



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

Jews, Power, and the Bible

July 28, 2014 – August 1, 2014

Participant Biographies

Matan Asher, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Matan Asher, 24 years old, studies law and political science at Bar-Ilan University. He was chosen as one of the 150 most promising young people in Israel by *Mozash* magazine of *Makor Rishon*. He was one of the founders of Human Rights Blue and White, sponsored by the Institute for Zionist Strategies, and headed the Yuvalim project at BIU for the World Zionist Organization. Mr. Asher interned at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs for Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld. He won the 2013 BIU President's Prize for Social Involvement. A graduate of the 2013 StandwithUS Program for Public Diplomacy, he was a member of the 2013 Assembly of Cooperation for Peace delegation to Voices of Peace in Seville, Spain. He is a member of the Erwin & Martha Samson Center for International Communication Public Diplomacy Workshop in Bar Ilan.

Noam Benaiah, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Noam Benaiah was born in Denmark and moved to Israel at a young age. He grew up in Ra'anana, where he attended the AMIT (Organization of Volunteers for Judaism and Torah) Technology high school and majored in history, Arabic, and biotechnology. After high school he joined the army, where he served as an intelligence officer in the 8200 unit for five years. Upon completion of his army service, Mr. Benaiah began his studies at the Hebrew University Law School. He is a research analyst at the Legislative Research Institution, which promotes social legislation in the Knesset, and a student at the Jewish Statesmanship Center, which deals with fundamental questions of public policy in Israel. In 2012 Noam established Hashgaha Elyona, an organization that addresses religion and state issues through legal tools, and is currently working on a legislative proposal concerning the *kasbrut* system in Israel. He is married to Livia, and they live in Jerusalem.

Randy Boyagoda, Advanced Institute Participant

Canada

Writer, critic and scholar Randy Boyagoda is a professor of American Studies at Ryerson University in Toronto, where he also directs a university-wide program in innovation and entrepreneurship. His latest novel, *Beggar's Feast*, published to critical acclaim around the world, was selected as a New York Times Book Review Editor's Choice and nominated for the 2013 IMPAC Dublin Literary Prize. He has written about religion, public life, literature, and culture for a variety of publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *First Things*, the *Paris Review*, the *Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, and



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Harper's. His biography of Richard John Neuhaus, the Catholic priest and neoconservative intellectual, will be published by Random House in 2015. He is currently working on a new novel. He lives in Toronto with his wife and four daughters.

Rebecca Clark, Advanced Institute Participant

United States

Rebecca R. Clark teaches political philosophy at the University of New Hampshire. Before becoming a lecturer at UNH, she held fellowships at the University of Richmond and Emory University. She also taught at Boston College, where she earned her doctorate in political science in 2012. Her dissertation examined Montesquieu's account of the importance of historical and geographic accidents to the development of modern constitutional government, as well as to the persistence of despotism. She is the co-author of work on Rousseau's relevance to contemporary environmentalist debates, published in *Political Theory* and currently in preparation as a book manuscript. Her other research concerns the historical, religious, and philosophic foundations of liberalism. Current projects include papers on Montesquieu's approach to reforming criminal practices and on the interpretation of the Book of Judges by Rousseau, Locke, and Hobbes.

Avishai Don, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Avishai Don graduated from Harvard College *magna cum laude* in 2012 with a concentration in social studies and a minor in modern Middle Eastern Studies. At Harvard he was as an op-ed columnist and editorial board member of the *Harvard Crimson*, as well as a *gabbai* and co-chair of the Harvard Hillel Orthodox Minyan. After college Mr. Don was a speechwriter and communications advisor to Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Ron Prosor, and a general adviser to the Israeli delegation to the United Nations. In that capacity he wrote op-eds, letters, and other correspondence for the delegation and helped draft Israel's official speech in response to the Palestinians' unilateral UN statehood bid on November 29, 2012. He is currently a research fellow in the Israeli Ministry of Justice Department of Special International Affairs, where he aids government attorneys in litigation involving the State of Israel and Israeli officials in foreign countries. He will enter Harvard Law School in the fall of 2014.

Amira Gabriel, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Canada

Amy Gabriel completed a Bachelor's degree in philosophy (Hon.) and English at Tyndale University in Toronto, Canada and a Master's degree in political theory at the University of Toronto. She has conducted research and writing for a diverse spectrum of organizations, including Canada's Department of National Defence, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs in Toronto, and the Shalem Center in Jerusalem. She is actively involved in her church and has coordinated and participated in volunteer projects both nationally and internationally, including teaching English as a second language, developing curricula for children's programs,



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and conducting research and letter-writing campaigns for the cause of human rights and religious freedom. In her spare time she can be found at home baking cheesecake.

Matan Harel, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Matan Harel served in the Israel Defense Forces as a combat communications officer for five-and-a-half years. Since 2011 he has studied at the Technion School of Civil Engineering towards a B.Sc. in management and construction. He currently serves as chairman of the Technion debate team and vice chairman of the School of Civil Engineering Student Union.

William Herlands, Tikvah Summer Fellow

United States

William Herlands is an incoming Ph.D. candidate in Carnegie Mellon's machine learning and public policy program. He graduated from Princeton in 2012 with a degree in electrical engineering and minors in computer science and Near Eastern studies. After college, William worked at MIT Lincoln Laboratory, researching robotic cybersecurity. He attended Yeshivat Maale Gilboa from 2007 to 2008 and has since taught classes on *halacha* and Tanach through Princeton's Center for Jewish Life and the Rimon Program. He is an amateur ornithologist and avid hiker.

Norman Kaufmann, Tikvah Summer Fellow

United States

Norm Kaufmann, a resident of Washington, D.C., is interested in Judaism, Zionism, and liberalism. As a management consultant with Booz Allen Hamilton, he works with industry, academia, and the U.S. government, providing progress data and advice to investors in applied energy research. He was a 2012 Public Policy Leadership Fellow at the Fund for American Studies. Last summer Mr. Kauffman represented the United States at the 19th Maccabiah Games in Jerusalem, Israel and won a bronze medal as a member of the Maccabi USA taekwondo team. He is also a taekwondo coach and instructor in Silver Spring, Maryland. He graduated *cum laude* with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio.

Nadav Kidron, Advanced Institute Participant

Israel

Nadav Kidron is an entrepreneur whose experience includes senior executive roles in a wide range of industries. He currently serves as CEO & director of Oramed Pharmaceuticals (NASDAQ: ORMP), an oral drug delivery company, which he founded in 2006. He is a member of the board of directors of Entera Bio, a joint venture formed by Oramed and DNA Biomedical Solutions, and is chairman of Project Innovation, an initiative to raise global awareness of Israel's entrepreneurial culture and the country's roots as an oasis of



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innovative ideas, for which he is a sought-after international lecturer. He holds a bachelor of laws degree and an international master's degree in business administration, both from Bar-Ilan University in Israel. He is a fellow of the Merage Business Executive Leadership Program and a member of the Israeli Bar Association.

Chaim Marder, Advanced Institute Participant

United States

Rabbi Chaim Marder has served as the rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of White Plains, New York since 1995; he is also chairman of the department of leadership and professional training at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah Rabbinical School, an open Orthodox rabbinical seminary. He was formerly the rabbi of Congregation Beth Sholom in Providence, Rhode Island and associate rabbi at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, New York. He is a graduate of Yeshiva University, holds a Master's degree in Jewish history, and received his rabbinical ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Theological Seminary of YU. He has served as a vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America and the Westchester Board of Rabbis. During Rabbi Marder's tenure, the Hebrew Institute of White Plains has seen dramatic growth and revitalization and has become a model Orthodox synagogue in the New York area. It continues to seek ways to deepen the religious and spiritual lives of its congregants within and outside the synagogue walls through efforts to provide significant synagogue experiences for women. There is a comfortable, engaging, and uplifting atmosphere in the synagogue; and each Shabbat is an opportunity for learning and growing. Rabbi Marder has helped spearhead numerous community-building efforts, including the White Plains B'Yachad series with other synagogues in the community. At YCT, Rabbi Marder works with students in all areas of their professional training, including public speaking, lifecycles, and synagogue and communal life. He also oversees the yeshiva's internship program. He and his wife, Suzie, have seven children.

Baruch Mashinsky, Advanced Institute Participant

United States

Baruch Mashinsky lives in Airmont, New York. He studied in Nezer HaTorah Yeshiva in Jerusalem and at Touro College, where he received his Master's degree in special education. He was hired as a mentor at Yeshiva Gevoah D'Goor and worked as a librarian at Heichal Menachem Library of Borough Park. Since 2011 he has worked as a special education itinerant teacher therapist in Williamsburg. He is currently consulting and editing Hasidic manuscripts and publications.

Ronen Neuwirth, Advanced Institute Participant

Israel

Rabbi Ronen Neuwirth serves as the rabbi of Ohel Ari (Minyan Chadash) Congregation in Ra'anana, Israel. Rav Ronen is the founder and executive director of "Beit Hillel—Attentive Spiritual Leadership," a spiritual leadership organization of more than 170 *rabbanim* and *rabbaniyot*, that strives to magnify the voice of the centrist mainstream Judaism and stop the religious extremism in Israel. From 2007 to 2012 Rabbi Neuwirth



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served as head of the overseas department director of the Tzohar rabbinical organization and director of the “Tzohar Open Communities” project. Rabbi Neuwirth also teaches at Matan Hasharon seminary in Ra’anana. He was a rabbi-educator in Yeshivat Hesder of Petach Tikva from 2006 to 2008 and has taught at Midreshet Orot Elkanna and Midreshet Aviv in Tel Aviv. From 2004 to 2006 Rabbi Neuwirth was the rabbi of Bnei Akiva of the US and Canada. This unique experience gave him the chance to work closely with and educate Modern Orthodox youth in North America. Rabbi Neuwirth, a firm adherent of the *Torah v'avoda* philosophy, combined his work as a rabbi and teacher with work as chief technology officer (CTO) of a hi-tech company. Rav Neuwirth served as a captain in the Israeli Navy Special Forces. He holds *smicha* from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and received a B.A. in mathematics and computer science from Bar Ilan University.

Hadas Ofir, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Hadas Ofir is a 21-year-old student at Shalem College. She graduated from the Bnei-Akiva High School for Girls in Pisgat-Ze’ev, Jerusalem, where her major subjects were biology, Russian, Jewish history, and Tanach. After three years working as an intelligence team officer in the Prime Minister’s office—two years of national service and one year of employment—she entered Shalem not only to study the Jewish world but to be a part of its repair. It is imperative that the State of Israel refocus on the *nesbama*, the soul that we once had. What drives her is this fight for the greater good of Israel and the Jewish people.

Benjamin Porat, Advanced Institute Participant

Israel

Dr. Benny Porat is a lecturer and director of the Matz Institute for Jewish Law, Faculty of Law, Hebrew University. After completing his doctorate (2009), Dr. Porat was a Halbert Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of Toronto (2010). He is the editor of *Shenaton haMishpat haIvri* and of the *Jewish Law Annual*. He is also a co-editor, with Avi Ravitzki, of *Reflections on Jewish Democracy* (2010) and, with Yedidia Stern, of *In Search of Solidarity: An Israeli Journey* (2014). In addition, Dr. Porat is a researcher at the Israeli Democracy Institute in Jerusalem.

Nelson Schwartz, Advanced Institute Participant

United States

Nelson D. Schwartz has covered the economy and economics for the business section of the *New York Times* since August, 2012. Before moving to the economics beat, Mr. Schwartz covered Wall Street, banking, and finance for two-and-a-half years; he was the *Times*’ European economics correspondent in Paris from 2008 to 2010, after joining the newspaper as a Sunday Business feature writer in June, 2007. Before that, he spent a decade at *Fortune* magazine, covering business in the United States as well as in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America. A 1995 graduate of the University of Chicago, where he studied Russian and American



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history, Mr. Schwartz grew up in Scarsdale, New York. He lives on the Upper East Side of Manhattan with his wife, Annalise Carol; their baby daughter, Willow; and Misha, a Russian Blue cat.

Ariel Seri-Levi, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Ariel Seri-Levi is a doctoral student in Jewish thought and Bible at the Hebrew University. His doctoral study is dedicated to the subject of Divine anger and its abatement in the Pentateuchal sources. He is a graduate of the Revivim Honor Program for the training of Jewish studies teachers at the Hebrew University, where he received his Bachelor's degree in Jewish studies and Bible and his Master's degree in Jewish thought, both with honors. He teaches Bible, Jewish thought, and Jewish culture at the Jerusalem Arts High School and writes textbooks for the public education system at the Shalom Hartman Institute. He lives in Jerusalem, is married to Naama, and has one son, Hillel.

Myriam Shermer, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Myriam Shermer, *née* Kalfon, was born in Jerusalem. At the age of four she moved to France with her parents and stayed there for 24 years. She completed her B.A. at the Sorbonne in Paris, majoring in psychology and film studies. At the age of 25 she moved back to Israel, completing an M.A. in film studies at Tel Aviv University. In 2011 she became a reporter and editor of the French edition of the *Jerusalem Post*. She remained there for three years, serving as acting editor-in-chief during the last six months of her tenure. Today she is a freelance journalist for the *Times of Israel* and the *I24news* TV channel. She was married last year. Her husband, Erez, will be with her in New York during the Tikvah summer fellowship program.

Alexander Steinberg, Tikvah Summer fellow

United States

Alexander Steinberg was educated in international relations at Boston University, concentrating in foreign policy, security studies, and the Middle East. After graduation he helped launch a real estate brokerage business and served as its president; today he is a licensed real estate and insurance broker in Massachusetts and New York. In addition to commercial entrepreneurship, is currently focused on developing practical non-profit programs to foster Jewish communal unity. He is the eldest of four children and is an avid basketball player.



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Daniela Traub, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Daniela Traub is co-founder and director of the Israel Center for New Diplomacy. She was head of the Hebrew University *hasbara* war room during the Pillar of Defense operation and served as assistant to Israeli Military Attaché in Rome. She is a published author; her works include *Idisina the Black Rider*. She was an officer in the combat intelligence unit of the Israel Defense Forces. She earned her B.A. in international relations and theater from the Hebrew University.

Daniel Weiss, Tikvah Summer Fellow

Israel

Daniel Weiss is a third year student at IDC-Herzlia, majoring in law and government, with a specialty in diplomacy and strategy. He was a research assistant at the Israeli Institute for Counter-Terrorism and is chief operating officer of the Fox Foundation, a non-profit organization for IDF veterans. He served as an officer in the IDF Givati unit. He is married to Danielle and has a son, Noam.