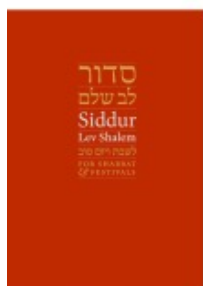


The Mordecai M. Kaplan Center for
Jewish Peoplehood and Mechon Hadar
present

*Imagine the Possibilities:
A Conference on the Future
of Jewish Liturgy and Prayer*
(Part 1 -The Words, Not the Music)

Sunday, May 17, 2015/28 Iyar 5775

at Congregation Rodeph Sholom
7 West 83rd Street, New York, NY



Imagine the Possibilities: A Conference on

- 9:30 - 10:00 am **Check-in and coffee**
- 10:00 - 10:05 am **Brief welcoming remarks**
- 10:05 - 11:15 am **Panel 1A – Poetry and Liturgy**
Moderator: Dr. Eric Selinger
Panelists: Dr. Marcia Falk, Ms. Merle Feld,
Yehoshua November and Dr. Alicia Ostriker
- Panel 1B – Liturgical Creativity within Halakhic Boundaries**
Moderator: Rabbi Dr. Ethan Tucker
Panelists: Dr. Alyssa Gray, Rabbi Dr. Daniel Sperber and Rabbi Jan Uhrbach
- 11:20 am- 12:10 pm **Keynote: “Reconstructing Jewish Worship without the Temple: Rabbinic Expectations vs. Social Realities”**
Speaker: Rabbi Dr. Ruth Langer
- 12:10 - 12:55 pm **Lunch (Kosher box lunches provided)**
- 1:00 - 2:15 pm **Panel 2A – Denominational Perspectives on Liturgy**
Moderator: Rabbi Dr. Elie Kaunfer
Panelists: Rabbi Dr. Peter Knobel,
Rabbi Reena Spicehandler and Rabbi Jan Uhrbach
- Panel 2B – “Jewish Language” and the Problems of Translation**
Moderator: Dr. Maeera Shreiber
Panelists: Rabbi Ofer Shabat Beit-Halachmi, Rabbi Dr. Leila Gal Berner, and Dr. Joel Rosenberg and Dr. Joseph Rosenstein
- 2:20 - 3:20 pm **Panel 3 – “Of Making Many Siddurim There is No End”: Critics’ Perspectives**
Moderator: Mr. Daniel Cedarbaum
Panelists: Rabbi Edward Feld, Ms. Catherine Madsen,
Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon and Rabbi Michael Strassfeld

n the Future of Jewish Liturgy and Prayer

Concurrent Workshops

Is Fixed Liturgy Consistent with Heartfelt Prayer?

Text study with Rabbi Joshua Cahan

Siddur and Intertextuality: A Method of Interpretation

Text study with Rabbi Dr. Elie Kaunfer

3:20 - 3:40 pm

Break/Mincha services

3:45 - 4:45pm

Panel 4 – Prayer as a Prod to Social Justice Work

Moderator: Dr. Eric Caplan

Panelists: Rabbi Jill Jacobs, Rabbi J. Rolando Matalon,
Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin and Rabbi Shawn Zevit

Concurrent Workshops

Poetry in Practice

Readings by poets

Praying in the Vernacular

Text study with Rabbi Dr. Ethan Tucker

4:50 - 5:55 pm

Panel 5 – Theology and Prayer

Moderator: Rabbi Jason Rubenstein

Panelists: Rabbi Dr. Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi,
Rabbi Dr. Shai Held and Dr. Tzemah Yoreh

Concurrent Workshops

*Prayer as Property: Sharing Sacred Work in the Age of
Copyright and the Web*

Presentation by Mr. Aharon Varady

*Shirah u'Tefillah: Contemporary Israeli Liturgy and
Prayer Practice*

Presentation by Rabbi Ofer Shabat Beit-Halachmi and
Dr. Adina Newberg

BIOGRAPHIES OF PRESENTERS

Rabbi Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi (Panel 2B and Workshop) is a third-generation Israeli. He grew up in the secular village of Beit Herut and served in the Israeli Defense Forces as a Major in the Medical Corps. With a graduate degree in Talmud and education from the University of Haifa and years of teaching in the university and in Hamidrasha of Oranim college, Ofer was ordained in 2005 at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. In many ways, Ofer has come to represent the return of secular Israelis to more traditional expressions of Jewish spirituality and religious leadership.

Ofer served as the Rabbi of the Progressive (Reform) Congregation Tzur Hadassah (a suburb of Jerusalem). He was a “Jerusalem Fellow” at the Mandel Foundation School for leadership and a member of the Reconstructionist “Amuta” in Israel. Ofer edited a volume entitled *El ha-Lev: Toward the Heart* a collection of original liberal Israeli prayers and ceremonies, and authored several pieces of liturgy for different Reform prayerbooks. Ofer has also authored several articles on a variety of topics including Jewish identity and the experience of becoming a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in secular Israeli society, on the creating of new liturgy and ritual, and on the ethical dilemmas of Israeli soldiers who have served in the occupied territories. Ofer is working on his Ph.D. dissertation at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati OH.

Rabbi Dr. Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi (Panel 5) serves the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion as the National Director of Recruitment and Admissions and President’s Scholar and heads the Office of Community Engagement. Prior to this recent appointment, Rachel served as Vice President of the Shalom Hartman Institute and for over a decade as a member of the Institute’s faculty, and directed the Hartman Lay leadership, Rabbinic leadership, and Christian leadership programs. Ordained at the HUC-JIR nearly 20 years ago, she also earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Rachel writes a monthly column in the Jerusalem Post and has co-authored two books and published numerous articles. She also teaches and mentors students of HUC-JIR and speaks throughout North America on leadership, Israel, gender, and theology, and is currently writing a book on the future of covenant for Jewish Peoplehood.

Rachel is an alumna of the Wexner Foundation Graduate Fellowship and is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. She has served on the faculties of the Wexner Foundation, CLAL-National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, and the Skirball Center. For more than a decade she also served as the rabbi of Congregation Shirat HaYam on Nantucket Island. Raised in Minneapolis, Rachel also lived in Israel for nearly 15 years and currently lives in Cincinnati with her husband, Rabbi Ofer Sabath Beit-Halachmi, and their three children.

Rabbi Dr. Leila Gal Berner (Panel 2B) was ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1989 where she also received an MHL (Master of Hebrew Letters). In 2009, Leila received a second rabbinic ordination from Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, z"l, founder of the Jewish Renewal movement. She received her B.A. in History and English Literature from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in medieval Jewish history with a specialization in medieval Jewish Spain, where she did her research under auspices of a Fulbright Fellowship. Dr. Berner has taught in the Religion departments of Reed and Swarthmore Colleges, at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and at Emory and George Washington Universities. She served as ongoing Scholar-in-Residence for a decade in the Philosophy and Religion Department at American University in Washington, D.C.

In her twenty-six year pulpit career, Leila has also served Reconstructionist congregations in Pennsylvania, Georgia and Virginia. Having founded Kol Ami: The Northern Virginia Reconstructionist Community fifteen years ago, she is entering her final eighteen months of service to that congregation before her retirement from the pulpit in 2016.

Since 2012, Leila has also served as Dean of Students of the ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal Ordination Program (AOP) where she continues to work directly with rabbinical, cantorial and rabbinic pastor students as a mentor and advisor, and where she is a key figure in shaping the evolving curriculum of the AOP. She also teaches Jewish history, Jewish feminist thought, midrash and contemporary approaches to liturgy in the AOP and in numerous adult education contexts. A noted liturgist, her work appears in the *Kol Haneshamah* Reconstructionist prayer book series. She is currently at work on a book entitled, *Listening With the Ears of the Heart: Genesis*, which offers a contemplative approach to the Book of Genesis.

Leila lives in Rockville, MD with her wife, Franna Ruddell, and spends her most joyous times being *savta* (grandmother) to Olivia, Lucy and Aliya.

Rabbi Joshua Cahan (Workshop) teaches Rabbinics and Prayer at the Solomon Schechter High School in Westchester, NY. He received his rabbinic ordination and Ph.D. in Rabbinic Literature from the Jewish Theological Seminary. Previously he was the founder and director of the Northwoods Kollel at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, the first fully egalitarian yeshiva program in the US. He also compiled and edited *Yedid Nefesh*, a traditional, egalitarian bencher with commentary.

Dr. Eric Caplan (Panel 4) was born in Montreal, Canada. He received his B.A. in Jewish Studies and Religious Studies from the University of Toronto, where he graduated in 1985. Between 1986 and 1990, Eric lived in Israel and pursued M.A. studies at the Samuel M. Melton Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. Eric received his Ph.D. from McGill University in the fall of

1998. He is the author of *From Ideology to Liturgy: Reconstructionist Worship and American Liberal Judaism*, published by Hebrew Union College Press in 2002. Eric continues to research Reconstructionist Judaism and liberal Jewish life in general. He is currently studying social activism in contemporary North American Jewish life and preparing for publication a volume of excerpts from the diaries of Mordecai Kaplan, 1951-1978. Eric is the Director of McGill's Jewish Teacher Training Program and an associate professor in its Faculties of Arts and Education. He is vice-president of The Mordecai M. Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood.

Mr. Daniel Cedarbaum (Panel 3 and Conference Moderator) is the Executive Director of The Mordecai M. Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood. From 2002-2006, Dan was the President of the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF), and a member of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. He became the Director of Movement Growth Initiatives and Special Projects of the JRF in September 2009, having previously served for almost 20 years as a member of JRF's Board of Directors. Dan was also the JRF's Acting Director of Individual Giving and staffed the JRF's Chicago-area office. He worked professionally for the JRF through November 2010, when he left to start the Kaplan Center, together with Mel Scult, Eric Caplan and Jack Wolofsky. Dan is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School.

Dr. Marcia Falk (Panel 1A) is a poet, translator, and painter. She received a B.A. in philosophy magna cum laude from Brandeis and a Ph.D. in English and comparative literature from Stanford. She was a Fulbright Scholar and a postdoctoral fellow in Bible and Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University and a professor of literature, creative writing, and Jewish studies at Binghamton University, the Claremont Colleges, and Stanford.

Marcia is known in the progressive Jewish world for her poetic re-creations of Hebrew and English liturgy from a nonhierarchical theological perspective and for her re-visioning of God in nontheistic imagery. Her bilingual prayer book, *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Holiday*, is used by congregations in North America, Europe, and Israel. Excerpts appear in the prayer books of all the major non-Orthodox denominations. Marcia's most recent book, *The Days Between* (Brandeis University Press, 2014), continues the project, providing liturgy for the Jewish High Holidays.

In addition to her liturgical books, Marcia has published several volumes of poems and translations from Hebrew and Yiddish. Nobel Laureate I. B. Singer said of her translation of the Song of Songs, "I thought until now that the Song of Songs could not be translated better than in the King James Version." Among the modern poets she has translated are the Yiddish modernist Malka Heifetz Tussman and the Hebrew mystic Zelda. The late poet Adrienne Rich has written of Falk's work: "It's always a thrill when (as rarely happens) the scholar's mind and the poet's soul come together." Please visit www.marciafalk.com.

Rabbi Edward Feld (Panel 2A) is senior editor of the new *Mahzor Lev Shalem*, published by the Conservative Movement's Rabbinical Assembly, for which he was listed as one of the Forward 50 – the 50 outstanding American Jews. He is currently senior editor of the forthcoming *Siddur Lev Shalem for Shabbat and Festivals*, due out in the fall. Of his most recent book, *Joy, Despair and Hope: Reading Psalms* (Cascade Books) one reviewer wrote, "Rabbi Feld has a profound understanding of the pathways to spiritual striving," and another wrote, "It invites readers to see the psalms as windows into the human condition."

In his distinguished career, Ed has served as Rabbi-in-Residence at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America functioning as an advisor and mentor to rabbinical students, Rabbi of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, and Hillel Director of Princeton University. He is a noted teacher, lecturing throughout North America and has published widely on halachic and ethical issues, on Jewish theology and on biblical themes and along with his book on Psalms is the author of *The Spirit of Renewal: Faith After the Holocaust* (Jewish Lights).

Ms. Merle Feld (Panel 1A) is a widely published poet, award-winning playwright, peace activist and educator. Her prose and poetry, including her signature poem about women and men at Sinai, "We All Stood Together," can be found in numerous anthologies and in Reconstructionist, Conservative, Reform and non-denominational prayer books. Merle is author of a highly acclaimed memoir in poetry and prose, *A Spiritual Life: Exploring the Heart and Jewish Tradition* (SUNY Press, revised 2007), a book of poetry, *Finding Words* (URJ Press, 2011) and the play *The Gates are Closing* which has offered hundreds of congregations from Brooklyn to Beijing a powerful and moving introduction to the High Holidays. She organized and facilitated Israeli-Palestinian dialogue on the West Bank during the first intifada and later at Seeds of Peace. Since 2005 Merle has served as Founding Director of the Albin Rabbinic Writing Institute, pioneering the teaching of writing as a spiritual practice and accompanying rabbis from across the denominations as they explore their inner lives and develop their authentic voices. Visit her at www.merlefeld.com to learn more about her writing, teaching, speaking, and for guidance to support your own writing practice.

Dr. Alyssa Gray (Panel 1B) is Emily and Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman Chair in Rabbinics and Associate Professor of Codes and Responsa Literature at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. She received her Ph.D. (with distinction) in Talmud and Rabbinics from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and also holds an LL.M. in Mishpat Ivri (Jewish Law) from the Hebrew University Faculty of Law. She also holds BA degrees from Barnard College and the Jewish Theological Seminary, and a JD from the Columbia University School of Law.

Alyssa has written on a number of topics, notably martyrdom in the Jerusalem Talmud, the formations of the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, liturgy, the halachic

history of Jewish women's charitable giving in the Middle Ages, the evolution of Talmudic attitudes toward the poor, and the application of contemporary legal theory to medieval halakhic literature. Her two current research interests are wealth, poverty, and charity in classical and medieval rabbinic literature and the application of "law and literature" and contemporary historiographical theory to the study of medieval halakhic literature.

Rabbi Dr. Shai Held is Co-Founder, Dean and Chair in Jewish Thought at Mechon Hadar. He also directs Mechon Hadar's Center for Jewish Leadership and Ideas, for which he has written over a year's worth of weekly divrei Torah on the parashah. Previously, he served for six years as Scholar-in-Residence at Kehilat Hadar in New York City, and taught both theology and Halakha at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He also served as Director of Education at Harvard Hillel. A renowned lecturer and educator, Shai is a 2011 recipient of the Covenant Award for excellence in Jewish education and has been named multiple times to Newsweek's list of the top 50 rabbis in America. He has taught for institutions such as Drisha, Me'ah, Combined Jewish Philanthropies, and the Rabbinic Training Institute, and currently serves on the faculty of the Wexner Heritage program. He holds a doctorate in religion from Harvard; his main academic interests are in modern Jewish and Christian thought and in the history of Zionism. His book, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence* was published by Indiana University Press in 2013.

Rabbi Jill Jacobs (Panel 4) is the Executive Director of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, which mobilizes 1,800 rabbis and cantors and tens of thousands of American Jews to protect human rights in North America and Israel. She is the author of *Where Justice Dwells: A Hands-On Guide to Doing Social Justice in Your Jewish Community* (Jewish Lights, 2011) and *There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice through Jewish Law and Tradition* (Jewish Lights, 2009).

Widely regarded as a leading voice on Jewish social justice, she regularly lectures at synagogues, Jewish community centers, and conferences and has written about Jewish perspectives on social justice and human rights for more than two dozen publications.

Jill has been named three times to the Forward's list of [50 influential American Jews](#), to Newsweek's list of the [50 Most Influential Rabbis in America](#) every year since 2009, and to the Jerusalem Post's 2013 list of "[Women to Watch.](#)" She holds rabbinic ordination and an MA in Talmud from the Jewish Theological Seminary, an MS in Urban Affairs from Hunter College, and a BA from Columbia University. She lives in New York with her husband, Guy Austrian, and their daughters Lior and Dvir.

Rabbi Dr. Elie Kaunfer is co-founder and executive director of Mechon Hadar. Elie has previously worked as a journalist, banker, and corporate fraud investigator. A graduate of Harvard College, he completed his doctorate in liturgy at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he was also ordained. A Wexner Graduate Fellow and

Dorot Fellow, Elie is a co-founder of Kehilat Hadar and has been named multiple times to Newsweek's list of the top 50 rabbis in America. He was selected as an inaugural AVI CHAI Fellow, and is the author of *Empowered Judaism: What Independent Minyanim Can Teach Us About Building Vibrant Jewish Communities* (Jewish Lights, 2010).

Rabbi Dr. Peter Knobel (Panel 2A) is Rabbi Emeritus of Beth Emet The Free Synagogue, in Evanston, Illinois, where he served as Senior Rabbi from 1980-2010. A graduate of Hamilton College, he was ordained by Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 1969, and earned a Master's in philosophy and a Ph.D. from Yale University. Peter serves in leadership roles in the Reform movement on a national level as well as being actively involved in the Chicago-area community. He is a past president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and served as the CCAR of Siddur Editorial Committee. He is a past Chair of the Liturgy and Reform Practice Committee and was a member of ad hoc committees on human sexuality, homosexuality and the rabbinate, and patrilineal descent.

Rabbi Dr. Ruth Langer (Keynote Speaker) is Professor of Jewish Studies in the Theology Department at Boston College and Associate Director of its Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. She is also chair of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations. She received her Ph.D. in Jewish Liturgy in 1994 and her rabbinic ordination in 1986 from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Ruth writes and speaks in two major areas: the development of Jewish liturgy and ritual; and Christian-Jewish relations. Her book, *Cursing the Christians?: A History of the Birkat HaMinim* (Oxford University Press, 2012), combines these two interests, tracing the transformations of a Jewish prayer that was, until modernity, a curse of Christians. Drawing on all available evidence, its chapters present the history of the text and the polemics around it from its putative origins in the early rabbinic period, through its censorship by the church, to its modern emergence into an inoffensive prayer that asks God to rid the world of evil.

Ruth is also author of *To Worship God Properly: Tensions between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism*, published in 1998 (Hebrew Union College Press). This book examines the interplay between liturgical law and custom in the medieval world, investigating the tensions between rabbinic dictates and the actual practices and understandings of the community. Most recently, she published *Jewish Liturgy: A Guide to Research* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), an annotated bibliography of over 1000 entries of English-language studies of Jewish liturgy accessible to those from outside the Jewish Studies world. She also co-edited *Liturgy in the Life of the Synagogue* (Eisenbrauns, 2005) and has published a long list of articles.

Ruth has been a visiting professor at Yale University and the Jewish Theological Seminary. She has also been invited to speak and/or teach in a variety of other

academic and non-academic settings, including Hebrew University, the University of Chicago, Florida Atlantic University, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Freehof Institute for Progressive Halakhah, Limmud UK, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the Masorti movement in Latin America, and the Union for Reform Judaism, as well as numerous synagogue settings. Her first book is *A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2005), and she has also edited (with Bernard Jackson) the volume *Studies in Mediaeval Halakhah in Honor of Stephen M. Passamanek* (Jewish Law Association Studies XVII; 2007). Her articles have or will appear in *Conservative Judaism*, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, *AJS Review*, *G'vanim*, *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, and *Diné Israel*, as well as many edited volumes.

Ms. Catherine Madsen (Panel 3) is the author of *The Bones Reassemble: Reconstituting Liturgical Speech* and *In Medias Res: Liturgy for the Estranged*, as well as many articles on liturgy. She also wrote the libretto for Robert Stern's acclaimed oratorio *Shofar*. She is a lay leader at the Jewish Community of Amherst, Massachusetts and works as Bibliographer at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst.

Rabbi José Rolando Matalon (Panel 4) pursued his rabbinical studies at the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires, which was founded by his mentor Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York where he was ordained in 1986. Since then he has been a rabbi at B'nai Jeshurun synagogue in Manhattan.

Dr. Adina Newberg (Workshop) has been a lecturer in Asian and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. Her current research focuses on contemporary religious organizations and the spiritual journeys of those who participate in them—especially within the growing renaissance of liberal Jewish life in Israel.

While Adina has studied all forms of adult transformative learning—including second-career rabbinical studies—she is particularly interested in the organizations and individuals who are creating a new form of engagement with Judaism inside Israel.

At RRC and Jewish Reconstructionist Communities, Adina serves as the channel for involvement with progressive Israeli Judaism in general, as well as the new Israeli-Jewish renaissance. She manages Gateways to Israeli-Jewish Renaissance on Facebook. Adina studied for her Bachelor of Arts at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and holds a doctorate in planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Yehoshua November (Panel 1A) is the author of *God's Optimism*, which won the MSR Poetry Book Award and was named a finalist for the *L.A. Times* Book Prize in Poetry, Autumn House Poetry Prize, and *Tampa Review* Prize for Poetry. His work has appeared or is *The Sun Magazine*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Prairie Schooner*,

and on NPR's *The Writer's Almanac*. *The Jewish Week* named November one of the 36 "Best and Brightest Innovators and Visionaries" under 36 years of age. The winner of *Prairie Schooner's* Bernice Slote Award and the London School of Jewish Studies Poetry Contest, November teaches writing at Rutgers University and Touro College.

Dr. Alicia Ostriker (Panel 1A) is a poet-critic, author of fourteen volumes of poetry including *the volcano sequence* (2002), *The Book of Seventy* (2009), which received the National Jewish Book Award, and *The Book of Life: Selected Jewish Poems 1979-2011*. Her prose work includes *Feminist Revision and the Bible* (2002), *The Nakedness of the Fathers* (1994), a combination of midrash and autobiography, and *For the Love of God: the Bible as an Open Book* (2007). Her awards include a Guggenheim, a William Carlos Williams Award, and a residency at the Bellagio Study Center; twice a finalist for the National Book Award, she is Professor Emerita of Rutgers University, and is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

Rabbi Margie Klein Ronkin (Panel 4) serves as the spiritual leader of Congregation Sha'arei Shalom in Ashland, Massachusetts, and also works as Director of Clergy and Leadership Development for the Essex County Community organization. She is the founder of Moische Kavod House in Boston, a community of over 600 Jews in their 20s and 30s dedicated to Tikkun Olam. Margie is co-editor of *Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call for Justice* (Jewish Lights), and is a member of the Synagogue 3000 Emergent Communities Leadership Network. She has appeared in the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the LA Times, CNN, and Newsweek for her faith-based social justice work, and was invited to the White House for her leadership.

Dr. Joel Rosenberg (Panel 2B) is Director of the Program in Judaic Studies at Tufts University, where he holds the Lee S. McCollester Chair in Biblical Literature, and is a member of the core faculty of the Program in International Literary and Visual Studies, and of the newly launched Program in Film and Media Studies. He holds a B. A. degree in English from U. C. Berkeley where he graduated with high honors and a junior-year membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He also holds a Bachelor of Hebrew Literature degree with honors from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles, and a Ph.D. in the History of Consciousness from U. C. Santa Cruz. His book *King and Kin: Political Allegory in the Hebrew Bible* (Indiana University Press, 1986), has received favorable discussion or mention by, among others, Gabriel Josipovici, David Damrosch, Harold Bloom, Jon Levinson, and Daniel Boyarin. His article "Biblical Narrative" in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (ed. Barry W. Holtz, Summit Books, 1981) has received widespread praise from scholars and lay readers alike. His essays "Jeremiah and Ezekiel" and "1 and 2 Samuel," appear in Robert Alter and Frank Kermode's anthology *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Belknap & Harvard Press / Thomas Collins, 1987), of which his essays received favorable mention by George Steiner in *The New Yorker* and by novelist Fernanda Eberstadt. For 13 years, beginning in 1987, he was translator of *Kol Haneshamah*, the Reconstructionist Sabbath, Festival, and Daily Prayer Books

and High Holiday Mahzor and, in recognition of this work, was accorded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 2006. Since the mid-1990s, following a 1995 grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities, he has been immersed in film studies, beginning with a groundbreaking essay “Jewish Experience on Film: An American Overview” (American Jewish Year Book, 1996), and he has recently completed a book titled *The Era of Catastrophe: A Judeo-Cinematic Trajectory*, a study of six films of Jewish experience made between 1920 and 1947.

Dr. Joseph G. Rosenstein (Panel 2B) has created and published *Siddur Eit Ratzon* and *Machzor Eit Ratzon*, traditional but non-conventional prayer books that include complete transliterations, new translations, guideposts and commentaries, and *kavvanot* and meditations. They were written to address the variety of obstacles to participating in prayer services described by his students. *Siddur Eit Ratzon*, whose website is simply newsiddur.org, is now used by over a hundred congregations of all types and (non-Orthodox) affiliations. Joe is a founder and former chair of the National Havurah Committee and its Summer Institute (at which he teaches frequently), and is a member and founder of the Highland Park (NJ) Minyan. His official title is Distinguished Professor of Mathematics at Rutgers University, where he is now completing his 46th year of teaching. For many years his focus has been on K-12 mathematics education. Joe directs year-round programs for teachers of mathematics and a summer program for mathematically talented high school students. His recently published book can be found at new-math-text.com. Joe and his, Judy, have five daughters, five sons-in-law, ten grandchildren, and two small dogs. *Baruch haShem yom yom*.

Rabbi Jason Rubenstein (Panel 5) is Dean of Students at Yeshivat Hadar, where he also teaches Talmud and Jewish thought. Jason also directs the recruitment efforts at Mechon Hadar. Jason was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2011, and also holds an MA in Talmud from JTS and a BA from Harvard College. An alumnus of the kollel of Yeshivat Ma’ale Gilboa, the Wexner Graduate Fellowship, the Legacy Heritage Rabbinic Fellows program at JTS, and the Graduate Fellowship in Jewish Law and Legal Theory of the Cardozo Center for Jewish Law, Jason has also led multiple programs for the Nesiya Institute.

Dr. Eric Selinger (Panel 1A) is Professor of English at DePaul University and Executive Editor of the online *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*. His books and edited collections include *What Is It Then Between Us? Traditions of Love in American Poetry*, *Jewish American Poetry: Poems, Commentary, and Reflections*, and the forthcoming critical anthology *Romance Fiction and American Culture: Love as the Practice of Freedom?* He has published essays on many Jewish American poets, including most recently “Three Are the Fathers (Harvey Shapiro, Stanley Moss, and Michael Heller)” and the forthcoming “Mixed Dancing (Alicia Ostriker),” both in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*. As “Rusty,” “Rus-T,” and “.doc” he appears each spring as the principal song

writer and featured rapper for the Alte Rockers, the Purim parody band of Evanston's Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation.

Dr. Maera Yaffa Shreiber (Panel 2B) is Associate Professor Department of English, University of Utah, Director of Religious Studies, University of Utah, Chair of the Initiative in Cross Cultural Jewish Studies at the U of U, author of *Singing in a Strange Land: Jewish American Poetry and Poetics* (Stanford University Press, 2007), the Jordan Schnitzer Prize in Jewish Literature (American Jewish Studies Association, 2011) as well as numerous articles in journals such as *Prooftexts* and *PMLA* on poetry, religion, and Jewish thought. She is the recipient of a National Endowment Humanities fellowship and recently was named a Fellow at the Frankel Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor Fall 2012. She is currently working on two new projects: a book length study entitled, *Holy Envy: Poetry and the Judeo-Christian Borderzone* and a collection of essays constellated around the relation between prayer and poetry.

Rabbi Dr. Daniel Sperber (Panel 1B) was born in a castle in Ruthin, Wales in 1940, to a distinguished line of Orthodox rabbis. He studied in Yeshivot Kol Torah and Hevron in Jerusalem, and then in the Courtauld Institute of Art for a B.A. in the history of Art and University College London for a Ph.D. in Classics, Ancient History and Hebrew Studies. In 1968 he joined the faculty of Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, where he has been since then, as a teacher in the Talmud Department, the Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, and for the past eight years as President of the Jesselson Institute for Advanced Torah Studies at Bar-Ilan University. He is the incumbent of the Milan Roven Chair of Talmudic Research, and received the Israel Prize in 1992 for his research in Talmud and the history of Jewish Customs. He also served as the chairman of the Council for Religious Education at the Ministry of Education for a decade. He has published over thirty books and over four hundred articles on the subjects of Talmudic realic and socio-economic history, classical philology, Jewish art, and a famous eight-volumes series on the history of Jewish customs. Most recently he has written *On Changes in Jewish Liturgy: Options and Limitations* (2010) and another books on halachic methodology and rabbinic decision-making in confrontation with modernity, and has a number of books presently in press.

Rabbi Reena Spicehandler (Panel 2A) has been specializing in the interim rabbinate since 2001, serving many congregations in the Reform and Conservative movements. She holds a BA in French Language and Literature and an MA in General Studies in the Humanities, both from the University of Chicago. She did further graduate work in Comparative Studies in Literature at that institution as well. Rabbi Spicehandler is a graduate of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College where she subsequently spent ten years as Dean of Students and Admissions.

Rabbi Spicehandler has contributed to many contemporary siddurim and mahzorim as editor, translator, and commentator. Her most recent literary project involves translating stories of S. Y. Agnon and Mendele Mocher Seforim into English in part-

nership with Dr. Herb Levine. She currently serves as Visiting Rabbi at Germantown-Jewish Centre in Philadelphia.

Rabbi Michael Strassfeld (Panel 3) has been prominent in the American Jewish community for nearly forty years, dating from his involvement as co-editor of the first Jewish Catalog in 1973. He graduated magna cum laude from Brandeis University (1971) with honors in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, after having spent his freshman year at the Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University. He also holds an M.A. degree from Brandeis in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, and completed his doctoral coursework in Jewish History at Brandeis. He received his ordination from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1991. Michael was very active in the Havurah movement, having been the founding chairperson of the National Havurah Committee from 1979 to 1982. Before coming to the SAJ, he held various positions at Congregation Ansche Chesed on the Upper West Side, including Director of Program and Development, Executive Director, and rabbi of the congregation.

Michael has been the author, editor or co-editor of numerous books and articles, including three versions of *The Jewish Catalog*, *A Shabbat Haggadah: Ritual and Study Texts for the Home*; and *The Jewish Holidays*, a guide to the holidays used in many Jewish households.

In 2000, he co-edited with his wife, Rabbi Joy Levitt, *A Night of Questions*, a Passover Haggadah published in 2000 by the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation. His most recent work is *A Book of Life: Embracing Judaism as a Spiritual Practice* published in 2002 by Schocken Books.

Rabbi Ethan Tucker (Panel 1B and Workshop) is co-founder and rosh yeshiva at Mechon Hadar and chair in Jewish Law. Ethan also directs Mechon Hadar's Center for Jewish Law and Values. Previously, Ethan was a faculty member at the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education, where he taught Talmud and Halakhah in the Scholars' Circle. Ethan was ordained by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and earned a doctorate in Talmud and Rabbinics from the Jewish Theological Seminary and a B.A. from Harvard College. He has been named multiple times to Newsweek's list of the top 50 rabbis in America. A Wexner Graduate Fellow, he was a co-founder of Kehilat Hadar and a winner of the first Grinspoon Foundation Social Entrepreneur Fellowship.

Rabbi Jan R. Uhrbach (Panel 1B and Panel 2A), was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in 2003, and recently joined JTS's faculty as Director of Liturgical Arts. She is associate editor of *Siddur Lev Shalem*, the new Shabbat and festival *siddur* to be published in 2015 by the Rabbinical Assembly, having served on the editorial committee for *Machzor Lev Shalem*. Jan is also the founding rabbi of the Conservative Synagogue of the Hamptons in Bridgehampton, and a distinguished teacher of Torah. She is a member of the Wexner Heritage faculty, and has taught and served as scholar-in-residence in many synagogues.

The rabbinate is Jan's second career. A graduate of Yale University (1988) and Harvard Law School (1985), she served as Law Clerk to Federal District Judge Kimba M. Wood. She then joined the New York law firm of Satterlee Stephens Burke & Burke LLP, where she specialized in media litigation, becoming a partner of the firm in January 1996.

Mr. Aharon Varady (Workshop) is a community planner and Jewish educator working to improve stewardship of the public domain, be it the physical and natural commons of urban park systems or the creative and cultural commons of yeshivot, libraries and museums. A co-founder of the Jewish Free-Culture Society, his advocacy for [open-source Judaism](#) has been written about in the [Atlantic Magazine](#) and [Haaretz](#). He is particularly interested in pedagogies for advancing ecological wisdom, praxes for maturing creative and emotional intelligence, and realizing effective theurgical ritual. He is a writer, publisher, and liturgist, the founding director of the [Open Siddur Project](#), a former Teva educator, and Jewish experiential education fellow for Hazon. He lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with his cat, Annie.

Rabbi Dr. Tzemah Yoreh (Panel 5) has been fascinated with the Bible and with liturgy since a young age. After winning the Diaspora division of the international Bible Contest as a teenager, he went on to study Bible and comparative literature at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where he earned his Ph.D. in 2004. As a teacher and rabbi in academic and community settings alike, Yoreh enjoys helping people discover sides of the Bible they never knew, and making prayer more meaningful for people who wish to go beyond traditional Jewish liturgy. His books and projects have been featured in the *Forward*, *Jerusalem Post*, *The Times of Israel*, and in numerous blogs. Tzemah was ordained as a humanist rabbi by the International Institute for Secular Humanistic Judaism and is a resident at Clal-National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. He splits his time between Israel and North America with his spouse, Aviva, and their children Boaz and Elisha.

Rabbi Shawn Israel Zevit (Panel 4) is the lead rabbi of congregation Mishkan Shalom, in Philadelphia, PA. He worked for the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement for fourteen years as Director of Congregational Services and Social Justice, consulting to and supporting dozens of congregations, organizations, federations, social justice initiatives in the Jewish and larger world. Shawn is co-director with Rabbi Marcia Prager of the award-winning Davennet Leader's Training Institute (www.dlti.org) and is a spiritual director and trainer of Jewish clergy in spiritual direction for the ALEPH Hashpa'ah (Spiritual Direction) program). He is also a recording and performing artist (<http://www.cdbaby.com/Artist/ShawnZevit>) with five CD's of original and traditional liturgical/spiritual compositions and has been an organizer for over twenty years of men's programming and retreats. He was co-editor with Harry Brod of *Brother Keepers: New Perspectives in Jewish Masculinity* (Men's Studies Press, 2010, <http://www.mensstudies.com/content/H44L82/>), as well as the first Jewish-based book for the Alban Institute: *Offerings of the Heart: Money and Values in Faith Community* (<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781566992817>).

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