

Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center  
in the Humanities and Jewish Studies

## Year in Review 2021



Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School  
for Advanced Studies in the Humanities



**Mandel Scholion**  
Interdisciplinary Research Center in  
the Humanities and Jewish Studies



THE HEBREW  
UNIVERSITY  
OF JERUSALEM

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# From our Academic Head

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It is with great pleasure that I reflect on this past year, my second as academic director of Mandel Scholion. The year began with all of us continuing to work from afar and ended with us meeting more and more often on campus. While it was a pleasure and also comforting to know we were able to maintain our academic community virtually, the joy returning to campus was tremendous. Being back in our offices and meeting in person lent a renewed significance to our great fortune of belonging to the Mandel Scholion scholarly community.

The first term was a busy one. Each of the research groups met on a weekly basis. In addition, instead of an in-person conference as originally planned, the **"In Someone Else's Shoes"** group, which studies empathy, held a bi-monthly online lecture with many international scholars, discussing their work and learning from their guests. This was an excellent way to allow new meetings and the exchange of information within the limitations of the pandemic.

During the fall, many of our post-doctoral fellows were interviewed for academic positions. As is our custom, we conducted practice sessions for the fellows before their interviews. We are thrilled to report that all five of our fellows who interviewed, Dr. Iyas Nasser, Dr. Giddon Tickotsky, Dr. Guy Ron-Gilboa, Dr. Yonatan Vardi and Dr. Yosi Yisraeli were appointed to tenure-track positions. Details can be found in the **News** section of

this newsletter. Their successes continue the remarkable achievements of former Mandel Fellows. Out of 41 fellows who have finished their tenure at Scholion, 36 have academic tenure-track positions in Israel and abroad (over 88%). We wish our current Mandel fellows much luck as they seek tenure-track positions for themselves and progress to the next stage of their academic careers.

The winter progressed, with each group enjoying their weekly seminars and all of us learning from each other as part of our monthly meetings. We had the pleasure of hearing both of this year's first-year Mandel fellows, Dr. Hadar Feldman Samet and Dr. Michael Lukin, present their work. December, as always, was marked by interviews for thirteen finalists who competed for the three Mandel fellowships (2021-2024). We are proud to announce they were awarded to Dr. Céline Debourse, Dr. Flavio Geisshuessler, and Dr. Ofir Haim. As always, competition for these fellowships was intense, and the recipients were chosen from a pool of more than 100 applicants who went through a rigorous assessment process. We look forward to having Céline, Flavio and Ofir with us in the coming years.

The academic committee also chose a new research group for 2022-2025: **"The Emergence of Local Elites in Late Antiquity: Between West and East"** (Dr. Avner Ecker, Dr. Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, Prof. Maren R. Niehoff, Dr. Yakir Paz). This was a difficult process, as a number of excellent proposals were submitted. We look

forward to this group joining us in fall 2022. I want to take this opportunity to thank our academic committee members for all of their hard work and dedication. In particular, I wish to thank Profs. Guy Stroumsa and Michael Segal, who have served on the committee for many years and are now rotating off. In January, we also said goodbye to Ms. Yana Mahlin-Abramovich, our executive director and welcomed Ms. Moran Zini Gradshtain who assumed her position. We are thrilled to have her working with us.

In March, as the second semester was about to begin, we were able to gradually return to campus, a process that was realized after Passover. It was wonderful to meet again in person and we were able to go on a joint tour and conduct other activities together.

In the fall, we bade farewell to the "In Someone Else's Shoes" research group and welcomed the "Evolution of Attention" research group together with our three new postdocs. We look forward to getting to know all the newcomers better. Being back in the Mandel School building and in our offices has caused all of us to appreciate the tremendous privileges we share: to learn from all the members of our center and expand our horizons in so many directions. It is inspirational to see how scholars from different disciplines can work and think together, teaching each other and generating new questions for future study.



Photo: Prof. Nathan Wasserman

I conclude by thanking Prof. Danny Schwartz and the Mandel Building staff and our devoted staff at Mandel Scholion, led by Ms. Moran Zini Gradshtain. It is thanks to them that we have been able to conduct all of our activities and maintain them so well during these unusual circumstances. I also extend our appreciation and gratitude to the Mandel Foundation for its support and guidance. We are privileged to have their trust and support for our academic endeavors, and I am thankful for their continued advice and concern throughout the year.

Elisheva Baumgarten



## Research Groups

# In Someone Else's Shoes

2018-2021

After three years here at the Mandel Scholion Center, we are pleased to present a brief summary of our joint intellectual journey on the topic of 'empathy.' This journey took three distinct paths: the definition of empathy, the boundaries of empathy, and empathy as a subject of scholarship as opposed to a methodology of inquiry.

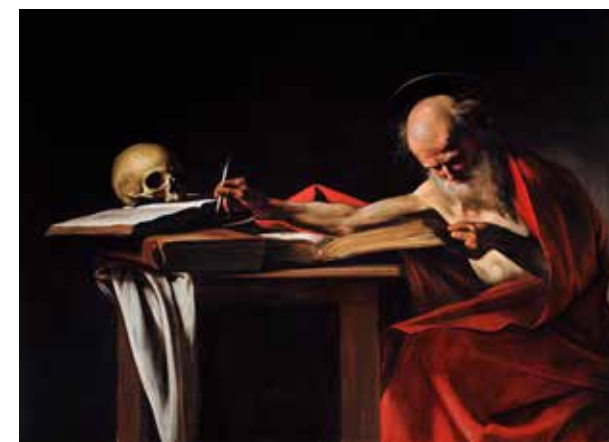
### **The definition of empathy**

Empathy has an extraordinary number of definitions, both complementary and contradictory. As a multidisciplinary group our first 'empathetic' undertaking was to try and understand what empathy means for others, in the group and outside of it. Ariel and Tal introduced empathy as a psychological-developmental

phenomenon comprised of both cognitive and emotional components; Galit, Roni, and Amos focused on the problematics of empathy and of the lack of empathy in the study of the Holocaust and its representations; Ofek acquainted the group with the layers of empathy operating in literature: between the author and other works of arts, between characters within a novel, and between an author and his or her readers; Lilach and Shai presented empathy as it is understood in the social sciences, namely the psychological relationship of empathy and values and empathy as a tool in clinical and ethnographic work; Jonathan focused on the ways that empathy relates to questions of ethics through the prism of art history.

### **The boundaries of empathy**

Any discussion of empathy is a discussion about boundaries, since practicing empathy entails a basic differentiation between self and other, and empathy towards one person or group of people necessarily means less empathy for other groups or other people. Empathy can also be harmful, even dangerous. In order to understand these issues, we discussed seminal critical texts including Paul Bloom's *Against Empathy* and invited numerous scholars to provide different perspectives on the topic. These included Prof. Eran Halperin (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), who led a discussion concerning the unexpected and disheartening role of empathy in



"Saint Jerome Writing" by the Italian painter Caravaggio. The painting depicts Jerome of Stridon, the patron saint of translators, reading and writing simultaneously - a process that lies at the core of rewriting.

# Setting Tables: Eating, Social Boundaries, and Intercultural Transfers

2019-2022

Despite the extraordinary challenges this past year presented, we continued our weekly seminars, convinced that maintaining our group's routines was the best way to keep our collective thinking and individual work going. This strategy has proved extremely successful. Our first year was dedicated to acquainting ourselves with each member's research project, while the second year was all about expanding beyond the boundaries of our group's various research interests. We began with the premise that eating practices (and the procuring of food more broadly) are governed by seemingly universal cultural and social logics and that they delineate inter- and outer-group ethnic, gender, and class divisions. But how do these supposedly universal social logics operate under specific historical and cultural conditions? To ensure that our subject matter was addressed from as many angles as possible, we invited several guest speakers, from disciplines as diverse as literature, anthropology, history, and more.

During the first semester, we dedicated the majority of our time to historical case studies as well as some literary textual discussions. Guest speakers included:

**Blanca Goretzka**, (PhD student, Folklore and Folk Culture Program, HUJI), who studies everyday practices of Polish-Jewish coexistence in Poland during the 1930s. She discussed the status and role of gentile cooks working in Jewish households. While these women

were authorized to manage kosher kitchens, they created liminal spaces of non-Jewish foods to which the children of the household could belong; Dr. **Limor Yungman** (EHESS) discussed recipe books in Arabic and their function within the imperial courts; Prof. **Ariel Hirschfeld** (Hebrew Literature, HUJI) offered a close reading of Agnon's short story "Pisces," which tells the story of Fischel Karp whose portrait was drawn on the fish he bought; Prof. **Ruhama Weiss** (The Hebrew Union College) discussed her book, *Meal Tests: The Meal in the World of the Sages*, in which she argues that meals serve as a site for establishing hierarchy and membership within the rabbinic movements, by functioning as a locus for testing one's acquaintances with the niceties of rabbinic meal etiquette and legal practice.

During the second semester we dedicated an additional meeting to this topic, with Dr. **Yaacov Deutch** (David Yellin College) speaking about the corpus of ethnographies as it developed in early modern Europe. Deutsch surveyed the limited contexts in which Jewish food practices were addressed in the ethnographic literature and compared this literature to that written about more exotic cultures. Dr. **Sergey Minov** (University of Oxford) discussed his article "Food and Social Boundaries in Late Antique Syria-Mesopotamia: Syriac Christians and Jewish Dietary Laws and Alimentary Practices."

ongoing political conflicts, and Dr. David Deutsch (Yad Vashem), who spoke about the Nazis' systemic program of murder of the disabled and chronically ill, an atrocity justified through a highly developed discourse of empathy.

## Empathy as a subject of scholarship as opposed to a methodology of inquiry

The group's working focus, whether psychological, literary, or historical, was first and foremost on empathy as a subject of scholarship. That being said, empathy is often more than that: it is a tool, a methodology that can guide research. It is in this context that Amos introduced the group to the theoretical work of Dominic LaCapra concerning the 'empathic unsettlement' historians feels towards their research subject, and the larger effects of emotions on historical research. Shai presented the psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut's somewhat controversial understanding of clinical empathy in the therapeutic relationship. Finally, Ofek demonstrated to the group how in the study of literature, empathy can be both a subject of inquiry and a methodological tool at the same time, and in fact perhaps the two are intertwined to the point of being inseparable, posing the question of whether or not one can understand and analyze an occurrence of empathy unfolding in a novel without experiencing that empathy ourselves, at least on some level.

**Group Members: Prof. Amos Goldberg, Prof. Ariel Knafo-Noam, Prof. Galit Noga-Banai, Prof. Lilach Sagiv, Yonatan Harel, Ofek Kehila, Tal Orlitsky, Shai Satran, Matan Aviel and Roni Mikel-Arieli (2018-2019)**



The first Hamburg memorial for the victims of National Socialism: The memorial for the victims of National Socialist persecution at the Ohlsdorf cemetery.

The rest of the second semester focused on sociological perspectives on present-day societies and dynamics. Prof. **Orit Rozin** (Tel Aviv University) presented her research on craving meat and gendered practices of meat consumption under the austerity policy in the early stages of Israeli statehood and nation building. Prof. **Nir Avieli** (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) discussed his ethnographic work on Vietnamese funeral rites, and the different meanings attached to eating with extended family members, both living and deceased. Finally, Prof. **Hizky Shoham** (Bar-Ilan University) spoke about the cultural history of the Israeli *mangal* (barbecue) and the intricate, class-based processes of its institutionalization as a ritual celebrating Independence Day in Israel. We also organized the Pan-Scholion trip in June 2021.



Photo: Muhammad Amer

**Group Members: Dr. Yair Furstenberg, Dr. Dana Kaplan, Prof. Nathan Wasserman, Prof. Zeev Weiss, Nadia Beider, Adi Namia Cohen, Hadass Shambadal, Shlomi Zemach, Dafna Israel**

Photos:

Chicken was an affordable food in Islamic countries in the Middle Ages and was considered to have medicinal properties and is mentioned in certificates from the genizah in medical prescriptions (a kind of diet for patient recovery) and shopping lists - the most famous of which is the Shavuot shopping list. Rice was also an everyday food staple and was eaten by people of different social backgrounds.

Sephoris: Decorated sarcophagi incorporated into the walls of the Crusader citadel. In Roman times, these were used in the local necropolis but were later robbed by the Crusaders to reinforce the citadel's corners.



Photo: Prof. Zeev Weiss

## Past and Past Perfect

2020-2023

Our research group focuses on exploring the ways in which pre-modern societies viewed their own past, the role this past played in their perception of the present, and how their 'present' influenced the construction of their past. The central goal of the group is to identify the impact of various causes, contexts, and situations on the crystallization and expression of this 'memory of the past' in groups differing in historical, cultural, social, and political circumstances (but found in the Near East or Mediterranean region), and to generalize on the basis of these findings. In this, our first year as a research group at the Mandel Scholion Center, we explored a theme we called **Stories of Genesis**, concentrating on the memories of the distant past relating to the origins of groups, dynasties, ruling institutions, and the foundation of cities, palaces, and sanctuaries.

The first semester was devoted to presentations by the group members:

**Anita Reisler** presented her proposed PhD research, *Dreams of Power: Theodore of Cyr's Reimagining of Church-State Relations in his Ecclesiastical History*. She provided several case studies from Theodore's *Ecclesiastical History* that depict conflicts between the imperial authority and the Church, in order to point to specific narrative tropes that recur in these depictions.

**Ronnie Agassi Cohen** presented her work on the subject of historical writing in Persian during the reign

of the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II (1481-1512), arguing that during this period the Ottomans experienced a number of significant changes that drove them to seek new sources of legitimacy for their rule. They thus began to see their past in a new light and wrote new histories that reflected these changes. These histories, written in Persian and inspired by Iran's glorious past, helped the Ottomans shape their new image and develop a unique imperial identity.

**Inbal Lev-Ari** presented her research into visual representations of the goddess Artemis as huntress. Examining vessel paintings from the seventh to the fifth century BCE that depicted Artemis as a beautiful huntress wandering the wilderness, Lev-Ari focused on who or what Artemis was shown to be hunting. She argued that over the centuries, the victims of the hunt changed, and as a result, so did the context of the hunting scenes and their meaning.

**Reut Achdut** discussed the concept of 'birthright' in the Bible, highlighting the connection between birthright law in Deut. 21:15-17 and both the Jacob narratives that appear in Genesis (from chapter 25:19), including the Joseph cycle (Ibid. 37-50). She suggested that the author of the Deuteronomic law chose phrases from Jacob and Joseph's narratives related to the birthright struggle between Judah and Joseph, underlining the polemic regarding which of the two tribes was more deserving of leadership.



**Nili Wazana**, focusing on dynastic origin stories, shared her research on a feature that appears in first-person royal inscriptions that convey a king's achievements in contrast to the failures of his predecessors. The prominent example is Kilamuwa's inscription (KAI 24). Kilamuwa, a 9th century BCE king of the north-Syrian state of Ya'adiya (also known as Sam'al), lists four of the former kings of Ya'adiya, concluding with his father and his brother, claiming they all "achieved nothing" and then proceeding to list his own achievements. This penchant for portraying one's own achievement in contrast to former rulers' failures appears to be characteristic of usurpers from within the system – younger brothers or other relatives who were not the designated crown princes.



Photo: DPS Images

**Reuven Amitai** spoke about a particularly important passage in the fifth volume of *Kitab al-'Ibar* by Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), in which he showed how origins of the Mamluk Sultanate were understood and presented under Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria (1250-1517), reaching back to antecedents in the early centuries of Islamic history.

**Uzi Leibner** presented his recent work on the portrayal of the memory of the ancient ruling institution of the Sanhedrin in rabbinic tradition. Surprisingly, this tradition refers to the Sanhedrin as a contemporary institution, and delineates its exile from Second Temple-era Jerusalem, its wandering throughout various locations across the



Photo: Tal Rogovski

Galilee, before finally settling in Tiberias. He focused on the symbolic meaning of this tradition and related the geographical course it portrays as based on the history of Jewish settlement in the Galilee in antiquity.

**Alexander Yakobson** discussed the portrayal of previous Roman emperors under the Early Roman Empire (Principate). Often lacking solidarity with their predecessors, Roman emperors tended to emphasize their reigns as constituting a 'new beginning' rather than continuity, or openly denounced their predecessors' policies, in some cases going as far as repudiating them as tyrants. They also allowed others – public figures, writers, or historians – to criticize previous emperors in public. The talk dealt with the attitude to Augustus in two of the works of Seneca written and published under Nero, attempting to reconstruct the politics of relating to predecessors during the first years of Nero's reign.

During the second semester we had the privilege and pleasure to host several scholars who presented papers on a variety of topics. **Guy Ron-Gilboa** discussed the wonders of Pharaonic Egypt through the eyes of the Muslim historian al-Mas'udi (d. 956). **Daniel Schwartz** explored how the Hasmoneans constructed the memory of the beginning of their dynasty. **Sara Japhet** showed how the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan narratives were portrayed in the Book of Chronicles. **Maren Niehoff** discussed Origen of Caesarea's use of the memory of the Olympic Games

in his newly discovered homilies. **Eyal Ben-Eliyahu** took us to an observation platform overlooking the Mount of Olives, where he discussed the formation of the traditions regarding the mountain in relation to geographical space and in the historical collective memories of Jews, Christians, and Muslims. **Alexander Rofe** explored the issue of historical thought and awareness in Biblical literature. **Netta Amir** presented her work on the changes in the Christian pilgrims' paths as a result of the fall of Frankish Jerusalem. **Oded Irshai** explored the Roman foundation myth in the eyes of the Jewish sages. and **Dylan James** discussed questions regarding bilingualism and the origins of ancient Greek identity.

**Group Members: Prof. Reuven Amitai, Prof. Uzi Leibner, Prof. Nili Wazana, Prof. Alexander Yakobson, Reut Achdut, Ronnie Agassi, Inbal Lev-Ari, Anita Reisler, Noa Goldberg**

Photos:

Aerial view of the excavations at Kh. el-'Eika - a Hellenistic-period estate in the Lower Galilee, looking east. In the background: the Arbel Valley and the Sea of Galilee.

Aegean wine amphorae in a destruction layer from 145/4 BCE at Khirbet el-'Eika, Lower Galilee. Evidence of a Hasmonean campaign?

## Departing Fellows

### Dr. Jonathan Vardi (2018-2021)

My three-year fellowship at Mandel-Scholion (2018-2021) was one of the most blissful, significant and busy periods in my life. I became a father; obtained an academic position, at the rank of senior lecturer, in the Hebrew literature department of my alma mater, the Hebrew University; submitted my book to the renowned academic publishing house, Brill; read, wrote, learned, taught, met incredible people, chatted, had coffee, went into lockdowns, Zoomed, and returned to the campus.

As a scholar of Hebrew literature, I specialize in the medieval Golden Age, namely, the Hebrew poetry written in Muslim Spain (al-Andalus) from the tenth to the twelfth centuries. My work situates this corpus along two axes: that of Hebrew poetry from the Bible to the present and that of other medieval literatures, in particular Arabic. In general, my research is situated within three concentric circles: philological work; literary theory and comparative literature; and the broader context of cultural history, especially with respect to the unique culture encounter between Muslims, Jews, and Christians in medieval Iberia. Thus, while my doctoral dissertation was dedicated primarily to the creation of a new critical edition to the

*diwān* (i.e., book of poems) of the magnificent poet, rabbi, philologist, statesman, and military commander, Samuel Ha-Nagid (993-1056) – during my post-doctoral fellowship at Mandel-Scholion I concentrated on the implications of his poetical work regarding the Jewish and Arab-Andalusi cultures, focusing on subjects such as music and musical performance; the meaning of growing old; concepts of sin and repentance; anticipation for redemption, and others.

In addition, I wrote an article about the adaptation of the Song of Songs into the Hebrew love poetry of Muslim Spain, which is about to be published in a volume on the reception history of the Song of Songs by Universität Wien and De Gruyter. Another study, this one on poetic prosody in the Middle Ages, was recently published in a jubilee volume dedicated to my teacher, Prof. Shulamit Elizur. I participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Medieval Hebrew Poetry Colloquium that took place in Leuven, Belgium, presenting innovative ideas about the division of the Hebrew poets of the Spanish Golden Age into distinct generations. I also participated in a conference that took place here at Mandel Scholion in memory of



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the poet Tubia Rübner, at which I spoke about Rübner's relationship with his mentor, the German-Hebrew poet Arie Ludwig Strauss.

During this period, I also taught the introductory course 'Landmarks of Criticism: From Plato to Nietzsche', in addition to other courses on medieval Hebrew poetry. I continued studying the Arabic language and literature and developed my 'hobby' of translating Arabic poetry into Hebrew. Some of these translations were recently published in a literary journal (J. Vardi, "Three Poems by Ta'abbaṭa Sharran," *Dehak* 13, 2021).

I wish to wholeheartedly thank the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation for enabling this amazing period; the former head of the program Prof. Danny Schwarz, and its current head, Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten, for their trust, advice, and generosity; the unstoppable executive directors, formerly Keren Sagi and Yana Mahlin-Abramovich and currently Moran Zini Gradshtein; and the wonderful fellow colleagues who taught me so much and made me a better scholar and a better person.



A 13<sup>th</sup>-century image from a copy of 'The Story of Bayad and Riyad' representing a social gathering of wine drinking and listening to music in the Muslim world. Such gatherings were popular among high society Jews in Muslim Spain.

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## Dr. Iyas Nasser (2019-2021)

During my two years at the Mandel Scholion Center, I wrote three extensive articles on classical Arabic poetry and literature. The first, "The View of Love Poetry's Impact and Role in Classical Arabic Literature," was recently published in the *Journal Asiatique* in Paris. The article focuses on the attitudes of early Abbasid critics and poets towards the impact of love poetry as a literary device establishing an effective poet-listener rapport. The second article, "A Christian Magnate in Islamic history: Ishāq ibn Nuṣayr al-'Ibādī, Arabic Stylist and Patron of the Abbasid Age," was co-authored with Prof. Luke Yarbrough (University of California). It examines several ancient Arabic texts of prose and poetry that shed new light on the figure of Ibn Nuṣayr (d. 910) and his activities. A third article, "The Traditional Qaṣīdah and Kitāb al-Zahrah by Ibn Dāwūd al-Iṣfahānī," was recently approved for publication in the *Journal of Arabic Literature*. It examines the structure of *Kitāb al-Zahrah*, an anthology of poetry, and consults the Turin manuscript to resolve critical ambiguities arising from the fact that the editions of the work had been based exclusively on the Cairo manuscript.

I am currently immersed in the writing of a new book that enquires into the various literary facets of pre- and early Islamic polythematic poems. In this work, I analyze the juxtaposition and interconnection of the lyrical, descriptive, and narrative elements of these texts. I also translated three classical Arabic poems into Hebrew, which were published by the *Carmel Journal* together with explanations and commentary.

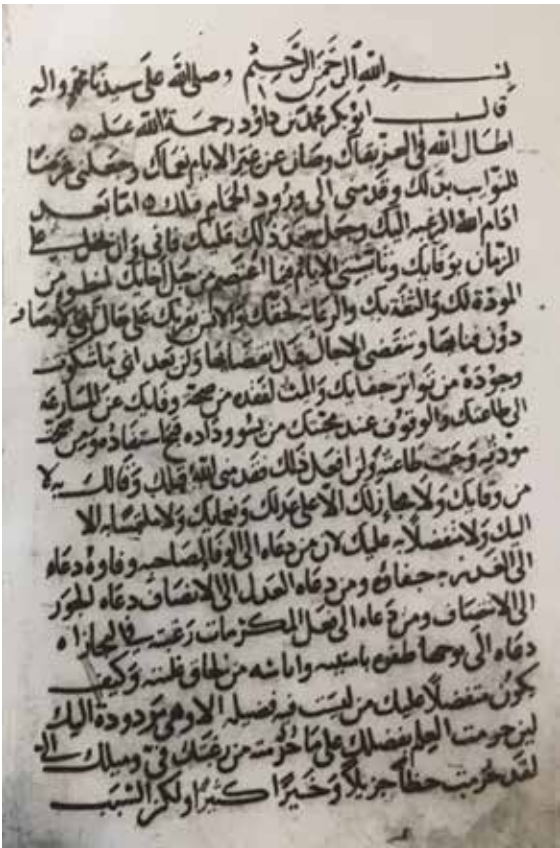
During my two years at the Center, I taught six courses in the Hebrew University's Department of Arabic Language and Literature and the Faculty of Medicine. The courses focused on classical and modern Arabic poetry and literature: "Introduction to Classical Arabic Poetry," "Modern Arabic Literature: Text Readings," "Love in Modern Arabic Literature," and "Narratology in Modern Arabic Literature." This last course had not been previously taught at the Hebrew University. In addition, I supervised a number of seminar papers and a doctoral dissertation on modern Arabic translations of the Bible. I also had the privilege of initiating a seminar day for pupils of Ruwwad al-Quds High School in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem. They visited the Mandel Scholion Center, listened to academic

lectures, toured the Central Library and participated in educational activities.

During the second year of my Mandel Scholion Fellowship, I was appointed to the position of lecturer in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature. I also won the Council for Higher Education's Maof Scholarship, for outstanding young scholars. In the coming academic year (2021-22), I will be teaching a number of courses in classical poetry, modern literature, and literary criticism. As the first Arab scholar to have won the Mandel Postdoctoral Fellowship, I will be extremely happy if the fellowship is granted to other upcoming Arab scholars, in the hope that they too will be able to pursue academic careers.

Photo:  
The first page of the Turin manuscript of *Kitāb al-Zahrah*, an anthology of poetry compiled by Muḥammad Ibn Dāwūd al-ʿIṣfahānī (d. 910), a theologian, poet and literary critic.

Photo: Dr. Iyas Nasser



Dr. Guy Ron-Gilboa (2019-2021)

During my fellowship at Mandel Scholion, I have been working on my research project on the discourse of wonder in medieval Arabic literature. This has led to the recent publication of my article on a mythical bird of Arabic tradition, named ‘Anqā’ *Mughrib*. In this article, I examine different representations of this fabulous creature (sometimes identified with the gryphon or phoenix) and the literary functions it fulfills in various genres and texts. Concurrently, I have been working with my friend and colleague Dr. Oded Zinger of the Hebrew University’s Department of Jewish History towards the publication of an edition and analysis of a medieval poem written in Judeo-Arabic, spuriously attributed to the pre-Islamic Jewish poet al-Samaw’ al ibn ‘Adiyā’. The poem glorifies the Jewish past while drawing on both Jewish and Islamic literary and religious sources.

I have also been studying a somewhat obscure Arabic legend about King Solomon, extant in various manuscripts. This tale was shared by Arabic-speaking Muslims, Jews, and Christians. I hope to publish my research on it in the near future. Moreover, during my stay here I have also begun working on my first book, based on my PhD dissertation. The book examines different aspects of the discourse of wonder in early Arabic prose literature, with particular attention to its formation in four 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century works of different genres.

As a Mandel Scholion fellow, I have developed and taught four new B.A. courses in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature: a course on a 10<sup>th</sup>-century compilation of exemplary tales; a course on Sudanese author al-Tayeb Salih’s modern classic, *Season of Migration to the North*; a course on “The Book of Songs,” a classical Arabic encyclopedic compilation of narratives and poems, also from the 10<sup>th</sup> century; and a course on medieval Arabic travel literature. In fall 2021, I will be joining the faculty of the Department of Arabic at Bar Ilan University. I am excited and happy for this opportunity to develop in my field and to train further generations of scholars and connoisseurs of Arabic literature.



The Mythical Bird ‘Anqā’ *Mughrib* - from al-Qazwīnī’s *Wonders of Creation* (*ʿAjā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt*), NLM MS P 2, fol. 187b. Anonymous artist, 17<sup>th</sup> cent. or 18<sup>th</sup> cent. Mughal India. - U.S. National Library of Medicine, NIH (2011). Visual Catalog of the Illustrations (Part 6/9).



# Current Fellows

## Dr. Hadar Feldman Samet (2020-2023)

During the past academic year, I have been making final edits and updates to my forthcoming first monograph – a book based on my doctoral research, which offers a cross-cultural, historical, and interdisciplinary study of clandestine Sabbatian communities (followers of the Jewish messiah Sabbatai Tsvi, who converted to Islam in his wake) in the late Ottoman era. The publication of my monograph by Magnes Press is funded by the Bartal Prize and Misgav Yerushalayim. Additionally, in collaboration with Dr. Avner Peretz, I have started working on another book that will be a complete edition of one of the main manuscripts I deciphered in my research, and which will include transcriptions, translations, annotations, and introduction. I have also begun my new research project on the intersection between mysticism and modern revolutionism in the late Ottoman era, and completed and submitted an article entitled “Practicing Aşk: Sound and Affect in Late Sabbatianism and Its Ottoman Sphere.”

Together with Prof. Orit Rozin (Tel Aviv University) and Dr. Emma Zohar (Max Planck Institute) I co-founded and coordinated the **Jewish History and Emotions** forum, which brings together scholars from numerous academic institutions in Israel and abroad. My partners and I are now in the process of producing two peer-reviewed journal special issues that will reflect the fruits of the group’s monthly meetings.

As a Scholion fellow I have taught and developed two new course curriculums: **The Study of Sabbatianism: Texts and Contexts** – a course about the development

of the historiography of the Sabbatian movement and the ways this reflects intellectual trends in the world of scholarship, with its ties to broader social transformation, both globally and in Israel; and **Sabbatianism and Gender: Between Faith and Praxis** – a course focusing on gender-related topics in the history of the Sabbatian movement – from its rise in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century till the present .



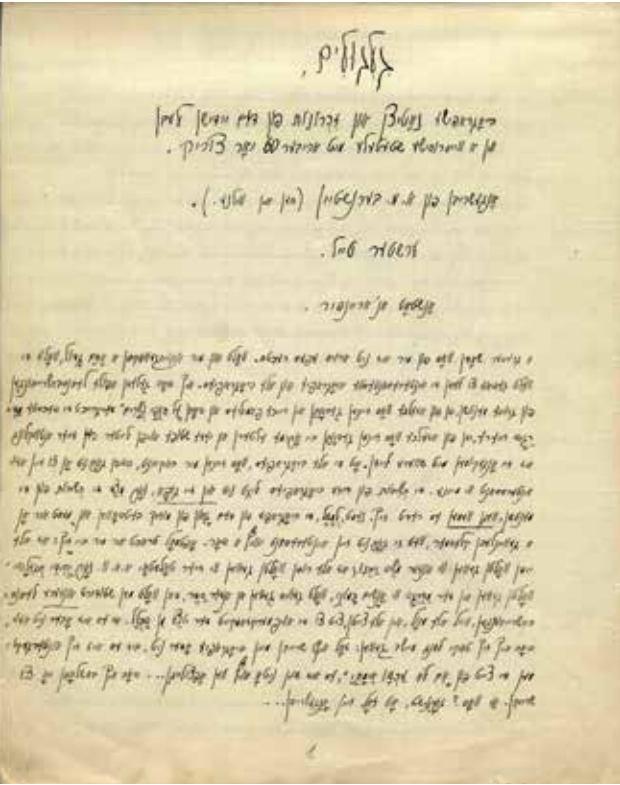
Harvard-Houghton Ms. 80, song 852.  
This page is one of hundreds of manuscript pages of Ottoman Sabbatian mystical sources which reflect their devotional practices in the late nineteenth century. Feldman Samet’s research shows that these sources include an abundance of unknown information about the social history of the community and their musical traditions, while raising fundamental questions about the intersections between religious life and modernization in the contemporary Islamic world.

## Dr. Michael Lukin (2020-2023)

Between October and June 2021, I devoted my attention to exploring the historical development, semiotics, and aesthetical foundations of two traditional eastern-Ashkenazi musical genres - cantorial improvisation and old Hassidic *nigunim*. Despite the lack of early-modern musical documentation and scarcity of literary testimonies, analysis of the late recordings reveals the historical contexts in which the musical elements of the cantorial improvisation emerged and the way in which its aesthetic features were formed. Born out of an encounter between Polish baroque and its focus on the individual listener, and the aesthetic ideal of transcending time limits - as it is expressed in various genres of the Eastern European and Ottoman musical traditions - the art of the Eastern Ashkenazi cantor was esteemed for evoking emotional awareness and thus a sense of the inner world and eternal time.

My work on Hassidic *nigunim* has led me to seek ways to identify significant differences between the Ukrainian and Polish/Belorussian Hassidic repertoires today and trace their emergence and development over time. The sources I am studying include the archival documentation of *nigunim* collected in Ukraine prior to the Holocaust; contemporary traditional *nigunim* that have flourished outside Eastern Europe, particularly in Hassidic courts in Israel; and the Ukrainian and Polish repertoires in the principal repositories published roughly between 1781 and 1961. Comparative analysis reveals that inter-ethnic musical dialogue played only a minor role in shaping Hassidic tunes: Hassidic musical innovation lay primarily in forms of performance rather than the melody line, the

latter being rooted in Jewish traditions - instrumental (klezmer) music and cantorial.



Ghetto Fighter's House Museum Archive, Israel  
The dearth of musical and literary evidence regarding this oral tradition means that any testimony concerning the daily life of eastern European cantors makes a significant contribution to our understanding of its cultural and social contexts.



# Research and Public Activities

## Monthly Pan-Scholion Seminars

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**29 October, 2020**

Introducing the new research group,  
“Past and Past Perfect.”

**26 November, 2020**

An online guided tour lead by the  
“Setting Tables” research group.

**7 January, 2021**

**Dr. Hadar Feldman Samet, Mandel Fellow**

Revealed and Hidden in Sabbatianism:  
Mysticism and Modernity in the late  
Ottoman Empire

**18 March, 2021**

**Dr. Michael Lukin, Mandel Fellow**

Emotion, Beauty, and Meaning in  
East-Ashkenazi Cantorial Improvisation,  
1600-1900

**22 April, 2021**

Mentoring Event

During 2020, many of the daily encounters that are part of our routine at Mandel Scholion did not take place. Not only were several activities suspended due to the global health situation, but much of the informal initiation that goes on in Scholion’s corridors and kitchen did not occur. April’s meeting, therefore, was devoted to in-depth conversations about academic professionalization, led by our senior researchers and designed to meet the needs of the more junior members of the Center.

**10 June, 2021**

“In Someone Else’s Shoes” Members

A series of lectures summarizing the research group’s time at Mandel Scholion.



# Conferences

27 December, 2020

## “Everything Is Being Written Down” (HaKol Rashum): Collaborative Research on Language and Theater

In Moscow in 1923, Zvi Ben-Haim started to keep a personal diary in Hebrew. The first entry promises that “ha-kol rashum” (everything is being written down). Hebrew was not his native tongue, but as a budding actor and dedicated administrator of the Habima theatrical troupe in Moscow, he was drawn to the language both ideologically and artistically. His writing, the writing of other members of the troupe, minutes they took in meetings, and letters that they exchanged, give us a rare peek into the process of language revival that Hebrew was undergoing in the early 20th century.

For almost a century these materials were hidden from sight. A recent collaborative digitization project is helping to expose and make them accessible, for research purposes as well as general edification. The project is led by Dr. Aynat Rubinstein, senior researcher of the Mandel Scholion research group on “Formal Semantics and Historical Linguistics” (2017-2020), in collaboration with the Israel Goor Theater Archives and Museum, which houses a rich collection dedicated to the history of Hebrew theater. In order to learn about how Hebrew was used in actual daily life, the project focuses on archival

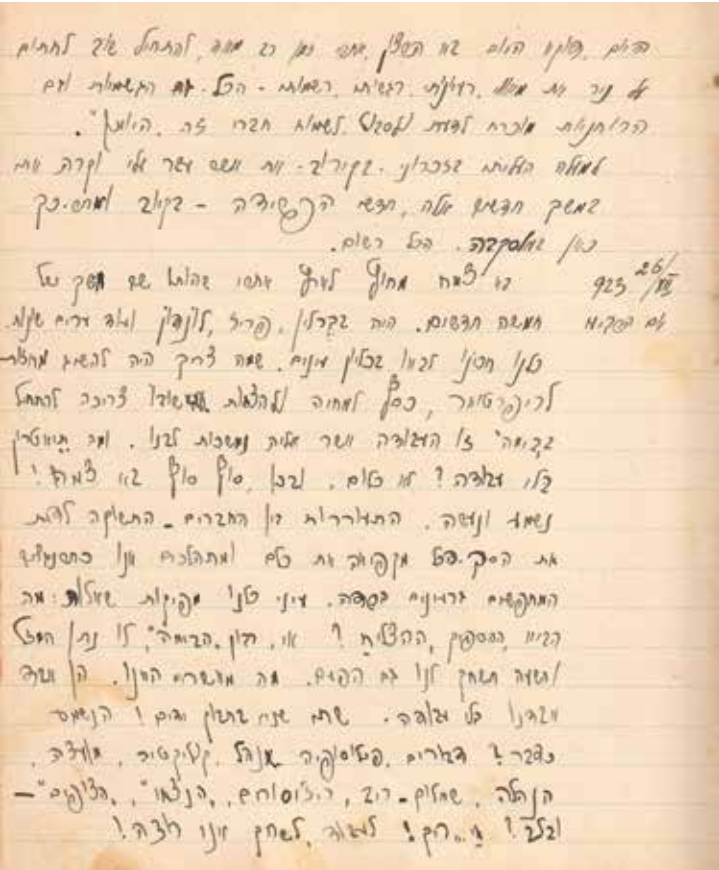
materials that represent spoken language, as found in dialogs in satirical skits, for example, in addition to personal correspondence and diaries that document everyday events and are considered less elevated in style as compared to literary or journalistic writing.

Digitization is more than scanning a document. It is a long process whose goal is to create an authentic digital representation of the content of the document. This content includes, first and foremost, the written words, but also how those words are organized on the page, edits that the author and other “hands” may have made, the identification of which words are actually dates, and which are names of people, places, organizations, or theatrical entities likes play names. In line with current policies of open access, the digitized historical documents that are the fruits of this long process have



been made accessible for further research. Their linguistic properties can be searched through the Jerusalem Corpus of Emergent Modern Hebrew (JEMH). With the aid of digital humanities tools, place names that are mentioned in the texts can be plotted on a map, producing a vivid representation of the geographical extent of the world of early Hebrew theater.

In the very final days of 2020, about one hundred years after it was written, Ben-Haim’s diary took center stage. In a virtual gathering under the auspices of Mandel Scholion, linguists, theater researchers, archivists, and members of the general public joined Dr. Rubinstein, Goor Archives Director Dr. Leah Gilula, and research assistants of the project, to hear about the gradual evolution of Hebrew that is fossilized in the texts, the new perspectives they provide on the history of Hebrew theater and Habima, as well as the value of the newly digitized corpus as a resource for research across the humanities and the social sciences.



Photos:  
Zvi Ben-Haim, The Israel Goor Theatre Archives and Museum  
Zvi Ben-Haim, Diary, The Israel Goor Theatre Archives and Museum



20-21 January, 2021

Language Change: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives

This was the concluding conference of the Mandel Scholion research group on “Historical Linguistics and Formal Semantics.” Originally planned to be held in Jerusalem in March 2020, we were unfortunately one of the first to fall victim to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead we had a special ZOOM-conference on January 20-21, 2021, with twenty-five 7-minute talks. This format allowed us to have short concentrated presentations, and overall we believe it was a very successful event.

The focus of our group was to better our understanding of natural language by combining two areas of linguistic research that have, to date, not been integrated: historical linguistics – the study of how and why languages change over time; and formal semantics – the study of linguistic meaning. Thus, during the time in Scholion, the group jointly explored how historical linguistics and formal semantics can contribute to one another, in an attempt to draw conclusions about the properties of a variety of semantic categories (e.g. negation, temporality, modality), their universality, and the mechanisms underlying recurring shifts in meanings over time, or paths of semantic change, within these categories.

The papers in the conference were dedicated to the intersection of these two sub-disciplines in linguistics. In order to have a broader perspective, the program of the conference included papers that concentrated on the interfaces between historical linguistics and adjacent fields. It was only natural to include the 5th meeting of the annual conference on Formal Diachronic Semantics (FoDS5). The conferences ended with an open discussion about possible future developments in the study of historical linguistics.



You can identify the members of our research group in this photo of a zoom conference session by the logo of our group in their backgrounds.





# Research Groups: Seminars

“In Someone Else’s Shoes” series on Empathy and its Boundaries:

**Prof. Ross Thompson** | The University of California

**Prof. Maayan Davidov** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Tal Orlitsky** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Parent-Child Relationships and the Development of Empathy*

**Prof. Mechtild Widrich** | The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

*Performative Materials and Activist Commemoration*

**Prof. Rebecca Lester** | Washington University in St. Louis

*Complicated Empathy in Clinical Ethnography: Vulnerability, Care, and Doing Ethical Work when the Whole Self Shows Up*

“Past and Past Perfect” research group seminar:

**Prof. Maren Niehoff** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Adopting Other Myths of Origen and Surpassing Them - The Case of the Olympic Games in Origen’s Newly Discovered Homilies:*

**Prof. (Emeritus) Alexander Rofe** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Catachronizem: A Category of Historical Thinking in the Bible:*

**Prof. Eyal Ben-Eliyahu** | University of Haifa

*A Visit to The Mount Olives and an Open Discussion - Historical Memory, Geographical Space and Crystallization of Traditions on The Mount Olives*

**Netta Amir** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Changing Religious Routes Following the Fall of Frankish Jerusalem*

**Prof. Oded Irshai** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*The Foundation of Rome in the Eyes of the Sages*

**Dr. Dylan James** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Bilingualism and the Origins of Greek Identity: Themistocles’ Persian Exile in the Classical and Imperial Greek Imagination:*

“Setting Tables” research group seminar:

**Dr. Limor Yungman** | EHESS

*Medieval Arab Cuisine in the Light of Cooking Recipes*

**Prof. Ariel Hirschfeld** | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Food and Eating in Shai Agnon’s ‘Mazal Dagim’*

**Dr. Yaacov Deutsch** | The David Yellin Academic College of Education

*The Neighbor’s Food Looks Worse: On Food Descriptions of the ‘Other’ in the Early Modern Era*

**Prof. Ruhama Weiss** | Hebrew Union College

*The Cultural Role of the Descriptions of Meals in the Culture of Chazal*

**Dr. Sergey Minov** | HSE University, Moscow

*Syriac Christians and Biblical Dietary Laws: Anti-Jewish Polemic and Beyond*

**Prof. Orit Rozin** | Tel Aviv University

*Food, Identity and the Building of the Nation in Israel’s Formative Years*

**Prof. Nir Avieli** | Ben-Gurion University

*Feasting with the Dead and the Living: Food and Social Relationships in Vietnamese Memorials*

**Prof. Hizky Shoham**, Bar-Ilan University

*Ritual Eating or Gorging? The History of the Mangal*

# Additional Events

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3 June, 2021

## Mandel Scholion Hosts High Schoolers from East Jerusalem

Together with Mandel fellow Dr. Iyas Nasser, we invited students from Rawad al-Quds High School in East Jerusalem to spend a day at the university. The day included a tour around campus and at the Mount Scopus library, and a series of meetings with lecturers from the Faculty of Law, the School of Social Work, the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, and Sociology. We aimed to establish a connection between this high school and the Hebrew University, and we hope to meet

the Rawad al-Quds students again during their studies. Thanks to our activities, the school was introduced to the HUJI Unit for diversity, headed by Dr. Michal Barak , who will coordinate the continuation of joint activities with this high school.



26 June, 2021

## Field Day

This year's much anticipated instructional excursion was organized by the "Setting Tables" research group, around the theme of food and eating, addressing class and religious divisions within the unique social setting of Jerusalem. We kicked the tour off at the Jerusalem branch of "Meir Panim," a free restaurant that provides food for the needy but at the same time is deeply concerned with ensuring human dignity. Group member **Adi Namia-Cohen** presented petitions for food and support from

the Genizah, through which we learned of the wide range of social standings of those in need within the Jewish community. We then moved to the botanical gardens at the Hebrew University's Safra campus where we met Uri Inbar of Menza Restaurant, who discussed the current contentious politics of eateries in Jerusalem. The day concluded with **Prof. Nathan Wasserman's** lecture on ancient Babylonian recipes and their relation to Babylonian forms of knowledge.



## Our New Research Group

The Evolution of Attention in Modern and Contemporary Culture: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Making of the Human

### 2021-2024

The digital revolution is associated with a radical transformation in the way we encounter, process, and evaluate information. Brain functions are adapting to the screen and its constant excitations and stimulations; much of the information we encounter is received passively and fleetingly. Critical, slow, and deep thinking is being increasingly undermined by the fast-paced gratification of relay; our online activity proceeds by passing knowledge on rather than absorbing it.

Our research group consists of researchers from literature, history, art history, and social, cognitive and brain sciences. We intend to read current debates on attention side by side with historic ones in order to study significant cultural shifts in the way we view, celebrate, or disrupt common conceptualizations of attention. Recent advances in neuroscience, cognitive sciences, disability studies, literary theory, history, culture studies, and the digital humanities have transformed our understanding of attention, its relations to the mind, and its role in the making of the human. Attention emerges as a productive conceptual anchor for the consideration of the cultural evolution of the human subject. Moral and value judgments, cultural and social norms, medical practices and civic duty all relate to attention within varying historical contexts; each prescribes to the individual how she might apply or use it for self-



Caricature of two visitors at the 1888 Salon, both absorbed in the exhibition's catalogue, each with a bestial "Migraine" perched on their heads.

Source: Albert Robida, Le Salon de 1888, colored lithograph, *La Caricature*, May 5, 1888, title page. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.



promotion and for the promotion of the public good. Technology, lifestyle practices, and pharmacological



Edgar Gómez Cruz, from the photographic series *Black Screens*, 2019.

interventions all complement the individual's attempt to harness attention as a means to productivity.

The images featured here represent different moments in time. The similarities between them nevertheless suggest we may be giving in to an overestimation of the effects of technological changes on our relation to the world. By looking back to artistic and literary explorations of attention, we will seek to ask, first, whether the seismic shift associated with the digital revolution has indeed radically changed the value of attention in human life, or whether such shifts were already in evidence in our past history; second, how technology complements or is in competition with cultural commentary on attention; and, third, what the comparative analyses of these epistemes might contribute to our understanding of the human. Our exploration will consider empirical data from ongoing studies on questions of attention and perception in an attempt to test the commonalities between disciplines. We aim to investigate how the rise and fall of competing terms – distraction, boredom, and attention deficit – are suggestive not only of the Bon Ton of an era, but of significant shifts in the way we understand community, the individual, and the nation state that holds them together.

**Group Members: Prof. Ofer Ashkenazi, Prof. Ayelet Landau, Prof. Yael Levin, Prof. Gal Ventura, Tamar Kogman, Sara Kopelman, Aysheh Maslemani, Hadas Schlussel, Nitsan Israeli**

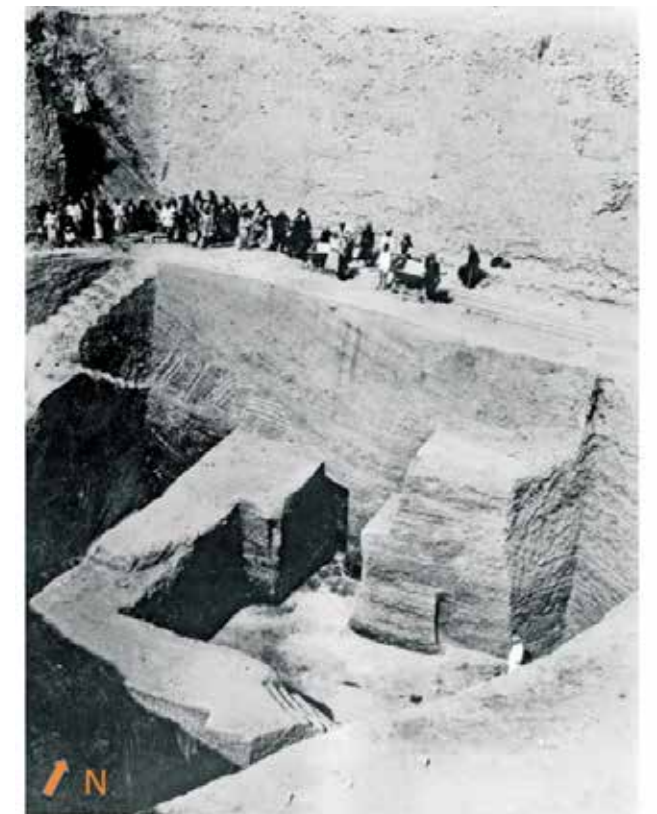
# Mandel Fellows

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## Incoming Fellows [2021-2024]

### Dr. Céline Debourse (2021-2024)

As an Assyriologist, Dr. Céline Debourse studies the cultures and languages of ancient Mesopotamia. Her research focuses on the very end of this region's long history, when Xerxes, Alexander, and Mithridates paraded through the streets of Babylon. Specifically, she is interested in Babylonia's cult and religion under these changing empires. In her dissertation, written at the University of Vienna, she reassessed a corpus of cuneiform ritual texts that prescribe New Year's rites. Going against the established idea that these texts were copies of ancient originals, she showed that they were rather the products of priests living in Hellenistic Babylon. An expression of this community's hopes and concerns under foreign rule, these ritual texts fit alongside other genres of the Late Babylonian priestly literature. Debourse's new project is a continuation of her previous work, asking the question of how changing imperial dynamics impacted cultic practices. First, a study of cuneiform documentation aims to shed more light on Babylon's temples, priesthood, pantheon, and rituals during the final centuries of cuneiform culture. This, in turn, will enable a comparison with contemporary temple institutions outside the Mesopotamian heartland in an interdisciplinary approach towards religious transformations in the Hellenistic age.



"Large Pit of Esagil", the main temple of Babylon. The temple was never fully excavated because it is under a huge and uncharacteristically large amount of dirt and earth. The German archaeologist Koldewey made the large pit and managed to determine the temple's ground plan based on what he found. It fits with my research because just like the archaeologist reconstructs the temple's remains, we too reconstruct the temple's cult based on "pits" of knowledge.

Dr. Ofir Haim (2021-2024)

Dr. Ofir Haim completed his doctoral studies in the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies and the Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the Hebrew University. During the academic year 2020/21, he was a Fulbright postdoctoral fellow at the Princeton Geniza Lab. Ofir’s research concerns the social, intellectual, and linguistic interactions between different religious and ethnic groups in the pre-modern Islamic world, particularly Iran. His dissertation reconstructed the religious and intellectual heritage of Jewish Persian-speaking communities during the first centuries of Islam and places it in the broader intellectual environment of the Jewish world. Ofir’s current project is dedicated to a rich and multi-lingual corpus that has been dubbed the “Afghan Geniza.” This textual corpus sheds light on “voiceless” groups that are virtually absent from known sources, particularly the Jewish minority, the rural population, and the urban landowners. Through a meticulous reading and translation of the corpus documents, Ofir delves into the everyday experiences of the Jews of eastern Iran and their relationship with the Muslim majority, and provides a fresh outlook on center-periphery relations in the region.



From the treasures of the Afghan Genizah: A well-preserved Judeo-Persian letter concerning a family dispute in eleventh-century Afghanistan (Ms. Heb. 8333.29=4; from the collection of the National Library of Israel).

Dr. Flavio Geissshuesler (2021-2024)

Dr. Flavio A. Geissshuesler is a historian of religions. He holds two PhDs, one from the University of Bern (Switzerland) and the other from the University of Virginia (USA), allowing him to develop a dual-expertise in the modern Western conception of “meditation,” on the one hand, and the contemplative systems of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, on the other. He is currently revising a book manuscript that offers the first comprehensive introduction to the sky-gazing meditation known as “Direct Transcendence” (*thod rgal*), one of the most secretive practices of Tibet. Providing a thorough engagement with both a traditional Tibetan technique and contemporary mindfulness approaches, the book

argues that meditation should not be conceived as a universal practice to be performed anywhere, anytime, and by anyone, but rather as a highly contextualized performance that takes place within a local contemplative system. As a Mandel Scholion fellow, he is working on a book that offers an extensive historical analysis of the famous Tibetan Buddhist tradition known as the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*), showing its surprising historical origins in Kaśmīri Śaivism and an unexpected afterlife in the modern theosophical movement. He is also an Azrieli postdoctoral fellow, conducting a research project on Indo-Tibetan tantric meditation techniques from a cognitive science perspective.



The Boudha Stupa, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Kathmandu Nepal. This picture was taken during my extensive field research from the bookstore owned by my host family.

Photo: Dr. Flavio Geissshuesler



# Upcoming Research Group

## The Emergence of Local Elites in Late Antiquity: Between West and East

2022-2025

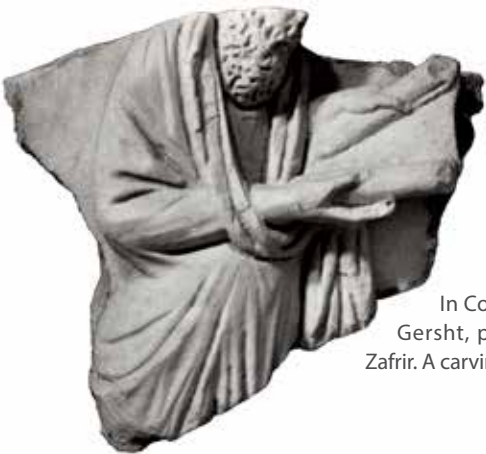
The chosen research group for 2022-2025 seeks to uncover the emergence of local elites in the Land of Israel and the Sasanian Empire within the larger context of Late Antique societies. Following Mischa Meier's groundbreaking work *Geschichte der Völkerwanderung*. (2019), the group's endeavors will be based on the working definition of a local elite as an association, with more or less rigorous structures of organization, that develops a sense of self-awareness in social, religious, cultural, and/or political matters and aspires towards positions of authority within society. The project will start with the bigger picture of Late Antiquity, in dialogue with leading historians of the different realms. The specific contribution of the group derives from three innovative perspectives: 1) focus on two neglected geographical areas and their relations with each other; 2) juxtaposition of sources from a great variety of backgrounds to reconstruct local elites, which have thus been overshadowed by elites that became canonical; and 3) using recently discovered sources, such as new homilies, magic bowls and the results of ongoing excavations.

The group's composition is diverse both regarding its members' fields of specialization and their stage in their career. The test case of Jewish elites brings them together. Avner Ecker and Maren R. Niehoff will focus on Late Antique Palaestina, Ecker contributing an archeological perspective on pagan elites in the Roman cities of

Palaestina and Niehoff providing insights into Greek-speaking Jewish elites in Late Antique Caesarea. Avigail Manekin-Bamberger and Yakir Paz will focus the Sasanian Empire, Manekin-Bamberger investigating magic bowls and Paz reconstructing non-rabbinic elites based on Christian sources.

The topic of the research group is of wider academic and public interest, joining recent debates about the traditional notion of the "Jewish Bookcase" (e.g. Dan Meron in *Ha'aretz*, 19.09.2021). The group will cooperate with various institutions and make its results accessible to wider audiences in Israel and abroad. The out-reach activities will include projects at the National Library, the Israel Museum, the Van Leer Institute, and the Yad Ben Zvi Institute as well as Tübingen University and the University of California San Diego.

**Group Members: Dr. Avner Ecker, Dr. Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, Dr. Yakir Paz, Prof. Maren R. Niehoff**



In Courtesy of Rivka Gersht, photo by Israel Zafrir. A carving of a sage.



# News in Brief

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## Academic Positions

**Dr. Dana Kaplan**, member of the “Setting Tables” research group, was appointed to a position in the Department of Sociology, Political Science, and Communication at the Open University.

Mandel Fellow **Dr. Iyas Nasser** was appointed to a position in the Department of Arabic Language and Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Dr. Nasser also received the Maof Scholarship for young researchers, awarded by the Council for Higher Education (VATAT).

Mandel Fellow **Dr. Guy Ron-Gilboa** was appointed to a position as a lecturer in the Department of Arabic at Bar-

Ilan University.

Mandel Fellow **Prof. Giddon Ticotsky** was appointed to a position in the Department of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Mandel Fellow **Dr. Jonathan Vardi** was appointed to a position in the Department of Hebrew Literature at the Hebrew University

Mandel Fellow **Dr. Yosi Yisraeli** was appointed to a position in the Department of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University.

## Prizes and Fellowships

**Ronnie Agassi**, member of “Past and Past Perfect” group, received the the Middle East and Islamic Studies Association (MEISAI) Award for her master’s thesis.

**Reut Achdut**, member of “Past and Past Perfect” group, received the Segal Award for an exceptional thesis, given by the Bible Department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Mandel Fellow **Dr. Hadar Feldman Samet** was awarded

the Shlomo Pines Prize for an outstanding researcher. Dr. Feldman Samet has also been selected to join the Young Scholars Forum group of the Israel Academy of Science and Humanities.

**Yonatan Harel**, member of “In Someone Else’s Shoes” group, received the Joseph Trink Fellowship for excellence in the humanities.

Mandel Fellow **Dr. Michael Lukin** was awarded the “Am Ve’Olam” prize commemorating the late Bella and Shlomo Bartal.

**Adi Namia-Cohen**, member of the “Setting Tables” research group, was awarded a scholarship from the Ish Tov and Fania Shraga Fund and the Zehava Lambert Fund, for Studies in Middle Eastern Jewry.

**Hadass Shambadal**, “Setting Tables” research group

member, won the Rotenstreich Scholarship for outstanding Ph.D. students, given by the Council for Higher Education (VATAT).

**Prof. Nathan Wasserman**, member of the “Setting Tables” research group, received the Haim Gouri Award for poetry.

## Israel Science Foundation Grants

Six Mandel Scholion scholars were awarded ISF grants.

Scholion’s academic head **Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten**, “Past and Past Perfect” member **Prof. Reuven Amitai**, and **Prof. Ayelet Landau** of the new “Evolution of Attention” group, were awarded personal research grants.

**Prof. Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal**, **Prof. Nora Boneh**, and **Prof. Eitan Grossman** of the research group on “Historical Linguistics and Formal Semantics” won an ISF research grant for their 4-year project titled “The Complexity of Simplification Processes in Language Change.” This new project is to a large extent a continuation of their project at the Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center

in the Humanities and Jewish Studies, which focused on formal aspects of language change. The new project will focus on one aspect of historical development in languages, namely that language change often seems to involve simplification. Diverse theoretical frameworks have argued that the mechanisms of language change are fundamentally simplifying. While the notion of simplification is evoked often in the literature on language change, it is not used in a unified way. This project will focus on three fundamental facets of this discussion: (i) What are the characteristics of simplification, and what is complexity? (ii) The assumption that historical change can be characterized as simplification relies mainly on the perception of diachronic processes as unidirectional. Is



this a general claim about all historical changes or merely a tendency? What is the scope of this claim? (iii) What is the theoretical role of simplification? Is this the process itself? Does it provide a motivation or even a cause? Or perhaps this is merely a description of certain kinds of language change?

The primary objective of the proposed project is to provide an empirically-rich and theoretically-informed account of language change across multiple domains of grammar in a single language family, Semitic. Attested for over 5,000 years, Semitic languages are spoken today in a quasi-continuous area stretching from West Africa to India. Focusing on a single family allows us to capitalize on existing research across multiple theoretical frameworks and to control for (or directly target) the roles of inheritance, language contact, and language-external historical circumstances in observed changes.

They report: "The past three years as part of our research group at the center allowed us to engage with a variety of studies in historical linguistics, and thus to set the foundations for this new and exciting project. Each one of us has already published work related to this new project, stemming directly from our joint sessions and activities within the research group at the Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities and Jewish Studies".

Bar-Asher Siegal, Elitzur A. 2020. "A formal approach to reanalysis: The case of a negative counterfactual marker," In a special issue on "Formal Approaches to Grammaticalization", edited by Martín Fuchs and Joshua Phillips. *LSA Proceedings* 5(2): 34-50.

Boneh, Nora. 2020. "Pseudo-grammaticalization: The anatomy of "come" in Modern Hebrew pseudo-coordination constructions". "Formal Approaches to Grammaticalization", edited by Martín Fuchs, Joshua Phillips. *LSA Proceedings* 5(2): 16-33.

Malte Rosemeyer & Eitan Grossman. 2020. "Why don't grammaticalization pathways always recur?" Accepted to *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*.

This past year has also been a fruitful year at Mandel Scholion in non-academic ways. We are happy to congratulate our members who welcomed new family members! Mazal Tov to **Reut Achdut** and her family who

welcomed **Yehuda David**; to **Ronnie Agassi** and her family who welcomed **Arbel**; to **Hadass Shambadal** and her family who welcomed **Kama**; and **Anita Reisler** and her family who welcomed **Gali**.



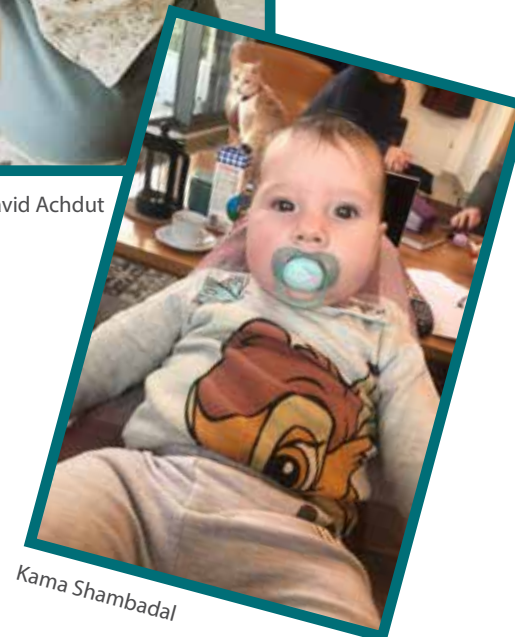
Arbel Agassi



Gali Reisler



Yehuda David Achdut



Kama Shambadal



**Mandel Scholion**

Interdisciplinary Research Center in  
the Humanities and Jewish Studies

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