



האוניברסיטה  
העברית  
בירושלים  
THE HEBREW  
UNIVERSITY  
OF JERUSALEM

# KOL HAMERCAZ

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Newsletter of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Melton Centre for Jewish Education

## From the Director: Prof. Jonathan Cohen



It is my privilege once again to report to our readers on the main events that took place at the Melton Centre during the past academic year. With the readers' permission, I will also dwell on "major trends" that have been developing at the Centre of late, trends that will have a profound influence on the course of the Mercaz in the future.

The academic year began in October 2015 with our annual faculty meeting – this time on the topic of the attitude of Israeli students in non-religious schools to the pluralistic approach to Judaism promoted by the Mercaz and other institutions. In sessions led by **Dr. Eilon Schwarz**, a member of our staff, together with selected teachers from the field, it became clear that many students in the non-religious stream, especially those from traditional backgrounds, have internalized certain intensively particularistic attitudes current in Israeli society. Teachers representing more open approaches to Judaism will have to learn the interpretive languages of the more traditionalist communities in order to remain educationally relevant.

In November, **Sir Mick Davis**, a prominent lay leader of the British Jewish community, addressed our staff and students. He gave a most interesting and informed talk on the role, both potential and actual, of lay leadership in promoting the Jewish "oxygen" of a Diaspora community. This invitation was extended in keeping with the Melton Centre's policy of maintaining contact with key Diaspora leaders who can advise us of the state of the Jewish community in their part of the world.

March 2016, was especially rich in activity and important events. In a gathering, conceived by **Prof. Marc Hirshman**, Head of Academic Studies, **Dr. Ruth Calderon**, former MK and Director of Alma, was invited to speak on her cultural-educational approach to Judaism and her path to recognition as a woman authority on the Talmud and its teaching. Later on that month, **Prof. Michael Fishbane** of the

University of Chicago delivered the Melton Centre's bi-annual lecture in memory of Prof. Seymour Fox, entitled "The Hermeneutic Self: An Old-New Pedagogic Vision." The lecture was particularly well attended since it took place on the 10th anniversary of Prof. Fox's passing and on the same day that the School of Education was formally named after him – becoming the **Seymour Fox School of Education**.

Towards the end of May, two new books, jointly published by the Melton Center and the Mofet Institute within the framework of the **Michael Rosenak Memorial Series in Jewish Education**, were launched. One book, by **Dr. Gad Ofaz**, narrates the history of Jewish texts study in kibbutz circles. The other, by **Prof. Ehud Luz**, is a collection of articles on the interpretation of Jewish canonical texts, on themes in Jewish and Zionist thought, and on guiding principles for Jewish education.

As far as major trends and developments are concerned: After much discussion together with the Rector of the University, **Prof. Asher Cohen**, the Director of the School of Education, **Prof. Moshe Tatar**, and myself, it was decided that the Melton Centre will be reintegrated into the School of Education, where it originally opened as a department in 1968. It has become clear that this is the most effective path for ensuring that Jewish education as an area of research, teaching and professional development can continue to grow at the Hebrew University.

As of 2017, the School of Education will comprise four academic sub-units of which Jewish education will be one. Each sub-unit will have a center for research and development attached to it. While other sub-units will have to build these centers, the Melton Centre is in the fortunate position of already having a well-developed and experienced center in operation. The Melton Centre will continue to carry out research, teach towards MA and PhD degrees, and conduct development projects with communities around the world. All endowments donated to the Centre will continue to be administered by the Centre and its directorship as before. This development is for the mutual benefit of all parties. We will benefit from the research, teaching and professional experience of the School of Education, and the School of Education will gain from the theoretical and practical activity undertaken in the area of Jewish education at Melton. I am most pleased to be working with such a fine educator as Prof. Moshe Tatar on the staged implementation of this process.

I am also proud to report that our new flagship program, the Melton Blended Masters (MBM)

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## The Michael Rosenak Memorial Series in Jewish Education

When considering the most appropriate manner in which to honor the memory of **Prof. Michael Rosenak**, a central figure for so many years at the Melton Centre, the idea of a book series in his name was proposed. This initiative, a library of books on Jewish Education from different perspectives, was well received and regarded as the most relevant way to perpetuate the memory of Mike, a former Director of Melton, esteemed colleague and most beloved teacher.

A call for proposals for books in the field of Jewish Education was announced and the number of submissions received was overwhelming. The obvious choice for the first book in the series, was one by Mike himself, written 30 years ago – “Teaching Jewish Culture: Values, Authenticity and Relevance.” The book was launched in 2015 at a conference held in his honor on “Jewish Education: Continuity for Creativity.”

Under the capable leadership of **Dr. Asher Shkedi**, chief editor and initiator of this idea, a selection process began to find prospective books for publication, together with **Dr. Yehudit Sheiman** of the **Mofet Institute**, and the academic committee: **Prof. Jonathan Cohen** (chair), **Dr. Eilon Edelstein**, **Dr. Hanoch Ben Pazi**, **Prof. Zeev Harvey**, and **Dr. Avinoam Rosenak**.

The second book selected is by **Dr. Gad Ufaz**, past lecturer at Oranim Academic College, a former member of Kibbutz Ayelet Hashachar, and an original member of the Shdemot group. His book, “From ‘Siach Lochamim’ to the ‘Jewish Bookshelf:’ Second and Third Generation Kibbutz Members in Search of Jewish Identity” - narrates the history of Jewish text study in Kibbutz circles.

The next book, “Integrated Implements: Thoughts on Zionism and Jewish Education” is by **Prof. Ehud Luz**, a well-known professor emeritus of Jewish Philosophy at Haifa University and Oranim Academic College. This book comprises a collection of articles on the

interpretation of Jewish canonical texts, on themes in Jewish and Zionist thought, and on guiding principles for Jewish education.

The first two books, both by close colleagues of Mike, were recently launched at a special meeting of the Jerusalem Forum for Jewish Education at the Melton Centre. **Muki Tsur**, author, historian and educator introduced Gad Ufaz’s book, and Prof. Jonathan Cohen, Director of the Melton Centre introduced the book by Ehud Luz. Following on the success of this evening, it was decided that each year, close to the date of Mike’s passing, new books in the series will be launched.

Work is already under way on the next book selected for the series. “Silent Testimony” by **Dr. Lilach Neistadt Bornstein**, a teacher at Seminar Hakibbutzim, brings to light a woman’s experience of the Holocaust, and the outlet she found in Germany for her testimony. Dr. Neistadt Bornstein has used this testimony to develop a teacher training project on how to teach the Holocaust through testimony.

**Prof. Eliezer Schweid** will author the fourth book. This will be a series of commentaries on the weekly Torah portion. Prof. Schweid, who has written numerous books on Jewish philosophy, is a recipient of the coveted Israel Prize and an esteemed professor emeritus of Jewish Thought at Hebrew University.

Also currently in the writing stage, is a book on the “Educational Thought of the Rambam” by **Dr. Amira Eran**, a lecturer on Jewish Philosophy at Seminar Hakibbutzim and Levinsky College of Education.

Melton is honored to partner with the **Mofet Institute**, a national intercollegial center for the research and development of programs in teacher education, in bringing this important series to fruition, and is extremely grateful to **Reches Publications** for the production and design of the books in the series.



Dr. Ashker Shkedi



Prof. Marc Hirshman, Prof. Ehud Luz, Muki Tsur



## The Hebrew University of Jerusalem Names School of Education in Honor of Former Head Seymour Fox

On March 14, 2016, the School of Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem was officially named the **Seymour Fox School of Education** in honor of the School's former head and innovative leader whose impact has benefitted education in Israel, the United States and around the world.

Seymour Fox served as head of the Hebrew University's School of Education for 14 years, beginning in 1967. During his tenure, he demonstrated his creativity and entrepreneurial spirit by introducing new programs for early childhood education and curriculum writing, also establishing the Melton Centre for Jewish Education. He believed in inspiring educators to creativity through a clear and intelligible vision. Indeed, many of Fox's students have become leaders in Israeli and Jewish education worldwide.

"Seymour was an esteemed leader and visionary educator," said Hebrew University of Jerusalem President **Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson**. "In naming our School of Education in his honor, we wish to acknowledge the profound influence he had on our University, and his lifelong passion for education and the institutions he built."

**David Fox**, one of Seymour Fox's sons, said: "My family is deeply humbled by this dedication in honor of our father. His commitment to education remains an inspiration for teachers, students and other leaders in Israel and the Jewish community around the world."

The dedication program was hosted by **Michael Federmann**, Chairman of the Board of Governors, and

Prof. Ben-Sasson. The event included a symposium entitled "Seymour Fox: Educational Architect and Visionary – Perspectives on his Writings and Achievements," moderated by **Dr. Eli Gottlieb**, Director of the Mandel Leadership Institute.

Participants included:

**Prof. Jonathan Cohen** of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Mandel Leadership Institute,

**Prof. Sharon Feiman-Nemser** of Brandeis University,

**Prof. Barry Holtz** of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and

**Dr. Daniel Marom**, Head of Pedagogical and Tutorial Development at the Mandel School for Educational Leadership.

Prior to the dedication ceremony, **Prof. Michael Fishbane** of the University of Chicago delivered the fifth bi-annual Fox memorial lecture entitled "The hermeneutic self: an old-new pedagogic vision". This lecture, as always, was given under the auspices of the Melton Centre and was chaired by its Director, **Prof. Jonathan Cohen**.

Prof. Fox passed away in 2006, at the age of 77. He was often described as a "larger than life" figure known for his energy, his powerful personality and his innovative thinking. His influence on Jewish education around the world has been called "inestimable," in terms of the financial resources he raised, the institutions he founded, and the intellectual contributions of the general education and Judaica scholars he brought together to advance Jewish education.



Prof. Michael Fishbane

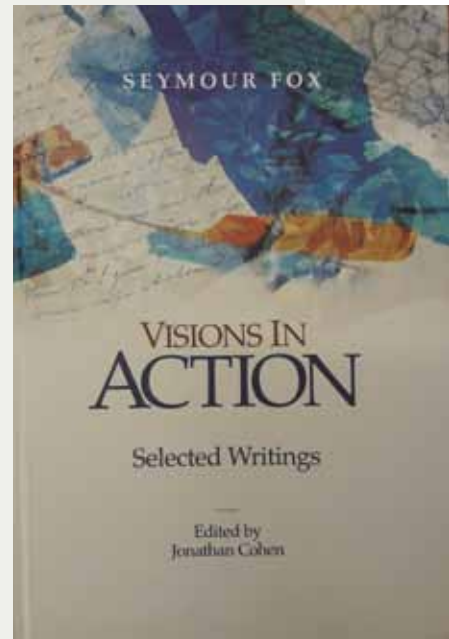


## New Book on Seymour Fox as Educational Thinker and Entrepreneur

This past March, the School of Education of the Hebrew University was officially named after Prof. Seymour Fox – the most dynamic Director of the School of Education in the University’s history and one of the founders and chief navigators of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education. To mark the occasion of the naming, Prof. Jonathan Cohen, former doctoral student of Prof. Fox, former Director of the School of Education and presently the Director of the Melton Centre – compiled and edited a volume of some of Fox’s most important articles and essays, entitled: *Visions in Action: Selected Writings*.

In his Introduction to the volume: “The Normative and the Deliberative Sensibility in the Writings of Seymour Fox,” he set forth the rationale for dividing Fox’s writings (spanning over forty years) into four thematic sections. The first section focuses on the “normative” dimension, namely those writings where Prof. Fox emphasizes the need for overarching visions that can serve as a compass for Jewish educational practice. The second section is devoted to the deliberative process, wherein problems are diagnosed, and interventions are suggested, tested, evaluated and revised. The third highlights what Prof. Joseph Schwab of the University of Chicago (Prof. Fox’s *alma mater*) called “the eclectic,” namely the need for multiple theoretical resources to ensure the breadth and flexibility necessary for the solution of practical problems. The fourth and final section contains essays and documents in which the reader can actually follow an implementation process from conceptualization to realization – with case studies taken from the Ramah Camps in the US and the School for Educational Leadership in Israel.

Overall, the book presents Prof. Fox as a “philosopher-administrator,” one who demanded that no vision be even called a vision if it was not amenable to implementation, and who demanded that all plans for action be grounded in a systematic educational world-view and empirical evidence. It is the hope of the author that the book will acquaint more and more academicians, policy-makers and reflective practitioners with Prof. Fox’s ideas and achievements.



### From the Director: Prof. Jonathan Cohen

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program, is underway. It is the first full degree offered by the Hebrew University largely in the online mode (2/3 of the courses). The program, conducted in English, takes place over three semesters: a semester of online distance learning between March and June, a six-week intense program onsite in Jerusalem, and another distance learning semester from September to February. Recent feedback shows that students are thoroughly enjoying the program, and registration is already in progress for 2017-2018. Twenty students from around the globe are currently engaged in an intensive new course of study towards an MA in Jewish education, and this number is expected to grow significantly in subsequent cohorts. This is in addition to the 70 students presently studying within the framework of our regular MA program.

My special thanks to **Dr. Marcelo Dorfsman**, Director of the program, who has effectively guided our teaching staff through the complex pilot stages of this most innovative program. Warm thanks are also due to **Prof. Orna Kupferman**, Deputy Rector of the University, without whose consistent support and encouragement this program could not have been realized. I am also most grateful to **Ms. Carmela Hariri**, our Executive Director, for

handling all the complex financial and administrative logistics involved in mounting such an ambitious program. Finally, special thanks to **Mr. Shlomo Lifshitz** of LIROM Global Education for his untiring efforts at canvassing students during a most difficult time here in Jerusalem.

As an indication of our success, I am proud to announce that I was invited, as a representative of the Melton Centre and the Hebrew University’s first online degree program, to address this year’s gathering of the University’s Board of Governors. The session was devoted to those unique university programs emphasizing an international and multi-disciplinary perspective. Reports indicate that our presentation was very well received and has generated interest in this and other Melton Centre programs. It is my fervent wish that this is only the first step towards a “takeoff into sustained growth” for the Melton Centre, as it intensifies its cooperation with the Seymour Fox School of Education.

Sincerely and respectfully,  
**Prof. Jonathan Cohen**  
Director





## Blended Masters in Jewish Education: Melton's Flagship Distance Learning Program

Dr. Marcelo Dorfsman

March 7 marked the official opening of the blended program of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education, an integrated program that entails 40 credits: 26 through distance courses and 14 from intensive courses that will take place this summer in Jerusalem.

Although the program officially began three months ago, in terms of the Centre, it all began many months earlier. Once the Standing Committee of Hebrew University had approved the program, systematic work began to develop the program and adapt it to the requirements of distance learning using advanced technologies currently available in the world of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0.

This is a recognized master's degree program from the Hebrew University. As such, the first challenge for the program designers was to create an appropriate framework that encompassed all the academic requirements of the university, but still provided an accessible and friendly space to participants (recognizing that distance learners face special challenges, essentially different from those of regular students). As such, the first task assigned was the development of a pedagogic model for the whole program, in conjunction with the creation of a well-defined and friendly online environment for the student.

The pedagogic model set a number of regulations: 1. The program is based primarily on the General Regulations of the Hebrew University, which, in certain sections, have been adapted to the conditions of distance learning (and has been approved by the relevant bodies); 2. Students are required to dedicate on average 4-5 hours a week for each course; 3. For the first stage,

the pedagogic paradigm of the courses is a weekly forum. During this forum, the lecturer raises an issue or dilemma central to the subject of the course that week. It is understood that all discussions will reflect reading of the bibliography, viewing the video lesson, and reviewing all the material brought up during the lesson, as well as relating to the views of their fellow students in the discussion and their response thereto; 4. Even if the language of the program is mainly textual, we ensured the development of a visual side as well in various forms – video recordings of the lectures, uploading other films from the Web, maps, photographs and diagrams – with the understanding that the use of multiple languages is both possible and necessary to enhance the students' understanding. 5. Although most interaction occurs within the online environment (on the Moodle site of the university), the student is given the option to consult with professors during online office hours, through email, Skype or other means. All lecturers teaching this semester reported that they have created personal relationships with students individually, through these means, and beyond the official platform.

Special mention must be made of the lecturers participating in the program. For over a period of almost a year, they were engaged in developing the program. This included development of the courses; advance preparation of each lesson; filming the lesson according to pedagogic, academic and artistic standards; examining and approving the edited films; testing, completing and approving the lessons on the platform; and testing and approving the complete course. These efforts, carried out in cooperation with the pedagogic team of the program, proved to be an





interesting experience for all and led to the creation of a common pedagogic language and script for each course as well as for the entire program.

From the start, we have tried to anticipate the problems and misunderstandings and are very attentive to the students and faculty, and have made every effort to resolve all problems as they arise. The program platform went online a few days prior to the start of the courses and provided explanations, tutorials and instructions and help was offered via Skype. In addition, the academic committee met frequently to discuss and solve various issues. Towards the end of the first semester, we had already gained a number of interesting insights through close surveillance of the courses, ongoing comments from the lecturers, and interim feedback questionnaire from the students. There is no synchronized component to the program, but the lecturers, themselves, initiated a web-conference, which provided the first opportunity to meet as a group before the summer seminar in Israel.

First, it is evident to all that the level of achievement of students does not fall below that of a regular group in a parallel program. The second insight relates to the standard of the weekly discussions, which generally reflects a very high level of bibliography reading and personal involvement in the issues discussed. A well-known phenomenon in online learning is that students are aware that the written word outweighs the spoken word, and therefore their investment in writing and thinking ahead exceeds that of oral statements within the classroom framework. In addition, students who write in the forum, as opposed to 'talkbacks,' are aware they are in a supervised academic framework with a commitment to the institution and the group.

Nevertheless, the level of the discussions, the depth, reference to texts, relationships between fellow students, and even other courses, are very impressive.

Another interesting phenomenon relates to the multiculturalism of the group. Of the 20 participants, there are students from the United States, Canada, England, France, South Africa, Australia, China and India. Among them are Israelis who left Israel many years ago and now live in the US and Americans who recently came on Aliyah. The cultural component arises in the debates and adds an interesting and exciting dimension.

The summer semester in Jerusalem is already in full swing, and we look forward to the development of the program for the coming years, and to disseminating the model for additional programs – both for the Centre itself and the university as a whole. The invitation Prof. Jonathan Cohen received to speak about the program at the Hebrew University Board of Governors 2016 meetings is an encouraging sign.

I would like to recognize and thank those whose efforts brought the program to fruition. Firstly, to all the lecturers participating in the program, and to the Melton Centre management, led by **Prof. Jonathan Cohen** and **Ms. Carmela Hariri**. Also to **Prof. Marc Hirshman**, Head of the Academic Committee, **Ms. Eti Gershon**, Academic Secretary, **Mr. Fabian Glagovsky**, Pedagogic and Technological Assistant, and **Ms. Neta Levy**, Social Coordinator, who have all been of tremendous assistance throughout the process. In addition, special thanks goes to **Prof. Asher Cohen**, Rector of the Hebrew University and **Prof. Orna Kupferman**, Vice-Rector, without whom the realization of this program would not have been possible.







## “Ve’Dibarta Bam”: An MA Program in Pluralistic Jewish Education

A joint program between the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion

Prof. Michal Muszkat-Barkan

The connection between Jewish education and pluralism is often perceived as the core of state Jewish education in Israel. However, this is not significantly reflected in the education system itself. In reality, there exists a dichotomy between ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ in the Jewish education systems in Israel that limits the depth and scope of Jewish dialogue.

In-depth understanding of Jewish education is an essential component for cultivating educational leaders to deal with these challenges to Israeli society and to provide an alternative to the extreme trends prevalent in the country. Building a community of pluralistic educational leaders will advance the chances to appreciate the other in society and to promote a society capable of promoting a wide range of Jewish cultural options.

In response to this issue, the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University together with HUC-JIR initiated the establishment of a specialization in pluralistic Jewish education. The aim is to produce educational leaders at the forefront of the field with an understanding of the world of pluralistic Jewish education and its challenges.

After completing two years of study, participants receive an MA degree in Jewish Education from Hebrew University, and a certificate of specialization in Pluralistic Jewish Education from HUC-JIR in Jerusalem.

The first cohort of this joint program, comprising educators involved in the Israeli Jewish renaissance, with teachers and principals from around the country, was launched in 2007. Each participant in that founding cohort, and those which have followed, has been motivated by a wish to combine extensive academic studies with activities in the field.

The program’s key features include:

- Exposure to multiple voices in Jewish tradition, in both research and fieldwork.
- Experience studying with a diversified group of learners and building a community willing to learn from a wide range of voices.
- In-depth academic study with leading lecturers in the field of Jewish education.
- Reflective practice relating both to individual and group experiences, employing both academic and practical tools.

The combination of HUC-JIR with the Hebrew University is an opportunity for a unique kind of dialogue. Those

who choose to study in an institute that identifies with the movement for liberal Judaism, are challenged to initiate and reflect upon discussion focused on values and spirituality. In Israeli society pluralistic Jewish discussion takes place mainly in the intellectual realm. In our program, in addition to the philosophical and ideological infrastructure, we open a wide range of avenues to experience pluralism. Combining academia with experiential study facilitates advanced professional training.



We are proud of our graduates who hold key positions in the field of Jewish renewal in Israel, in organizations such as Panim, Morasha, Bina, the Association for Community Centers, and schools around the country.

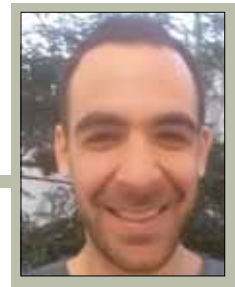
Kobi Ben Hemo, graduate of the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort writes about his experience in the program:

“After years of searching and feeling skeptical I found the Beit Midrash I was looking for. Studying within the framework of “Ve’Dibarta Bam” provided, and continues to provide, a fertile environment to clarify questions on both a personal and professional level. Here is a learning atmosphere that allowed me to ask, examine and discuss my identity as a Jew, a *Mizrachi*, and an Israeli. During the two years of the program I got to know a group of students from different cultural, religious and social backgrounds. The time spent together, sowed the seeds for a caring, collegial and communal encounter between students from completely different backgrounds. The chances for such an encounter in the reality of Israeli society, are almost impossible ...”

In the spring of 2017, we plan to hold a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference dedicated to the challenges of pluralistic education in Jerusalem. We will invite researchers and educators to further the discussion that this innovative program has introduced to the world of Jewish education.



## MEET A MELTON PHD STUDENT: AKIVA HAMEIRI



It is a privilege and pleasure at this moment in time, dominated as it is by issues of ethnocentricity, xenophobia and the question of self-reflection, to sit down with Melton Ph.D candidate, Akiva Hameiri, to discuss his research, and what he gives to and gains from his work as a high school educator. To hear his perspective on Israeli society and its youth, and his vision for education in Israel is illuminating.

Akiva's career path to the world of Jewish education and academia was somewhat circuitous. Throughout high school and his military service, he knew his goal was medical school, until he was not accepted. He decided to make good use of the gap year during which he would reapply to medical school, and registered for Bible Studies at Hebrew University to study courses that would "nourish his soul." What he did not anticipate was that this decision would redirect his route through life. Here Akiva first encountered the outstanding students of the Revivim Honors Teacher-Training Program in Jewish Studies for secular high schools in Israel. Inspired by his fellow students, intellectually and emotionally satisfied with Bible studies, his outstanding lecturers, and the concept of Revivim, Akiva soon abandoned his medical school ambition and registered for the sixth cohort of the Revivim program. According to him, this decision is one of the best he ever made.

Within this framework, Akiva graduated with a BA in Jewish Studies and Bible and with a non-thesis MA in Jewish Education. The decision of a non-thesis track would once again influence the direction of his career. The wide range of courses he needed to take would open his world to new concepts and opportunities, as well as meeting brilliant academics who would lead him into the world of academia. One such encounter was with **Dr. Leah Mazor**, of the Bible Studies Department, and her course on the different traditions of the Exodus from Egypt. This was his first meeting with Tziporah and her tribe, and here he fell in love with the concept of nomadism in the Bible. Another such opportunity was a Melton Centre course with **Dr. Alick Isaacs**, where he researched people who live on the fringe of society. This planted the first seeds for further research, and possible applications to educational work in the field.

With his BA and MA completed Akiva decided again to make another short detour. He set off for a year in India (another excellent decision according to him). Here he studied in temples mainly in the north of the country and returned to Israel ready to enter the national education system as a Bible and Jewish Studies teacher at the Yigal Alon High School in Rishon LeZion. However, within a year of his return from India, Akiva was back at Hebrew University to complete his MA thesis and start his PhD journey under the supervision of **Prof. Marc Hirshman**.

Prof. Hirshman recommended that he ask **Prof. Israel Knohl** of the Department of Bible to be his second supervisor. In addition to having enjoyed studying with him in the past, Akiva was more than convinced this was the right match when he saw Prof. Knohl walk out of synagogue on Shabbat with a Tanakh under one arm and a tennis racket under the other. Akiva is extremely grateful to both his supervisors who have been wise, encouraging, exact, supportive, and always with a smile.

In 2015, Akiva received a scholarship for the Mandel Scholars in Education program for PhD education students at the Mandel Leadership Institute. Here he was fortunate to study with **Dr. Ayman Agbaria**, director of the program and a senior lecturer in the Department of Leadership and Policy in Education at the University of Haifa, and with fellow PhD candidates from a range of different specialized fields in education.

Back at the Melton Centre, Akiva dedicated the past year to completing his pioneering thesis, which he recently submitted on: "A study of the formation of the characters of Esau and Zipporah in the biblical narrative and in the legends of the sages, as a gateway for investigating the cultural attitude toward the stranger, and the possible ramifications of this attitude for Jewish education." In the thesis he invokes modern theories of identity formation to suggest new methods of teaching these sources to allow Israeli high school students to form their own identities with a heightened appreciation of the plight of refugees and foreigners.

Akiva is thankful for the opportunity he has had to meet many inspiring and different personalities at Melton. Even though it is a center for Jewish education, he believes Melton exposes students to different aspects and perspectives on education in general. He made special mention of **Prof. Jonathan Cohen**, who opened his mind to philosophy of education, and **Prof. Zvi Bekerman**, with whom he enjoyed every minute of his studies and appreciated his critical thinking.

Akiva is a staunch supporter of the secular school system and does not favor private education and specialist schools. He believes Jewish education subjects have great potential to deal with relevant issues in society and would like to see more secular students join the field of Jewish education.

Throughout his PhD studies, Akiva continued to teach at the high school in Rishon. Here he hopes to implement his PhD research and conclusions in teaching tolerance to his students. "It is true that in high schools we encounter hatred towards minority

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## 2016 Graduates of Jewish Education Track

The Melton Centre is proud to announce that at the annual graduation ceremony held on Mt. Scopus campus, 16 students graduated with an MA in Jewish Education. Among those receiving their MA degrees, **Hamutal Elbaz** and **Ehud Peled-Farkash**, completed their degrees cum laude.

### PhD Recipient

The Faculty of Humanities held its annual ceremony for conferring Doctor of Philosophy degrees at which Melton student **Leonor Silvia Shtieglitz** received her PhD degree.

The title of Leonor's research and thesis, which she carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Jonathan Cohen** and **Dr. Asher Shkedi** was on: "Student-teachers' Perceptions of Their Role as Educators: A Longitudinal Case Study of a Teacher Training Program for Jewish Studies Teachers."



### AKIVA HAMEIRI

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groups. To change this phenomenon is depressingly difficult, but it is important that I make it clear that the students are good students, loving and caring, but the educational system in Israel is doing something so wrong that the children only meet minorities through the media and horror stories and almost never face to face. Tolerance has no chance when encounters are only with the extremists in any group. Society creates the person, and not the individual."

We wish Akiva much success as he continues to forge his way along his unique, important and challenging educational path.



## Melton Centre Staff Tour the Northern Dead Sea Region Tamar Katz

We left rainy, cold, windy Jerusalem, all 10 of us: Jonny, Carmela, Yonatan, Neta, Eti, Fabian, Tamar, Tlalit, Alex the security guard and our fearless, valiant leader, Haim. After a short ride eastward, the sky cleared and we made a stop near Jericho, in order to feel the desert for a few minutes and discuss the meaning of 'the desert' for each of us...

We enjoyed a thought-provoking exercise at Kasr El Yahud – a place on the Jordan River holy to Christians - as the point where Jesus was baptized. It is believed that this is the point where Joshua and the people of Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land as well as the site where Elijah went up in a chariot of fire

into the sky and Elisha took his place as the prophet of God. Another remarkable fact about this place is that the width of the river is only about 3-4 meters and the border between Israel and Jordan crosses the river in the middle - with Israeli and Jordanian soldiers facing each other peacefully (so it seemed).

We had a short stop for breakfast at the Lido, looking at the interesting maps painted on the walls and then continued on to Qumran - the famous archaeological site in the vicinity of the Dead Sea that was constructed during John Hyrcanus' reign in the late 2nd century BC and was destroyed by the Romans in c.68 CE. The site is best known for its proximity to the caves where the

Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947. The settlement is believed to have belonged to a Jewish sect secluded from the rest of the Jewish people of that time.

We ended the day with lunch on the shores of the Dead Sea, and closed with a short discussion about the scrolls and what they convey.

Special thanks to the organizers, **Carmela Hariri** and **Neta Levy**, and our tour educator, **Haim Aronovitz**. It was a most interesting and enriching day – giving us another perspective on our Eretz Yisrael.



## CALL FOR PAPERS: THE MELTON COALITION CONFERENCE

### JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

NEW YORK CITY | FEBRUARY 12-14, 2017

## JEWISH LEARNING AND THE NON-JEW

**Interested scholars in the fields of Jewish Studies (history, textual studies, philosophy, literature, etc.) and Jewish Education (curriculum, pedagogy, philosophy, sociology, etc.) are invited to submit proposals for an academic conference on the topic of “Jewish Learning and the Non-Jew.”**

**The Topic:** Jewish tradition and Jewish learning have never existed in isolation from surrounding thought-currents and cultural tendencies. Historically, it would be indefensible to present Judaism as some kind of “extraterritorial” phenomenon – immune to external influences and uninterested in affecting the outside world. Yet, the Jewish tradition is still taught, in some circles, as if it were largely insular, uninterested in influencing its environment, or in being affected by it.

In fact, Judaism and Jewish learning have been engaged in a two-way mode of interaction with non-Jews and the non-Jewish environment. “Influences” have both been absorbed from without and spread “outwards” from within. Jewish tradition and Jewish learning, while certainly exhibiting “particular” and unique characteristics, have also been concerned with nothing less than effecting a “tikkun” affecting all of humanity.

Examples abound: In the Bible, we find that Moses sees Jethro’s way of “seeing” as essential to Israel’s course through history – just as Jethro realizes that Israel bears a truth with import for all nations. Rabbinic literature tells of Roman women, and philosophers, interested in Jewish ideas, some of whom would question the rabbis about them. The high Middle Ages saw a flowering of Christian Hebraism as the Victorines and other scholars sought out Hebrew sources in order to better understand Scripture. This current grew tremendously with the Reformation as Humanists attempted to learn about primitive apostolic Christianity through its Jewish context. Meanwhile, kabbalists were sought out by Christian savants who wanted to learn its ancient secrets. Early Enlightenment Christian Hebraists also studied Jewish law, liturgy, and ritual for various purposes. And while non-Jews have been interested in Judaism, many modern Jewish thinkers have sought to articulate the universal significance of Judaism for all human beings.

What are we to learn from all this? How have the rabbis responded to the demand for Jewish learning from non-Jews? How have technologies such as the codex, the printing press, broadcast media and digital media affected non-Jews’ connection with Jewish learning? What about the term “Jewish learning” itself? Is there any Jewish learning, which did not itself develop in relationship with non-Jews and their ideas? What sorts of larger educational and specific pedagogical issues does Jewish learning with and about non-Jews raise?

How have non-Jews been portrayed in Jewish sources and how does that affect the way we teach those texts, especially in environments such as universities where Jews and non-Jews may be in the same classes? How do we deal with Jewish materials that present negative views of non-Jews? How do these issues manifest themselves in different ways in the Israeli and North American settings? How does the representation of non-Jews, particularly Arabs, in Israeli education affect the possibility of national and cultural co-existence?

**Details: Please send your proposed title and description (not to exceed one page single-spaced) to the following committee members by August 15, 2016:**

In Israel: Professor Jonathan Cohen (Yonathan.cohen@mail.huji.ac.il)

At JTS: Professor Barry Holtz (baholtz@jtsa.edu)

At OSU: Professor Matt Goldish (goldish.1@osu.edu)

The selected speakers who reside outside the New York area will be flown in for the conference and given hotel accommodations as well as meals.

The Melton Coalition is a partnership between the Melton Centers at Hebrew University, Jewish Theological Seminary and The Ohio State University. All Coalition activities are made possible through the vision and generosity of the late Mr. Samuel M. Melton, z”l and his family.





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