

# NEWS & VIEWS



## Exhale Tension, Inhale Inspiration

*"And the Lord formed the human of soil from the earth, and blew in its nostrils the breath of life: and the earthling became a human being." (Gen. 2:7)*

Breathe. Sing. Pray. These three principals are not only central to Hebrew College rabbinical and cantorial training but can help many of us stay centered during this challenging time. Hebrew College rabbinical students are using those skills in service to Jewish communities across the country through two new online initiatives: the [Hebrew College Niggun Seminar](#) and [Breath Lab at Hebrew College](#).

## Hebrew College Niggun Seminar

Co-hosts and Hebrew College rabbinical students Jackson Mercer and Shani Rosenbaum (pictured above) pack a lot of music, learning, and spirituality into 30 minutes each week. When they hit the airwaves Thursdays from 1-1:30 pm EDT via Zoom and [JewishLIVE.org](#) (a platform founded by Hebrew College alumnus Lex Rofeberg) for the new [Hebrew College Niggun Seminar](#), they introduce weekly guest instructors, who offer a story or some brief words of Torah, and teach a *niggun*, a wordless melody. Shani and Jackson take turns in



front of the camera, learning the niggun so participants can sing along with them, and behind the camera to ensure that all the technology runs smoothly.

"Spiritual music and particularly *niggunim* have a profound capacity to lift us when facing crisis, when we feel emotionally overwhelmed or at a loss for words," says Shani.

Shani initially launched the seminar in March through her role as a rabbinic intern at Temple Israel of Sharon, MA. She was asked to bring more energy into the prayer life of the congregation and cultivate opportunities for members to connect through spiritual music. When the quarantine began, she drew inspiration from a college friend's idea and launched the Thursday *Niggun* Seminar. Soon after, Mercer joined as co-host and the seminar became a Hebrew College initiative and partnership with JewishLIVE.

Guest instructors have included Rabbi Jessica Kate Meyer '14 (pictured above right) of The Kitchen in San Francisco, Hebrew College's Rabbi Nehemia Polen, Hadar's Rabbi Miriam-Simma Walfish, and others—and Shani and Jackson plan to bring in other faculty, students, and friends of Hebrew College.

[Read more](#) and remember to [tune in on Thursdays!](#)



## Breath Lab of Hebrew College

Hit pause on the day. Unwind, breathe, and recharge—Jewishly. That's the philosophy behind Breath Lab.

Founded by [Hebrew College](#) rabbinical student Yaakov Ginsberg-Schreck and Evelyn Punch, a seasoned yoga teacher with a background in biochemistry and neuroscience, Breath Lab offers anatomy-based movement classes, as well as combined yoga and *kavannah*/text study sessions, for personal well-being and Divine connection. In the combined sessions, Evelyn draws on her scientific background and practical Talmudic knowledge of the body to teach a one-hour yoga class, followed by Yaakov's 30-minute text study.

"We have the power to tune out of fight-or-flight and genuinely ground in ourselves," says Yaakov. "Ranging from Biblical to Rabbinic to Kabbalistic and Chasidic sources, the breath and body are intimately tied to the quality of spiritual well-being. In destabilizing times like these, it's through tuning into our inner stability and balance that we can reach equilibrium, clarity, and envision a brighter future."

Breath Lab launched in February at Hebrew College, drawing participants from across the Hebrew College community. Since moving online in March, it has been reaching communities in Greater Boston and across the country. They run weekly sessions for [Temple Israel of Boston](#) and, earlier this month, teamed up with [IKAR](#) in Los Angeles.

According to Yaakov, there's an ancient Jewish flag planted in mindfulness practice. "In the Torah, the word for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, literally means 'from the narrow places,' and our sacred journey is from these places of narrowness to expansive liberation. On the yoga mat, this transformation is literal. We release tension in the body's narrow places and bring blood flow to the tissues—gaining freedom in the terrain of our own being. This process of unwinding tension and coming into peacefulness is through the body. And while that's a universal human experience, the journey can be lived and narrated through a uniquely Jewish idiom."

[Learn more and sign up](#) for Breath Lab's newsletter.



## A Celebration of Our Graduates

Please join us as we honor our graduates on Sunday, June 7 during the virtual events below. Links will be posted on our website at [hebrewcollege.edu/classof2020](https://hebrewcollege.edu/classof2020).

### 12:00 pm A Celebration of Our Graduates

Honor and celebrate those receiving degrees in all of our programs, and becoming rabbis, cantors, and Jewish educators. Graduates will be welcomed back on June 6, 2021 to march and receive their degrees with the class of 2021.

### 1:00 pm Cantorial Ordination

School of Jewish Music graduates will be ordained as cantors.

### 2:00 pm Rabbinic Ordination: Stage I

Rabbinical School graduates will be honored for completion of their program and have the title of "Rabbi" conferred upon them. The second stage of our rabbinic ordination ceremony will be held when we can safely gather in person.

[Learn more](#) about our graduates. Help us recognize the Class of 2020 with a contribution to support Hebrew College's future.

Honor our graduates with a gift

## TORAH FOR THIS MOMENT



## Hebrew College Responds with Torah

Hebrew College faculty, alumni, and students have responded to this moment with an outpouring of Torah. Recent essays have included Rabbi Art Green's "[Coronavirus from the Holy Land](#)" and rabbinical student Frankie Sandmel's "[Moving from Corona-Time into Divine-Time.](#)"

Read Torah offerings

# SIGHTS & SOUNDS



We celebrated *berachot* and Cake Day 5780 in early May, where current rabbinical and cantorial students offered blessings to ordainees. Above l-r: Mimi Micner, Sarah Noyovitz, Jessica Goldberg, Noam Lerman, Becca Weintraub, SAM Luckey, Talia Stein, Gita Karasov, Matt Ponak. Below left: Jennifer Boyle. Below right l-r: Rachel Putterman, Genevieve Greinetz, Rabbi Daniel Klein, and Batya Ellinoy. View the list of graduates.





Cantoral student David Wolff gave his recital on May 17 via Zoom with more than 250 people in (virtual) attendance. His program, entitled *Hearing, Feeling and Singing Across the Centuries: Deep Pluralism in Jewish Music*, included Jewish music genres from classic cantorial *Hazzanut* to Jewish pop music.



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

## Safety in Numbers

*Parashat B'midbar (Numbers 1:1-4:20)*

*By Rabbi Minna Bromberg `10*

*Coordinator, Hebrew College Year-in-Israel Program for Rabbinical Students*

Numbers. It says it right there in the English name for the book of Torah that we begin reading this week: this book is about numbers. What does it mean for this suddenly free people to be numbered? Can we be truly free if we are constrained by being one in a number? Yet can we have a functioning society without making an accounting of people?

The first numbering in the book of Numbers is a census of men of military age. And this week's Torah portion alone contains three different numberings: the census of men old enough to bear arms, the census of the Levites, and the census of first-born males who are not Levites.

[Read more](#)

## IN THE NEWS

Rabbi Dr. Michael Shire's [article](#) "Responding to the Questions of Uncertainty Online" was featured in the May 12 issue of the Wabash Center website. He

was featured on [The Wabash Center](#)'s May 19 podcast. Rabbi Shire's article on Jewish childhood appears in the *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Children and Childhood Studies Four-Volume Set*.

Rabbi Jeffrey Summit, Director of the [Hebrew College Innovation Lab](#), participated in a conversation on "[Faith And Purpose During The Coronavirus Pandemic](#)," on the April 26 episode of WGBH's *Under the Radar with Callie Crossley*.

An interview with [Dr. Celene Ibrahim](#), [Miller Center](#) Advisory Council member, appeared on the [State of Formation website](#) on April 22.

[Rav-Hazzan Aliza Berger](#) '17 of Temple Emanuel of Newton, was quoted in an April 16 [story on WBUR 90.9 FM](#), "Religious Leaders Seeing More Participation And Generosity Despite Social Distancing."

Hebrew College President Rabbi Sharon Cohen Anisfeld was quoted in an April 8 [Boston Herald article](#), "Easter services, Passover seders go virtual amid pandemic."

[Miller Center](#) Director [Rabbi Or Rose](#)'s article "Building Bridges of Compassion: Preparing for Passover & Easter Virtually" was published in the April 7 issue of [Patheos.com](#).

# EVENTS

## May and June Events

[Visit our website](#) for the most recent information. All events are virtual.

### **May 21 & 28**

Hebrew College *Niggun* Seminar  
1-1:30 pm on [Jewishlive.org](#)

### **May 21**

Hebrew College Me'ah Graduation  
7:30 pm | [Learn more](#)



## May 23 & June 20

Azamra Online: A Monthly Alternative Shabbat Community Minyan  
10 am to Noon via Zoom | [Learn more](#)

## May 24

Hebrew College Prozdor Graduation  
11 am | [Learn more](#)

## May 26

Jewish Teen Foundation of Greater Boston at Hebrew College  
Grant Ceremony  
6 pm | [Learn more](#)

## June 7

A Celebration of Our Graduates - Noon-12:45 pm  
Cantorial Ordination - 1 pm  
Rabbinic Ordination: Stage I - 2 pm  
[Learn more](#)

## June 8

PsalmSeason Concert  
7:30-9 pm | [Learn more](#)

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Hebrew College | 160 Herrick Road, Newton Centre, MA 02459  
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