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NEWS & VIEWS

May 23, 2019 | 18 Iyar 5779



Hebrew College 94th Commencement

Hebrew College will celebrate its 94th [Commencement Ceremonies](#) on Sunday, June 2, 2019. At the morning Commencement exercises at Hebrew College, we will recognize the 118 graduates who are completing their studies this year – 22 from our Prozdor Community High School Program, 72 from our signature Me'ah Adult Learning Program, and 28 from our graduate leadership programs for rabbis, cantors, and educators, known throughout the world for their blend of spiritual and intellectual creativity and depth. Rabbinical ordainee Misha Clebaner will be the student speaker at the morning exercises. In the afternoon, our rabbinic and cantorial graduates will receive *semikha* at special ordination ceremonies at Temple Reyim in Newton, MA. We send them off with our heartfelt blessings, as they leave our learning community and go on to serve in synagogues and schools, on college

campuses, and in pastoral care settings across the United States and world.



Dr. Avivah Zornberg (above left), Torah scholar, teacher, and author, will deliver the Commencement address and receive an honorary degree of humane letters. She is a teacher who embodies the kind of Torah learning that we strive to model for and inspire in our graduates. Whether spoken or written, her scholarship is breathtaking in its intellectual, psychological, and spiritual depth, and her voice is insistently tender and truthful about the complexities of the human condition.

Other [honorary degree recipients](#) include (l-r above):

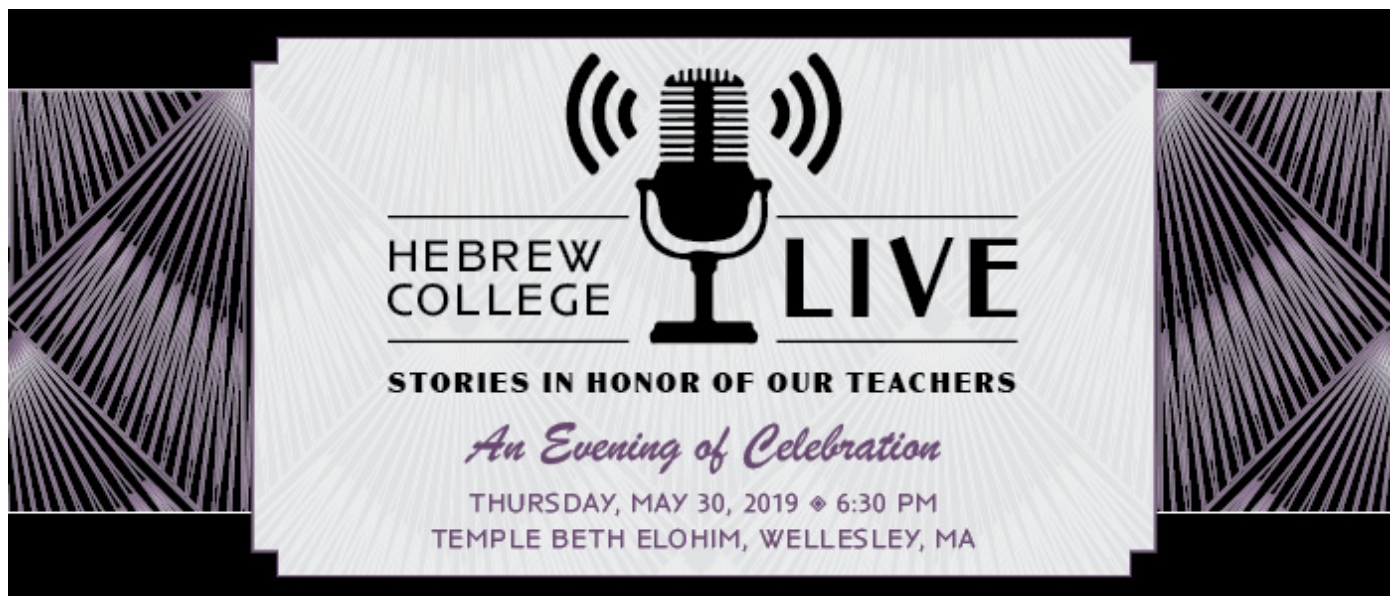
Mark Atkins, Priz' 65, entrepreneur and former Hebrew College Board Chair, is a professor at The University of Massachusetts-Boston College of Management with more than 30 years of experience as a leader in the computer and financial industries, and has been part of the Hebrew College family for more than 50 years.

Dr. Alice Shalvi, Israeli feminist and professor, has played a leading role in progressive Jewish education for girls, advancing the status of women and is often referred to as “the matriarch of Israeli feminism.”

Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker is a senior lecturer and research scholar with a joint appointment at the Yale School of Divinity and the Yale School of Forestry, and a pioneer in the field of religion and ecology.

Two awards will be presented at the morning Commencement ceremony. **Joshua Foer** and **Brett Lockspeiser** will accept the *Dr. Benjamin J. Shevach Memorial Award* for distinguished achievement in Jewish educational leadership on behalf of [Sefaria](#), a non-profit whose mission is to build the future of Torah in the digital era. **Ross B. Levine**, President and Executive Director of the Chleck Foundation, will receive the *Sydney Hillson/Rose Bronstein Memorial Award* for distinguished leadership and commitment to the centrality of the Hebrew language in Jewish education.

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Over the past few weeks, we have introduced the storytellers and musicians for next week's Hebrew College fundraiser "[Hebrew College Live! Stories in Honor of Our Teachers](#)." This week, meet our last two storytellers, Rabbi Tiferet Berenbaum, Rab`13, MEd`13 who will tell the story "Honor and Dignity," and Celene Ibrahim, PhD, who will tell the story "Coming Full Circle." Join us next week to hear them in person. Please RSVP by Tuesday, May 28 [online](#) or via [email](#).

Rabbi Tiferet Berenbaum

Finding Judaism

Rabbi Tiferet Berenbaum found Judaism nearly a decade after she started practicing.

She began observing Shabbat when she was 11 — because she thought it made sense to rest on Saturday and work or shop on Sundays — and she could never understand why her Catholic school teachers told Bible stories out of order. She also developed her own system of *kashrut*.



But she didn't realize that she was following Jewish practices until she was 20 and an undergraduate at Tufts University in Medford, MA, when she went to Harvard Hillel with her then-boyfriend — a non-observant Jew — to say *Kaddish*.

"I was already living a Jewish life. I just didn't have that language when I was younger," she said. "And then I discovered Judaism as an adult, and everything I was looking to do or doing was being done — like reading the Torah in order instead of bopping all over the place, and having services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, and having a quiet reflective experience through the *Amidah*. I thought, 'These people do the same things as I do!' I called my mom and said, 'I think I'm Jewish. She responded, 'We always knew you were Jewish!'"

[Read more](#)

Celene Ibrahim, PhD

Inspired by Mentors



Celene Ibrahim met Rabbi Or Rose at a retreat for “emerging” Jewish and Muslim leaders. Rabbi Or was attending the retreat in the capacity of a mentor to the emerging leaders and taught a session on the biblical story of Jacob and Joseph, figures whose stories are also recounted in the Qur’an.

At the time, Celene was finishing her degree in divinity studies at Harvard Divinity School. Several months later, Or and his colleagues at Hebrew College were looking for a community leader and scholar within the Boston Muslim community for a new interfaith initiative. “It was a very fortuitous alignment of my interest and their needs,” said Ibrahim. “They had a strong vision and desire to expand beyond their Jewish and Christian niche.”

Celene initially ran a fellowship program for Muslim community leaders for two years and then, in 2014, joined an interreligious team spearheaded by Rabbi Rose and his colleague Dr. Jennifer Howe Peace from Andover Newton Theological School. Celene assumed a joint faculty position as Islamic Studies Scholar-in-Residence and became the Muslim Co-Director of the Center for Inter-religious and Communal Leadership Education, or CIRCLE – a nationally recognized program shared between Hebrew College and Andover Newton. When Hebrew College established the [Betty Ann Greenbaum Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership](#) in 2016, Celene became a member of the Center’s Advisory Council.

In the seven years since their initial meeting, it didn’t take long for Or to become a mentor and good friend to Celene. “I so admire Or’s skillful diplomacy between faith communities, his ability to sit with ambiguity with such delight,” she said. “He maintains this balance of humility, courage, and humor while simultaneously being really present in difficult situations. He has a real conviction that a better world, that a better America, is possible. And he believes that individuals can make a profound social impact -- that our striving isn’t in vain.”

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SIGHTS & SOUNDS





Rabbinical student **Giulia Fleishman** (pictured right) and her work on a b'nai mitzvah program for seniors from [2Life Communities](#) was featured on [WGBH Boston](#) on May 22. A story also ran on WBUR Boston Radio on May 10 and the [Newton Tab on](#) in a May 7, and [JewishBoston.com](#) on May 20. This project was funded through a generous partnership grant to Hebrew College and 2Life Communities from the Rita and Stanley Kaplan Foundation. The culminating ceremony took place at Temple Emanuel in Newton, MA on May 11. We are delighted that the collaborative program will continue next year with another Hebrew College rabbinic intern, **Elyse Pincus**.

Kol HaKavod to outgoing Dean of the School of Jewish Music at Hebrew College, **Cantor Dr. Brian Mayer**, who received the Samuel Rosenbaum Award for Scholarship and Creativity, the Cantors Assembly's most prestigious award, at the organization's annual convention in Louisville, KY.

Cantor Mayer was honored earlier this month at "Huzzah La'Hazzan," a special community event where the new Cantor Dr. Brian Mayer Scholarship Fund was established in his honor.

[Donate to the Fund](#)



70 FACES OF TORAH

Posts from this [Hebrew College-hosted blog](#) are published weekly in [Patheos](#).

Examining Our "Glory-Flaw": A Brief Exercise for Sefirat Ha-Omer

By Rabbi Or N. Rose
Director, [Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership](#)



One of the joys of my work as a rabbi has been the opportunity to serve as the visiting rabbi at Netivot Torah: The Chatham Synagogue (TCS), in New York's Hudson Valley. Founded twenty years ago by a small contingent of "weekenders" and permanent transplants from the Five Boroughs and other nearby locations, this independent "country shul" has been a key part of my spiritual and professional life for almost two decades.

Last weekend, I traveled to Chatham to facilitate Shabbat morning services and the weekly Torah discussion. The biblical reading for the week was *parashat Emor* (Leviticus 21:1-24:23), which contains, among other items, instructions about the ancient Israelite calendar. This includes a description of the Sabbath, the Three Pilgrimage Festivals, and the High Holy Days. (See Leviticus 23)

It also includes information about the practice of counting the *omer*: a fifty-day ritual count celebrating the unfolding of the spring harvest, beginning on the day when an *omer* measure of barley was offered in the Temple in Jerusalem and culminating with *Shavuot*, “The Feast of Weeks” (also called the “Festival of Reaping [*Hag Ha’Katzir*] among other names in the Torah; and later known as *Pentecost* [“Fifty” in Greek]).

Over the centuries, this agricultural ritual evolved into a time for introspection and self-improvement as one journeys between the two great spring holidays of *Pesach* (Passover) and *Shavuot*. Symbolically, this involves reflection on the relationship between the story of the exodus from Egypt and the revelation at Mount Sinai (in keeping with rabbinic teachings about *Shavuot*). What does it mean to be a free person who consciously reenters a covenantal relationship with God through engagement in Torah every year?

[Read more](#)

EVENTS



Each semester, Hebrew College faculty go beyond our classrooms to bring compelling, relevant and creative ideas to your community. We share our love of Torah, our commitment to communal and social responsibility, and our diverse perspectives to ask and help find answers to the most important and challenging questions of our time—and of our lives. [Our faculty](#) inspire, enlighten and engage.

Faculty summer speaking engagements

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June 2 | 10 am
Hebrew College
[Information](#)

[Information](#)

Cantorial Ordination
June 2 | 1:30 pm
Temple Reyim, Newton MA
[Information](#)



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