

# Beyond the Elite

## Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe

Newsletter #8, Winter 2022

*Dear Friends,*

It is with great pleasure that we send you this newsletter describing some of our activities this fall. We were fortunate to be able to meet in person until almost the end of the term and continued to discuss our research with colleagues in Israel and abroad in person and online. We are especially excited to include information about our recent publications, the fruit of our ongoing research.

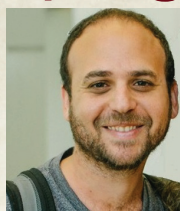
We wish each of you good health and a good winter and spring!

### Grants & Awards

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

- ✿ **Eyal Levinson** was awarded a book publishing support grant from the World Union of Jewish Studies. The grant is awarded to young scholars without alternative research funds, and who have never held a tenured position at a university.
- ✿ **Elisheva Baumgarten** was awarded an Israel Science Foundation Grant for her project "From the 'House of Life' to Communal Profiles: Tombstones, Cemeteries, and Daily Life in Medieval Ashkenaz."

### Spotlight On



**Erez Rochman,**  
MA Student

I am a graduate student, currently in the process of writing my MA thesis under the supervision of Professor Elisheva Baumgarten. During the course of my studies, I became fascinated with the extensive liturgical writings produced in medieval Ashkenaz. I was especially intrigued by the piyyutim written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century by the rabbinic scholarly elite, in the aftermath of the First and Second Crusades and their impact on the Jewish communities of the region. Under the direction of Prof. Baumgarten, and taking my example from the academic discussions of the *Beyond the Elite* research group, I examined how these texts were designed to effect the broader Jewish population. To do so, I explored how they were integrated into the rituals of which they were a part, and the different ways in which they were recited and performed.

In addition to its impact on my own work, the opportunity to participate in *Beyond the Elite* has also opened a unique window onto the working of a young, dynamic group of scholars dedicated to researching this period in history, and inspired me in my academic path. The spirit of collaboration which exists between the group members is truly remarkable.



**Annika Funke**  
PhD Candidate

(University of Trier)

In my doctoral dissertation, I am focusing on the reorganization of Jewish communities in small towns and villages in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century Alsace and Wetterau. My main area of interest is the issues that arose, directly or indirectly, as a result of the dispersion of the settlement network during this period. I seek to examine how Jewish individuals not only coped, but actively shaped their communal life according to their religious, economic, and legal needs.

Since I joined the *Beyond the Elite* research group in December 2021, I have profited from the support, creative input, and productive feedback of the group members and associates. They encouraged me to shift my perspective from the institutionalized efforts of the Jewish lay leadership to the agency of the non-elite members of these rural communities.

Above all, I have learned much from the team's experience reading Hebrew sources through the lens of everyday encounters. After a rewarding and productive year, I feel very grateful for the myriad learning opportunities and the patience and encouragement of the group while I worked to improve my language skills. I look forward to our continued work together.



# Around the World

## Presentations by our Team Members

The *Beyond the Elite* group members took part in the **Second World Congress of the *Société des études juives***, held in December 2021 in Paris. The group presented in a double session concerning Jewish daily life in the Middle Ages entitled: “In and Around the House: Jews and Christians in Northern France.” In the first part of the session, **Elisheva Baumgarten** discussed the implications of the quotidian presence of Christian maids and servants inside Jewish homes; **Amit Shafran** talked about 13<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew and Hebraico-French magical-medical recipes, and **Hannah Teddy Schachter** discussed queenly intercession in Jewish life. **Nureet Dermer** opened the second session, exploring topographical changes in 14<sup>th</sup> century Jewish residence and re-settlement in Paris; Following her, **Ryan Low** (Harvard University) presented a case study concerning a southern French Jewish house as a hub of Jewish-Christian activity, and **Manon Banoun** (Paris1-Panthéon-Sorbonne) presented archeological evidence of medieval Jewish institutions from Paris, Rouen, and southern France. **Judith Olszowy-Schlanger** (EPHE and Oxford University) summed up the sessions together with Elisheva Baumgarten. It was a pleasure to take part in this event and we look forward to meeting our French colleagues again soon.



14<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew tombstones from Paris, displayed at Musée Carnavalet, Paris (photo: Nureet Dermer)

### Amit Shafran

I presented my paper, “By Bread and Salt, By Wine and Water’: A 13<sup>th</sup>-century Hebraico-French Magical Recipe” at the *Leeds International Medieval Conference*. My paper discussed a cure for fever and was presented in the framework of a panel on illness and healing in the Middle Ages that was entitled “Climates of Fear.”

### Aviya Doron

Before the beginning of the academic year I participated in two virtual conferences: In September I presented a paper, “Communities of Credit or Communities of Debt? Jewish-Christian Financial

Networks in 14<sup>th</sup> Century Frankfurt-am-Main,” at the *Communities and Networks in Late Medieval Europe* (c. 1300–1500) virtual conference organized at the University of Cambridge. In October, I presented a paper at a virtual workshop organized by the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies on *Jews, Gender, and Economies in History*, entitled “Equal Credit: The Financial Networks of Jewish Women in 14<sup>th</sup> Century Frankfurt am Main.”

During the second half of November, I participated in an **Erasmus+ teaching and training exchange** at the Arye Maimon Institute, University of Trier, where I was hosted by **Christoph Cluse** and **Jörg Müller**, among others. During my time at the Institute I was introduced to its various working methods and databases. They also showed me around Trier’s municipal archive and historical landmarks. I was guest lecturer in a number of classes: Cluse’s class on the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Müller’s class on Martyrs and Saints, and **Andreas Lehnertz**’s class on the Jewish community. Teaching these classes allowed me to meet new students from different backgrounds and be exposed to new approaches to sources. Finally, on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, I gave a public talk in the *Arbeitskreis für Jüdische Geschichte des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, entitled “Objects of Trust?: The Materiality of Pawns in Jewish-Christian Exchange.” The experience was incredibly enriching and impactful.

### Annika Funke

In September I presented my paper “Shaping the Neighborhood: Individual Jewish Interference with the Admission of Fellow Settlers” at the conference: *Ventes, échanges, mutations... De la reconfiguration des maisons entre juifs et chrétiens (XIIe-XVIIe siècles)* organised by the University of Perpignan. My presentation focused on attempts of individual Jews to initiate the expulsion or influence the admittance of co-religionists into their hometown. In October, I presented a paper “Political Advocacy of Rural Jewish Communities in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century” at the conference *Migrationsprozesse und Mobilität der europäischen Juden am Übergang vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit* in Prague organized by the Historisches Institut der Akademie der Wissenschaften der Tschechischen Republik. In this talk, I discussed whether different regional Jewish political bodies in Alsace used the same tactics when dealing with regional Christian policies towards them. Comparing the strategies used by the body of representatives of Lower and Upper Alsace facing the exclusion from the market in Strasbourg, I discovered that these two groups had distinct regional identities and negotiated in different ways.



## Special Guest

This Hannukah we were fortunate to be able to host a very special guest – **Christoph Cluse** from the Arye Maimon Institute at the University of Trier. Made possible by the **Erasmus+ exchange program**, Cluse was able to join us for a week, during which time he taught several classes: on the medieval German legal system, on the return of Jews to German cities following the Black Death, and on Jews' privileges during the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. In addition, Cluse also took part in our group's activities, during which he provided valuable feedback in one of our practice sessions and conducted personal meetings with group members. We were all very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss our research projects with Cluse and to benefit from his thoughts and comments, as well as to improve on some paleographic skills. We look forward to continuing this ongoing fruitful exchange and collaboration.

## Visiting Fellow



**Moishi Chechik, PhD Candidate**  
Hebrew University of Jerusalem

I have known Prof. Baumgarten for several years, during which I had the privilege of her good advice, both as a lively partner for conversation and a careful (and sharp) reader of some of my papers. In addition, over the last few years, I was introduced to her emerging 'circle' – the team of students participating in the *Beyond the Elite* project. Therefore, when I was invited to be a member of the group for a month, I was pleased, and thought I knew what to expect. However, already at the beginning, I discovered that I was completely wrong.

I presented part of my dissertation that deals with particular cases of *fama* (rumor) in rabbinic responsa literature from late 13<sup>th</sup> century Germany. The insightful remarks, the true interest in my research and mainly the kind collegiality and pleasant atmosphere in which critique was made – the entire combination exposed me to a different type of intellectual climate, quite rare in our academy. I found a space for open discussion, free of ego-games or mannerisms, based upon respect and supportive encouragement towards each member, recognizing his/her unique qualities. My opening presentation was only the first shot for the whole month. I was truly enriched by several brilliant (and, indeed, challenging) conversations, which led me toward new directions I could never expect.



## Medieval Creativity

Besides writing insightful books and articles, *Beyond the Elite* seeks new ways to disseminate our study of medieval Jewish history outside of the confines of academic circles. We have worked on curricula for schools, offered public zoom lectures, and, more recently, opened an exhibit that blends modern art and medieval history. It was this same spirit that inspired the creation of the *Beyond the Elite Woollies*, a collection of knitted characters commissioned as **Albert Kohn's** gift to the group at the end of his tenure in Jerusalem, before he moved to Princeton to start a doctorate there. Each "Woolly," as their creator **Giselle Taylor** calls them, was inspired by the research of one of our group members. They include judges, queens, tax collectors, magicians, knights, householders and many more of the characters at the center of our research into everyday life in medieval Ashkenaz. Most important is that each Woolly's attire, colors, and accessories are modeled off the same textual descriptions and manuscript illuminations that animate our academic work. Albert explains: "Beyond being a parting gift to my dear colleagues and friends in Jerusalem, these Woollies will hopefully serve as a reminder of our intent to creatively bring the past's diverse range of characters to life to the best of our abilities." You can find more of Giselle's medieval themed knitted characters on her Facebook [page](#), Woolly Warriors by Giselle.

## Publications

We are pleased to feature the projects of our group that came to fruition this year! Click [here](#) to see abstracts and articles.





## Conference

**Belonging: Jews, Christians, and Civic Identity in Medieval Europe** Organized with the help of team members **Hannah Teddy Schachter**, **Annika Funke**, and **Erez Rochman**, this virtual conference, held on 3-5 January 2022, featured leading scholars from France, Germany, the U.K., U.S., and Israel to discuss aspects of civic identity among Jews and Christians in medieval Europe. The first day opened with a paper by **Olivier Richard** (l'Université de Strasbourg), who spoke about experiences of citizenship in Late Medieval German lands, followed by **Elisheva Baumgarten's** (HUJI) discussion of Jewish urban experiences in Ashkenaz via a virtual tour of the exhibition [\*In and Out, Between and Beyond: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe\*](#).

The second day began with a paper by **Sonia Fellous** (Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, CNRS), who combined epigraphy, documents, and iconography to discuss Jewish civic identity in medieval France. Then, **Andreas Lehnertz** (HUJI) explored civic participation among Jewish women and men through combined sealing and oath-taking practices, and **Tzafrir Barzilay** (Haifa) discussed the construction of Jewish civic identity in Mainz through memorializations of the city's martyrs during the First Crusade. In the final panel of the day, **Meredith Cohen** (UCLA) discussed how urban belonging and community could be built through the architecture of medieval Paris, while **Hannah Teddy Schachter** (HUJI) discussed the various ways in which Jews and Christians performed

their civic belonging by participating in urban processions upon the formal arrival of a ruler to French and German cities.

The last day of the conference featured the work of **Tamar Menashe** (University of Pennsylvania), who discussed imperial court records as a source for understanding how Jews showcased their citizenship via litigation. Thereafter, **Benjamin Scheller** (Universität Duisburg-Essen) discussed the identity of converts living in medieval Venice and the extent to which their former status as Jews had implications for their new (Christian) position in society, while **Annika Funke** considered Jewish citizenship in early modern villages, exploring how some Jews worked with town author-

ities to limit and screen who could take up residence among them.

The conference concluded with a roundtable discussion by **Eyal Poleg** (Queen Mary University of London), **Miri Rubin** (Queen Mary University of London), and **Paola Tartakoff** (Rutgers University) on the limits and possibilities of discussing medieval "citizenship" and arrived at many fruitful insights. Throughout the conference, we had dozens of scholars from some eight countries - Israel, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Germany, France, England and the U.S. - join us online! It was thus a great success and exceeded all of our expectations.

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

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