a paper at the State University of New York Librarians Association -- SUNYLA 2022 Annual Conference: Soaring into the Future of Libraries. It took place at Farmingdale State College, Long Island, June 10th. Marlene Schiffman presented the paper on behalf of Metadata Services and Processing describing the project that resulted in cataloging all the YU theses, dissertations, and SCW and YC Honors theses into YULIS. The paper, entitled, "From Piecemeal to Proactive: Cataloging Theses and Dissertations at Yeshiva University" was accompanied by PowerPoint diagrams and flowcharts to help the audience visualize how the project was carried out. The paper shows the intricate planning that went into the project, the number of people who had a hand in various aspects of it, and expressed appreciation for the cooperative effort it took to accomplish it in the projected timeframe. The paper was simultaneously shown on Zoom and will appear shortly on the YU YouTube channel.



Student Library Research Award Winner

Sammy Friedman

by Marlene Schiffman

What to do with a research paper written for Psychology class? If it's submitted as a candidate for the Student Library Research Award, it just might win. Sammy Friedman was the participant in a group project with his fellow students Jacob Jablonka, Ron Mashmoor and Josh Segal. They conceived of a psychological experiment and how it could be implemented, and each wrote a paper. But only Sammy submitted his paper to the award committee. He won a certificate and a cash prize.

The paper concerns Narrative Transportation. When the subjects of the experiment were engaged in a story--be it a book or movie--they became sucked into the narrative such that they cannot notice details that appear alongside the narratives in which they are so involved. Sammy's subjects were asked to watch a clip of a Disney film and watch for auditory or visual cues such as the appearance of horses walking across the screen or the mention of a specific word. Since they are so involved in the story, they often miss these cues. That is because the brain cannot multitask, and the concentration on one aspect overrules the other.

The subjects in this experiment were shown similar scenes from the same movie, one in animated form and one with live performers. They discovered that while viewing the animated film, the subjects were more invested in the plot, and actually lost more of the marginal details than with the live movie. Sammy is hoping to expand this experiment to a full study with many more participants.

This psych major from Clifton, NJ will be a senior next year and hopes to earn a joint B.A. and M.A. at Ferkauf. By next Spring, he will attain an M.A. in Mental Health Counseling. Asked what he plans to do with the prize money, he hasn't worked out the details yet.

Focus on YAIR

Richard C. Steiner & Beyond

by Chaya Sarah (Hallie) Cantor

As creator of Yeshiva University's repository (YAIR), Stephanie (Sara Leah) Gross has to date amassed a mile-long list of faculty and alumni achievements. And the list keeps on growing.

Among the latest in her cyber Who's Who of YU is Richard C. Steiner, Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages and Literatures, whose prolific work encompasses historical eras from Egyptian Pyramid texts to Medieval Biblical interpretation. The Bronx native and graduate of Yeshiva College (1966) taught at both YC and the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies until his retirement.

Where to even start? "Luckily, we have a LibGuide of Steiner," Stephanie explained, while sharing screens over Teams. Locating books and articles was comparatively easy. " Some were already available in JSTOR." Stephanie contacted the professor, who supplied her with additional links; others were looked up in Academia (<https://yeshiva.academia.edu/RichardSteiner>). Three of the professor's students had worked on his bibliography for a Festschrift: *Semitic, Biblical, and Jewish Studies in Honor of Richard C. Steiner*, Aaron J. Koller, Mordechai Z. Cohen and Adina Moshavi.

After completing the repository entries, Stephanie was sent Prof. Steiner's curriculum vitae, from which she created the bio webpage:

<https://library.yu.edu/richardsteiner>. The webpage, which includes his photo, highlights his bona fides:

- Author of six books and 71 articles;**
- Co-author of one book and four articles;**
- Honorary member of both the Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Mekize Nirdamim Society;**
- Former Starr Fellow (Harvard University);**
- Two-time fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies (Hebrew University).**

Prof. Steiner also served as principal investigator of institutional research grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and was the recipient of a publication award from the Biblical Archaeology Society.

His scholarly contributions—189 in total—comprise an extraordinary range of converging subjects:

- Biblical and Semitic philology;**
- History of ancient Hebrew and Aramaic;**
- Semitic texts in Egyptian scripts;**
- History of Jewish Biblical exegesis;**
- Medieval Hebrew reading traditions;**
- Hebrew linguistics in the Middle Ages.**

DESIDERATA

Completion of the Steiner archive shows the gradual changes, aesthetic and practical, within YAIR, and the transition to mastery of online tools.

Stephanie credits Hao for tech support and for recent improvements:

- List of Top 10 Performers (monthly downloads;**
- LibGuide tweaks;**
- DSpace support.**

Consequently, appearance has become more streamlined: Prof. Steiner's works and affiliations, for example, are neatly divided into horizontal, titled bars on the upper left. Also of worthy mention is J.B. for edits to Zoom links and conversion to YouTube.

Stephanie lauds the intellectual progress the repository has affected.

"There's so much richness. All these ideas have broadened the repository's perspective as well as global interest."

As an example, she pointed to the contributions by Wurzweiler Social Work Professor Daniel Pollack, who specializes in family law and co-authors expert witness advice columns in nationally published law journals. Because YAIR does not include articles from Cardozo School of Law, Dr. Pollack's contributions broaden YAIR's scope in legal fields.

What further changes would Stephanie like to see?

For starters, more rabbinics, Hebraica, and secular works. More Libguides for bibliographies, which themselves should be annotated. More self-depositing, and feedback from social media like Twitter. As a supplementary aid to the YU Book Talks, Stephanie had created a spreadsheet with call numbers of the relevant authors, with links to YAIR and YouTube. Staff, both librarians and support, can cover special collections or communities on the library blog (which will include the YAIR link).

Stephanie stressed the need for retrospective conversions of requested print items that may not be accessed through interlibrary loans. Since many international requests come via Google Scholar and other discovery tools, this need has been acknowledged and supported from librarians in all departments, notably Gottesman.

"There is little appreciation of backing up and archiving files from student publications, ETDS [electronic theses and dissertations], or department publications," Stephanie wistfully noted. YAIR acts as archives, true, but it is important to remember: There was a paucity of digital files to be shared.

"For example," she continued, "the Orthodox Forum was found to be available on CD. But most material has had to be scanned from print. And, in the case of student newspapers, from microform!"

In an interview with Stephanie before COVID, Dean of Students Karen Bacon had expressed her desire, especially in the case of YU-funded publications, that certain protocols be met: 1) two print copies to YU Archives, and 2) one digital file to YAIR.



DISEMBODIED SOULS

*The Nefesh in Israel
and Kindred Spirits in
the Ancient Near East,
with an Appendix on the
'Katumuwa' Inscription*

Richard C. Steiner

Ancient Near East Monographs - Monografías sobre el Antiguo Cercano Oriente
Society of Biblical Literature
Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente (CEHA)

It is easy to think that a library could simply start scanning and digitizing theses and dissertations. However, copyright and consent protocols must be followed. The first step is to locate and contact authors via email or phone, then to request that they sign and return a consent form for their works to be digitized and shared in the repository. All work is then copyright-protected under Creative Commons sharing license.

Time is of the essence. "It's a question of locating the authors while they're still alive," Stephanie explained. In the case of deceased authors, surviving relatives must be located and their consent given before the process of self-archiving to YAIR can move forward.

There are other challenges -- misspelled author names, variations in spelling (especially romanizations), and, of course, typos. Prof. Steiner himself appears in various links without his middle initial.

Nevertheless, the rewards of her work outweigh any pitfalls. Stephanie is seeing the ultimate achievement: archiving intellectual output of YU scholars (outside of AECOM or Cardozo) and presenting it globally via open access.

The publications of Richard C. Steiner can be found here:

<https://repository.yu.edu/RichardSteiner>. *Yasher koach* to Prof. Steiner on his numerous contributions to our university and library—and to Stephanie, for making them available beyond the academic walls.

Also a special thanks for her input and added information for this article.

TRANSITIONS

New Librarian Justin Thomas



This jovial fellow is Justin Thomas, Pollack Library's new Public Services and User Experience Librarian, who enjoys helping people and aims to hear feedback about how the library can be improved for its users. With a library degree from the University of Maryland, he served as Head Research and Instruction Librarian at Howard

Community College, coordinating faculty and reference staff.

Justin lives in Queens with a partner and two fur children (Mango and Kiwi; they're sheepadoodles.*) As a former jazz bassist, Justin likes to make electronic listening music and admits to an addiction to french fries.

Looking forward to working with you, Justin!

Mango and Kiwi



*The Sheepadoodle is a mixed breed dog – a cross between the Old English Sheepdog and Poodle dog breeds. Smart, playful, and loving, these pups inherited some of the best traits from both of their parents.

Ethan Fraenkel Follows a New Path

Ethan has left HSL to pursue a Ph.D. in Germanic languages at Columbia University.



New path at Columbia

Enna Korik Joins Pollack Staff

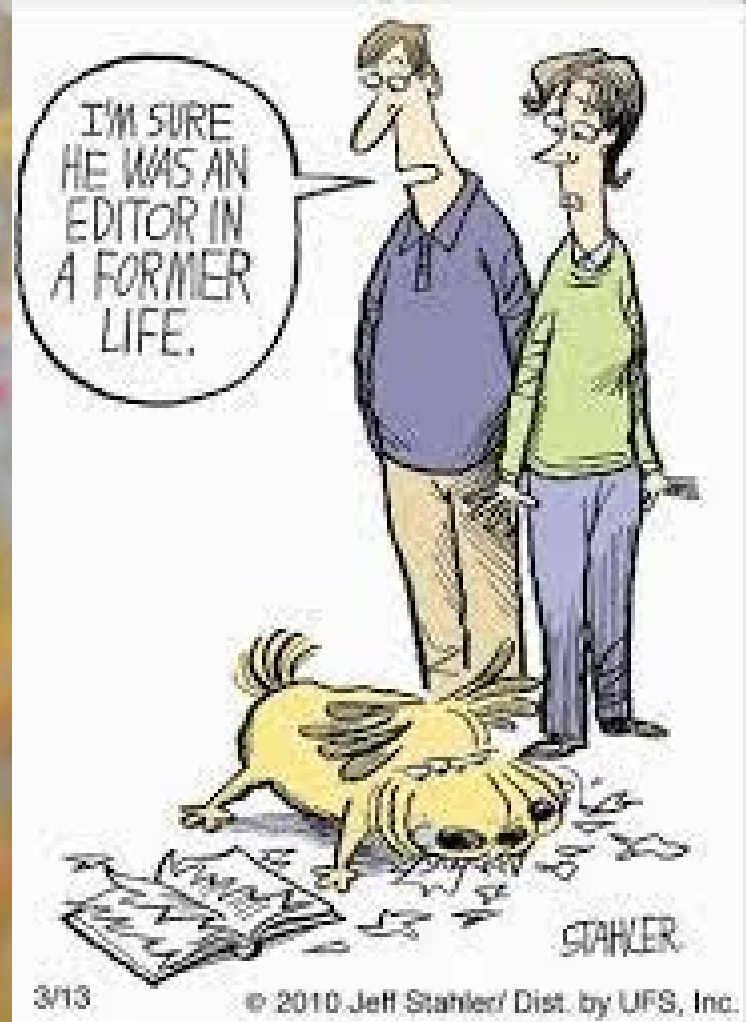
Enna (pronounced ("Eena")) is a Circulation Associate at Pollack Library. Born in Moldova, Enna came to New York as a teenager. She has a bachelor's degree in marketing management from Baruch College and has worked in various companies as an administrative assistant. Before joining our Pollack circulation team, Enna worked in the Admissions Department at YU and used her native knowledge of the Russian language to translate transcripts of incoming students from Russia. She lives in Washington Heights with her husband, and they are parents of a son and daughter, and grandparents of two beautiful granddaughters, who love her recipes.



Some of her interests are holistic medicine and research into the benefits of herbal and nutritional supplements. Enna likes to do calisthenics and stretching exercises and advocates for healthy living to be taught to children in school.

Welcome, Enna!

Library Humor







"They've rebranded the reference library."

Why did the cardiologist recommend that his patients go to the library?

He heard they're good for circulation.

Why did Dracula go to the library?

He wanted to sink his teeth into a good book.

Library Shorts



Once again our librarians will be represented at the Association of Jewish Libraries Conference, held this year in Philadelphia, June 27-29th. The conference is appropriately entitled : "Conference 2022: Together again!" after several years of Zoom hiatus.

The Association for Jewish Studies will feature a panel on The Varieties of Careers in Judaica Librarianship during its conference in December in Boston. Marlene has been invited to participate in the panel along with a curator, an archivist, and a cataloger from the Library of Congress.

Edith , Rebecca, Sandy and Tina will develop a job description for a summer pre-professional internship.

A contract has been signed with Gefen Publishers to produce the memorial book for Leah Adler, ז"ל. It will be entitled: *Wisdom Built her House (Proverbs 9:1): A Tribute in Honor and in Memory of Mrs. Leah Adler ז"ל.*

Edith will share with Sandy, Shuli, and Tina the tool HSL uses to record research interactions. . Sandy & Hao will coordinate one tool for all to include chat.

Stephanie has begun to scan all articles and stories that were written by Chaya Sarah (Hallie). She encourages other staff members to submit to YAIR anything they have written as well.



Congratulations, Class of 2022!



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