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For over 90 years, AFHU has been The Hebrew University's partner-in-progress, helping to ensure that The Hebrew University serves as an engine of growth for Israel and a research engine for the world. AFHU and its thousands of supporters enable the university to recruit and retain outstanding new faculty, build state-of-the-art facilities, provide scholarships and fellowships to students at every level of academic study, and advance research and R&D activities in globally vital fields.

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INTERVIEW WITH JONATHAN BRENT

Executive Director,
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

How did YIVO's Shine Online Educational Series come about?

Long ago I began thinking about Jewish education and my dismay at the poor quality of Jewish education as my children experienced it. That experience fused with something else that I became aware of. I spent 18 years working on and off in the Soviet Archives in Moscow on a big project called "The Annals of Communism." As I got deeper into the subject, everywhere I looked I encountered Jewish history. Every stone I turned up, there were Jewish actors involved. Lenin's maternal grandfather was a Jew and wrote a letter to the Tsar in Yiddish, of all things. Maya Plisetskaya, the great prima ballerina, was Jewish. One of the creators of the hydrogen bomb and most of the physicists and mathematicians who worked on that project for Stalin were Jewish.

The most astounding thing for me was to discover how many Jews were in the KGB. Many of them came from shtetls. The head of the KGB in the 1930s, Genrikh Yagoda, was a Jew. Then, when I read Isaac Babel in Russian, nowhere could one glean that Isaac Babel was Jewish. And, if you go to Wikipedia and look up Sigmund Freud, he's presented initially as a Viennese psychologist or doctor, not as Jewish.

Peter Gay, the great cultural historian, wrote a book called *Modernism*. And what he wrote about the Jews appalled me. He said, "Yes, the Jews did play a role in the creation of Modernism, but largely in the roles of agents, and owners of galleries and editors and salon hostesses, and so on and so forth. Not in the role of creators." How could it possibly be that Peter Gay, of all people, is not recognizing the creative power of someone like Kafka or Freud or Husserl, let alone Mahler and Schoenberg and many others?

When I talked to my colleagues about these things, I discovered that most people had almost no knowledge of the extent, the depth, the breadth, the variousness and nuance of Jewish life in Eastern Europe and Russia. Nobody teaches it and there is no book on the subject. People know bits and pieces of this and that; they latch onto certain stories, but putting it together

into a contextualized whole is something that was missing. So the fundamental impetus for the Winter Program was the idea that we would begin the process of putting this history into a contextualized whole that would include history, literature, art, philosophy, music, cuisine, theater and religious ritual.

Who is interested in this kind of class?

At first we thought, "Maybe nobody's interested in this. Maybe only I am interested in this." And then, when we offered it, we couldn't keep people away. The class on the history of the Jews of Eastern Europe was packed to the rafters. With the help of the Shine Trust in Los Angeles, the class was launched online and 3,500 people from around the world signed up, from every state in the U.S., Japan and China, the Philippines, Uganda, Uruguay, Bolivia, as well as, of course, Russia and Ukraine.

With that experience of this enormous response, we decided to do a class on the history of Yiddish language and literature and one on Jewish folklore of Eastern Europe, which recently launched. In the future, we will also offer a class on the Yiddish theater.

I look at myself as the guy that I want to appeal to, somebody who has some connection but very little knowledge, at least initially, who has a bit of a family background, has stories rolling around in his head. Maybe a little bit of Yiddish, he doesn't really know where it comes from or what the words mean.

What do classes about the Old Country have to do with the future?

It's a dangerous situation, culturally, for the Jewish people today. Because the farther away you get, the more cloudy and dismembered all of this becomes. What will our children have? How do we pass anything on? I know this is so clichéd, but I actually believe this. What are we leaving our kids?

I want what we leave our kids not just to be bubble-meises, but to be fact-based, and to instill in them a sense of the grandeur and the power of this civilization from which they come. Israel represented that for the majority of Jews in my generation. Israel represented the future, strength, doing and acting in the world. And the Old Country? That was the place where Jews suffered. There is a false stereotype of what that civilization was. There were people of tremendous courage and strength who acted.—Ellen Meltzer



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distinguished leaders in the field that allow you to continue to work in your community. The Certificate in Jewish Education for Adolescents and Emerging Adults strengthens your expertise in adolescent development, experiential learning, program planning, change theory, uses of social media, the arts, service learning and more. DeLeT – Day School Teachers for a New Generation offers a one-year mentored internship teaching in a Jewish day school in Los Angeles, San Diego, or the San Francisco Bay Area while you participate in on-site and video-conference seminars taught by scholars and practitioners in the growing field of day school education. DeLeT L'Ivrit Fellowship Program features a mentored internship teaching Hebrew and Judaic Studies in a Jewish day school. The DeLeT programs include a full-tuition scholarship, generous stipend, a Certificate in Day School Teaching and California State Multiple Subject Teaching Credential. HUC-JIR partners with the Jewish Theological Seminary for the Jewish Early Childhood Education Leadership Institute. Become a leader in Jewish education who will break boundaries and find pioneering solutions as you

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ball Museum, HUC-UC Ethics Center, and Israel summer program at our Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology in Jerusalem. You can begin your journey through our two-year M.A. in Jewish Studies as a foundation for doctoral studies, which will give you a mastery of Hebrew languages of all periods, skills to teach seminal Hebrew texts within their historical contexts, and treatment of all areas of Jewish studies as they relate to core academic disciplines, including history, literature, law, philosophy, and religion. If you are a rabbi ordained at HUC-JIR (or another accredited Jewish seminary), the Doctor of Hebrew Letters Program offers you the opportunity for independent study and coursework that will revitalize your ongoing work as a learned leader for the Jewish people. Our New York campus offers the Interfaith Doctor of Ministry Program in Pastoral Counseling, designed for ordained clergy of all faiths.

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INTERVIEW WITH RABBI AARON PANKEN

Ph.D., President, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Hebrew Union College has over 4,000 alumni. What is the global impact of your students and alumni?

What most people don't realize is that our alumni are very diverse. We have folks who graduated who have become rabbis, cantors, Jewish educators, those who work in Jewish non-profit management. We also have Ph.D. students, some of whom are Jewish and some who are Christian and Muslim. They are teaching in institutions all over the south and the Midwest and doing some exciting things in terms of interfaith dialogue. And this November, we'll be ordaining our 100th Israeli reform rabbi.

We're interested in both the development of educated Jews but also in the development of educated professionals. That's one of the things that distinguishes an HUC education. We do so much to make sure you get a full, holistic education.

How much of that impact is in Israel?

A few different ways. With the 100th ordainee, there are now about 55 Israeli Reform congregations, which have been growing steadily. When I lived there from 1986 to 1987, there were about 12. So, that impact is huge, reaching thousands and thousands of Israelis.

The other thing I would say in terms of our impact is we ensure that every one of our rabbis, cantors and Jewish educators spend a year in Israel and Jerusalem before graduating. The Koret Foundation's Scholars Program has made it possible for our "Year in Israel" program to be essentially tuition free. So, this is a major step forward to building a bridge between the Diaspora, North America and Israel.

How has being an engineer, a pilot, professor, Talmud scholar, rabbi and president of the college inform who you are and what you do?

I think it's vital to kind of run with your arms open towards all different kinds of experiences and knowledge.

What the engineer does is hear what needs to be

solved, sees the problem that exists, figures out a way to try to fix it, tests it, prototypes it, tests it, tweaks it and continues to think about how to do it better. That sense of sort of building as an engineer is something that's always informed me. Another metaphor is navigation. As a pilot, and a bit of a sailor, you have a destination, you know where you want to go. Wind and weather and the time of day have an impact on the decisions you make. But you want to have as much information to put yourself in the best possible position safely and arrive where you want to arrive. And I think both of those inform my work as a university president.

Being a Talmud scholar and a rabbi helped me understand the beauty of Jewish tradition and how vital it is for our people to understand it more, to study it more, to learn and to share it more. Education to me is the key. If you learn about the Jewish tradition, then you'll want to be Jewish and it'll be meaningful to you.

How is the college shaping the future?

We are an institution that responds to what we see around us in society. We do not cloister and distance ourselves from what's happening. What does it mean to help young people understand what it means to be Jewish, to be part of a community? How do we get beyond the walls of a synagogue to reach people who are not coming in? How do we think about intermarried families who are struggling to figure out what their identity is and how do we make them feel welcome so that the next generation is part of the Jewish community, too? We look carefully at what's happening around us, we combine it with Jewish tradition and we think about how can we have the most appropriate kind of action. That's exactly what Jews have done for centuries already, and it's exactly what we should be doing.

A second area is to think about social justice. What does it mean to create leaders who know how to organize their communities, advocate on behalf of the values they believe in and take direct action to help the people in need. We also think about the environment and the idea of reproductive rights and how we should be approaching those issues. There's no uniformity in the Jewish community on many of these issues. But our goal as an educational institution is to create an atmosphere in which people can have different approaches, yet respect one another and argue vehemently for what they believe in.—Ellen Meltzer

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