Campus Fellows Report: April 2018

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel

To our members and friends

It has been a sensational year for our Campus Fellows, who have been leading and developing programming for our Institute at universities across the United States and Canada. We thank all of our fellows who have worked so hard to promote our vision on their campuses. Please see below for the latest reports on their programs.

Looking ahead to next year: We currently have Campus Fellows lined up at the following universities:

Columbia, Harvard, University of Maryland, McGill, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, Queens College, Rutgers, University of Toronto, UCLA, Umass, Yale, and Yeshiva University (several others are still pending but are available at the moment).

If you are an involved Orthodox student on another campus, (or if you know of an Orthodox student on another campus), and might be able to serve as our ambassador, please apply as soon as possible. The opportunities to promote our religious vision on campus are truly meaningful to our fellows and to the students they reach. There is a stipend and small programming budget as well.

Please go to our website (jewishideas.org) and then go to the University Network tab. If they are not yet members of the University Network, they would need to join first, and then apply to be a campus fellow.

If you have any questions about the fellowship, please feel free to contact me at hangel@jewishideas.org.

Thank you,

Rabbi Hayyim Angel

National Scholar, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals

Here are the most recent programs by our fellows:

Sarah Pincus, SUNY Binghamton

I had a program before Pesach that was about different forms of modern slavery. We focused on the poor treatment of domestic farmers. We also discussed practical things that we could do to support programs and products that treat their workers well.

Yael Jaffe, Brandeis

I have continued running senior mishmars on a weekly basis. I am also working on an interfaith event between the Jewish feminist group I run and the Muslim Students' Association, focused on Jewish and Muslim women's experiences.

Albert Kohn, Columbia

I had a really nice Shabbat dinner with members of the Orthodox community and the Columbia Mormon community (entitled "Shabbat Sh'Mormon") at which we discussed our different religious values and how they fit into the modern world. It was really fantastic as it gave both the Jewish and Mormon attendees a rare chance to try to articulate their values to those with no understanding.

Ezra Newman, Harvard Law School

This semester we are running a series of group study sessions over lunch which are led by students and professors on a variety of Torah topics. So far this semester we have had two such sessions with two more scheduled. The first one was titled “The Ten Commandments and the #MeToo movement”. The second was titled “Mordechai and Joseph: A Tale of Two Leaders”. The third one is titled “Responsa During the Holocaust”. The fourth topic is TBA.

Eitan Zecher and Tova Rosenthal, University of Maryland

We co-sponsored a chevruta learning event called "understanding righteousness" exploring the concepts of tzedek, tzedaka, and tzadik in Judaism. Participants from the Orthodox and Conservative communities at UMD enjoyed pizza while learning a prepared source sheet with discussion questions and sources, and then heard short thoughts bringing it all together from our JLIC rabbi and campus Rabbi. It was a big success!

Zachary Tankel, McGill University

This semester, we continued to run our TNT (Thursday Night Torah) program very successfully, and held some sessions at different synagogues in the local community, which attracted very good crowds. We also hosted a Shabbaton in downtown Montreal which brought together the downtown and local communities for a wonderful Shabbat.

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Bentzion Goldman, New School

This coming semester we have a panel planned in two weeks, featuring some external speakers as well as current Jewish Parsons speakers. We have a Pesach luncheon planned and we plan to hold one if not two New School Shabbat meals again.

Sigal Spitzer, University of Pennsylvania

Program 1: Pre-Pesach Lunch & Learn Series (3 Part)

The series will consist of varies topics relating to Pesach preparation. One shiur will be given by Rabbi Itamar Rosensweig, who will be speaking about owning stocks or investments in chametz related companies. The other two will be given by our JLIC couple - One about halacha of Pesach preparation and the other about a Yetziat Mitzrayim idea for the seder.

Program 2: Our community is interested in medical ethics and halachic ramifications of various medical practices. A student at Penn has been extensively studying the topic and will be giving a shiur to a group of 20 students next week. She is focusing on post birth medical conditions and breastfeeding issues. I am very excited for this opportunity to both empower a student from within the community and bring together other students to support.

Ricki Heicklen, Princeton

I have a few different events on the schedule. The first is a shiur on consent and female agency in the gemara and in a really cool midrash which will be on Fridaynight March 9th and the second is an LGBTQ themed Shabbat for which I am bringing in Abby Stein to speak and having a panel of queer Princeton students talk about their own experiences with Judaism and halacha, which is scheduled for Shabbat April 20-21.

Devora Chait, Queens College

This year, we ran a regular Pop-Up Mishmar and Apartment Parsha. Pop-Up Mishmar is mishmar given and run completely by students for their peers. Two students give a ten-minute mini-shiur at each Pop-Up Mishmar, and we follow the shiurim with reading and discussing an article about a contemporary issue relevant to Judaism. We have run three Pop-up Mishmars this year, and we will be running a fourth at the close of the semester. Apartment Parsha is a text-based discussion event, held at a different student's apartment each week. One student selects a portion of the weekly Parsha or a Torah portion relevant to an upcoming holiday and leads his or her peers in exploring the text. We read through the text, ask questions, and break into groups to learn different interpretations and search for possible answers, at which point we regroup and discuss again.

Raffi Levi and Benjamin Nechmad, Rutgers

We are currently planning our second event which will be a dinner where some students will come together and we can speak about personal experiences with being a part of the Orthodox community in the modern age.

Ari Barbalat, University of Toronto

I did a program on the Book of Judith. It was grounded in the notes on the story found in *Me'or Eynayim* by R. Azariah de Rossi. We compared and contrasted implications of ideas found in Azariah de Rossi's text with the ideas of Emil Fackenheim on the philosophy of the Holocaust as they present very different understandings of ideal virtue ethics. It was well attended and the discussion was diverse and deep. It was really the best of all the programs I led as far as its reception by the audience, in my perspective.

The subsequent planned programs are as follows:

A) "Exotic Interpretations of the Book of Habakkuk"

Zeev Schiff's journalistic masterpiece on the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, *Israel's Lebanon War* uses as its epigraph the quotation from the Book of Habakkuk: "The violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you" (Hab. 2:17). In his book, he presents a quotation from Yasser Arafat, leader of the PLO, using that very verse from the Book of Habakkuk as pro-PLO propaganda for the Palestinian cause during the Lebanon War. I intend to bring quotations and passages from various different interpreters and interpretations of the Book of Habakkuk to bring to mind the problem of theodicy raised in the Book of Habakkuk and apply the dilemma of theodicy to complicated and complex aspects of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. I would like to include quotes from Emil Fackenheim's *To Mend a Broken World* which was published in 1982, concurrent with the Lebanon War, and reflect on how the question of "where is God in mass atrocity" might apply to Israel's "forgotten war".

B) Philo of Alexandria's Stories of the Pogroms Against the Jews of Egypt

I would like to share texts and passages from the narratives "Flaccus" and "On the Embassy to Gaius" by Philo of Alexandria, both of which deal with the response of Philo himself and the Jewish community of Egypt to massacres and pogroms against them. Intriguingly, like Ezra and Nehemiah, Philo conducts himself as a diplomat and helps bring about a diplomatic resolution of the crisis. In what ways do the virtue ethics of Philo's narratives complement and contradict Biblical virtue ethics? What can Philo's perspective contribute to understanding Jewish ethics of international relations?

C) "Exotic Interpretations of the Book of Job"

I would like to compare and contrast interpretations of the Book of Job as they are found in liberation theology with those found in Midrashic literature. How do classical Jewish commentaries on Job differ in ethical emphasis from those espoused by liberation theology? What similarities and differences are there as to how to understand and relate to other people's genocides?

Asher Naghi, UCLA

We're planning on running a mishmar program this coming Tuesday with Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom or Rabbi Kaplan on Yom Ha'Atzmaut.

Daniel Fridman, Yale

I am running a weekly learning program called “pizza and learning.” This takes place every Sunday in which students get together in chavruta pairs to discuss a diverse range of topics of their interest. I have coordinated with our OU-JLIC couple to attend these events and provide support for whoever has questions or comments regarding the text they are studying or to lead group discussions. There has been interest in learning Talmud and a group has developed which is learning Tractate Sanhedrin. We’ve expanded our outreach efforts to include a wide diversity of students with diverse thoughts and opinions and from broader

religious backgrounds to get together to study these texts and share their unique views.

Stemming from pizza and learning, we have started a new club called the “Beit Midrash Group” in which students meet weekly to discuss the Parshah and any interesting commentaries related to it as well as to connect lessons from the Parshah to relevant issues (whether they be halakhic questions, or social, moral, or political questions) we face today or interesting philosophic questions.

We have also organized several guest speakers. On April 15th we will be having Rabbi Yona Reiss from the Chicago Rabbinical Council coming to Yale to speak on the topic “The Role and Relevance of Rabbinical Courts Today.”

Last semester I organized the visit of Dean David Bernstein from the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. He spoke on the topic “May You Live in Interesting Times: Living with Uncertainty From Abraham to Us.”