



NEWS & VIEWS

January 23, 2020 | 26 Tevet 5780

Blog & Events

70 FACES OF TORAH

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

The Scroll of Redemptions (Megillot haGe'ula)

Parashat Va'eira (Exodus 6:2-9:35)

By Rachel Adelman, PhD

Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Hebrew College



I recently heard a fascinating [interview](#) with the psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk, an expert on the treatment of trauma. He defines trauma as overwhelmingly negative experiences which become lodged in the body beyond the reach of language. As an expert on PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder), he maintains that the “talking cure” — the traditional psychoanalytic attempt to make a coherent narrative of one’s trauma — cannot really help patients, but embodied work such as EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy), mindfulness, and even yoga can. This week’s Torah reading speaks to that very attempt to provide the “talking cure” to the Israelites, yet they will have none of it! They cannot yet transform their suffering — imprinted in their whipped, humiliated, and mud-wracked bodies — into a coherent or meaningful story.

Parashat Va'eira opens with the great speech of redemption, promising that God will free the Israelites from slavery with the proverbial outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgment, for “I am the LORD (Yhwh, that is, Being-Present-with/Becoming-for Israel) your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exodus 6:7). Yet as soon as Moses delivers these eloquent words of hope, the whole narrative threatens to come to a grinding halt for the people would not listen to him. Why could they not hear the great redemption speech? Millenia later, these very words would become the basis for the Haggadah that we recite every year at Passover, the way we make meaning of that past collective trauma. The four verbs in God’s promise—“*ve-hotz’eti...ve-hitzalti...ve-ga’alti...ve-laqahti*, I will free

the drinking of four cups of wine during the seder (mishnah berurah 472:45). Yet when first relayed to the people, they were not heard, because of Israel's "broken spirit (*qotzer ruah*, lit. shortness of breath) and their cruel bondage" (Exodus 6:9, RSV). What happened to cause such despair?

[Read more](#)

COMMUNITY LEARNING



My Choice to Teach "Six Jews of Vilna"

By **Rachel L. Greenblatt, PhD**
Instructor, [Hebrew College Open Circle Jewish Learning](#)

[Learn about Rachel's winter course & register](#)



I was first drawn to the Jewish wonders of Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania) when I traveled – armchair style – with historian Lucy Dawidowicz, who had ventured there from New York City by ship and train in August 1938. Dawidowicz was 23 years old when she made that trip. I must have been about the same age, give or take, when I read about it. And I was curious. What made this young American sail the wrong way? How did she get out in time? Whom did she leave behind? I dove into Dawidowicz's memoir, *From that Time and Place* (W.W. Norton, 1989) and, walking the city streets vicariously, discovered a Yiddish-speaking universe: poets, secular scholars of Yiddish, religious scholars of Torah and Talmud, communists, Polish nationalists, musicians, Jewish teens looking for no more than a good time. And on, and on.

I was most surprised to learn of the high level and vast scope of the activities of YIVO, the academic institute devoted to scholarly study of Yiddish language and culture where Dawidowicz was a research fellow for the year. As a Jewish child of the 1970s and 1980s, the notion that American Jews of Eastern European descent could, once-upon-a-time, like our Irish or Italian neighbors, go back to where our parents and grandparents had come from to study our language and our literature, that "the Old Country" had existed as a living, vital place at the same time as Jews crowded on the Lower East Side – was simply mind-blowing. Study of the Holocaust interested me much less than it did some of my friends of a similar historical bent. Instead, I found through Dawidowicz the history that I believed we needed to study: the LIFE of Jews before the destruction. The city of Vilna encapsulates that life in all its diversity and excitement.

[Read more](#)

HUMANS OF HEBREW COLLEGE



My Jewish Learning Journey

By Vicki Kaplan

Hebrew College [Me'ah](#) and [Open Circle](#) participant



What brilliance lies in the very foundations of [Me'ah](#). What great minds were able to come together to take on the enormous challenge of bringing thousands of years of history into a living form! I believe that my classmates also felt the life-changing, mind-opening explosions of excitement in learning, of opening minds and hearts, of the idea of pushing traditions forward and breaking barriers that may exist in our thinking. The ability to look at my people and their history with new eyes, and the impetus to look at our ancient and traditional ways and bring new meaning and light to them – sheer brilliance!

I often feel that I am in the right place at the right time. Hebrew College has given me just what I wanted and needed in my life: exciting, relevant learning that continues to enrich me, inspire me, and bring much joy to my life. I have been blessed with outstanding teachers for all of my Hebrew College community learning classes and will continue, indefinitely, to study with them. I am blessed with amazing classes of peers. I have learned so much from all of them and enjoyed their personal perspectives. I am forever grateful that I lived within Hebrew College's realm, something that has allowed me to continue my long-awaited Jewish journey.

Hebrew College offers [community learning](#) programs for all ages, stages and backgrounds, and [graduate leadership programs](#) in rabbinical, cantorial, education, and Jewish studies, all within a pluralistic environment of open inquiry, depth, creativity, and compassion.

[View winter/spring community courses](#)

EVENTS



April 29, 2020

Save the Date

Leadership, Learning, and Love
An evening of music, conversation, and celebration

6:30 pm at Temple Israel, Boston

More details coming soon!

JANUARY

Azamra: Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan

Join Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab`18, for a morning service in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon. Supported by the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#).

January 25 | 10 am - 12 pm
Hebrew College Beit Midrash
[Learn more](#)

Ownership, Access, and the Question of Belonging: Towards a Just Land Ethic in America

A discussion with Leah Penniman, co-director and farm manager of Soul Fire Farm. Part of the Hebrew College Winter Seminar "What Do We Owe Each Other: Jewish Conversations on Equality and the Challenges of a Just Society," the week of January 27.

January 27 | 2 - 4 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)

Tainted Money: Jewish Philanthropy in a Troubled Time

A conversation with Len Fishman and Rabbi Sara Paache-Orlow, Hebrew SeniorLife. Part of the Hebrew College Winter Seminar "What Do We Owe Each Other: Jewish Conversations on Equality and the Challenges of a Just Society."

January 28 | 9:15 am
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)

Investing for Equity: A Conversation with Aliana Pineiro

A conversation with Aliana Pinerio, Impact Director for The Boston Impact Initiative Fund. Part of the Hebrew College Winter Seminar "What Do We Owe Each Other: Jewish

FEBRUARY

Taking it "Seriously": Doubt, Trust and Halakhah with Rabbi Avivia Richman

Hebrew College is co-sponsoring this event.

February 11 | 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Hadar, 10 Phillips Place, Cambridge, MA
[Learn more & register](#)

Azamra: Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan

Join Rabbi Lev Friedman, Rab`18, for a morning service in the Hebrew College Beit Midrash, followed by a pot-luck vegetarian kiddush luncheon. Supported by the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#).

February 22 | 10 am - 12 pm
Hebrew College Beit Midrash
[Learn more](#)

February Yom Iyyun: Teen Mental Health

The Rabbinical School of Hebrew College will be holding a Yom Iyyun on Teen Mental Health thanks to generous support from The Ruderman Family Foundation.

February 26 | 9 am - 3:30 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)

MARCH

Seeing Torah Gallery Opening

"Seeing Torah" is a visual diary documenting artist Anita Rabinoff-Goldman's study and artistic response to each of the 54 portions of the Torah over the cycle of a single Jewish year. Refreshments will be served.

March 24 | 6 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)

Re-envisioning Jewish Inclusion in 2020 and

January 28 | 1:15 - 2:30 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)

A one-day program including panel discussion, text study, and presentations. Supported by the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#). Breakfast and lunch available for purchase.

Income Inequality & The Problem of Inheritance

March 26 | 8 am - 4 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more](#)

A panel discussion with Chuck Collins, author of Born on Third Base; Molly Schulman of Resource Generation; and Rabbi Shoshana Meria Friedman, Rab`14. Part of the Hebrew College Winter Seminar “What Do We Owe Each Other: Jewish Conversations on Equality and the Challenges of a Just Society.”

January 28 | 7:15 pm
Hebrew College
[Learn more & RSVP](#)

