

STROUM CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES

# IMPACT REPORT 2021-2022



**STROUM CENTER  
FOR JEWISH STUDIES**

HENRY M. JACKSON SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

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## STROUM CENTER FOR JEWISH STUDIES, 2021-2022

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**1,769** people attended  
**18** online & in-person events

People from **23** countries  
viewed educational lectures

**62,000**  
times on YouTube



Nearly **103,000** people  
from **203** countries  
learned from educational  
resources on our website



**710** students  
took **28** courses

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear UW and Stroum Center community,

This July marks the beginning of my five-year term as the Director of the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies. While it is a fraught and challenging time in the United States, I feel privileged to be part of the wider university community composed of faculty, staff, students, and you, all working to better our world.

I was born in Kibbutz Beit Hashita in north Israel, a place founded in the 1930s by my grandfather, among other refugees from the Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire. At its peak, my kibbutz was the fourth largest in Israel, famous for its pickle production, its agricultural celebration of Jewish holidays, and its devotion to secular and socialist Zionism. Coming of age between rural and urban settings, as well as Israeli and American cultures, I learned how to shift perspectives in a deep way, which is a skill that I have endeavored to share with students.

The pandemic clarified for many of us what matters most, where we want to invest our energy, and how much our community ties matter for our health and well-being. As director of the Stroum Center, I am committed to honoring these lessons and finding new and fruitful ways for us to come together as a learning community.

While transitioning to online teaching was challenging, our faculty's public lectures on Zoom have reached more people than ever before. Our faculty have taught their hearts out in these past few years, and our students have recognized their efforts, nominating eleven of them as outstanding teachers in the 2021-2022 academic year!

These pandemic years have been trying for our students, both undergraduates and graduates, who strove to continue their education despite unprecedented challenges. Thanks to our community, we have been able to support our students through emergencies, research discoveries, and transitions into new careers.

The education of this generation of students — more multicultural, worldly, and diverse than any generation before it, coming from all over the state of Washington and around the globe, from every socioeconomic background and faith — is what brings all of us together, and their education will always remain at the forefront of what we do at the Stroum Center.

Three new faculty colleagues will join us in the coming year, making a total of thirty faculty members in Jewish Studies. Our Sephardic Studies Program will celebrate its tenth year in 2022-2023 with a wide range of public events, and our Israel Studies Program will continue to support high-quality research and public engagement.

I truly hope to see you at our events this year (both online and in person), and to connect with each of you who support our work, so that we can continue to explore how our mission at the Stroum Center can complement yours.

Thank you so much for your support of our work at the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies.

Sincerely,



Mika Ahuvia

*Director, Stroum Center for Jewish Studies*

*Herbert L. & Lucia S. Pruzan Chair in Jewish Studies*

*Associate Professor, Jackson School of International Studies*





## NEW COMMUNITY LECTURE SERIES

# THE HISTORY OF JEWS IN ARAB LANDS BEFORE 1900

What did it mean to be a Jewish minority in an Arab-Islamic society? How did Judaism shape Islam and vice versa? What is the future of Jewish-Arab relations?

Today, Jews and Arabs sometimes seem to be participants in a timeless conflict. But for centuries, over 90% of the world's Jews lived, worked, and thrived (or sometimes floundered) in communities across the Arab Near East.

In fall 2022, join us for the Jews of Arab Lands speaker series to explore fifteen hundred years of interactions between Jews and Arabs across four talks from scholars that will draw on their original research on this subject.

In the first talk, we will join the Jewish tribes of Arabia in their fraught but significant encounters with the prophetic claimant, Muhammad. Then, we will meet wealthy Jewish bankers petitioning the Muslim caliph at his court in the heart of high medieval Baghdad.

Subsequently, we will encounter everyday Jewish and Muslim laborers struggling for colonial favor in nineteenth-century French Algeria.

Finally, we will get to know some modern-day Near Eastern Jews in Israel as they remember the food, music and relationships that defined their ancestors' world in the shadow of the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Jews from Arab lands.



*Faculty member  
Brendan Goldman will  
facilitate the series*

Learn more and register to attend:  
[jewishstudies.washington.edu/jews-arab-lands](https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/jews-arab-lands)

*- Brendan Goldman, Affiliate faculty, Jackson School  
of International Studies*

## LECTURE TOPICS

- The Jewish Tribes of Arabia and Muhammad
- Jews and the Caliph in High Medieval Baghdad
- Jewish and Muslim Laborers in 19th-Century Algeria
- Modern Near Eastern Jews in Israel

Wednesdays, October 19 - November 9, 2022, on Zoom

Lecture descriptions, times, and registration:

[jewishstudies.washington.edu/  
jews-arab-lands](https://jewishstudies.washington.edu/jews-arab-lands)



# VOCALIST AND COMPOSER ANTHONY MORDECHAI TZVI RUSSELL

Trained as an operatic bass, **Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell** has turned his stunning voice and considerable talents as a composer, historian of music, and writer to the arrangement and performance of Yiddish songs in the past decade.

Russell's work with the traditional music of Ashkenazi Jews led him to the exploration of his own roots, resulting in "Convergence" (2018), a collaboration with the klezmer trio Veretski Pass.

A breathtaking album that explores the sounds of east European Jewish music and the music of Black America as a kind of translation of one musical tradition into and through the other, "Convergence" dwells on African Americans' and Ashkenazi Jews' often twinned histories of oppression, expressions of hope for a better future, and reliance on and dialogic engagement with divine authority.

Since 2018, Russell's work has focused on Yiddish art music; autobiographical explorations in music, essays, and poetry of his experience as a Black Jewish American; and performance in multiple contexts in the U.S. and internationally, including as part of the musical group Tsvey Brider (Two Brothers) with the accordionist Dmitri Gaskin.

Russell recently relocated from Massachusetts to Atlanta, GA, with his husband, a congregational rabbi.

- *Sasha Senderovich, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies and Slavic Languages and Literatures*



Russell will deliver the 2023 Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, including live musical performances, on **May 2 & May 4, 2023.**





## SEPHARDIC STUDIES PROGRAM UPDATE

# NEW AZOSE FUND FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year, the Sephardic Studies Program unveiled the **Hazzan Isaac Azose Fund for Community Engagement in Sephardic Studies**. The fund – the first of its kind at the UW – was created in honor of hazzan emeritus Isaac Azose of Seattle's Congregation Ezra Bessaroth, and will support annual programming and digital projects related to Sephardic arts and culture.

The inaugural event supported by the fund was a spring 2022 scholarly panel discussion of the hit Netflix show "Kulüp," the first major television series to focus on Sephardic Jews in Turkey. The event also included an interview with show writer Rana Denizer.



Joel and Maureen Benoliel with Elisa and Isaac Azose

The fund was made possible in partnership with the Isaac Alhadeff Foundation, Joel and Maureen Benoliel, and other community leaders and local institutions.

## NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

- The Sephardic Studies Program coordinated and funded the digitization of **La Vara**, New York's longest-running Ladino newspaper (1922-1948), now available online via the National Library of Israel's Historical Jewish Press website.
- Artifacts from the **Sephardic Studies Digital Collection** will be featured in forthcoming exhibitions by Australia's Melbourne Holocaust Museum (online) and at the Museum of Jewish Heritage (in person) in New York City.
- Isaac Alhadeff Professor in Sephardic Studies **Devin Naar** received a fellowship from the Yiddish Book Center to translate the first Ladino novella published in the United States.
- 2022 graduate fellow and Sephardic Digital Collection archivist **Lili Brown** accepted a position as Metadata Librarian for Hebraica and Judaica at Stanford University Libraries.
- 2019-2022 Sephardic Studies Assistant Director **Makena Mezistrano** will start a Ph.D. in history at Stanford University in autumn 2022, advised by historian Aron Rodrigue.



# TRACING THE HISTORY OF AN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT COMPANY IN MANDATORY PALESTINE

Most scholarly research on pre-1948 American Zionism focuses on either Hadassah, the women's Zionist auxiliary, or on the Zionist Organization of America. But neither group was the largest American organization operating in British Mandate Palestine in the early 20th century.

Rather, that distinction goes to a lesser-known organization called the Palestine Economic Corporation (PEC), an American for-profit development company that operated six major corporations in Palestine, granted loans to Jewish settlers, and contributed to major regional development projects such as the port of Haifa Bay.

What makes the PEC so interesting isn't just the large size of the organization, but its unusual mission: to utilize economic development to facilitate Jewish settlement in Palestine while remaining strictly "apolitical." To a modern audience, this mission seems to be a clear contradiction — the major goal of the Zionist movement in the 1920s and '30s was Jewish immigration to Palestine. How could an organization claim to be apolitical while contributing millions of dollars to that cause?

At the heart of my study is a group of American Jewish leaders in the 1920s and '30s, including Felix Warburg and Louis Marshall, who wanted to help their persecuted coreligionists leave Europe, but who also believed Zionism risked stoking further antisemitism.

They reasoned that the solution to this conundrum was to take an "apolitical" approach to Palestine: to

help Jews settle there without officially embracing the goals of the Zionist movement. As leaders from the business world, they were accustomed to imagining capitalism and economic development as separate from politics, and argued that as long as they focused on economic support in Palestine, they could remain separate from the Zionist movement.

However, they soon realized that this distinction was not as simple as they had imagined. Was it political to give a loan to an existing Zionist settlement for expansion? Was a policy of supporting exclusively Jewish labor a political act? How would the PEC respond when approached by Arabs who were looking for loans on the same terms as Jewish settlers?

My research aims to explore how the leaders of the PEC wrestled with these difficult questions, and how they came to terms with the difficulty of acting apolitically in the nascent Jewish State.

*- Jake Beckert, Ph.D. student, History*





## 2022 OUTSTANDING STUDENT

# AUDEN FINCH

**Auden Finch**, a third-year comparative history of ideas major, is the 2022 recipient of the **Outstanding Student in Jewish Studies** award. The award was established in 2020 to recognize exceptional students for their engagement with Jewish studies, their academic excellence, and their citizenship in the campus community.

Stroum Center faculty who worked with Auden this year praised his keen insights, his strong motivation to learn independently, and his kindness as a classmate.

Faculty member Sasha Senderovich spoke to Auden's high degree of learning around Jewish and Yiddish literatures, much of which he acquired independently, and his strong motivation to learn Yiddish, which he began to study in 2021-2022 and continued to learn in a summer 2022 intensive at the YIVO Institute.

Next year, Auden will begin work on his honors thesis, which will focus on Moyshe Kulbak's Yiddish-language novel *The Zelmenyaners*, about a Jewish family in Soviet Belorussia.

*Auden Finch (right) with mother Miriam Eve (left) at the Stroum Center's End-of-Year celebration*



## 2022-2023 GRADUATE FELLOWS IN JEWISH STUDIES



### **Jacob Beckert, Leo and Mickey Sreebny Memorial Fellow**

**Project:** "Arab Loans: American Jewish Capital and Racial Anxiety in Mandatory Palestine"



### **Aaron Carpenter, Pamela and Robert Center Fellow**

**Project:** "Returning Loanwords: Using Fremdwörter to Bring Home What is Missing in National Narratives"



### **Ara Daglian, Robinovich Family Fellow**

**Project:** "Armenian Intercommunal Relations in Jerusalem"



### **Elizabeth Férauge, Max Sarason Fellow**

**Project:** "Jewish Ecofeminism"



### **Forrest Martin, Ina and Richard Willner Memorial Fellow**

**Project:** "The Moral Intelligence of Animals in the Hebrew Bible and Early Jewish Literature"



### **Yasir Zaidan, Robinovich Family Fellow**

**Project:** "Contested Waterfronts: Port Developments and Insecurity in the Red Sea"



## 2023 FINISH LINE FELLOW MEAGHAN GUTERMAN

# REDISCOVERING YIDDISH THEATER MUSIC



**Meaghan Guterman** received the 2022-2023 **Finish Line Fellowship**, a \$24,000 grant with benefits that supports a late-stage doctoral candidate in completing their dissertation. This fellowship was made possible through the generosity of a local donor.

In the coming academic year, Guterman will complete her Doctor of Musical Arts dissertation, which examines the song structure, vocal style,

language, themes, and influences found in Yiddish theatrical music, looking at the works of composers including Avraham Goldfaden (1840-1908), Sholom Secunda (1894-1974) and Joseph Rumshinsky (1881-1956) in comparison with other theatrical music of the same period.

Meaghan Guterman is an accomplished vocalist who has performed locally in choral ensembles including the Mägi Ensemble, Chorosynthesis, and the Saint James Cathedral Choir, where she serves as a cantor and section leader. In spring 2022, she studied Yiddish through the YIVO Institute with the support of a Stroum Center opportunity grant.

## NEW SEPHARDIC STUDIES FACULTY MEMBER

**Canan Bolel** is the new Assistant Professor in Jewish Cultures, Literature and Languages of the Eastern Mediterranean in the UW's Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures, and will be the second dedicated faculty member in the Sephardic Studies Program.



Bolel is a two-time past graduate fellow in Jewish Studies at the UW, and completed her Ph.D. in Near and Middle East Studies at the University of Washington in spring 2022. An excerpt from her dissertation, "Constructions of Jewish Modernity and Marginality in Izmir, 1860-1907," won the 2022 national competition for best graduate student essay in Jewish studies sponsored by UC Irvine.

## NEW BOOKS BY STROUM CENTER FACULTY

*Israel* by Alan Dowty,  
Polity Press

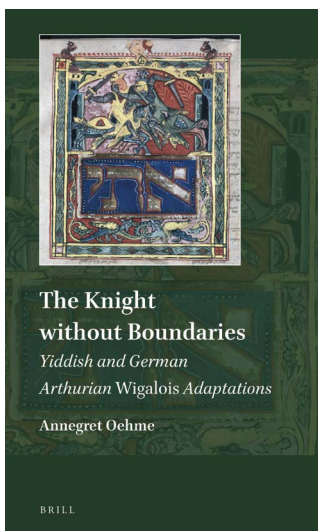
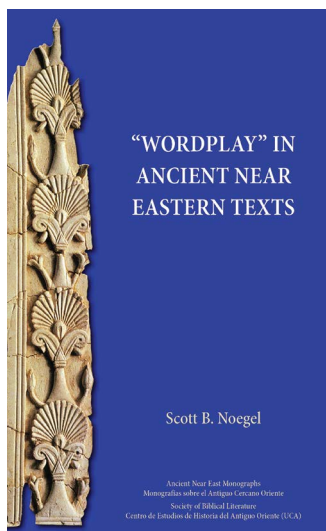
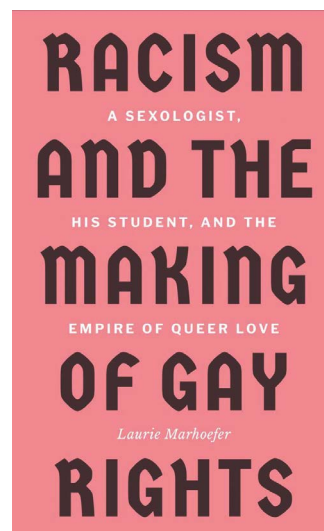
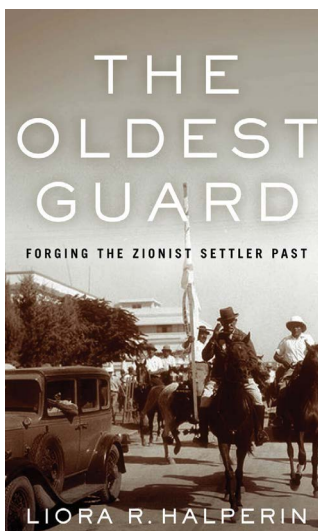
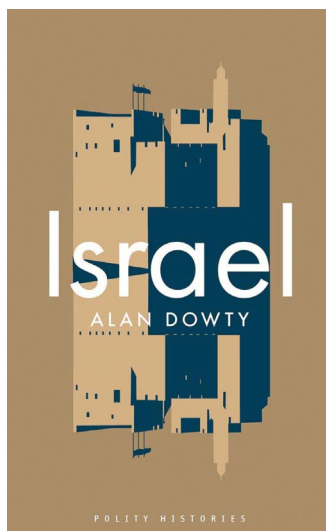
*The Oldest Guard: Forging  
the Zionist Settler Past*  
by Liora R. Halperin,  
Stanford University Press

*Racism and the Making of  
Gay Rights: A Sexologist, His  
Student, and the Empire of  
Queer Love*  
by Laurie Marhoefer,  
University of Toronto Press

*"Wordplay" in Ancient Near  
Eastern Texts*  
by Scott B. Noegel, Society  
of Biblical Literature Press –  
book publicly available online  
through the SBL website

*The Knight Without Boundaries:  
Yiddish and German Arthurian  
Wigalois Adaptations*  
by Annegret Oehme, Brill

*How the Soviet Jew Was Made*  
by Sasha Senderovich,  
Harvard University Press



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