



THE TIKVAH FUND

165 E. 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

American Jewish Literature

March 15–17, 2015

Dean: Mark Gottlieb

Instructor: Ruth Wisse

I. What is the Tikvah Fund?

The Tikvah Fund is a philanthropic foundation and ideas institution committed to supporting the intellectual, religious, and political leaders of the Jewish people and the Jewish State. Tikvah runs and invests in a wide range of initiatives in Israel, the United States, and around the world, including educational programs, publications, and fellowships.

Tikvah is politically Zionist, economically free-market oriented, culturally traditional, and theologically open-minded. Yet in all issues and subjects, we welcome vigorous debate and big arguments. Our institutes, programs, and publications all reflect this spirit of bringing forward the serious alternatives for what the Jewish future should look like, and bringing Jewish thinking and leaders into conversation with Western political, moral, and economic thought.

II. Description of American Judaism Workshop, “American Jewish Literature”

The Jew in America has enjoyed unprecedented success as an equal member of a free and democratic nation. Jews have risen in the arts, in politics, in business, and in much else. But they have also risen out of traditional life, first confronting modernity as aliens and then being swallowed in whole or in part by the rewards of assimilated American life.

It is this predicament—that of the anxious immigrant and the hesitant or guilty modern—that has colored the great works of American Jewish literature by authors such as Saul Bellow. Ruth Wisse, the dean of the study of Jewish literature, will explore what the Jewish novel can teach us about the modern Jewish-American condition.

III. Workshop Schedule (subject to minor changes)

Sunday, March 15			
<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Reading</i>
The Hertog Foundation, 745 Fifth Ave., Suite 1400, NY, NY 10151	12:00–1:00	Opening Lunch and Introductions	
	1:15–4:00	<i>Seminar Session with Ruth Wisse, Part 1</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saul Bellow, <i>Mr. Sammler's Planet</i> (1970), chaps. 1–2
	4:15–6:15	<i>Discussion of Participants' "American Ideas Papers," Part 1</i>	
	6:30	Dinner	

Monday, March 16			
<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Reading</i>
The Tikvah Fund, 165 East 56 th St., 4 th Floor, NY, NY 10022	8:30	Breakfast	
	9:15–11:15	<i>Discussion of Participants' "American Ideas Papers," Part 2</i>	
	12:15–1:15	Lunch	
	1:15–4:15	<i>Seminar Session with Ruth Wisse, Part 2</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saul Bellow, <i>Mr. Sammler's Planet</i> (1970), chaps. 3–4
	4:30–6:30	<i>Discussion of Participants' "American Ideas Papers," Part 3</i>	
	6:30	Dinner	

Tuesday, March 17			
<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Reading</i>
The Tikvah Fund, 165 East 56 th St., 4 th Floor, NY, NY 10022	8:30	Breakfast	
	9:00–12:00	<i>Seminar Session with Ruth Wisse, Part 3</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saul Bellow, <i>Mr. Sammler's Planet</i> (1970), chaps. 5–6
	12:00–2:00	Closing Lunch and Discussion of Proposed Strategies	

IV. American Ideas Papers

The American Judaism Workshops are meant to generate practical ideas to strengthen American Jewry, with the workshop participants leading the way. What can be done to increase the moral, intellectual, spiritual, political, religious, or demographic vitality of the Jewish people in America?

Each workshop participant will prepare in writing his or her best concrete idea (or ideas) to improve American Jewish life or America's contribution to the Jewish State. This written presentation—the American Ideas Paper—should present a particular problem or opportunity, and propose a set of actions or initiatives. For instance, we are *not* looking for a paper that urges the need to invest in Jewish education in America. That is true, as far as it goes, but too vague and imprecise. If you believe that Jewish education is the key to a healthy Judaism in the United States, a better paper might propose a novel way for the three largest synagogues in Philadelphia to work together with two under-enrolled day schools, in order to bring tuition costs down. Another might regard curricular reform within Jewish day schools as the most important strategic initiative; an excellent paper will lay out particular reform proposals, attending as appropriate to pedagogy, texts, the allocation of time to different disciplines, and the scope and aim of day school education. Your proposal can focus on local, national, or international questions, but whatever the focus, keep the following guidelines in mind.

- **Subject:** The American Ideas Paper should clearly describe the nature and significance of a problem or opportunity that affects the American Jewish community. How did it arise, why does it matter, and what can be done?
- **Significance:** The American Ideas Paper should note why this particular problem should be prioritized above other serious problems we face. If you had limited resources to do something, why is *this* the foundational issue that you would address?
- **Strategy:** What is your plan to mobilize American Jewish leaders into action? Who must be persuaded? What coalitions must be formed? What steps must be taken? What obstacles stand in the way, and how can they be overcome? What is the budget, and where will the funding come from?

Each workshop participant will submit their American Ideas Paper two weeks before our workshop convenes, no later than Monday, March 2, 2015. Approximately one week before the workshop convenes, we will assemble and distribute the papers from each participant to the group as a whole, so that each participant will read all of the submissions. As you can see from the schedule, the workshop will feature sessions dedicated to discussing the American Ideas Papers that you submit.

To what practical ends should the energies of American Jews be dedicated, and what is the grand strategy of American Jewish leaders? This is your chance to make your best case—and to take part in a new movement of American Jews who are unafraid to question stale ideas, are willing to ask hard questions of the American Jewish community, and are prepared to chart a new course. What is *your* best idea?

Guideline on Length: We expect papers to be three to six single-spaced pages.

Submission Deadline: Monday, March 2, 2015

Submission Address: AJW2015@tikvahfund.org. Please write your name on your document (e.g., jindoAJW2015AIP.doc)

V. Faculty Biographies

Instructor

Ruth R. Wisse

Ruth R. Wisse is Professor of Yiddish Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, and a former director of its Center for Jewish Studies. Her books on literary subjects include an edition of Jacob Glatstein's two-volume fictional memoir, *The Glatstein Chronicles* (2010), *The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey through Literature and Culture* (2003), and *A Little Love in Big Manhattan* (1988). She is also the author of two political studies, *If I Am Not for Myself: The Liberal Betrayal of the Jews* (1992) and *Jews and Power* (2007). Her latest book, *No Joke: Mocking Jewish Humor*, a volume in the Tikvah-sponsored Library of Jewish Ideas, was recently published by Princeton University Press.

Dean

Mark Gottlieb

Rabbi Mark Gottlieb is Senior Director of the Tikvah Fund and Dean of the Tikvah Summer Institute at Yale University. Prior to joining Tikvah, Rabbi Gottlieb served as Head of School at Yeshiva University High School for Boys and Principal of the Maimonides School in Brookline, MA and has taught at The Frisch School, Ida Crown Jewish Academy, Hebrew Theological College, Loyola University in Chicago and the University of Chicago. He received his B.A. from Yeshiva College, rabbinical ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, and an M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Chicago, where his doctoral studies focused on the moral and political thought of Alasdair MacIntyre. Rabbi Gottlieb is a member of the Orthodox Forum Steering Committee and serves on the Editorial Committee of *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*. He lives in Teaneck, NJ with his wife and five children.

VI. Our Mutual Commitment

Our pledge to you is that the program will be excellent and that the teachers are, in every case, among the best people in the world teaching the subjects they are teaching. Your pledge to us is that you will invest yourselves in the texts and the seminars, and do the work to the fullest extent of your talents. You have put your everyday work on hold to join us, so we know you come to us with great interest and commitment. We will insist that you continue that commitment—a commitment to attending each and every session, a commitment to coming to class on time, a commitment to doing all the readings—throughout the duration of the workshop. If anyone fails to honor his or her commitment, he or she will be dismissed from the workshop.



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Participant Biographies

Jonathan Bronitsky

Jonathan Bronitsky is Founder and Managing Director of Gradis Group, LLC, a strategic communications firm specializing in historical issues and political affairs. He has worked in Washington, DC at the American Enterprise Institute and Levick, a crisis public relations firm. He received both his PhD in History and MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge. His doctoral dissertation, “The Anglo-American Origins of Neoconservatism,” examined the postwar, transatlantic experiences of Irving Kristol, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and Norman Podhoretz. Jonathan has appeared on radio and national television, while his writings have been featured in print in *National Affairs*, *The Detroit News*, and the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* and online at *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The Daily Caller*, *The Federalist*, *The American*, *War on the Rocks*, and *The Key Reporter*.



Sheryl Elias

Sheryl Elias has worked as a litigator and a print journalist and is currently training as a mediator in the New York and New Jersey Courts. She has served on various non-profit boards, including Yavneh Academy, Congregation Rinat Yisroel, Emunah of America, and NNJKids, spearheading a range of initiatives relating to Israel advocacy, special education, tuition affordability, and non-profit governance. She is currently on the Board of Hillel at Stanford University, where she is focusing on expanding kosher food options in the Palo Alto community and training students to deal with anti-Israel movements.



Daniel Ross Goodman

Daniel Ross Goodman is a writer and a rabbinical student at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT) in New York, where he is editor-in-chief of the *YCT Jewish Studies Journal*. He is a regular contributor to *Public Discourse* (a publication of The Witherspoon Institute) and *The Weekly Standard*. Several of his articles have been Editors' Picks in *Mosaic Magazine*, *Real Clear Religion*, *Prufrock*, and Andrew Sullivan's "The Dish." Mr. Goodman has published in numerous academic and popular journals, magazines, and newspapers, including *Journal of Religion & Film*, *Religious Studies Review*, *Bright Lights Film Journal*, *South Texas Law Review*, *Haaretz*, and *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin*. He is the 2014 recipient of the Whizin Prize in Jewish ethics. He holds a law degree, and is a cum laude graduate of Yeshiva University, where he was Valedictorian of the Beit Midrash Program of Jewish Studies.



Abe Greenwald

Abe Greenwald is senior editor of *Commentary*. He has also written for *Commentary* and other publications. In 2009, he was a policy advisor at the Foreign Policy Initiative, a think tank based in Washington, DC.



Matthew Holbreich

Matthew Holbreich is the Resident Scholar at the Straus Center, Yeshiva University and a Jacobson Scholar at NYU Law. He has published on the political thought of Abraham Lincoln as well as religion and modernity in Alexis de Tocqueville. His writing has appeared in *History of Political Thought* and the *Jewish Review of Books*. He is currently working on a book-length source anthology of the influence of the Hebrew Bible in America.



Marshall Huebner

Marshall Huebner is co-head of Davis Polk's Insolvency and Restructuring Group. He is widely recognized as one of the country's leading practitioners, and is one of only five U.S. lawyers to have been twice-named a "Dealmaker of the Year" by *The American Lawyer*. Mr. Huebner served as lead counsel to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and to the U.S. Department of the Treasury with respect to their \$182 billion in multiple financings and 79.9% equity stake in AIG. He is counsel to the joint administrators and liquidators of Lehman Brothers International and its U.K. Lehman affiliates. Mr. Huebner was lead counsel to Citibank, as bank agent, in Lyondell, in the largest private DIP financing in U.S. history. He also advised the Ford Motor Company in connection with its restructuring. He is lead restructuring counsel to Delta Air Lines, Patriot Coal, Pinnacle Airlines, Frontier Airlines, and The Star Tribune Company. He is active in UJA, Congregation Kehillath Jeshurun, Bikur Cholim, Hatzolah, and the Shalem Center. He was also a Wexner Heritage Fellow.



Naya Lekht

Naya Lekht is an adjunct faculty at the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at UCLA, where she received her PhD in 2013. She teaches courses on Russian-Jewish literature, the Holocaust in the Soviet context, twentieth century Russian literature, and the Russian language. She is currently working on her monograph, *Babi Yar: The Shaping of the Holocaust in Soviet Literature*, which will explore the representation of the Holocaust in popular Soviet texts. In addition to working on Russian-language representations of the Holocaust, Ms. Lekht likewise works extensively on Soviet Yiddish literature, with a particular interest on the Yiddish modernist writer, Der Nister.



Sarah Rindner

Sarah Rindner teaches English Literature at Lander College for Women, a division of Touro College. In the past she has also taught English at Ma'ayanot and SAR High Schools. Ms. Rindner has lectured on both Jewish and literary texts in a wide variety of formal and informal environments, and is particularly interested in the confluence of religion and literature. She holds degrees in English Literature from Stern College and Columbia University.



Zalman Rothschild

Zalman Rothschild is a PhD candidate in modern Jewish philosophy at New York University. He received rabbinical ordination from the Ariel Institute of Jerusalem, earned a BA in Judaic Studies from SUNY Binghamton, and an MA in Jewish philosophy from Bernard Revel Graduate School of Yeshiva University. He has held the position of Scholar-in-Residence at Park Ave. Synagogue, and has served as a visiting scholar to Central Synagogue, the Conservative Synagogue of Fifth Avenue, Temple Israel of Great Neck, Hannah Senesh School's Adult Education Program, and various other synagogues and institutions in and around New York. Mr. Rothschild has been a Tikvah Scholar at the Tikvah Center of Law and Jewish Civilization at NYU Law School, a Fellow in Jewish Law and Interdisciplinary Studies at Benjamin Cardozo School of Law, a Summer Fellow at the Katz Center of University of Pennsylvania, and a Fellow at the Kevah Teaching Center of Berkeley. He has served as adjunct professor at NYU and JTS, and currently is a part-time rabbi at Congregation Beth El of Massapequa, NY.



Jeremy Rozansky

Jeremy Rozansky is research analyst at the Tikvah Fund, where he works on college-age programming. Previously, he was assistant editor of *National Affairs*. Mr. Rozansky's essays and reviews have appeared in *Commentary*, *The New Atlantis*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *City Journal*. He holds an A.B. from the University of Chicago, where he majored in Fundamentals: Issues & Texts and Political Science.





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Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970)

As you read the text, please keep in mind the following questions and be ready to discuss them during the workshop:

- Ancient wisdom has it that “In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” Does this apply to Mr. Sammler in America of the 1960s?
- Govinda Lal has much in common with Mr. Sammler, but they differ in their approaches to life. What does this second “survivor” add to the story of the first?
- What (if anything) in this book makes you most uncomfortable? What do you think makes others most uncomfortable? Are these the same?
- Is this a neo-conservative novel? Or, better said, could you deduce the rise of neo-conservatism America from this novel, and if so, how?
- The much quoted homespun *kaddish* that Mr. Sammler says over Elya Gruner at the end of the novel concludes with repetition of the words, “We know....” What is it that Mr. Sammler thinks we know? Did the life of Elya Gruner bring us to this knowledge?