



Beyond the Elite

Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe

Newsletter #6, Winter 2021

We are delighted to present the sixth issue of our newsletter.

We would like to take this moment, at the outset, to wish all of you reading this newsletter good health, and extend our hope that you and your loved ones are all doing well during these difficult times.

It is with great pleasure that we present this report of our fall activities. As a result of the pandemic that continues to affect all of our lives and prevents face to face social interactions, we moved our weekly meetings online. These meetings continue to be fruitful and enriching, and in this framework we even had the honor of hosting scholars from around the world!

That being said, when the opportunity arose in October



to gather outdoors for a day of learning and conversation, we seized on it with joy. Meeting in person made us realize how much we miss our daily routine in our complex on campus, an experience we look forward to resuming as soon as possible. 🌸

Grants & Awards

Congratulations to our Beyond the Elite team members!

✿ **Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten** was elected as a member of the Council of the Medieval Academy of America (2021-2024)

✿ **Nureet Dermer and Aviya Doron** received the Kurt Grunwald Fund research grant from the Bernard Cherrick Center for the Study of Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel, HUJI

✿ **Albert Kohn** received the Kalman Fund Grant for the Study of French Jewry for the year of 2021

✿ **Amit Shafran** was awarded a graduate scholarship from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Department of History for the year 2020

Spotlight on our Team Member

Hannah Teddy Schachter Ph.D. Candidate



Interested in the ways Jews engaged with European monarchies in the Middle Ages, I am currently focused on the relationship between the Jews and Queen Blanche of Castile (r. 1223-1252), a Spanish-born princess who actively ruled France during

a period of socio-political and economic change for French Jewry. Beginning with this queen's entanglement in the events leading up to the Talmud Trial in Paris during the 1240s, I explore her interaction with French Jews through the lenses of economics, political institutions, ritual, and material culture. I focus on the ways gender played a role in this relationship, and more generally, how Jews approached and accessed

their rulers, as well as how queens and ideas of female royalty impacted everyday Jewish life and ritual.

The opportunity to be working collaboratively with Prof. Baumgarten and the *Beyond the Elite* team has enriched my development as a researcher immensely. My exchanges with other group members versed in areas of medieval economics, Hebrew responsa literature, and domestic ritual practices have proven especially fruitful and continue to inspire me as my project takes shape.



Around the World Presentations by our Team Members

Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten gave a number of lectures this term. She spoke at the colloquium on religion and medicine, organized by Prof. Liat Kozma (HUJI) and Dr. Naama Cohen Hanegbi (TAU) in October. In November, Elisheva spoke at the Jewish Studies Program at Fordham University, responding to one of Prof. Moshe Rosman's talks on Judaism and Gender. In December, she participated in a lightening session at the Association of Jewish Studies annual conference, organized by the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (University of Pennsylvania) in honor of a century of the journal's publication. Elisheva also presented at Limmud 2020, speaking about the Black Death and the period leading up to the plague and that which followed it.

Nureet Dermer was a guest lecturer at Prof. Sarah Grace Heller's undergraduate class on Gothic Paris, 1100-1300, at the State University of Ohio's Department of Medieval & Renaissance Studies. In her lecture "Jews of Paris in the late 13th Century," Nureet elaborated on Jewish life in Paris in the years preceding the expulsion of 1306, presenting and discussing aspects such as: urban space, economic, legal, and social norms vs. everyday reality, and the various medieval sources that tell the story of Jews in Christian society, such as Hebrew manuscripts, illuminations and art, material culture, administrative documents, and more.

Aviya Doron had the opportunity to present her work in two very different forums. In November she gave a lecture on "Trust thy Neighbor? Considering Risk and Trust in Medieval Jewish-Christian Economic Exchange" at the Azrieli Fellows Forum, and in December, she presented her lecture "See you at Court: Court Records and Jewish Christian Economic Interactions in 14th Century Frankfurt" [Hebrew] at the ninth annual conference of the Economic History Association of Israel. Both occasions were attended by a diverse audience of scholars from different fields, including economists, legal scholars, and researchers in the natural sciences. The experience was enriching, providing Aviya with valuable new insights and outlooks on her research that she looks forward to pursuing in the months to come.

Miri Fenton participated in a panel on "Jewish Women and State Power in the Medieval Mediterranean: From Intervention to Empowerment" at AJS 2020, giving a lecture entitled "Conflict

Resolution and the Crown: Jewish Women's Use of Royal Petitions in the Medieval Crown of Aragon," contributing a European perspective to an otherwise Geniza focused panel. She discussed the ways in which the system of royal petitioning enabled Jewish women in the medieval Crown of Aragon to advocate for themselves during moments of conflict and reshape the distribution of resources in their communities.

Dr. Eyal Levinson presented his doctoral research to the monthly colloquium of Bar Ilan University's History Department, in which he discussed youth culture in medieval Ashkenaz, particularly the influences of chivalric culture on Jewish young men during this period. Eyal also gave a lecture entitled "Chivalric Culture and Jewish Daily Life in Ashkenaz Before the Black Death" at Limmud 2020. The lecture focused on the Jewish community of Cologne, Germany, a community that like many other contemporary Jewish communities was devastated by the pogroms associated with the Black Death. Eyal presented three archaeological findings and discussed what these objects reveal about the daily lives of the victims and the influences of chivalric culture on Ashkenazic Jews.



London, British Library, Add MS 21160, fol. 181v.

Hannah Teddy Schachter and **Albert Kohn** participated in a Limmud session entitled: "Jews on the Move: Responses to the Plague in Medieval Europe," which was the second part of our series on the great plague of the 14th century. The session explored Jewish responses to deadly times in the European Middle Ages, and considered the challenges medieval Jews faced and explored how movement - dancing and re-settlement - helped them transition through periods of hardship. Hannah Teddy Schachter also gave a paper entitled "Picturing Jewish-Royal Relations: Jews and Royal Women in Parisian Manuscript Illuminations of the 13th Century" at the virtual workshop "Berhard Blumenkranz et

après? L'histoire des juifs médiévaux en France du Nord aujourd'hui", organized by the New Gallia-Germania Judaica, the Nouvelle Gallia Judaica and the German Historical Institute in Paris.

Events

In October, we had a wonderful online workshop with **Prof. Caroline Bynum** (emerita, IAS Princeton) during which eight members of the group gave brief presentations on an aspect of their work and Prof. Bynum responded with helpful questions, comments, and insights. Her responses touched on a range of themes, including the importance of focusing on the specific terms that arise in our sources and understanding them in their linguistic, comparative, and historical context; the possibility of thinking of continua and binaries as not mutually exclusive but rather as mutually constitutive; the fact that similarity allows us to talk in theoretical ways about two things that seem dissimilar; and the practice of getting 'behind' our sources to investigate the lives of non-elite people. We all learned a great deal from Prof. Bynum's comments and suggestions, especially as she helped us begin to formulate ideas for the final volume of our project.

On November 17, we were excited to host an online workshop with **Prof. William Chester Jordan** of Princeton University. Two of our group members presented their work: Nureet Dermer gave a talk entitled "Strangers of a Different Type: The Daily Life of Parisian Jews in the Years Leading to the Expulsion of 1306," and Hannah Teddy Schachter presented a talk entitled "Biblical Esther, Queen-ship, and the Jews in 13th Century Capetian France." Beyond the invaluable comments and feedback Prof. Jordan gave to both Nureet and Teddy, we all benefitted tremendously from the lively discussion, learning more about his approach to the sources and the methodological questions that we are all grappling with. Among the many issues discussed was the extent to which evidence of spatial proximity can be stressed in Jewish-Christian relations, and the need to balance between the conviviality of Jews and Christians in Medieval Europe and the violent offences repeatedly committed against Jewish communities.

All these experiences were very valuable. We look forward to continuing to meet online and also to being able to meet in person in the near future. 🌸

During the last week of November, we hosted **Prof. Rowan Dorin**, from Stanford University's History Department. Prof. Dorin gave a public lecture on "Conflicts of Interest: Jews, Christian Moneylenders, and the Rise of Mass Expulsion in Medieval Europe," in which he demonstrated, through a close examination of changes in the interpretation of the canon *Usurarum voraginem* promulgated in 1274 at the Second Council of Lyon, how throughout western Europe during the course of the 13th and 14th centuries, usury was used as an excuse to expel foreigners, including Jews. Prof. Dorin's intriguing lecture illustrated the intersections between law and society, and especially what happens when legal norms conflict with social practices. The lecture was followed by a fruitful discussion and personal meetings between Prof. Dorin and group members over the course of the rest of the week.



In December, the group, together with the Martin Buber Society of Fellows, held a virtual evening in honor of the publication of group member **Dr. Andreas Lehnertz's** book *Judensiegel im spätmittelalterlichen Reichsgebiet Beglaubigungstätigkeit und Selbstrepräsentation von Jüdinnen und Juden* (Jewish Seals in the Late Medieval Empire: Authentication and Self-Representation of Jewish Women and Men) (Harassowitz, 2020).

Three distinguished speakers, **Prof. Alfred Haverkamp** of the University of Trier (Andreas' Doktorvater), **Dr. Eveline Brugger** of the Institute of Jewish Studies in Saint Pölten, Austria, and **Prof. Brigitte Bedos-Rezak** of New York University discussed various aspects regarding this two-volume publication and its important contributions to current medieval historiography. The successful event was attended by more than 75 people from Israel, Europe, and the United States.

In mid-December, we hosted **Prof. John Arnold** of Kings College, Cambridge, one of the world's leading experts on medieval religion in the context of social and cultural history. Prof. Arnold gave a public lecture about his new and ongoing research on confraternities in southern France during the 13th and 14th centuries. By presenting and analyzing several sources by members of such confraternities, Prof. Arnold exemplified the social, cultural, and religious meaning of such organizations in medieval society, their public role and inner-communal functions, as well as gender relations in and outside of these frameworks.



Visiting Fellows

Ahuva Liberles Ben Gurion University



Immediately after submitting my doctoral dissertation: *'Believing or Belonging? Religious Conversion, Family Life, and the Jewish Community in Late Medieval German Lands'* (Jerusalem 2020), I was privileged to join the *Beyond the Elite* research group for the

month of November as a short-term postdoc researcher. I cannot express the thrill and appreciation of being able to engage with such warm, enthusiastic, and productive scholars after so many months of constant writing during the Covid-19 lockdown. Familiar with the work of the group, having participated in many activities they have organized over the past few years, this gave me the opportunity to go "behind the scenes" and admire the impressive activities of this academic laboratory first hand. During this month I gave three lectures, one of them to the group, and began working on a new research project that focuses on crime and violence in interfaith families. I am thankful for the hours of fruitful discussions, whether one-on-one or in a group format, over shared research interests and concluded the experience with exciting new directions and thoughts on how to shape my thesis into what will hopefully be a successful academic monograph.

Tamar Nadav University of Haifa



My time with the *Beyond the Elite* research group in December 2020 was extremely valuable for my current research project. Over the past five years I have been writing my PhD thesis which focuses on knowledge transfer and the intellectual landscape

of the Latin West in the 12th century, with special emphasis on medical knowledge and its intersections with Christian philosophy and theology. Recently, I expanded my focus to include the Jewish intellectual landscape as well, and the transmission of Latin medical texts into Hebrew between ca. 1200 to ca. 1500. As an intellectual historian, my tendency is to consider the evidence I find within a purely intellectual context. My visit to the *Beyond the Elite* research group, during which I presented my initial findings, allowed me to examine how my research fits into current trends in cultural and material history of Jewish-Christian relationships. It offered me the opportunity to develop some of the ideas I have regarding the material and practical aspects of Italian medicine, and pursue new ideas concerning the professional and cultural identity of the translators themselves. I am deeply grateful for this opportunity, and for the new perspectives I gained.