

Featured Faculty



Professor Holly R. Litwin
Lecturer, Hebrew

I am passionate about Jewish education and am grateful to have the privilege of working in this important field for the past twenty-three years. Shortly after graduating from [Brandeis University](#), I began teaching Hebrew and Judaic Studies at Portland Jewish Academy, a pluralistic Jewish community day school in Portland, Oregon. The eighteen years that I spent there enabled me to see firsthand the powerful links between Hebrew language learning and Judaic knowledge as well as the deeply meaningful impact the subjects I taught had on my students long after they graduated. Getting to develop and then implement new Hebrew language, Bible and Judaics curriculum was a fascinating and worthwhile experience that led to my own professional development as both an educator and an administrator.

Together with my husband, Tod Northman, and my sons, Eitan and Aryeh, I relocated from Portland to Shaker Heights in 2011. The move was not for professional reasons but rather for personal ones. My husband and I wanted

our sons to continue their Jewish educations. The warm welcome we received from the Cleveland community was truly phenomenal. From 2011 through 2015, I taught Hebrew, Bible and Judaic Studies at the Gross Schechter Day School. Gross Schechter gave me the opportunity to once again take a leadership role and implement new Hebrew and Judaic programming that greatly enhanced the academics at the school. In 2016, I completed my Masters degree at [Cleveland State University](#) and also began teaching at Beatrice J. Stone Yavne High School.

In January 2017, I became a part of [Case Western Reserve University's Department of Modern Languages and Literatures](#). I am the lecturer who teaches all of the Hebrew language courses offered to undergraduates. The enthusiasm and dedication to learning Hebrew shown by my students is impressive. My goal is to make the Hebrew language and the culture that it represents come to life in an exciting and intellectually challenging fashion. From total beginner through advanced level courses, Hebrew is being taught to undergraduates at [CWRU](#). Whether you want to learn beginning Hebrew or want to take enough Hebrew courses to earn a minor in Hebrew, I am excited to partner with you in making that goal a reality. It is an honor for me to ensure that all undergraduates who want to study Hebrew have the opportunity to do so.

INSIDE

Featured Faculty	1
Student Awards	2
• Debra Winberg	
• Jonathan Meckler	
• Estee Cramer	
• Talia Adler	
• Danny Reifman	
Student Essay	3-4
• Sarah Means	
On/Off Campus	5
• Peter Haas	
Post-It	5
• Milton Strauss	
Courses of Interest	6
Sampling of Paper Titles	7
• Sophia Cos	
• Gloria Neilson	
• Luis Correa	
• Cameron Childers	
• Grace Cross	
• Naveen Karthik	
• Hira Qureshi	
JDST Information	8

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Student Awards and Honors

The Ira and Ruth Bressler Prize

To a student who has done outstanding work in the area of Jewish Studies.

Hometown: Darnestown, MD

Academic Interests: English, pharmacology, and medicine

Extra-curricular activities: I am a very active member of my sorority, Alpha Chi Omega. In the rest of my free time I teach Hebrew School and write novels.



Debra Winberg



Jonathan Meckler

Hometown: Pepper Pike, OH

Academic Interests: Economics and Judaic Studies

Extra-curricular activities: Member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Hillel Jewish Student Group, and CWRU College Trivia Club.

The Eudese and Elmer Paull Prizes

To one or several undergraduate or graduate students who demonstrate an interest in Jewish Studies or Jewish contemporary life.

Hometown: Skokie, IL

Academic activities: Biology major with math and chemistry minors.

Extra-Curricular activities: I am the Vice President of Programming for Hillel Undergraduate Leadership Council, and the Survivorship and Luminaria Chair for Colleges Against Cancer. I also participated in Sinai Scholars Society and volunteer at Hope Lodge. In my free time I love trying new restaurants around Cleveland, and attending Shabbat dinners at Hillel and Chabad!



Estee Cramer

Hometown: West Hartford, CT

Academic Interests: I am a junior BSN candidate at the Francis Payne Bolton School of Nursing. I hope to work in the Emergency Department when I graduate!

Extra-curricular activities: I am the outgoing President of CWRU's Hillel Undergraduate Leadership Committee. I am also the secretary for Israel's CWRU, our pro-Israel group on campus. I work as a campus tour guide and peer tutor. I also teach Hebrew school at a local synagogue on the weekends. In my free time I love meeting new people, cooking, and traveling!



Talia Adler



Danny Reifman

Hometown: Frederick, MD

Academic interests: Mechanical Engineering

Extra-curricular activities: I am the president of Israel's CWRU, which is a pro-Israel club on campus. We plan events and invite speakers to inform our campus about issues in the Middle East. I am also an active member of my fraternity, Beta Theta Pi, and have held numerous positions from VP of Risk management to member of the judicial board. In addition, this semester I am on co-op at Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems.

The Leviathan, The Behemoth and The Ziz: Sources of Entertainment and Insight

Recognition for Outstanding Achievement

Sarah Means



Sarah Means

In rabbinic literature, the Leviathan, the Behemoth and the Ziz were gigantic beasts representing God's control over sea, earth and air. Each beast was said to roar once a year with such ferocity, predators of each species curbed their appetites for the next twelve months. Clearly, without this intervention, the small would be consumed, the large would starve, and the world would come to a premature end. The Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz have another role to play with the arrival of the Messiah, when the world will come to a timely end, the dead will be resurrected, and the three beasts will be served as dainties at a banquet in the afterlife; the heavenly World to Come. Tales of the Leviathan and his comrades can still entertain us, but as with all traditional literature, they also give us insight into the spirit and mentality of the people who hold them in tradition.

In Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews* (2003: 32-33), the Leviathan is the Ruler of the Fish, a giant sea monster. His hot breath can make the sea boil, and his scales are so strong they can easily bend steel. He is beautiful, and so radiant that "the sun itself is obscured, and his eyes shed such splendor that at times the sea is suddenly illuminated." The Ruler of the Beasts is the Behemoth, greatest of mammals "so monstrous, he requires the produce of 1000 mountains for his daily food . . . to quench his thirst, the Behemoth can only drink from a stream that flows from Paradise just for him." The Ziz is the ruler of the birds. He was named for the flavor of his flesh, which is said to taste a little like "this" and a little like "that" ("zeh-va-zeh" in Hebrew). Once, when a Ziz egg fell from the sky, "it crushed 300 cedars and the fluid flooded sixty cities. Fortunately," we are told, "this does not happen very often."

The three beasts have a similarly rich history in traditional art, most notably in a thirteenth century illuminated manuscript, where we see them at the banquet in the World to Come. The illumination, called *The Feast of the Righteous in Paradise* (Germany 1236-1238), is held at the Ambrosian Library in Milan, Italy. It shows the beasts on the menu in the space above the table, while the Righteous dine below, flanked by two musicians in anticipation of feasting and dancing with God. Accord-

ing to art critic Bezalel Narkiss (1969:90), the animal heads placed on the guests do not reflect Jewish avoidance of realism, in order to satisfy the Second Commandment, as is often assumed. Rather, they reflect what was first a Muslim solution to the same problem. German influence appears in use of bold outlines and colors, while Greek influence appears in use of an ouroboros for the Leviathan, and a griffin for the Ziz. In this way, we're reminded that for much of their history, Jews lived as a minority among non-Jews in many countries, and their artistic expression often



Feast of the Righteous in Paradise
Ambrosian Bible, Germany (Ulm?) 1236-1238

reflects these many influences (Gutmann 1967: 168).

But use of different species, costumes and headgear to depict the Righteous is a uniquely Jewish vision of a uniquely Jewish literary tradition. For example, at the banquet table we see diners of many different physical aspects, colors and cultural attire, as well as a woman (in a wimple, or female headdress, third from left). This inclusive vision of righteousness was remarkable for its time and remains so today. As Leila L. Bronner writes "Women get in on good deeds, as do gentiles; the righteous of the

gentiles, we are told, have a share in the World to Come” (2011: 93 [Tosefta Sanhedrin 13]).

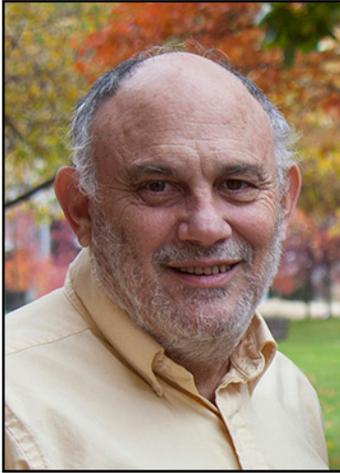
Folklorist Judith Neulander notes that tales of the Leviathan, the Behemoth and the Ziz reflect the spirit and mentality of a people that “aspired to eternal life among the righteous of all nations in a paradisiacal World to Come; an ethically principled community that valued peace and justice, and saw protection of the weak as the natural ecology of the world” (2017: n/p). Ultimately, a peaceful afterlife, feasting on the Leviathan, the Behemoth and the Ziz, rejoicing with God and one’s neighbors—no matter their faith, gender or ethnicity—shows us the community’s reverence for the greatness of God, His devotion to His people, and to the Righteous of the world. Today, the ability of these tales to entertain still persists, and with it, the insight they give into the many generations that have carried them in tradition.

References Cited

- Bronner, Leila. 2011. *Journey to Heaven: Exploring Jewish Views of the Afterlife*. Jerusalem: Urim Publications.
- Ginzberg, Louis [1909] 2003. *Legends of the Jews, Vol. 1*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Gutmann, Joseph. 1967. *When the Kingdom Comes: Messianic Themes in Medieval Jewish Art*. New York: College Art Association of America.
- Narkiss, Bezalel. 1969. *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House.
- Neulander, Judith. *A Hebrew Mythical Bestiary*. Unpublished manuscript (class handout, CWRU, spring semester 2017).



On/Off Campus



Peter Haas

CWRU Humanities Festival Event

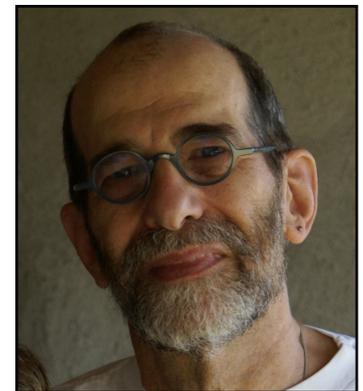
“Making Cleveland Home: Immigration Stories”

In March 2017, Peter Haas, Abba Hillel Silver Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies and past Director of the *JDST Program*, facilitated a panel at *The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage*. A discussion by Iraqi immigrants centered on the theme of escape, relocation and making a new home. The audience was then included in their own reflections of the story’s resonance with their own perceptions of home.

Post It!

--I just read the Featured Faculty piece in the Dec. 2016 *eJournal*, a publication I always enjoy. Wonderful approach to bogus use of bio markers to claim crypto-Jewish descent in New Mexico! I’d appreciate a reference to fuller information.

Milton E. Strauss
Professor Emeritus, Dept. of Psychology, CWRU
New Mexico



Mitlon E. Strauss

Editor’s note:
For more information on this topic (available at KSL):

“Conjuring Crypto-Jews” in *Boundaries, Identity and Belonging in Modern Judaism*, eds. Diemling and Ray. Routledge (2016).

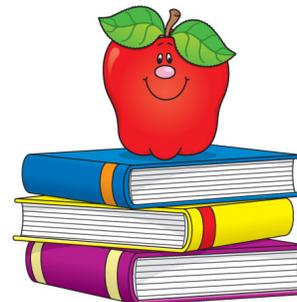
“Inventing Jewish History, Culture and Genetic Identity in Modern New Mexico” in *Who is a Jew?*, ed. L.J. Greenspoon. Purdue University Press (2014).

LET’S HEAR FROM YOU!

postit@case.edu



Courses of Interest for Fall 2017



JDST 228

The Jewish Image in Popular Film

Judith Neulander

This course will explore film as social practice, from the flickering silent era through Hollywood's Golden Age, to the technological dazzle of the present day. Standing at the confluence of society, history, ideology and culture, students will come to understand how popular film is shaped by, and how it actively shapes, the constant reconstruction of Jewish identity in the American mainstream.

HBRW 101

Elementary Modern Hebrew I

Holly Litwin

Hebrew comes alive in this class through literature, music and popular culture. This beginning course will give you the ability to read, write and converse in Modern Hebrew. No previous knowledge of Hebrew is required.

HSTY 107

Introduction to the Ancient Near East

Maddalena Rumor

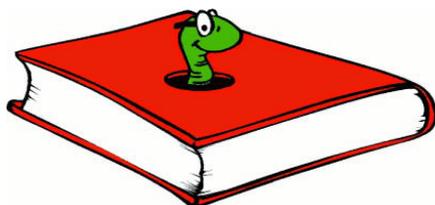
Have you ever wondered what the names of our alphabet letters really mean? What conditions gave rise to the beginning of scientific thinking? How and why the Egyptians mummified their bodies? Who were all those peoples mentioned in the Bible: Assyrians, Chaldeans, Hittites, Israelites, and how they interacted with each other? This course will introduce you to the history and culture of the Ancient Near East, a land that, spanning from modern Iraq to the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and from Hittite Anatolia to Egypt, was home to the earliest known civilizations in written history.

HBRW 102

Elementary Modern Hebrew II

Holly Litwin

Hebrew is both the ancient language of the Bible and the modern language of Israel. We will explore the connection between the revival of Hebrew as a modern language and Israeli society. This advanced beginning course will give you an in depth understanding of the Hebrew language, so that you can communicate effectively in both speech and writing. Prerequisites: HBRW 101 or prior knowledge of basic Hebrew.



For courses in Hebrew and Arabic visit the Modern Languages and Literatures website:
<http://www.case.edu/artsci/dmll/>

Sampling of Final Paper Titles

A sampling of titles for final research papers in
The Mythical Trickster-RLGN 312
reflects the diversity of interests in a typical RLGN/JDST classroom

Borat:

A 21st Century Trickster through a Jewish Lens

Sophia Cos

Gnostic Trickster:

A Study of Jesus Christ and St. Peter

Gloria Neilson

Social Restrictions Placed on the Female Trickster

Luis Correa

Queering the Trickster:

Analysis of the Trickster's Subversion and Liminality in a Queer Theoretical Framework

Cameron Childers

Jazz:

A Trickster's Music

Grace Cross

Hermes:

An Archetype of Trickster-Traits across Cultures

Naveen Karthik

Neither This Nor That:

Defining the Liminal Trickster

Hira Qureshi

The Program in Judaic Studies

By bringing a variety of fields and disciplines to bear on its subject, the Judaic Studies Program at Case Western Reserve University conveys to students the complex interaction of forces that create Jewish ethnic identity. Students completing the program will have a broad knowledge of the field along with the tools necessary for continued academic study of Jewish civilization in all its manifestations.



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giving.case.edu



In April 2017, Prof. Daniel Matt spoke on *God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony between Science and Spirituality*, sponsored by the Baker Nord Center and the Judaic Studies Program.

