

AFTER ORTHODOXY

CULTURAL CREATIVITY AND
THE BREAK WITH TRADITION

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Sunday, September 15, 2024
9:00am-10:00pm ET

Monday, September 16, 2024
10:00am-1:30pm ET

DAY 1 | SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

9:00am-9:15am ET

Greetings and Opening Remarks

ZALMAN NEWFIELD and NAOMI SEIDMAN

9:15am-10:45am ET

Session One | *Activism After Orthodoxy*

NAFTULI MOSTER (Shtetl: The Haredi Free Press)

"The Orthodox Media Ecosystem and Its Discontents"

ELAD NEHORAI (Torah Trumps Hate)

"Liberalism and the Illiberal Community"

YAIR HESS (Hillel, Israel)

"Beyond Orthodoxy: Navigating Israel's Cultural Maze"

BEATRICE WEBER (YAFFED)

"Strategies for Impacting Systemic Change in the Orthodox Community"

11:00am-12:30pm ET

Session Two | *Religion After Orthodoxy*

Roundtable with YEHUDA JACOBOWITZ (Nitzotzot),

AMICHAEL LAU-LAVIE (Lab/Shul NYC), JERICHO VINCENT (Temple of the Stranger)

Moderated by SHAUL MAGID (Harvard University)

12:30pm-1:30pm ET | Break

(Lunch not provided)

1:30pm-3:00pm ET

Session Three | *Do We Need an OTD Think Tank? Challenges, Opportunities, Visions*

Roundtable with SHAUL MAGID, ELAD NEHORAI,

CHANI GETTER, NAOMI SEIDMAN; Moderated by LANI SANTO

3:15pm-4:45pm ET

Session Four | *Comparative Religious Exit*

Roundtable with AMY JEMMET, JESSICA PRATEZINA,

HANNAH ABBASI, JEREMY JENKINS; Moderated by ZALMAN NEWFIELD

5:00pm-10:00pm ET
AFTER ORTHODOXY—THE FESTIVAL
MC, LUZER TWERSKY

5:00pm-5:30pm ET
“Castles in the Sky”
A thirty-minute film by PEARL GLUCK

5:45pm-7:00pm ET
Ex-Orthodoxy and the Arts
Roundtable with MELISSA WEISZ, PEARL GLUCK,
SARA ERENTHAL, LUZER TWERSKY; Moderated by JESSICA LANG

7:00pm-8:30pm ET | Reception and Shmoozing

8:30pm-9:45pm ET
Performances by BASYA SCHECHTER, RIKI ROSE,
RAYNE LUNGER, YIRMIYAHU AARON TAUB, MICHAEL WEX

9:45pm-10:00pm ET
Presentation of “Righteous Frum Person Award” to ISAAC SCHONFELD

DAY 2 | MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024

10:00am-11:30am ET
Session One | *The Changing Face of OTD*

Roundtable with JESSICA LANG (Baruch College), ZALMAN NEWFIELD (Hunter College), MIRIAM MOSTER (Wagner College); Moderated by NAOMI SEIDMAN

11:45am-1:15pm ET
Session Two | *On Going Back to Where You Came From*

NAOMI SEIDMAN (University of Toronto)
“A Bais Yaakov Girl Does Her Homework”

SHAUL MAGID (Harvard University)
“Is Heresy an Operative Category Anymore? Judaism after Orthodoxy”

RONI MASEL (University of California, Berkeley)
“Reading after Orthodoxy”

1:15pm-1:30pm ET
Closing Remarks
ZALMAN NEWFIELD

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

Hannah Abbasi studied Religious Studies, Middle Eastern Studies, and History at UT-Austin and went on to study at seminaries in Iran and Lebanon. After leaving religion, she got her master's in education from City College of NY and later co-founded An-Nas, a secular humanist community for people from Muslim backgrounds.

Sara Erenthal is a Brooklyn-based, self-taught, multi-disciplinary artist and activist whose work focuses on displacement, survival, liberation, and social justice. Born into an ultra-Orthodox Jewish family, she left home at 17 to avoid an arranged marriage and spent the next two decades creating art and traveling the world. She works across painting, sculpture, and performance, often integrating everyday materials into her process. When not in her studio, Erenthal can be found working on the streets, reinventing discarded objects and painting provocative portraits. Erenthal's work has also been presented in solo and group exhibitions in New York City, Montreal and Tel Aviv.

Chani Getter grew up in the Nickelsburg Chassidis in Monsey, NY. At 23, Getter left an arranged marriage with three children and began a journey of self-discovery. Today, Getter is an ordained interfaith minister, a licensed clinical social worker with a private practice, and the Scholar-in-Residence for Footsteps. To learn more visit <https://chanigetters.com/aboutchani>.

Pearl Gluck teaches Screenwriting and Directing at Penn State and is among the most respected OTD artists in North America today. Her films include *Divan*, *The Turn Out*, *Summer*, and *Castles in the Air*. She regularly focuses on the Hasidic community in which she was raised, exploring gender, class, and the ethical challenges of representing Orthodox Judaism within a world in which it is often dismissed or denigrated.

Malky Goldman is an actor, artist, and writer from a Yiddish-speaking home in Jerusalem, with a Fine Art degree from Hunter College. Her films and television shows include *The Vigil*, *The Performance*, *Unorthodox*, *The Binding of Itzik*, and *Castles*. She has performed on stage in *Hedda Gabler*, *Rhinoceros*, and *God of Vengeance*.

Yair Hass was raised in an ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem family and later embraced a secular lifestyle. After studying Social Work and Economics at Hebrew University, he worked as a teacher and Projects Coordinator for at-risk youth. He began volunteering with Hillel – Beyond Orthodoxy in 2007 and has served as CEO for the past 10 years.

Jeremy Jenkins is an ex-Christian, now identifying as an agnostic-atheist. He was formerly a member of, and preacher (sixth generation) for the Church of Christ, a so-called “non-denominational,” evangelical fundamentalist group. The Church of Christ is a product of the Restoration Movement and, more particularly, the Stone-Campbell Movement.

Yehuda Jacobowitz grew up ultra-Orthodox and left ultra-Orthodoxy when he was 20. He was a co-founder of Nitzotzot an organization dedicated to creating community and belonging for those who have left ultra-Orthodoxy and do not want to throw out the baby with the bath water. He is currently pursuing his MA in Mental Health Counseling at Touro University.

Amy Jemmet is a PhD student at the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. She studies new religious movements, with particular attention to children's experiences in Scientology. She utilizes psychoanalytic theory and the autoethnographic method to explore the ways in which Scientology's beliefs and practices become embodied and lived through its

children. She will provide a valuable comparative perspective, one that focuses on childhood (an under-researched topic in NRM Studies), and that brings attention to a central issue of this academic conference, which is the experience of returning to an often traumatic past through research.

Jessica Lang is Professor of English and Dean of the George and Mildred Weissman School of Arts and Sciences, Baruch College. Her areas of specialization span early American fiction and Jewish American and Holocaust literature. Her numerous publications include *Textual Silence: Unreadability and the Holocaust* and *Off the Derech: Leaving Orthodox Judaism*. Dr. Lang is the founding Newman Director of Baruch's Sandra Kahn Wasserman Jewish Studies Center.

Amichai Lau-Lavie is the Founding Spiritual Leader of Lab/Shul NYC and the creator of Storahelling, Inc. An Israeli-born Jewish educator, writer, and performance artist, he received his rabbinical ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in 2016. Rabbi Amichai is a founding member of the Jewish Emergent Network, serves on the Leadership Council of the New York Jewish Agenda, is a member of the Global Justice Fellowship of the American Jewish World Service, the Advisory Council for the Institute for Jewish Spirituality, an advisor to the Jerusalem Open House, and is a founding faculty member of the Reboot Network.

Rayne Lunger is an emerging poet working on a poetry memoir. She began writing poetry in high school, in a clandestine attempt to process stuff that was otherwise taboo in the Hasidic community where she grew up. She lives in Brooklyn with her teenage daughter and currently works at Footsteps. Find her on X @trayne_wreck.

Shaul Magid teaches modern Judaism at Harvard Divinity School and is senior research fellow at the Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard. He is the author of many books and

essays including *Hasidism on the Margin* (2005), *Meir Kahane: The Public Life and Political Thought of an American Jewish Radical* (2021), and *The Necessity of Exile: Essays from a Distance* (2023). He also works as a Renewal Rabbi, bringing Hasidic energy to post-traditional spaces.

Roni Masel is Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley, working on Hebrew and Yiddish literatures and queer and postcolonial theory. Masel is completing a book manuscript titled *Bad Readers: Misreading, Mistranslation, and Other Textual Malpractices in Hebrew and Yiddish*. Masel turns her own OTD experience to theoretical advantage by arguing for the power, pleasure, and efficacy of OTD reading as a productive form of "bad reading."

Miriam Moster is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology at Wagner College. Her dissertation, "Inadvertent Exit: Divorce in the Haredi Community," explores the relationship between divorce and religious exit among members of the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) community. She holds a PhD in sociology from The Graduate Center CUNY and an MFA in creative writing from Hunter College.

Naftuli Moster grew up in a large Hasidic family in Boro Park Brooklyn and attended Hasidic Yeshivas. He received a BA in psychology from the College of Staten Island and a MSW from Hunter College. In 2012, he founded YAFFED (Youth Advocates for Fair Education) to ensure that Haredi and Hasidic Yeshivas in New York deliver a sound basic education to their students. After ten years at YAFFED, he founded and is the publisher of *Shtetl*, a media outlet covering the Haredi communities of NY and beyond.

Elad Nehorai is an outspoken essayist, journalist, and activist specializing in extremism, antisemitism, tech, and how all three intersect. He is an ex-Hasidic Jew who was a Chabad recruitee for 10 years. Before leaving Orthodoxy, he led a creative

Jewish community in Brooklyn called Hevria and co-led the largest politically progressive Orthodox Jewish advocacy group, Torah Trumps Hate. You can find his writing in *The Daily Beast*, *Huffpost*, *The Forward*, *Haartz*, and beyond.

Schneur Zalman Newfield is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Jewish Studies at Hunter College, City University of New York, and the author of *Degrees of Separation: Identity Formation While Leaving Ultra-Orthodox Judaism* (2020). Newfield is also a host on the Jewish Studies channel of the New Books Network podcast and the founder of the Bridge to College initiative, a Hunter College pilot program designed to assist those lacking formal secular education to acclimate to the college environment.

Jessica Pratezina is a PhD student at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. Her research centers on growing up in alternative religious movements, women's narratives of religious transition, and the development of wise therapeutic and social work practice with people involved in these religious groups. She is also one of the few academics globally who specializes in children in cults and new religious movements. Her MA research on growing up in and leaving alternative religions and was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Silver Medal for Most Outstanding Thesis. Her doctoral work uses theories derived from religious conversion to explore how women change their attitudes towards abortion.

Lani Santo, CEO of Footsteps, transformed the organization from a three-person start-up to a 501c3 with 28 staff and a nearly \$5 million budget. Formerly a Senior Program Officer at American Jewish World Service, she is an alumna of the Wexner Field Fellowship and was named to *The Jewish Week's* "36 Under 36" list. She holds an MPA from NYU and lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two children.

Basya Schechter is best known for her group, Pharaoh's Daughter, a seven-piece world music ensemble that travels effortlessly through continents, key signatures, and languages with a genre-bending sound. Her earthy, soulful voice rings out over textured instrumentation that forms a vibrant collage of East and West, providing the soundtrack for vibrant diversity. She worked as a Hazan for the last decade at Romemu NYC and R-Bklyn.

Naomi Seidman is the Chancellor Jackman Professor of the Arts in the Department for the Study of Religion and the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies at the University of Toronto. She is the author of five books, including *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement* (2019) and *Translating the Jewish Freud* (2024). Her 2022 podcast about OTD, *Heretic in the House*, won a Signal Award.

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub is a poet, writer, and translator of Yiddish literature. He is the author of two books of fiction and six volumes of poetry, including *The Education of a Daffodil: Prose Poems*. His recent translations from the Yiddish include *Dineh: An Autobiographical Novel* by Ida Maze and *Blessed Hands: Stories* by Frume Halpern.

Luzer Twersky is an accomplished actor and writer originally from Borough Park, Brooklyn. He has appeared on stage in New York and Sweden and on screen on Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime Video, and cinemas worldwide.

Jericho Vincent is the founder and spiritual leader of Temple of the Stranger, a mystical community in Brooklyn rooted in Jewish ancestral wisdom and open to all. Raised in an ultra-Orthodox home with an illustrious rabbinical lineage and with a masters degree in Public Policy from Harvard University, he is the author of the memoir *Cut Me Loose* and other essays published in *The New York Times*, *The Daily Beast*, *The Cut*, and elsewhere.

Beatrice Webber is the subject of countless articles, interviews and news programs locally, nationally and globally, and is a Senior Advisor at YAFFED, a nonprofit that advocates for education justice in the Hasidic and Haredi community. A mother of 10 and grandmother of 12, she escaped her arranged marriage several years ago, leaving her Hasidic life in the process. Deprived of a basic education as a child, she enrolled in college as an adult, earning her BA and an MBA. Trained as an interfaith minister, she is now a sought-after public speaker and activist. The author of a forthcoming memoir, she believes that access to education is the surest route to success in life.

Melissa Weisz is an actor, producer, writer and consultant with a focus on giving marginalized individuals and communities a voice. Weisz has appeared in shows such as *Unorthodox*, *Little America*, *High Maintenance* and in award-winning films such as *Felix et Meira*, *Romeo and Juliet in Yiddish* and *Tzadeikis*, amongst others. Weisz made their theatre debut in 2017 playing Manke in the NYT Critic's Pick "God of Vengeance." Weisz co-wrote the play "Di Froyen" (The Women) which takes place in the Hasidic Jewish community and explores the plight of a young mother fighting for custody of her children. Weisz is the host of *The Forbidden Apple Podcast*, which explores the complex relationship between queer people and religion.

Michael Wex is the author of three books on Yiddish, including the bestselling *Born to Kvetch*. His most recent major project Baym Kabaret Yitesh, an all-Yiddish cabaret show, which he wrote and directed, premiered at Yiddish Summer Weimar in 2019 and was featured at Toronto's Ashkenaz Festival in 2022. He is among the best-known OTD performers in the world today, combining humor with deep emotional connection to Orthodoxy and unparalleled knowledge of its history to convey the complicated OTD experience in its many dimensions.

Bais Yaakov Lid
(Eliezer Schindler, 1931)

Mir zenen vi fayglelekh fraye
we are like free birds
Mir zenen vi blimelekh in feld
like flowers in the field
Mir zenen khaveres getraye
we are true friends
Mir kinder fun Yankevs getzelt
children of Jacob's tent

**Lomir ale, lomir ale gayn
in toyre's veg (2x)**
let us all walk the path of Torah

Mir lernen un zingen tsuzamen
we study and sing together
Mir lebn un Fridn banant
we live in peace side by side
Kayn sine bay undz nisht faranen
no hatred among us
Di toyre zi is unzer band
the Torah is our bond

**Lomir ale, lomir ale gayn
in toyre's veg (2x)**

Mir zenen getray unzer boyre
we are faithful to our creator
Mir hitn zayn heylik gebot (butt)
we follow his holy command
Mir shvern tsu halten di toyre
we swear to keep the Torah
Tsu dinen dem ayntzign Got!
to obey the one true G-d

**Lomir ale, lomir ale gayn
in toyre's veg (2x)**

This program is co-sponsored by:



This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.



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