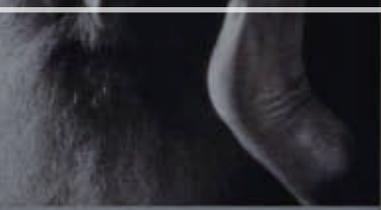


inished World  
AN VISHNIAC  
with a foreword by Elie Wiesel

Jews of Iran  
A Photographic Chronicle

FREDERIC BR

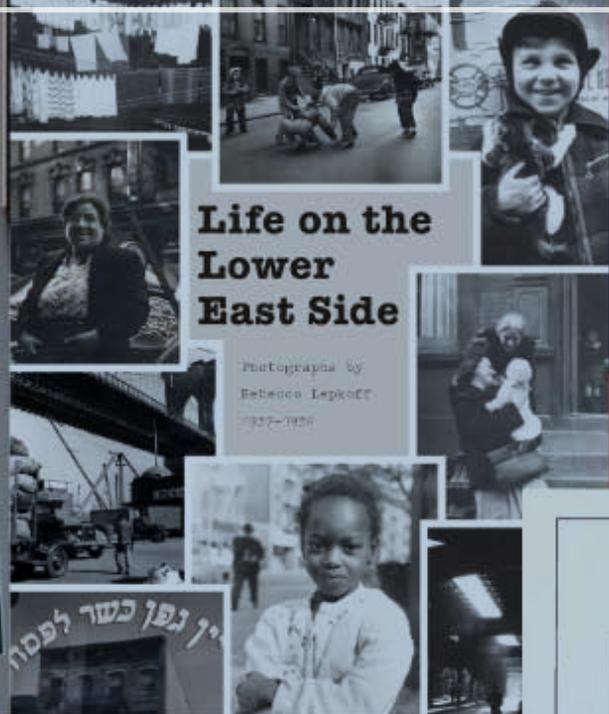
# FRANKELY SPEAKING



of the SHADOWS



A Photographic Portrait of

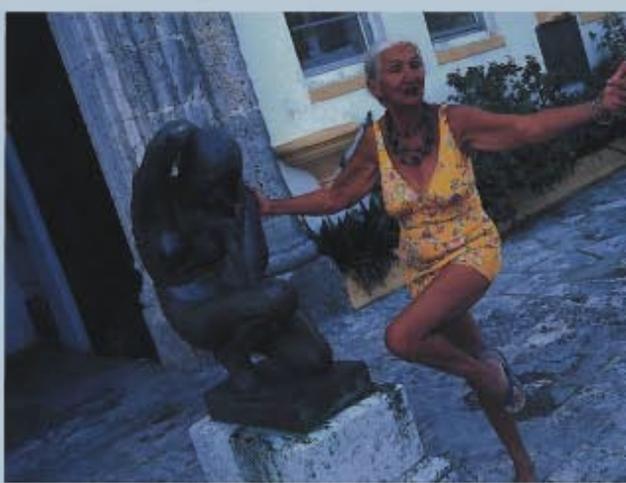


Life on the  
Lower  
East Side

Photographs by  
Rebecca Lepkoff  
1937-1950

a moment  
**before**  
Jews in the Soviet U

My Love Affair with  
**MIAMI BEACH**



PHOTOGRAPHS  
**Richard Nagler**

INTRODUCTION & COMMENTAR  
**Isaac Bashevis Singer**

The Last Jews of Rădăuți

by Ayşe Gürsan-Salzmänn Photographs by Laurence Salzmänn



# On Covers: Looking at Jews



Deborah Dash Moore  
Interim Director of the  
Frankel Center for Judaic Studies

The old adage admonishes us to not judge a book by its cover, but I've been thinking recently a lot about covers and how much they invite, if not judgment, curiosity. After all, when bookstores choose to put a book face out, they are appealing to viewers to pick it up, drawn by an enticing cover. I have always worked hard to choose covers for my books that speak as loudly as possible in favor of the words inside. And when the contents feature images, there is even a more compelling reason to contemplate covers.

This year's Frankel Institute theme focuses on Jews and Media. Although there is no scholar exploring the history of the book as a popular form of Jewish media engagement (one with a long and deep history), Nadya Bair's December photobook workshop came close. An art historian, Bair looks at photobooks as standing at the intersection of image and text. In the workshop, she specifically presented photobooks that pictured Jews, most of them created by Jewish photographers.

So, what do Jews look like? Well, it depends.

Is the photographer, like Roman Vishniac, picturing Jews in Eastern Europe before World War II? Or maybe the photographer, like Edward Serotta, is responding to a series of books published after the Holocaust called "The Last Jews of . . ." and sets out to do a book called *Out of the Shadows: A Photographic Portrait of Jewish Life in Central Europe Since the Holocaust* that portrays Jews from 1985 to 1991. Or maybe an American Jewish photographer, like Richard Nagler, discovers elderly Jewish immigrants living in Miami Beach during those same years and is convinced that he is capturing a shtetl world transported to American shores. Vishniac, Serotta, and Nagler are all depicting Jews.

What kinds of covers do these books present?

Vishniac's very successful volume, *A Vanished World*, pictured a close-up portrait of an elderly bearded Jew on its cover staring soulfully at the photographer and, therefore, at us. In some ways, with his long white beard, deep-set eyes, and graceful raised left hand, he represented exactly what Americans imagined a Jew from Eastern Europe before the Holocaust looked like. Serotta, by contrast, put a young couple, teenagers, dancing cheek-to-cheek at a Hanukkah celebration in Budapest in December of 1989 on his cover. The boy wears a *kippah* on top of his curly black hair, the girl wears a white blouse with large loose sleeves; behind them couples, both young and middle-aged, fill the dance floor. Nagler turned to color to convey the in-your-face Jewish world of Miami Beach. His book, *My Love Affair with Miami Beach*, features an old, fit woman in a yellow bathing suit balancing on one leg, her arms outstretched, a big smile on her face. One of her hands grasps a kneeling stone statue of a nude young woman, placed in front of a building. Both statue and dancer seem to be performing for the camera, inviting us to appreciate their grace and vigor. Neither Vishniac's nor Nagler's book titles mention Jews. It is up to the viewer to recognize them by virtue of when and where they lived.

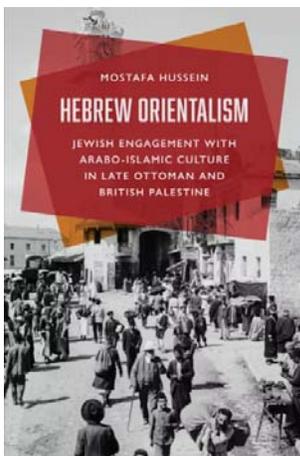
Bearded old man, teenage dancing couple, elderly vigorous woman. This is what Jews look like according to the book covers. Each effectively conveys a message, allowing us, indeed, to judge a book by its cover.

### Deborah Dash Moore

Interim Director of the Frankel Center  
for Judaic Studies

# Mostafa Hussein

In this issue's Faculty Spotlight, we are delighted to feature Dr. Mostafa Hussein, Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies, whose new book, *Hebrew Orientalism: Jewish Engagement with Arabo-Islamic Culture in Late Ottoman and British Palestine*, is redefining how scholars and the public alike think about Jewish-Arab relations in the region. Last October, Dr. Hussein delivered the esteemed Padnos Public Lecture in Grand Rapids, captivating audiences with his insights on intercultural exchange and the intricate tapestry of Jewish and Arabo-Islamic encounters. Looking ahead, Dr. Hussein is co-organizing the "Symposium on Judeo-Islamic Engagements" this coming April 2026, bringing together leading voices to advance dialogue, collaboration, and understanding. In our interview, Dr. Hussein reflects on the challenges and rewards of bridging disciplinary divides, pushing past entrenched narratives, and fostering public conversations that illuminate the deep, multifaceted history of these intertwined communities.



***What does the term “Hebrew Orientalism” mean in your work? How does it align or differ from canonical definitions of Orientalism?***

Hebrew Orientalism concerns Hebrew writings produced by Jewish nationalists in late Ottoman and British Palestine that explored and investigated Arabs, Palestinians, Islam, the flora and fauna of the landscape, as well as the



Mustafa Hussein

folkloric lore of the East. While in the European context it denotes, for the most part, subjugation and domination over the East, in the Jewish context in Palestine, the term “Orientalism” refers to an ambivalent approach towards the East. On the one hand, the East is uncivilized and backward and needs to be elevated and educated at the hands of European Jewish settlers, but at the same time it is a subject for fascination and enchantment and striking roots in the land given the multilinguistic, multiethnic, and multireligious landscape of the region compared to the

For a closer look at *Hebrew Orientalism*, please visit the [publication website](#).



(Left to right) Professors Deborah Dash Moore, Eric Covey (GVSU), and Mostafa Hussein in conversation at the 2025 Padnos Lecture.



homogeneous realities of Europe at the time. Early Jewish settlers, for instance, while raising the banner of a civilizing mission to educate the backward native population in late Ottoman Palestine adopted aspects of their lifestyle in their reincarnation of the old native Israelite.

***What are the major methodological and intellectual challenges you have encountered when bridging Jewish, Arab, and Islamic studies?***

In contextualizing the Jewish writings on Arabs, Jews, Palestine landscape, the language, and the Bible, I had to immerse myself in reading many works in Arabic language that had been originally written in the Middle Ages for a certain objective and then these books got revived and republished by Muslim, Christian, and Jewish writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century to address issues about subjectivity, the relations between tradition and modernity, the relations between various religious and ethnic communities, and the revival of a language characteristic of their traditions and past while at the same time addressing the issues of the hour, including the relations between the colonized and the colonizer and seeking liberation and independence from the European occupier. I had to grapple with several contextual layers in my undertaking and pay close attention to the questions that informed the original context and

how they differ as scholars from different ethnic and religious backgrounds continued to deal with the same questions over time while looking at the same Arabic and Islamic texts.

***If there's one takeaway you hope readers gain from your book, especially those with entrenched views on the "clash" between Jews and Arabs, what would it be?***

A dominant perspective of Jewish–Arab relations is one of perpetual confrontation and irreconcilable differences. However, this monolithic and reductionist view overlooks the myriad ways in which both groups have interacted throughout history. It is vital to challenge this binary worldview, as it leads only to alienation and division—especially in the U.S., where people's views are often shaped by limited media exposure and insular conversations. While tension certainly exists, often due to the political situation in Israel/Palestine, understanding the historical context that led to the present is crucial. Only then can we move past superficial generalizations and clearly understand the complex history of these communities.

***How do you navigate presenting a subject as complex and sensitive as Jewish–Arab cultural exchange and colonial encounters in a public forum at the Padnos Lecture this past October? Do you adjust your framing or language for non-academic listeners?***



The lecture was attended by two members of the Padnos Family, Jeff and Peg Padnos, whose invaluable support enables this annual endowed lecture.

When unpacking the complexity of this subject, I approach it with empathy. My goal is to provide the historical context that explains how we arrived at the current political impasse in Israel/Palestine. I also strive to give the audience hope that a solution is plausible. By addressing injustices and adhering to impartiality—and specifically, if the more powerful party demonstrates a sincere intention to uplift the powerless—we can find a way forward. I also attempt to direct the attention of the audience to other geographic locations and cases where Jews and Arabs/Muslims are not in a state of rivalry and tension. This gives my audience a well-rounded view of the complex history of both groups. I would like to thank the Padnos family for supporting and encouraging conversations around this timely topic.

***Do you hope the symposium on Jewish–Islamic Entanglements this upcoming April will lead to any concrete projects, such as edited volumes, collaborative research, or public engagement initiatives? How might academic dialogue at the conference influence the way this history is taught or publicly discussed beyond the university?***

The symposium on Jewish–Muslim Entanglements will host several leading scholars in the field of Jewish–Islamic studies, each bringing their unique perspectives. Highlighting the rich and creative ways these scholars engage with the

subject—and how they address current political, cultural, and social issues on U.S. campuses and beyond—is crucial. We aim to enrich public understanding of the deep intertwining of Islamic and Jewish thought. By doing so, we hope to encourage the public to look deeper and push back against superficial views that reduce Jewish–Muslim intersectionality to a mere battlefield or a zero-sum game. I am hopeful the scholarly contributions in this symposium will result in two types of works: an edited volume directed towards academics and another type of project that helps nonacademic interested readers to comprehend the questions at hand.

***What will be your next project(s)?***

I have recently been working on a micro-history project tentatively titled *Friendship Across Religions*. The project examines the decades-long socioeconomic relationship that developed in the early twentieth century between Abraham Shalom Yahuda, a Jewish scholar–book trader based in Europe, and Muhammad Amīn al-Khānjī, a Muslim bookseller based in Cairo. Using the notion of friendship as a primary lens, the book explores their connection that was deeply rooted in their shared passion for books, as evidenced by their acquisition and circulation of thousands of manuscripts and books on Arabic and Islamic sciences.

# Dialogues with Assaf Shelleg



By Peter Cohn,  
Undergraduate  
Student & Judaic  
Studies Ambassador

This September, the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies had the pleasure of hosting Assaf Shelleg, professor and musicologist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, for a roundtable discussion as well as meetings with individual students. After attending the discussion on September 16, I had the pleasure of getting to spend some time chatting with Professor Shelleg the next day, and we had an enormously interesting and insightful conversation.

But that wasn't surprising—as a dual-degree student in Judaic Studies and Music Composition, I knew from the first announcement that this was something I needed to attend. While my standard coursework involves both Judaic Studies and music in many forms, there aren't any classes specifically on Jewish music—it's just too niche—and a lot of the synthesis between the two that I do happens on my own time and is painfully self-guided. I was excited to not just talk about Jewish music with a Judaic studies professor or a musician, but with a scholar who has dedicated their life to both—a rare and exciting opportunity.

And I was not disappointed. The roundtable discussion, titled “Jewish Sound in Four Objects,” was a fascinating look not just into the materiality of sound, but also into the way in which different musical backgrounds can lead to different ways of interacting with Jewishness in music. My experience does probably have the most in common with Prof. Shelleg's—I mostly inhabit secular musical spaces, and tend to view Jewishness in music through an academic lens, in contrast to, for example, another one of the speakers, Jeremiah Lockwood, whose experience is much more liturgical in nature—and the ways the different speakers navigated the boundaries between secular and liturgical was one of the most interesting parts of the discussion.

In a lot of ways, the discussion felt like a preamble to my chat during Prof. Shelleg's office hours the next day. The musical object he “brought” to the discussion—a composition based on Jewish music by a German, non-Jewish composer in the late 20th century—stirred controversy, and that was clearly intentional. We spent a lot of our chat talking about the notion of what it means to “own” music, especially in regards to who can interact with Jewish music in that way. It turns out that the American view of that kind of cross-cultural musical creation is very different from what Prof. Shelleg sees in the Israeli and German musical communities, and we ended up having a lengthy discussion about how modern music, Jewish and otherwise, is understood differently in America than in the schools of Europe. Contemporary musicology in America has a fascination with “ownership” that he finds almost uniquely American—a tendency to view musical origins and histories not as a series of interactions and influences but as a set of discrete traditions—and it's one with which his research has led him to firmly disagree.

We also spoke about Wagner—an unavoidably common topic of any discussion about Jewishness and music—and about how the performance and study of Wagner in the context of his antisemitism is much less cut-and-dry than a lot of musicians today would like to think. Wagner, the notorious antisemite, has long been persona non grata in Israeli classical music circles, something Prof. Shelleg no doubt experienced during his tenure as curator at the Israel Philharmonic—but his views on the performance of Wagner's works was so much more multifaceted than what I'm used to hearing. His extensive reading of the composer's writings show, as he explained, less of a singularly prejudiced view of Jews in music and more of an internally inconsistent, sometimes contradictory perception, exemplary of the complex role that Jewish artists had in

*Assaf Shelleg is clearly not afraid of controversy—but rather than being interested in shock value, he’s interested in what those discussions can tell us about how we understand our own Jewishness through the medium of music.*



Assaf Shelleg

contemporary Europe and an interesting look into the nuances of Nazi propaganda. Shelleg views Wagner almost as a case study, a lens into the Aryan view of Jewish art and an example of the complexity of Nazi antisemitism.

Assaf Shelleg is clearly not afraid of controversy—but rather than being interested in shock value, he’s interested in what those discussions can tell us about how we understand our own Jewishness through the medium of music. In my two degree programs, Jewishness and music are fully distinct things. I was excited to talk with Shelleg because he’s managed to find a career path that combines these two fields, something I also hope to do one day. It was enormously insightful to hear about his research and work, and, perhaps self-indulgently, I’d like to say he was interested in my studies as well—a lot of my recent compositional projects have involved the use of Jewish and Israeli musical materials, and he had a lot of really interesting insight about how that inclusion reflects modern and past trends in Jewish music-making. This residency was such a rare and uniquely perfect opportunity for me, and I’m so glad he was so willing to share his work and his insights with me and the rest of the department.

# Yiddishland in Ann Arbor



By Kristen Morgenstern,  
Graduate Student

I am pacing back and forth on Lubarwoska street in Lublin, Poland. I look at the neglected storefront in front of me, which seems to be some sort of credit office, and then back at the address I have plugged into my phone. It is at this moment I accept that I am, in fact, lost. About to give up and move on to the next item in my too-long-and-impossible-to-finish itinerary, I suddenly notice a light on the second floor above the storefront—an electric menorah glowing in the middle of June.

I am looking right at it, the only synagogue in Lublin to have survived the Second World War. I face another barrier: the entrance is locked, but a phone number is listed next to the door. Someone answers right away, and knows why I have called. “Give me five minutes,” says the voice on the other end of the line.

Soon enough, a man, who I learn is named Pawel, and his dog come walking down the street. Pawel gives me a personal tour of the small interior of the synagogue, showing me

Judaica his family and other survivors rescued from the streets of the former ghetto after the war. Tefillin boxes with stolen scrolls. Gravestones stolen to make millstones, with their Hebrew lettering still visible. We speak together in Yiddish, and with some Polish to English Google Translate to supplement. His dog chews on a potato the whole time. “When the Hasidim come to visit, they don’t like that I bring him inside,” Pawel says. We laugh.

He treats me to lunch down the block, at a cafeteria where everyone seems to know Pawel and his dog. We talk about my studies and his life in Lublin. He is beyond thrilled I have taken an interest in Yiddish; he believes mine is much better than his, I say the opposite is true.

Fast forward to the fall and I am sitting in my second year of graduate Yiddish at the University of Michigan. Our professor, Elena Luchina, introduces the next book we will be reading, *Fun Lublin Biz Nyu York* (From Lublin to New York). We will read the original 1942 ‘forgotten novel’

Students learning traditional Yiddish dance at the “Dance, Dance Across From Me” Workshop in March 2025





Visiting Author Vivi Lachs presenting  
“The Great Yiddish Parade” at the  
Frankel Center in October 2025

by Kadya Molodovsky, and later consult its recent translation by our own Professor Emerita, Anita Norich.

I instantly connect with the novel’s main character, a teenager named Rivke who struggles to adjust to life in New York, and misses her former home. The fictional Rivke and I both long for Lublin. Her Lublin, I realize, is one that I will never truly know.

A portal is opened to Rivke’s world in class and the decades between us collapse as we speak Yiddish through the streets of Lublin hand-in-hand. Reading in Yiddish gives me a new vocabulary for thinking about longing, home, and memory.

During my summer Yiddish program in Warsaw, I began, for the first time, to think in Yiddish. I was walking from class to my apartment located in the former Warsaw Ghetto when I realized what I was doing.

At the time, I was living with two Yiddishists, both of whom I knew from a year of class together. Our stay in Warsaw, however, was the first time we met in person, as they are both virtual students joining from Urbana-Champaign. Our diasporic Yiddishland exists beyond borders in the virtual world, yet it also brought us together for a summer in Warsaw.

Yiddish at Michigan is not just about gaining a new perspective on history or coming together in Yiddishland, but it is also about having an eye to the future. This semester, we were visited by historian and Yiddishist Vivi Lachs. She is the

co-creator of “The Great Yiddish Parade,” a recreation of the 1889 march in London’s East End where Jewish immigrant tailors went on strike to demand better working conditions. Lachs’ parade breathes new life into the historic songs of Jewish workers and the march brings together the immigrant communities of Whitechapel past and present.

Lachs encourages us to embody our longings, to bring our Yiddish into the streets. Her work inspires us to use historical resonances we find in the Yiddish archives as a tool for solidarity work as we look toward a Yiddish future.

Yiddish on the Diag:  
Yiddish Labor Shabbos  
community gathering in  
August 2025



# American Jewish Life of DNA



By Samantha Caminker,  
Undergraduate  
Student & Judaic  
Studies Ambassador

In my second semester at the University of Michigan, I took Professor Cara Rock-Singer's class, "American Jewish Life of DNA." I chose this course because I was intrigued by the murky relationship between Jewishness and notions of race and ethnicity, and I became only more interested the deeper we delved into this topic. We traced Jewishness's definition throughout history and tracked its frequent shifts—in biblical times, Jews were considered a tribe, then they became known as a biologically distinct group, then a separate race, then a sub-white religious identity, before eventually reaching today's status as an ethno-religion. Learning this full history not only helped me appreciate the sociopolitical influences that feed into and shape racial designations, but it also created a strong contextual foundation for future subjects and courses in Judaic Studies.

After examining the historical relationship between Jewishness and race, we dove into the modern world of DNA and genetics. One of my favorite topics to study was the rise of genetic ancestry tests (which can reveal one's racial/ethnic heritage) and the impact they have on an individual's sense of identity and community belonging



Cara Rock-Singer

when they yield unexpected results. We explored this theme from multiple viewpoints, including—in an amazing case of polarized perspectives—both a) a Jewish woman discovering that the man who raised her, from whom she drew her sense of Jewish identity, was not her biological father; and b) white nationalists discovering non-white DNA and consequently being rejected from white-nationalist communal spaces. Seeing the same theme emerge in completely opposite settings was truly fascinating.

Another very important theme of this course, one that kept reappearing in new contexts until the very end, was the role of agency in identity. Amid all the discussion of racial designations, biological categorizations, and genetic discoveries, we kept returning to the ways in which we each choose, shape, and accept our own identities. College is primarily an educational setting, but it is also a place for self-exploration and redefinition. This course not only introduced a multitude of lenses through which to examine identity—historical, biological, social, political, to name a few—but it also made room for overlapping interpretations, as well as encouraged students to reflect on their own identities from multiple angles.

I learned so much from this course and its wealth of topics addressing vital historical context and new, still-evolving fields such as epigenetics and genetic ancestry testing. I also came away deeply interested in the subject of genetics and DNA's place in American Jewish life and culture. This aspect of modern Jewishness manifests in myriad forms—from discovering Jewish heritage and tracking diasporic lineages to screening for predominantly Ashkenazi genetic diseases and recognizing the impact of the Holocaust on second- and third-generation survivors. This relationship between DNA and Jewishness plays such a prominent part in American Jewish life, and I'm grateful to this class for giving Michigan students, including myself, an opportunity to engage with it.

# The Future of American Jewish Pasts

**T**he *Future of American Jewish Pasts* is a multifaceted volume published last November that promises to reshape the conversation in American Jewish studies. Frankel Center Interim Director Deborah Dash Moore joins forces with noted scholars Lila Corwin Berman (New York University) and Beth S. Wenger (University of Pennsylvania)—a group who first collaborated as fellows at the Katz Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania—to edit this collection, sprung from a period marked by unprecedented social change and urgent historical reflection.

*The Future of American Jewish Pasts* is both a product of its exceptional scholarly community and its context: conceived in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and completed just before the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel and ensuing war. Contributors to this volume assess not just what we know of the American Jewish experience, but how we might envision its ongoing evolution—through fresh perspectives, new methods, and previously unexplored questions.

*Contributors deploy a kaleidoscope of disciplinary tools, including history, ethnography, literary analysis, and personal narrative, to reflect the complexity and richness of American Jewish life.*

Diverging from traditional historical narratives, the essays gathered in this work reconceive established themes—antisemitism, Zionism, liberalism, immigration, family, and feminism—while also forging paths into underexamined terrains. Contributors deploy a kaleidoscope of disciplinary tools, including history, ethnog-

raphy, literary analysis, and personal narrative, to reflect the complexity and richness of American Jewish life. Particularly compelling are the essays that blend theoretical rigor with individual voice, illuminating how scholars' own identities and experiences inform both their questions and their answers.

For example, explorations of what constitutes “community” or “identity” in an era marked by rapid sociopolitical shifts seek new sources and frameworks, shifting our lens from the familiar to the revelatory. Personal stories are interwoven with archival research, offering a poignant reminder that

the past shapes, and is continuously shaped by, the individuals who study it. Questions about antisemitism are reconsidered in light of recent social movements, discussions of Zionism challenge both historical and contemporary understandings, and the topic of immigration is recast within the wider context of the American experience.

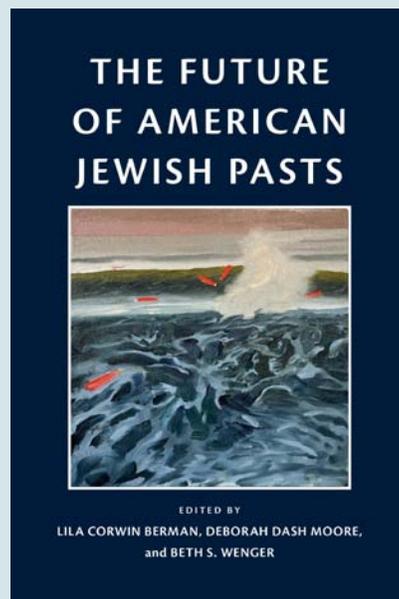
In a blog post from the University of Pennsylvania Press, Berman reflects,

**“Written during the pandemic, the essays in this volume reflect the simultaneity of dislocation and location. . . Today, the crises in higher education, in our country’s government, and in Israel and Palestine make it feel harder than ever to find one’s moorings. Yet the essays insist we keep trying, no matter the powerful tides of change.”**

This new volume offers an expansive, dynamic view of American Jewish history—one that encourages readers to reconsider the past itself as open to reinterpretation, recasting American Jewish life not as a static legacy but as an ongoing, lived process. This perspective is echoed in Emory University and U-M Alum Professor Eric L. Goldstein’s praise of the volume:

**“This critical text provides bold new frameworks, methodologies, and interpretations that challenge the narrative of American Jewish ‘synthesis’ and draw our attention to the collisions and contradictions of the American Jewish past.”**

We congratulate our colleagues and all contributors for producing a work that will surely have a lasting impact on the field and beyond.



Read the co-editors' blog post here:



For a closer look at *The Future of American Jewish Pasts*, please visit the publication website.



Frankely Judaic Podcast **Season 11**

# “Jews and Media”

The “Frankely Judaic” podcast explores some of the newest research being conducted at the University of Michigan in Judaic Studies. Each episode of “Frankely Judaic” presents the research of a Frankel Institute Fellow in an interesting and lively way, showing how intersectional research of the humanities is relevant to listeners’ lives today.

In Season 11 of the Frankely Judaic Podcast, we shine a light on our “Jews and Media” cohort, discussing the study of various media forms, from the historical artifacts of manuscripts and scrolls to newspapers, magazines, recordings, film, television, and digital technologies. Listen to the first three episodes of Season 11 on our podcast website.



**Episode 1**

**Shachar Pinsker,**  
“Below the Line:  
The Feuilleton &  
Modern Jewish  
Cultures”

In this episode, host Jeremy Shere talks with Shachar Pinsker, a professor of Judaic and Middle East Studies at the University of Michigan, about the historical and contemporary relevance of the feuilleton—an arts and entertainment section of newspapers that during the 19th and 20th centuries became known as a Jewish genre of journalism. The discussion covers the origins of the feuilleton during the French Revolution, its development and popularity among Jewish writers across Europe, and the genre’s unique ability to address both lighthearted and critical societal issues. Pinsker elaborates on how the feuilleton allowed writers to explore sensitive political and social topics under the guise of light entertainment and reflects on the genre’s continued importance in media studies.



**Episode 2**

**Ayelet Brinn,**  
“Government  
Censorship  
and Surveillance  
of the American  
Yiddish Press  
During World War I”

**During World War I”**

Historian Ayelet Brinn discusses her research on the American Yiddish press during World War I, focusing on government censorship and surveillance. She highlights the immense influence of the Yiddish press, the broad powers of the Espionage Act and Trading with the Enemy Act, and the role of the Bureau of Translation. Brinn also examines the complex dynamics between newspapers, the government, and perceptions of Jewish loyalty in the United States, as well as the broader implications for American Jewish history and the relevance of these events today.



**Episode 3**

**Uri Schreter,**  
“Reverberations:  
Jewish Music in  
the LP Era”

This episode explores the research of Uri Schreter, who examines the impact of Jewish LP records in shaping American Jewish identity and culture. Hosted by Jeremy Shere, the discussion delves into “Olives, Almonds, and Raisins,” an enigmatic 1950s album by Ray Martin, highlighting its multiple versions and regional adaptations. The episode also covers the evolution of recording formats, the marketing of Jewish music, and the role of media in influencing public perception. Through Schreter’s insights, listeners gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between music, culture, and history in the post-war era.



## Invested in Excellence

Student Funding Opportunities & Outcomes

The Frankel Center is proud to empower our students with funding opportunities that enable participation in study abroad programs, internships, conferences, extended research, and more. See what our students accomplished in the last few months with our support!

### Undergraduate



**Jordan Goldstein** participated in the United Nations Watch Internship Program in Geneva, Switzerland in June 2025. Throughout the internship,

Goldstein attended sessions with the United Nations Human Rights Council and engaged with diplomacy experts from around the world.



**Eitan Borenstein** traveled to Buenos Aires in December 2025 to perform ethnographic research on the Argentinian Jewish community.

### Graduate



**Cassandra Euphrat Weston** (left), **Denisa Glacova** (right), and **Andryusha Kuznetsov** all attended and presented papers at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference in Washington D.C. in December 2025.



**Tomi Drucker** will continue her research on the Hebrew Bible and modern Hebrew literature in Israel, providing her the opportunity to engage directly

with field experts, contemporary Hebrew writers, and resources at Tel Aviv University.



**Allen Kendall** presented two papers at the Society of Biblical Literature Conference in Boston, MA in November 2025, titled: “God Save

the Queen: The Judean Garrison at Leontopolis in Ptolemaic Dynastic Disputes” and “Maccabees in the Context of Riots in Ptolemaic Alexandria.”



**Andryusha Kuznetsov** attended the Advanced Yiddish Winter School in Cluj, Romania, in February 2026.



**Mimi Wooten** presented her dissertation in progress titled “A Sephardi South? Ottoman Sephardi Views of the South in the Early 20th

Century” at the Southern Jewish Historical Society Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA, in October 2025

## Students



**Emma Avagyan** published “Bridging Hebrew and Yiddish: Dvora Baron’s Multilingual Vision in ‘Ogmat Nefesh,’” in the 16th edition of *Religions* (2025).



**Brittany Joyce** received the American Dissertation Fellowship from the American Association of University Women.



**Oksana Shcherba** published a Ukrainian translation of Roland de Wolk’s book, *American Disruptor: The Scandalous Life of Leland Stanford*.

## Alumni



**Nick Block** was promoted to Associate Professor at Boston College, and is currently serving as Assistant Director for Jewish Studies.



**Pavel Brunssen** published *The Making of “Jew Clubs”: Performing Jewishness and Antisemitism in European Football and Fan Cultures* (Indiana University Press, 2025), and delivered lecture about the book at U-M in February 2026.



**Jason Wagner** published an English translation of Moyshe Kulbak’s Yiddish book, *Rasyn* (Nadybus Press, 2025).

**Andi Nussbaum Frenkel** joined the Board of Trustees at University of Michigan Hillel.

## Faculty



**Maya Barzilai** published three articles in 2025: “The Blemished Human: Shmu‘el Yosef Agnon’s ‘Ovadyah ba‘al mum’ as a Wartime Story” in *Proof-texts*, “Fashion and Whiteness in Early American Cinema” in *The Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Film*, and “The Poem Is en Route: Translational Exchanges Between Paul Celan and David Rokeah” in *Paul Celan / 1969*.



**Mostafa Hussein’s** recently published book, *Hebrew Orientalism: Jewish Engagement with Arabo-Islamic Culture in Late Ottoman and British Palestine*, has been selected for the 75th National Jewish Book Awards Shortlist.



**Gabriele Boccaccini** published *Paolo di Tarso, un ebreo del suo tempo [Paul of Tarsus, a Jew of His Time]* (Rome: Carocci, 2025), alongside co-author Giulio Mariotti.



In addition to *The Future of American Jewish Pasts*, **Deborah Dash Moore** penned an article titled “Politics and Pictures: Jewish American

Photographers and Black Americans, 1938–1965” in *Rethinking Jewish History and Memory Through Photography* (SUNY Press, 2025).



**Rafael Rachel Neis** was appointed the inaugural Faculty Director of Teaching & Learning at the Arts Initiative, and published three articles: “bHagigah 12A–b: ‘The

Talmud expounds Mishnah Hagigah 2:1” in *Religious Studies Review*, “Life” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago University Press, 2025), and “Author Response” in *Ancient Jew Review*.



**Anita Norich** and Ellen Cassedy co-authored an English translation of *Hand in Hand* by Rashel Veprinski (White Goat Press, 2025).



**Cara Rock-Singer** received two awards: the Young Scholars in American Religion Award from the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture,

and the Association for Jewish Studies’ 2025 Jordan Schnitzer First Book Publication Award for her book, *Gestating Judaism: The Corporeal Technologies of American Jewish Religion* forthcoming from University of Chicago Press.



**Olga Gershenson** is the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Film* (Oxford University Press, 2025), and co-authored an included chapter titled “Jewish Film

Festivals: The Cultural Phenomena” with Janis Plotkin. She also published “Palestinian Ghosts on Israeli Screens” in *New Directions in Israeli Media: Film, Television, and Digital Content* (Texas University Press, 2025), and edited the “Teaching With Film and Media” column for *AJS Perspectives* Winter 2024 and Summer 2025.

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## Current Fellows



**Ayelet Brinn** published a chapter titled “Americanization Politics and the Yiddish Press,” in *The Future of American Jewish Past* (University of Pennsylvania Press,

2025), and received the Association for Jewish Studies’ 2025 Jordan Schnitzer Book Award for her book *A Revolution in Type: Gender and the Making of the American Yiddish Press* (New York University Press, 2023).



**Uri Schreter** received the 2025 Harry and Cecile Starr Prize for the Best Doctoral Dissertation in the Field of Jewish and Hebrew Studies from Harvard

University’s Center for Jewish Studies.



**Sigal Yona** published an article titled “More Than Enough: Multilingual Film Exhibition in 1950s Israel” in Issue 18 of the *Journal of Jewish Identities*

(John Hopkins University Press, 2025).

## Hasidic Women in the Media

Tuesday, March 17 from 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Room 2022, South Thayer Building

RSVP: <https://myumi.ch/bV2rx>

Special Guests: **Jessica Roda** (Georgetown University) & **Malchy Goldman**

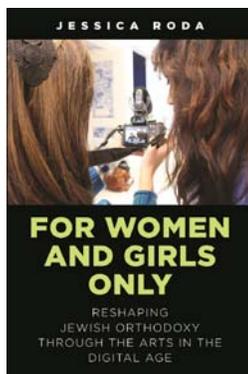
Moderator: **Shachar Pinsker**



In a compelling lecture performance, author Jessica Roda presents themes from her groundbreaking book *For Women and Girls Only*, joined by actress, writer, and producer Malky Goldman—the book’s remarkable protagonist. The event offers a nuanced exploration of the representation of Hasidic female identity in media, on screen, and on stage. Goldman, who was raised in the ultra-Orthodox neighborhood of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem, shares her deeply personal journey navigating the arts from within and beyond the boundaries of her Hasidic upbringing. Through dialogue, multimedia,

and live performance, the evening exposes the tensions between tradition and self-expression, visibility and erasure, community expectations and artistic freedom. Roda contextualizes Goldman’s story within broader questions of gender, religion, and representation, challenging reductive portrayals of Hasidic women in mainstream media. Goldman’s voice—grounded, creative, and courageous—offers a powerful counter-narrative, reclaiming agency and complexity for Hasidic female identities on public stages. The performance invites audiences to reconsider assumptions and listen to stories often silenced or misunderstood.

Scan to RSVP:



## How Ford Transformed Religion in America

Tuesday, March 24 from 5:00 – 6:30 PM

Room 2022, South Thayer Building

RSVP: <https://myumi.ch/y1Wbw>

Special Guest: **Kati Curts** (University of the South)



What does a motor company and its founder have to do with religion in America? A lot, it turns out. Henry Ford did not just mass produce cars. As a member of the Episcopal Church, reader of New Thought texts, believer in the “gospel of reincarnation,” mass marketer of antisemitic material, and employer who institutionalized a social gospel,

Henry Ford’s contributions to American models of business were informed by and produced for an America he understood to be broadly Christian. Though Ford’s efforts at the head of the Ford Motor Company have commonly been understood as secular, the Motor King was explicit that his work in engineering and auto production was prophetic and meant to remake the world. This talk offers a religious history of Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Company, repositioning them within critical studies of religion and examining how Ford transformed American religion in the twentieth century.

Scan to RSVP:



# 36TH ANNUAL DAVID W. BELIN LECTURE

## Orthodox Jewish Wellness Influencers in the Age of Viral Politics

Thursday, March 26

5:30 – 6:00 PM Pre-Lecture Reception

6:00 – 7:00 PM Belin Lecture

7:00 – 7:30 PM Book Signing

Scan to RSVP:



Michigan Union, Pendleton Room

RSVP: <https://myumi.ch/15PN8>

Speaker: **Ayala Fader** (Fordham University)



Ayala Fader

Mark your calendars for an illuminating evening with Professor Ayala Fader, who will deliver the 36th Annual David W. Belin Lecture: “Orthodox Jewish Wellness Influencers in the Age of Viral Politics.”

Professor Fader—acclaimed author of *Mitzvah Girls* and *Hidden Heretics*—brings decades of groundbreaking research on Orthodox Jews to the digital frontier. Her lecture unpacks the rise of Orthodox Jewish women “wellness influencers” on platforms like Instagram, revealing how their voices echo, blend with, and differentiate from their conservative Christian counterparts. Expect insights on how these women navigate tradition, bodily sovereignty, and religious freedom, forging surprising alliances and reflecting the political fractures of our day.

You’ll hear how influencers use social media to reshape traditional religious authority, challenging both scientific and religious expertise, and creating dynamic, interreligious communities online. Fader’s research reveals how these influencers play a key role in reimagining religion as a public, political, and even racialized force—while confronting complex questions like vaccine hesitancy and alternative medicine. What do these influencers tell us about Jewish Orthodoxy’s place in American and global politics?

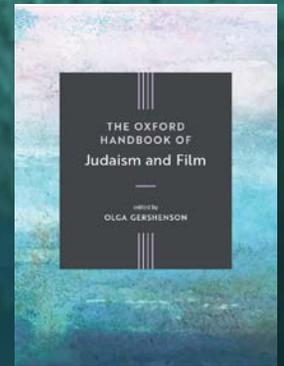
Whether you’re curious about the intersection of gender, faith, and wellness, or just want a fresh perspective on the power of social media in religious life, this lecture promises both intellectual adventure and timely reflection. Come for the food, stay for the fascinating conversation.

# Judaism and Film Symposium

This symposium as part of the 2025–26 “Jews and Media” Frankel Institute theme year celebrates the forthcoming 38–chapter volume *The Oxford Handbook of Judaism and Film* edited by Institute Co-Head Fellow Olga Gershenson. This volume offers the first comprehensive survey of the flourishing interdisciplinary field, while expanding the geographic and conceptual boundaries of Jewish cinema.

We invite you to join us for two free film screenings featuring panel discussions with *Handbook* contributors and scholars in the relevant fields.

Scan to RSVP:



## *Sabbath Queen*

Film Screening & Discussion Panel

**Monday, April 20 from 6:30 – 9:30 PM**

Rackham Graduate School, Amphitheater

Moderator: Janis Plotkin

Panelists: Nathan Abrams, Naftali Cohn

*Sabbath Queen* (2024, dir. Sandi Simcha DuBowski, USA, 105 min)

This feature documentary follows Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie’s epic journey across several decades as the dynastic heir of 38 generations of Orthodox rabbis including the Chief Rabbi of Israel. Lau-Lavie is torn between rejecting and embracing his destiny and becomes a drag-queen rebel, a queer bio-dad and the founder of Lab/Shul, a pop-up experimental congregation. *Sabbath Queen* joins him as he reinvents religion and ritual, challenges patriarchy and supremacy, champions interfaith love, and stands up for peace and an end to the Occupation in Israel/Palestine.

View trailer:



## *My One and Only*

Film Screening & Discussion Panel

**Tuesday, April 21 from 6:30 – 9:30 PM**

Rackham Graduate School, Amphitheater

Moderator: Gilad Halpern

Panelists: Olga Gershenson, Naomi Seidman, Karla Malette

*My One and Only* (2025, dir. David Tauber, Israel, 104 min.)

Weeks after giving birth to her first child, a young ultra-Orthodox woman arrives at her rabbi’s wife’s home, claiming her husband has been replaced. He looks identical, but she insists he’s a double. Does she need psychiatric care, or is her husband a demon? This mystery drama can be read as a nuanced exploration of how people change in relationships or as a new instance of Israeli horror productions.

View trailer:



## 2027–2028 Fellowship Opportunity

# Rethinking Jewish Peoplehood: Towards a New Archive

Who is a Jew? What makes something Jewish? Is Judaism a religion or ethnicity, or both? What is Jewish peoplehood and (if such a phenomenon even exists) how is it constituted? These issues have been interrogated in great depth by scholars of modern Judaism(s). But we often write as if such questions only emerged with the complications of early modernity—as if premodern Jewishness were an organic and self-explanatory category uncomplicated by questions of how, why, and with whom to be Jewish. The theme year Rethinking Jewish Peoplehood: Towards a New Archive seeks to move beyond the horizon of modernity to interrogate the ways Jewishness was constructed among a diverse set of premodern Jewish communities and thinkers—uncovering forgotten historical models of Jewish belonging and reshaping our sense of what it meant to be a Jew in the premodern world.

Research on premodern Judaism(s) has, of course, considered the question of Jewish identity and how it was constituted. But scholars who have ventured to interrogate these questions have largely focused (albeit critically) on those strains of premodern thought that gave birth to currently hegemonic conceptions of Jewishness. This theme year proposes to (re)visit the premodern past in a different register. We will gather scholars working to complicate our understanding of how concepts such as Jewishness, ethno-religion, peoplehood, Jewish racial and ethnic diversity, conversion, Jewish-adjacent practitioners, and Jewish belonging have been constructed and utilized in premodern Jewish communities and literatures.

While our research will remain firmly rooted within our individual expertise in late antique or medieval Judaism(s), this theme year will also push participants to consider the ways in which we can begin to integrate research of different periods on these questions—acknowledging that the construction of Jewishness has always been complicated, contested, and diverse. Specifically, we will consider how different historical models of imagining Jewish belonging might offer affordances for thinking about present phenomena. Our historical research will be premised on the principle that the archive is not static. Perceptions of the Jewish past are constantly remade as texts and histories are suppressed and forgotten—through uneven patterns of preservation, publication, translation and pedagogy. But we work in a moment where more of the archive than ever is available to be reexamined and Rethinking Jewish Peoplehood invites researchers to engage with the archive in ways that expand and even transform our conceptual frameworks for understanding what it means to be Jewish.

We invite scholars, experts, and practitioners from an array of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences to join us in this multidisciplinary exploration. We encourage applicants to consider questions of diversity, inclusion, and the voices that are amplified or marginalized in different media contexts.

Applications due **November 2, 2026**.

For more information, and complete application materials go to

[www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/institute](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/institute)

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