



HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

JULIS- RABINOWITZ PROGRAM ON JEWISH AND ISRAELI LAW

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FISCAL YEAR 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

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Part One: Report of Activities Summary

Over the past academic year, our program officially launched with an inaugural event on November 8th 2016. Since then, we've organized and co-sponsored several different activities related to research, scholarship, and projects in line with the core mission of the program. Our program includes a teaching element in the form of academic upper-level reading group courses on subjects related to advanced topics in Jewish law and legal theory. These academic courses and the program events and conferences held this past year as well as those planned for next academic year, permit activities for HLS students to take academic courses and attend program events on various topics of interest that incorporate Jewish law and sometimes other related studies on the subject as well.

This coming year, the program will again offer the academic reading group on advanced topics in Jewish law and legal theory at HLS for upper-level students. Also, we will hold a large conference on the Temple Mount in the fall. We also plan to hold and co-sponsor the Center for Jewish Legal Studies' Dreben lecture as well as some book talks and likely another Jewish law related conference in the spring.

A. Summary of Academic Year: 2016-2017

1. Executive Summary

The mission of the Program in Jewish and Israeli Law is to understand the structure and real-world effects of Jewish and Israeli law. The two systems are distinct and different. One is a complex, contested body of reasoning and rules embedded in ancient and evolving religious tradition. The other is the law of a state whose foundational documents declare it to be "Jewish and Democratic." Jewish and Israeli law sometimes interact and make claims on each other, which justifies studying both in the same program. But both also can and must be studied independently – and this too is part of the Program's mission, because practitioners of each sometimes consider the two as totally unrelated.

The Program will be an interdisciplinary research program where Jewish and Israeli law are studied using the tools that the field of legal studies has developed over the last two centuries alongside and where appropriate connected with traditional methods. The Program is committed to academic freedom and full and open discussion of multiple views and issues about both Jewish and Israeli law.

2. Research, Scholarship and Project Activities

Our program's inaugural event took place last fall in November (full event program included with this report). At the event, Professor Noah Feldman, the program's director, officially announced the program's establishment, mission and future plans for the year. We welcomed and thanked donor Mr. Mitch Julis and family for his support and Dean Martha Minow presented him with a gift on behalf of the law school. The event consisted of academic talks and discussion by prominent scholars in the Jewish law community on topics pertaining to the program's establishment and mission. Speakers included: Martha Minow, Noah Feldman, Daniel Boyarin, Christine Hayes, Malika Zeghal and Ruth Gavison.

In December of 2017, Professor Feldman held a lunch event with several HLS faculty members in attendance that featured former President of the Israeli Supreme Court, Asher Grunis as well as the Consulate General of Israel to New England to discuss current topics in Israel and Jewish law.

Also in December of 2017, Professor Feldman traveled to Stockholm, Sweden to commence research on state regulation of Kosher slaughter and circumcision in Nordic countries. He met extensively with Jewish community leaders and experts, and began an analysis of Jewish-Muslim relations in Europe that will form the backdrop for this complex set of legal issues. This will be an ongoing project. The research will eventually be used to organize a future program conference/event on the subject and potentially scholarly publication as well.

In March of 2017, our program held a two-day conference on Trans/Gender and Religious Law (full event program included with this report). The goal of the conference was to bring together scholars and thinkers from a range of disciplines to engage topics in the theory and practice of gender and gender transitions and transformations, with special attention to how these topics engage and are engaged by religious legal systems. Our primary focus was on the legal systems associated with Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, while also certainly open to comparisons and analyses connected to other forms of religious legal thought as well. Speakers included: Noah Feldman, Afsaneh Najmabadi, Moshe Idel, Ann Pellegrini, Ronit Irshai, Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, Max Strassfeld, Sarra Lev, Shaun Marmon, Rachael Fried, Isaac Schechter, Daniel Nevins and Leonard Sharzer.

Also in March, our program organized a book talk featuring HLS alum, Mohsin Hamid, on his new novel, "Exit West". The talk was well attended by HLS students and was co-sponsored by the Islamic Legal Studies Program.

Currently, we've been underway planning a large conference this fall on the Temple Mount which will feature several prominent scholars in the Jewish law community as well as others.

3. Contributions to HLS Teaching Program- Professor Noah Feldman offered an upper-level reading group on the subject of advanced topics in Jewish law during both the fall and spring semesters of the 2016-2017 academic year. The fall semester reading group was titled, “Advanced Topics in Jewish Law and Legal Theory: Antinomianism” and the spring semester reading group was titled, “Advanced Topics in Jewish Law and Legal Theory: Temple Mount”. Professor Feldman will offer this reading group again in both the fall and spring semesters of this academic year as well on further sub-topics of advanced topics in Jewish law and legal theory.

4. Participation of HLS Students in Program Activities – We estimate that approximately 200 HLS students participated in our program’s first year of activities this past year by attending Professor Feldman’s Jewish law reading groups, our inaugural event and our other program sponsored and co-sponsored lectures, book talks and conferences.

5. Faculty Participation – Our reading group is co-convened by two eminent professors from FAS, Professors Shaye Cohen and Jay Harris. We have also been fortunate to have regular exchange with Islamic Legal Studies Program faculty, with Israel-interested faculty, and with gender studies-interested faculty. We intend to deepen these and other connections going forward.

6. Other Contributions to the HLS Community –The program is coordinating with the Gruss professors, current and past, on programming and curriculum. Informally, the reading group has enabled students from a range of Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds to become interlocutors and mentors/mentees with each other.

9. Collaborations with other Schools and Departments at Harvard University- Our program collaborates regularly with the Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) at FAS as well as the Islamic Legal Studies Program (ILSP) here at HLS. This past academic year, we’ve co-sponsored several events with these departments including the annual CJS Dreben Lecture, a student talk at the Harvard Jewish Studies Workshop, and a book talk by Moshin Hamid co-sponsored by the Islamic Legal Studies Program.

B. Plans for Academic Year: 2017-2018

1. Executive Summary – Our goals remain as above. Our first full year should see more programming, the hiring of permanent staff, and the building of ties within HLS and into the Harvard community and beyond.

2. Research, Scholarship and Project Activities -- We will hold a major conference on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, with more than a dozen interdisciplinary scholars on international law, religion, sociology, anthropology, and history of the contested space on the 50th anniversary of the Israeli conquest/occupation of 1967. Prof. Feldman will

continue to research questions of Israeli and Jewish law in the U.S., Northern Europe, and Israel.

3. Contributions to HLS Teaching Program – Prof. Feldman will continue to teach two semesters of the advanced Jewish law reading group, which usually has some 20 students.

4. Participation of HLS Students in Program Activities – We intend to continue our excellent student participation rates and deepen the connection and commitment while broadening to more students of diverse backgrounds.

5. Faculty Participation – Professors Yochai Benkler, Gabriela Blum, Oren Bar-Gil, Lucien Bebchuck, and Alma Cohen are all fluent Hebrew speakers of Israeli origin. Other faculty take varying degrees of interest in Jewish legal matters. Prof. Robert Mnookin is writing a book on American Jewish identity.

6. Law Reform and Advocacy – Work growing from the program has been cited in the last year by the Israeli Supreme Court on free speech/incitement to violence issues before that court. It is our hope to continue to produce work that will influence ongoing legal disputes and issues worldwide.

7. Connections to the Profession – We plan to launch a series of regular events in New York connecting with interested alums who are in practice. We are also developing connections to Jewish law practitioners. Our academic connections in Israel are an embarrassment of riches, with more proposed collaborators than we can manage.

8. Collaborations with other Schools and Departments at Harvard University – We coordinate closely with Center for Jewish Studies within FAS, and as mentioned, the reading group is also co-convened by senior FAS faculty.

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