Campus Fellows Report: May 2019

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel

We are thrilled by the creative programming of our Campus Fellows across the country and in Canada. Here is a brief summary of their latest activities.

Thank you all for your support,

Rabbi Hayyim Angel

National Scholar, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals

Yona Benjamin, Columbia

On Shabbat April 12-13, I will be co-sponsoring a small Shabbaton for Columbia students with the Moishe House of the Upper West Side. We thought it would be nice to bring together some undergraduates from Columbia and some of the young professionals on the UWS (many of whom are Columbia grads) to spend time together over Shabbat. There will be a number of peer led shiurim throughout the weekend surrounding the theme of "how we can understand the laws relating to Avodah Zarah in our contemporary lives." There will also be a Melaveh Malka which I am helping to organize. I will be pitching the University Network to all participants and hope to bring some copies of the publication to distribute.

Corey Gold, Harvard

This semester we hosted Sarah Cheses, a graduate of Nishmat's Yoetzet Halacha Program. She gave a shiur to undergraduates and community members on Sunday, February 3 titled "Assisted Reproduction and Gender Selection: Playing G-d?" It was really successful. Everyone enjoyed welcoming her and hearing her teach Torah.

Then, February 8–10 we hosted an off-campus shabbaton for Orthodox undergrads. Though we have a strong and broad Orthodox Minyan community at Harvard Hillel of grad students, young professionals, etc. and a dynamic, pluralistic Hillel undergraduate community, this was a unique opportunity for just

the Orthodox undergraduates to spend Shabbat together. 27 undergraduates came—a significant increase in the number of participants since last year when we started the program. Throughout the weekend, students enjoyed Shabbat, reflected together, and learned Torah from a fellow student.

Mikey Pollack and Aryeh Roberts, University of Maryland

At UMD, we are planning on running the following two events.

On March 31, we hosted a a “Chessed and Chabura” learning event, cosponsored with Kedma. Together we packaged $700 worth of food to be disturbed to DC families who need it via Jewish Social Services. We then had three separate charburas to learn about different aspects of chessed. Overall about 30 people showed up.

The second is UMD's annual Sermon Slam, a Jewish poetry slam centered around a Jewish theme. It is always a really powerful event.

Yoni Gutenmacher, University of Pennsylvania
I hosted a Shabbat lunch with 25 guests during which we explored the topic of family history with a particularly Jewish perspective. Everyone shared snippets of his/her family history and heritage before we entered a discussion on the values of Jewish history and questions arising from it.

I also hosted a Shabbat lunch together with two other students who are particularly passionate about Chassidut. At the lunch, we sang zmirot, shared divrei Torah and spoke about how Chassidut both informs and is informed by our contemporary culture.

Devora Chait, Queens College
This semester, we are running two mishmar events called "Pop-Up Mishmars", where 2-3 students each give a 10-minute dvar Torah followed by a group discussion and socializing. One will be a week before Pesach, and one will be the last Thursday night of the semester.

Jakob Glogauer, Ryerson University
Event 1: Discussion on History of Jewish people. Participants gained a new understanding of the history of the Jewish people in a modern context. Major detail on Exodus from Egypt and exile from Israel eras.

Event 2: Purim in the 21st Century. Conversations on how the story of Purim exists in 2019. Participants debated and conversed in their opinions on this matter. Emphasis was put on how religion plays a big part in daily life.

Ari Barbalat, University of Toronto

In the past months, I undertook a few attempts at holding programs. The program topics were:

A) The English Renaissance Play “The Jew of Malta” by Christopher Marlowe
This topic intended to discuss this controversial play from Shakespeare’s time which has generated analogous controversy to its more famous counterpart The Merchant of Venice. Is the play bad as scholars say it is? What lessons can we learn from both the text and the conversation surrounding it?

What is the true character of racism?

B) Stories of Self-Harm in Judaism that Most People Don't Know
This lecture examined texts from the Apocrypha depicting the psychology of self-harm: Tobit, Sirach, Fourth Maccabees, and others. What can these texts teach us about this psychology? How do they challenge contemporary conceptions of self-harm? Why are they on the periphery of Judaism?

Last term I did two programs.

A) Jewish Philosophy and the Yemenite Children Affair
What happened during the infamous Yemenite Children Affair in Israel? How can we philosophically and theologically come to terms with it? I did this during Parashat Vayechi during the Joseph story saga and tried to connect the kidnappings to the Joseph story.

B) What Can Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy Teach the Contemporary World?
What similarities exist between Jewish and Islamic philosophers in the Middle Ages? How can the differences and similarities between them address contemporary concerns over psychology, sociology and politics?

Yonatan Abrams and Ora Friedman, Yeshiva University

On April 9, Shira Hecht Koller gave a Tanach shiur called "Texts that anchor, texts that fly" about the 28th chapter of Genesis. She made a pitch to join the 929 program, and everyone walked away with various *Conversations* journals.

Our next event is coming up on Tuesday, May 7. It is with Rabbi Chaim Hagler, Head of School of Yeshivat Noam, who is speaking on the topic of the latest issue of *Conversations*, "The Impact of Jewish Education on Moral Character and Development."