



# Beyond the Elite

## Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe

Newsletter #7, Autumn 2021

We are honored to send you our seventh *Beyond the Elite* newsletter. This was a busy term for all our team members, particularly due to the opening of our new exhibition, “In and Out, Between and Beyond,” which will run in Jerusalem until Fall 2022. For those who can’t visit in person, the exhibition can also be explored online [here](#). In addition, we are happy to share the news that the European Research Council has generously extended our grant until October 2022!

### Spotlight On:



**Albert Kohn,**  
Research Associate

For two years now I have been a research associate with the *Beyond the Elite* team.

The focus of my work to date was on the ways medieval Jews and Christians infused their homes with religious rituals expressed through song and prayer. This led me to my current interest in the home as a nexus of social interaction, particularly between Jews and Christians. Homes in medieval cities were multi-purpose spaces: in addition to being the locus of family life, it was also where the majority of medieval people practiced their trade, conducted business, and entertained guests. Using both rabbinic and administrative sources, I trace the different ways that Jews and

### Grants & Awards

#### Congratulations to our Beyond the Elite team members!

- ✿ **Hannah Teddy Schachter** was awarded a President’s Scholarship for Outstanding Doctoral Students in the Faculty of Humanities (2021-2024) (HUJI), and a fellowship for 2021-2022 from The Israel Ministry of Absorption; the Robert Solomon Wistrich Prize given by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism (HUJI) and the Solomon and Penny Balaban-Glass Doctoral Prize for Excellence as well as an additional Excellence Scholarship by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies (HUJI)
- ✿ **Amit Shafran** was granted a scholarship for her M.A. studies by the Solomon and Penny Balaban-Glass Foundation by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies (HUJI)

- ✿ **Nureet Dermer** received the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture doctoral scholarship (for the academic year 2021-2022); the Solomon and Penny Balaban-Glass Doctoral Prize for Excellence from the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies (HUJI) (for the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022); and the 2021 Mendoza Prize for Excellent Doctoral Students awarded by the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry (HUJI)
- ✿ **Eyal Levinson** was awarded the Solomon and Penny Balaban-Glass Award in Jewish Studies for outstanding post-doctoral researchers by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute for Jewish Studies (HUJI)
- ✿ **Albert Kohn** was awarded the 2020-2021 Solomon and Penny Balaban-Glass Doctoral Prize for Excellence by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute for Jewish Studies (HUJI) and received a five-year fellowship to Princeton University’s History Department

Christians interacted in one another’s homes. In my doctoral project, I plan to investigate how the home was an important locus for cross-cultural interactions and how it differed from the public sphere.

While I will be continuing my work as a doctoral student in the History Department at Princeton University, my time with the ERC group has shaped me as an historian. The variety of research methodologies embraced by

group members inspired me to expand my thinking. Working with a diverse group of international scholars at different stages of their careers, especially during this challenging last year, has provided models worthy of emulation regarding the dedication and creativity required of good historians.

### Spring 2021 Guests



**Dr. Tzafrir Barzilay, Ben Gurion University**

After being a part of the group from 2016 to 2019, it was a pleasure to rejoin the *Beyond the Elite* team on a short-term research fellowship in 2021.

Presenting the team with some of the initial findings of my new project, “The Flow of Ritual: Water Rites of the Laity in High-Medieval Europe,” which investigates lay beliefs and practices pertaining to water in Jewish and Christian life from 1050 to 1400 in western Europe, I received valuable feedback and advice, which will surely enhance my future work on the project. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to meet with group members, both old and new, for valuable discussions on issues of methodology, historiography, and writing.



**Dr. Rachel Furst, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich**

In April 2021, I had the good fortune to join the *Beyond the Elite* research group for a month-long virtual fellowship. As I sat in front of my computer in Munich, the geographical distance between myself and the fellows gathered in Jerusalem or logging in from their homes in Tel Aviv was made starker by the differences in weather and pandemic regulations between our locations. And yet, the welcome extended to me by all members of the team was palpable and much appreciated after more than a year of working largely alone. Participating in the group’s bi-weekly meetings gave me a sense of belonging, and I especially appreciated the opportunity to meet with most of the fellows one on one.

During my month with the group, I pursued a small side project: the preparation and interpretation of an unusual, unpublished pair of Hebrew archival documents pertaining to the marriage of an otherwise unknown Jewish couple from 14<sup>th</sup> century Speyer. The range of feedback I received was striking and demonstrated to me the depth and breadth of the team as a whole. I look forward to many more opportunities for fruitful exchange with each and every one.

### Meeting In Person At Last!

In March 2021, after COVID restrictions eased, we met in person for the first time since the fall. We visited the *Custodia Terrae Sanctae* monastery in the Christian quarter and had the honor and pleasure of being



**Sophia Schmitt, Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich**

I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to join the *Beyond the Elite* research group for a month this past May! It was wonderful to (re-) connect with so many innovative researchers of medieval Jewish history, especially after more than a year without conferences and travels. Although not able to join in person, the new online and hybrid formats nonetheless enabled me to participate in the intriguing lectures and discussions with international experts such as **Prof. Daniel Jütte** and **Dr. Birgit Wiedl**. In addition, it was exciting to hear about the academic progress of some of the group members whom I had met previously and to learn about their evolving projects in the more informal settings of the internal group meetings and individual exchanges. I presented my research about how medieval Jews dealt with blood libel accusations. The valuable feedback I received allowed fruitful reflections on the advantages and challenges of different approaches to the topic.



### Publications

#### **Sefer Hasidim: Book, Context, and Afterlife. Studies in Honor of Prof. Ivan G. Marcus**

Spearheaded by **Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten** in collaboration with **Prof. Elisabeth Hollender**, Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, and **Prof. Ephraim Shoham-Steiner**, Ben Gurion University, the volume was published in the journal *Jewish History*, vol. 34 (no. 1-3), 2021. Resulting from the *Beyond the Elite* conference on *Sefer Hasidim* that took place in March 2017, it includes both re-workings of a number of the papers given at the conference as well as new pieces. It is dedicated to **Prof. Ivan G. Marcus**, Yale University, who has been a mentor to many scholars, including the editors of the volume, and a leading figure in the study of medieval Ashkenaz over the past decades.

hosted by **Frater Stephanos** who led us through a detailed tour of their impressive collection. A special highlight was the bell from the 12<sup>th</sup> century inscribed with a curse on anyone who stole it.

# Workshops, Conferences and Events

## January, 2021

On January 25<sup>th</sup> 2021, we hosted a virtual workshop, for graduate students from all of Israel's universities with **Prof. Julia Smith**, Chichele Professor of Medieval History at Oxford University's All Souls College. Prof. Smith discussed different methodologies for using written and material sources in parallel. Her workshop looked at relic collections in the early medieval Latin West, focusing specifically on 'relics of place' – materials referencing Christian sacred sites in the Holy Land. The workshop participants read a 9<sup>th</sup> century relic list from the abbey of Saint-Denis and relic labels from the nunnery of Chelles, along with excerpts from pilgrim accounts including that of Theodosius, the Piacenza Pilgrim. Prof. Smith then led a discussion concerning the representation of places via objects in the Middle Ages, and ways this impacts our understanding of the very concept of materials and locations.

## March, 2021

In mid-March, the group hosted **Prof. Anne E. Lester** of Johns Hopkins University. Prof. Lester's seminar focused on her latest research project which relates to crusading as a religious movement. The research team read an article in preparation by Lester that analyzes various vernacular sources that discuss practices and ideologies relating to the Crusades. Prof. Lester underlined that these sources reveal the wide range of agents and motivations among not only the Crusaders themselves but also the patrons who funded the journey, many of whom were women. We then discussed how these vernacular sources provide access to people other than the Christian leadership.

## April, 2021

In early April, we hosted **Prof. Martha Howell**, Columbia University. Prof. Howell responded to presentations by two team members: **Aviya Doron** who presented her paper "Home and Away – Debt Litigation and Social Ties in 14<sup>th</sup> Century Frankfurt am Main" and **Albert Kohn** who spoke about his work "Home, For a Time: Short-Term Home Rentals in 13<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew Sources." Prof. Howell's detailed comments and suggestions led to a fruitful discussion of methods for pursuing medieval social and economic history and to an in-depth conversation, both during and after her talk, about the ways scholars who study Christians integrate material about Jews in their work.

## April, 2021

At the end of April, we hosted **Prof. Daniel Jütte** of New York University for a public seminar. Although Prof. Jütte's research generally focuses on early-modern cultural and urban history, this particular seminar revolved around his work on inter-religious relations. He presented earlier work on various kinds of Jewish-Christian interaction in the early-modern world, focusing on the existence of friendship as well as conflict between Jews and Christians. His presentation of the material and its historiographical context sparked a discussion, both inside and outside of the seminar, about how we as scholars conceptualize the relationships between Jews and Christians.

## May, 2021

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, we hosted our final guest of the 2020-2021 academic year, **Dr. Birgit Wiedl** from the Institute for Jewish History in

Austria. We were excited to host two separate sessions with Dr. Wiedl. During the first session we learned about her work on the four volumes of the *Regesten zur Geschichte der Juden in Österreich im Mittelalter*, and the other rich and diverse source material that has been at the heart of her research. The second session was a public lecture entitled "Witnessed by Honourable People, Christians and Jews: Charters as a Source for Daily Jewish-Christian Interactions." The fascinating lecture and the discussions during both sessions provided fresh outlooks on Jewish-Christian daily encounters and the intersection of law, space, and economics.

## June, 2021

Various members of the *Beyond the Elite* team were invited to present papers at the IJS international conference "Medieval Jewish Controversies" organized by **Prof. Sacha Stern**, University College London. The first session, "Resolving Conflicts: Courts, Crowns and Other Institutions," was opened by **Prof. Marina Rustow**, Princeton University, who spoke about "How to Handle Conflict as an Islamicate Jew," after which two team members presented. **Miri Fenton's** paper "Controversy, Conflict and Resolution: Royal Involvement in Jewish Disputes in the Medieval Crown of Aragon" explored how Jews navigated the system of royal petitioning to solve intracommunal disagreements, and **Hannah Teddy Schachter's** paper, entitled "Beseeching the Queen: Contextualizing Queenly Intervention at the 'Talmud Trial' of Paris, 1240," explored the landmark medieval Jewish-Christian controversy for insights into how Jews engaged with their monarchies and courtly

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culture in 13<sup>th</sup> century France, concluded the session.

Four team members gave talks on the third day of the conference, in a session titled: “Private Conflicts in Medieval Ashkenaz,” **Aviya Doron** opened the session by exploring Jewish-Christian conflicts concerning debt litigation in Frankfurt am Main throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Highlighting expectations shared by contemporaries regarding risk and trust in the credit market, Aviya analyzed the endurance and fragility of these trends in the wake of the Black Death. **Albert Kohn**, focused on urban homes in Germany and northern France during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, using responsa regarding disagreements that ar-

ose between Jews sharing homes in various situations. **Nureet Dermer** closed the first part of the session by discussing the controversy over Jewish presence in 14<sup>th</sup> century Paris. Analyzing changes in the urban topography and Jewish settlement within the city throughout this century of repeated expulsions, Nureet showed how spatial changes reflected political and social shifts. Fruitful discussions followed all three presentations.

Following these talks by group members, **Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten** presented “Controversies and Scholarly Conventions.” Making use of the various examples, methodologies, and historical sources employed and examined by herself and other

group members, she demonstrated the value and richness that the perspective of daily life contributed to the study of the Jews of medieval Ashkenaz within their Christian surroundings. The session was followed by a response by **Prof. Eve Krakowski**, Princeton University, who highlighted the innovations and different methodologies used in the collected works of the *Beyond the Elite* research group members. She further linked the developments in medieval Jewish history in the European context to developments in the field of Jews in Islamic societies, especially the Geniza society.

## Exhibition: In and Out, Between and Beyond

This exhibition, on display at the Iris and Max Stern Gallery at Mount Scopus, is the result of two years of work on the part of our team, in collaboration with seven Israeli artists. **Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten** invited **Dr. Ido Noy**, a member of our research team who specializes in medieval Jewish material culture, as well as a curator, to collaborate directing this project. Team members wrote short articles focusing on medieval sources, reflecting a variety of genres and languages, that presented a picture of Jewish daily life in the Middle Ages. After creating a catalogue, designed by Shani and Guy Eldar, Zugraphi Design Studio, we met with seven Israeli artists who then created art based on these joint sessions. The results can be seen in the gallery and in the virtual exhibit. The gallery is organized around the spatial concepts of “in and out,” “between,” and “beyond” to convey the complexity and entanglement of Jewish life within the urban centers of medieval Christian Europe.

We opened the exhibition on June 2<sup>nd</sup> in the presence of over 100 colleagues, artists, and family members. We are very grateful to **Prof. Asher Cohen**, the pres-

ident of HUJI, **Prof. Michael Segal**, Dean of the Humanities Faculty and **Prof. Yitzhak Hen**, Director of the Israel Institute for Advanced Studies, for their participation in the evening.



**We wish everyone a happy and healthy new year!**

**For more information and to learn about upcoming events visit our website: [beyond-the-elite.huji.ac.il](http://beyond-the-elite.huji.ac.il)**

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