

Beyond the Elite

Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe

Newsletter #10, Autumn, 2022

Dear Friends,

As our European Research Council-funded project *Beyond the Elite* (Nov. 2016 - Oct. 2022) has come to a close, it is with great pleasure that we are sending you our final project newsletter. Over the years of our activities, six students finished their MA's; three students completed their PhD's and three dissertations are currently underway; of the five postdocs who have participated in the project, two now have tenure-track jobs in Israel, two have gone on to other post-docs, and one started a job at an Israeli cultural institution. We have published four monographs, with more being written, and eight collections of essays and sources. Our final book of essays is currently being prepared for publication. We hosted over a dozen inter-

national conferences and many research seminars. Details of our research activities and of some of our future plans can be found in the pages that follow.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to you, our colleagues, for your support and partnership over the past six years.

The Beyond the Elite Team



Grants & Awards

Congratulations to our *Beyond the Elite* team members!

- ❖ **Dr. Tzafrir Barzilay** was appointed senior lecturer in the Department of History at Bar Ilan University.
- ❖ **Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten** was appointed academic head of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Elisheva was also awarded the newly inaugurated Israel Science Foundation Breakthrough Research Grant for her upcoming project *Contending with Crises: The Jews in Fourteenth Century Europe*. A video about this project can be found [here](#) at minute 2:11.
- ❖ **Dr. Neta Bodner** (Open University) was awarded an Israel Science Foundation personal grant for her project *Digging Deep: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Medieval Mikveh (Jewish Ritual Bath) in Cologne*.
- ❖ **Nureet Dermer** was awarded the Wald Doctoral Fellowship by the Zalman Shazar Center and Israel Historical Society, which was given by Israeli President Isaac Herzog. See a short video of the prize ceremony [here](#).
- ❖ **Miri Fenton** submitted her dissertation.
- ❖ **Hannah Teddy Schachter** was granted a Vattat-Rotenstreich Doctoral Fellowship by Israel's Council of Higher Education.

Spotlight On:



Audrey Fingherman
Project Coordinator

Six years ago, a group of people gathered together in these offices for the first time: several students, excited and a bit nervous, who were mostly strangers to each other, a brilliant, respected, humble, and beloved professor, and I, a mother of three eager to get back to work after ten years at home with her children. What started as a day job quickly became, for me, something else entirely. The weekly meetings, multiple seminars, various conferences and trips organized by the group have been exceptional opportunities to meet new people from around the world, and not only learn about their work, but also be inspired by their passion for the fields in which they excel and their often unique and fascinating personalities.

It has been a privilege to watch how, over the past six years, all of the students, whether at the start of or more advanced in their careers, have blossomed, evolved, and become respected and valued researchers in their own fields. As group coordinator I have developed a special bond with each of them and gained a deep admiration and appreciation for who they are today.



Elisheva Baumgarten
Principal Investigator

The past six years leading the *Beyond the Elite* research team have been an extraordinary experience like none I could have imagined when we began. Submitting a re-

search proposal, even one that required tremendous planning, and translating it into practice are not the same. Two fortunate circumstances allowed the project to get off to a good start. The first was finding and persuading Audrey Fingherman to come on board as our project coordinator. The second was the complex in the Rabin building I was given by the Faculty of Humanities at HUJI. Once the group came together, comprised of students I was already working with, postdocs who applied to the CFA, and others who found us themselves, our first task was figuring out how to facilitate learning from each other while also setting aside substantial time for personal research.

Our pattern of working together on Mondays and Wednesdays became a constant, even after the Covid-19 pandemic set in and we switched to working remotely. Our ranks included five postdocs, seven Ph.D. students, six M.A. students, and two research associates, as well as close to a dozen visiting PhD and postdocs from Israel, Europe, and North America.

Many of our projects were the results of conversations – between individuals, in group sessions, and in meetings with the many guests who visited us. Together we hosted conferences, workshops, seminars, traveled in Israel and to Germany (Spring, 2018) and France (Spring, 2022), planned publications, peer reviewed each other's writing and practiced our presentations for conferences.

We also created a [website](#) that provides teaching materials for Israeli middle school teachers (a project we hope can be further developed in the future), and created an exhibition, *In and Out, Between and Beyond* that recently closed in Jerusalem and is now on display in Erfurt (see below).

As members of the team have progressed with their work, moving from M.A. student to Ph.D. candidate, from Ph.D. to postdoc and from postdoc to faculty, new projects have begun. Dr. Neta Bodner's personal ISF grant is a collaboration with Dr. Tzafir Barzilay and our colleagues from the MIQUA museum in Cologne with whom we worked closely over the past few years. Together, Andreas Lehnertz, Eyal Levinson and Hannah Teddy Schachter founded the [Medieval Jewish Studies blog](#), that now has thousands of hits and was recently listed as one of the ten best blogs on Jewish history. I believe this is just the beginning of many projects that will come into being, both personal and collective, in the years ahead.

As I have said, repeatedly and often, over the past six years, working with the *Beyond the Elite* team has been the joy of my academic career to date. It was a privilege to help foster an academic setting in which I met my students on a weekly basis, was able to discuss their and my research regularly. The sum of our collective wisdom is far greater than the ability of any one of us alone. Thank you to all the members of my team. You have been a source of inspiration and learning. The words from Tractate Ta'anit (7a):

*הרבה למדתי מרבתי ומחבירי יותר מרבתי ומתלמידי יותר מכולן

truly apply to you.

*(I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned more than from all of them).

Events

Seminar with Sara McDougall

At the end of June, we hosted Sara McDougall (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NY), who gave a seminar on her ongoing research projects, focusing especially on her current work on Jehanne, a woman from 15th century Lorraine who was the concubine of a local clerk. McDougall met individually with each group member and we all learned a lot from her and look forward to remaining in touch.

World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 2022

At the 18th World Congress of Jewish Studies, held in Jerusalem in August of this year, our research group hosted and organized two days of sessions, consisting of five panels, on everyday life in medieval Ashkenaz

The first panel featured the work of Suzanne Weigand, Erez Rochman, and Eyal Levinson. They discussed a range public and private ritual and liturgical practices, ranging from piyyutim, to table manners, to Jews and Christians in the Regensburg court books. The second showcased the work of Hannah Teddy Schachter, Tzafir Barzilay, Nureet Dermer, and

Miri Fenton, focusing on urban spaces in France and Germany, and the rituals practiced therein. Amélie Sagasser, Sophia Schmitt, Rachel Furst, and Aviya Doron presented their work in the third

importance of the methodological strides made over six years of the project. Elisheva responded to David Shyovitz's comments, leading to a fruitful discussion about the group's conclusions and di-



panel on Jews and legal cultures, and the fourth panel addressed material culture, and featured lectures by Hila Manor, Ido Noy, and Maximilian Holfelder. The final panel included lectures by Malin Drees and Andreas Lehnertz on literacy and craftspeople and concluded with Elisheva Baumgarten's reflections on the

reactions for future research. Throughout the five-day conference, members of the group led tours of our exhibit in English and Hebrew. It was a pleasure to see so many colleagues after the years of pandemic did not allow us to meet. We look forward to the next opportunity, whenever it may be.

Wrapping Up *Beyond the Elite*

Filming

Shahar Naim and his team spent two days with the group, filming interviews with members, our offices, and putting together a retrospective of the project and our collective accomplishments. The film can be accessed via our [website](#) and we hope it conveys both our research and our experience working on a collaborative project.



Our Final Volume

Over the course of the last months, past and present *Beyond the Elite* team members have been working on their essays for our final volume.

In September, we workshopped our essays with three wonderful scholars, Gadi Algazi (Tel Aviv University), Elisheva Carlebach (Columbia University), and Miri Rubin (Queen Mary), all of whom have been good friends of our project throughout our work. Their comments and criticism sent all of us back to revise our pieces and helped us figure out the volume's introduction. We hope to finish our collective manuscript this coming winter and thank Gadi, Elisheva, and Miri for reading our work thoroughly and for their sage advice.

Celebratory Evening

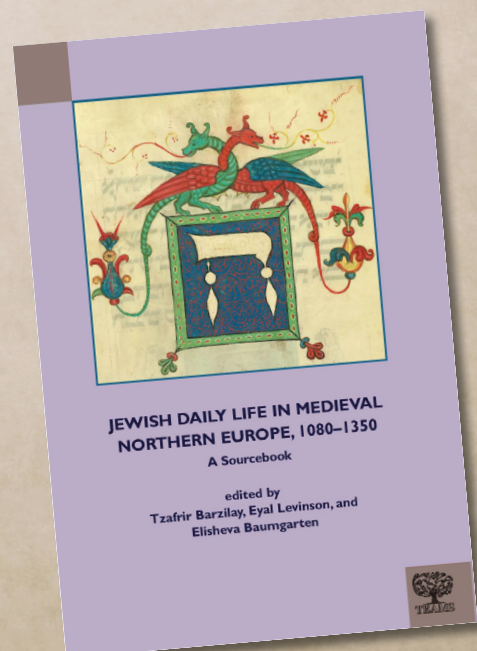
On Sep. 21, we gathered at Derech HaGefen in Beit Zayit for a fun evening. We divided into three groups and played a complex game that reviewed the project and contained a lot of medieval trivia, discovering that maybe we know less about the Middle Ages than we thought! After dinner, we enjoyed a few short comments by a number of team members and photo albums, pictures, and gifts were distributed. It was a beautiful evening joined by all team members who were present. All team members, world wide, were part of the planning and felt present, even if they could not be there in person.



Publications

We are proud to have published many books, volumes and articles during the years we worked together. A complete list can be found on our [website](#). We include here a list of the collected volumes:

- ❖ “Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe,” ed. Elisheva Baumgarten and Doron Avraham, Special Issue of *Chidushim* (Leo Baeck Institute Journal), Vol. 21 (2019) [Hebrew].
- ❖ “Sefer Hasidim: Book, Context and Afterlife: Studies in Honor of Ivan G. Marcus,” ed. Elisheva Baumgarten, Elisabeth Hollender, and Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, *Jewish History* 34 (1-3) (2021).
- ❖ “Jewish Space and Place in Medieval Ashkenaz,” ed. Elisheva Baumgarten, *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 28 3-4, (2021).
- ❖ “Money Matters: Individuals, Communities and Everyday Interactions between Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe,” ed. Elisheva Baumgarten, *Medieval Encounters* 27, 4-5 (2021).
- ❖ Elisheva Baumgarten and Ido Noy (eds.), *In and Out, Between and Beyond: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe: A Catalogue* (Jerusalem, 2021), repr. New edition for Erfurt exhibit, 2022.
- ❖ Katrin Kogman-Appel, Elisheva Baumgarten, Elisabeth Hollender, and Ephraim Shoham-Steiner (eds.), *Perception and Awareness: Artefacts and Imageries in Medieval European Jewish Cultures*, Brepols, 2023 (forthcoming).
- ❖ Tzafir Barzilay, Eyal Levinson, and Elisheva Baumgarten (eds.), *Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe. A Source Book*, Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University Press, 2022. This volume is available, [here](#).



Looking Ahead

In and Out Between and Beyond: Jüdisches Alltagsleben im mittelalterlichen Europa (Nov. 8, 2022 - Spring 2023)

Our exhibit has moved to the Old Synagogue in Erfurt, where curator of the Old Synagogue Museum, Maria Stürzbecher, worked together with our curator, Ido Noy, to adapt the original exhibit to the medieval space. The works of the seven modern Israeli artists are distributed among the original artifacts from the period, telling a new story that transverse the centuries. Elisheva Baumgarten and Ido Noy took part in the opening of the exhibit in Erfurt on Nov. 8. Kalman Delmoor created a new piece of art in honor of the Erfurt exhibit (featured here). A virtual tour of the new exhibit and the new catalogue are both available [online](#).

Book Evening

Eyal Levinson, *Gender and Sexuality in Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages* (Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem and the Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 2022) [Hebrew]

On Nov. 15, 2022, the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem hosted a book evening in honor of Eyal Levinson's new book. Elisheva Baumgarten chaired the evening and Ronit Irshai (Bar Ilan University) and Moshe Rosman (emeritus Bar Ilan University) were invited to discuss the book with Eyal Levinson adding his own remarks. See [here](#) for a clip about the author and book.

GIF Young Scholars' Workshop

In May, 2023, a short research tour in Germany and Alsace is scheduled to take place on the theme of *Connecting Individuals and Communities in Medieval and Early Modern Ashkenaz*. This workshop, which is being organized by Elisheva Baumgarten, Debra Kaplan (Bar Ilan University), and Christoph Cluse, Lukas Clemens, and Stephen Laux (University of Trier) is funded by the German Israeli Foundation. The workshop will be open to Israeli and German scholars. [Applications](#) are due Jan. 1st, 2023.



Contending with Crises: The Jews in XIVth Century Europe (ISF BRG 2022-2028)

As *Beyond the Elite* comes to an end, Elisheva and five current team members, Nureet Dermer, Aviya Doron, Annika Funke, Eyal Levinson, and Hannah Teddy Schachter, as well as Ariella Lehmann who is returning to start her Ph.D., are embarking on an exciting new project. They will be joined by additional scholars who will be located with CFAs. Focusing on the Jews of Ashkenaz (roughly corresponding to the Holy Roman Empire, northern France, the Low countries, and northern Italy) from the late 13th to the early 15th century, the project will seek to write the history of this century in a way that integrates persecution and agency and presents Jewish life as distinct yet entangled with Christian life and culture. Further details and a new website will be available soon.



For more information and to learn about us visit our website: beyond-the-elite.huji.ac.il

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