



THE TIKVAH FUND
165 E. 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Jewish Idea of God
May 27, 2014 – June 1, 2014

Participant Biographies

Jacob Abolafia

United States

Jacob Abolafia is a Ph.D. candidate and Harold Laski Fellow in the government department of Harvard University. He holds degrees in philosophy (Yale) and political thought and classics (Cambridge). He has published on topics in ancient and modern political thought and has particular interests in both Plato and the philosophy of Zionism.

Orit Avnery

Israel

Dr. Orit Avnery has been a Hartman Institute Research Fellow since 2008 at the Kogod Research Center for Contemporary Jewish Thought, which aims to engage in Jewish thought with emphasis on contemporary existential questions in the Jewish world. She is also involved in Hartman Institute's educational projects for the Israel Defense Forces and the Mossad, lecturing on Jewish identity, culture, and texts. For the past two years, Dr. Avnery has also helped run the Hartman Institute's Jewish culture program for educators, teaching courses in Bible studies and giving workshops to a wide variety of audiences. She is a lecturer in Bible studies on Shalem College's Faculty of Humanities and lectures in different institutions and venues in Israel and abroad. She wrote a weekly column on the "Parasha" for the newspaper *Makor Rishon*. Her doctoral dissertation, a feminist comparative reading of the books of Ruth, Esther, and Samuel, will be published in the coming months as part of the Hartman Institute's "Yahaduyut" series. Dr. Avnery is married, with five children.

Shuky Blass

Israel

Shuky Blass serves as the director of the media department of the Kohelet Policy Forum. Until recently he worked as a media critic for the *Latma* satire website and was a member of the MyIsrael staff. He has worked in the past as a research assistant for several academic projects involving modern Israeli history. Mr. Blass is currently writing his Ph.D dissertation in history at the Hebrew

University about anti-Israel propaganda in Western Europe. He lives in Jerusalem with his wife and three children.

Max Eden

United States

Max Eden is a research assistant at the American Enterprise Institute, focusing on education policy. He has worked on several political campaigns, including those of Tom Cotton for Congress, Jon Huntsman for President, and an ill-fated attempt to draft Mitch Daniels to run for President. Max has been published in the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, the *Washington Times*, and the *Indianapolis Star*.

Shmuel Faust

Israel

Shmuel Faust is a lecturer in Talmud, Midrash and Aggadah at the *Yaacov Herzog Center for Jewish Studies* and at *Efrata College* and is currently the Literary Editor of *Shabbat*, *Makor Rishon's* supplement on Jewish Philosophy, Literature and Art. He studied at *Yeshivat Birkat Moshe* in Ma'aleh Adumim, and received his Ph.D. at *Bar-Ilan University* from the *Interdisciplinary Program in Hermeneutics and Culture*. The Title of his dissertation is "*Criticism in Rabbinic Sage Stories from the Babylonian Talmud*". Dr. Faust is the author of *Agadta: Stories of Talmudic Drama* (Dvir Publishing House, 2011). Since 2010 he lectures at '*Bereshit*' - European Jewish Community University (JDC). He was the Director of External Studies Department at *Beit Morasha - The Center for Advanced Judaic Studies and Leadership* in Jerusalem. Shmuel spent a year as Program Director at the Jewish Community Center (BCMHI) in Seattle, Washington. He lives with his wife Michal and their four children in Mazkeret-Batya, Israel.

Alicja Anna Gescinska

Poland

Alicja Anna Gescinska, a philosopher and writer, is William E. Simon Postdoctoral Research Associate in Religion and Public Life at Princeton University. She was born in Warsaw in 1981 and fled with her family from communist Poland to Belgium in 1988. She obtained a Master's degree in moral sciences from Ghent University, *summa cum laude*, in 2007. After she graduated she was offered a research grant for a full year at Warsaw University, then received her doctorate in philosophy from Ghent University in 2012. Her doctoral thesis, "Freedom and Persons," presents an analysis of the concepts of freedom, personhood, and moral agency in the writings of Max Scheler and Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II). She regularly writes essays, opinion columns, and book reviews for Dutch and Flemish newspapers and journals. Her book *De verovering van de vrijheid (The Conquest of Freedom, 2011)* was short-listed for several literary prizes and named the best nonfiction book of 2010-2011 by deMens.nu. She is currently working on a biography of John Paul II and his philosophy.

Yair Halevy

Israel

Yair Halevy is a researcher in the area of *haredi* society and thought. He is writing his Ph. D. dissertation at Bar-Ilan University on "The 'New Haredism' Revolution in Israel in the 1970's." He

is also an instructor at Hebrew University, where he wrote his M.A. thesis on "Mainstream Haredi Responses to the Six Day War". Mr. Halevy has also published academic articles on related subjects, including the Musar Movement at the end of the 20th century.

Ariel Levy

Israel

Dr. Ariel Levy has been a member of the William Davidson Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Management at the Technion in Israel since 2009. His field of research is empirical finance, with an emphasis on financial products and credit risk. Dr. Levy's work has been published in various academic journals, including the *Journal of Banking and Finance* and the *Journal of Fixed Income*; and his work has been the subject of pieces in more popular journals such as *Bloomberg* and *Risk Magazine*. He earned his B.A. in philosophy and economics from the Hebrew University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in economics from the University of California Los Angeles.

Ariel Malachi

Israel

Ariel Malachi is a partner in Aran-Malachi, an Israeli law firm based in Jerusalem. He has been a member of the Israel Bar Association since 1999 and is a practicing lawyer, specializing in civil law, property law, litigation, and local government. He holds a Bachelor of Laws degree (LL.B.), as well as Master's degree in philosophy (M.A.; with highest honors) both from Bar-Ilan University in Israel. He is a Ph.D. candidate in the department of Jewish philosophy at Bar-Ilan University. Mr. Malachi is General Counsel (Legal) of the Consumers' Authority of the General Federation of Labor in Israel (CA), which is a statutory acknowledged organization and the largest of its kind in Israel.

Yakov Nagen

Israel

Yakov Nagen (Genack) grew up on the West Side of Manhattan and for the last 17 years has lived in Otniel, a small town south of Hebron, with Michal and their seven children. He was ordained as a rabbi by RIETS and has a doctorate in Jewish philosophy from the Hebrew University. He is a *rosh mesifita* at the Hesder Yeshiva of Otniel, is involved in interfaith dialogue, primarily with Islam, and has written extensively about Judaism and Eastern religions. His books include "נשמת המשנה: צוהר לעולמה הפנימי של המשנה", "מים בריאה והתגלות: חג הסוכות במחשבה ההלכה" ו"להתעורר ליום חדש: קריאת מתחדשת של התורה ושל החיים"

David Pardo

United States

Rabbi David Pardo is the director of the Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus (JLIC) at Brandeis University, where he offers learning opportunities to a campus of 1,600 Jews and serves as *rav, posek*, and spiritual guide to an engaged Orthodox community of 250 dedicated college students. He was

previously the director of education and community engagement at the House, Toronto's center for young adult education and engagement, working closely with the UJA, Birthright, and March of the Living. Rabbi Pardo has *smikha* from RIETS (Yeshiva University) and a B.A. from UCLA. He has received supplementary education from the CJF and the Israelight Institute.

Daniel Reiser

Israel

Dr. Daniel Reiser specializes in kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, and Hasidic philosophy. He is a Claims Conference Saul Kagan Post-Doctoral Fellow in Advanced Shoah Studies and teaches Hasidic philosophy at the Hebrew University. His first book, *Vision as a Mirror: Imagery Techniques in Twentieth Century Jewish Mysticism* (Cherub-Press, Sources and Studies in the Literature of Jewish Mysticism, Los Angeles 2014), has just been published; and his Hebrew translation of Abraham Joshua Heschel's Yiddish book, *Kotsk: In Gerangl far Emesdikayt*, is forthcoming. Currently, Reiser is working on a critical annotated edition of Rabbi Klonimus Kalmish Shapira's sermons during the Holocaust, known as the Esh Kodesh.

David Schaefer

United States

David Lewis Schaefer is professor of political science at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts where he teaches political philosophy and American political thought. His authored books include *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne* (1990) and *Illiberal Justice: John Rawls vs. the American Political Tradition* (2007); his edited books include Sir Henry Taylor's *The Statesman* (1992), *Freedom Over Servitude: Montaigne, La Boétie, and "Of Voluntary Servitude"* (1998), and *Democratic Decision-Making: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (2012). Besides having published many articles and reviews in scholarly journals, he has contributed op-eds to publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Boston Globe*, and *National Review Online*. He is a three-time fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities and has been a fellow of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. He is currently completing an essay comparing Yorem Hazony's and Leo Strauss's approaches to interpreting the political teaching of the Hebrew Bible.

Orel Sharp

Israel

Orel Sharp has been the chief editor of the periodical *De'ot* since 2011. He is now a Ph.D. student in Hebrew literature and teaches Judaism and literature in several institutions. He is also the editor of a forthcoming book discussing the stories of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Temima Shulman

United States

Temima G. Shulman has been writing for many news outlets—Jewish and mainstream—since her graduation from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 1996. She has taught

Tanakh classes for adults and high school students throughout New Jersey for almost as long as she has been writing. Influenced by many professors at Stern College and a broad range of thinkers, Ms. Shulman enjoys bringing these voices into her classes and is passionate about drawing on both philosophy and history and their relevance to the text. Born and raised in Jerusalem, Ms. Shulman started writing during the Persian Gulf War, covering the events in a column titled, "From the Sealed Rooms," in a series for the Intermountain Jewish News, based in Denver, Colorado. This experience catapulted her into her writing career, which has since spanned news stories, columns, essays, and human interest features, winning a number of awards in the United States and Israel. Ms. Shulman has lived on the East Coast for the last 20 years. She has covered news for dailies and weeklies and continues to write for a variety of media outlets.

Harris Tilevitz

United States

Harris Tilevitz is the chief technology officer of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, where he has worked since 1987. He is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the firm's information technology strategy, planning, and implementation. For the past several years, Mr. Tilevitz has focused on achieving the long-sought-after "soft" benefits of technology. For eight years before joining Skadden, Mr. Tilevitz worked for litigation support companies including Mead Data Central (LEXIS); he is a recognized expert in the area of legal information management. In 1984, Mr. Tilevitz was responsible for client management and operations for a start-up software venture called Document Automation Corporation, which was the first company to develop and market a PC-based litigation support software package. The company was acquired by BaronData Systems in 1986. A recipient of the Pro Bono Service Award from the Legal Aid Society of New York (2006), Mr. Tilevitz received his J.D. from Benjamin Cardozo School of Law and is a member of the bar of the State of New York. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and is a 1978 graduate (with high honors) of SUNY-Binghamton, where he majored in the history of science. His honors thesis was entitled "Archival Sources for the History of Medicine in Broome County, NY 1806-1906." From 1987 to 1991, Mr. Tilevitz published *The Jewish Review: A Journal of Torah, Judaism, Philosophy, Life and Culture*. Mr. Tilevitz serves on the board of several private companies and non-profit organizations and was the president of the Young Israel of White Plains for three years.

Jonathan Yovel

Israel

Jonathan Yovel is a professor of law and humanities at the University of Haifa and is currently a Straus Fellow at the New York University School of Law and a Berkowitz Fellow at the Tikvah Center for Law and Jewish Civilization. He has studied law, philosophy, and linguistics at Tel Aviv, Oxford, Northwestern, and Chicago. His diverse work lies mostly at the junction of the linguistic construction of normativity in various forms, and he has worked and published in legal, moral, and political theory; international and comparative law; contract law and theory; Biblical and Talmudic hermeneutics; formal and applied logic; human rights law pragmatics and metapragmatics; narrative theory; and the epistemological relations between law and the social sciences. His most recent work attempts to render a new account of the role of legal language in secularization processes in early modernity. Dr. Yovel has recently held the position of senior research scholar at Yale Law School; before that, he taught or held visiting research positions at, among others, Columbia Law School; the Max Planck Institute for Public International Law (Heidelberg) and Comparative and

International Private Law (Hamburg); and, as an academic observer, the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law. Since 2011 his work has been published in some 40 articles in law reviews and peer-edited journals, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries in the United States, Europe, and Israel. He serves as a lay judge on Israel's Court of Standard Contracts. He writes and publishes poetry regularly and prose occasionally; some is collected in his first books of short stories (*Trojan Horse*, 2009) and poetry cycles (*Songs of the Homo Urbanus*, 2005). He translated into Hebrew works by Aquinas, Milton, Villon, du Bellay, Brassens, Brel, and others.