



Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism

NEWSLETTER • ACADEMIC YEAR 2015–2016

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Inessa Laskova

From the Director...



Maurice Samuels

Considered from the viewpoint of antisemitism, 2015 was a paradoxical year. While terrorism in general became an increasing concern the world over, violence specifically directed against Jews decreased dramatically. From the November 13 attack in Paris, which killed 130 people at a theater and various cafés and restaurants, to the San Bernardino slaying in December, to the dozens of incidents in Turkey, Iraq, and other Middle Eastern countries throughout the year, 2015 seemed to signal a new era in terrorism, as so-called “soft targets” became the order of the day. And yet, according to the annual Kantor Center Worldwide Report on Antisemitism, violent incidents against Jews and Jewish property actually decreased from 766 to 410, a reduction of 46% from 2014 levels. How to explain this unexpected slide?

For one thing, as the Kantor Center report makes clear, 2014 was an exceptionally violent year for Jews. The low number of antisemitic incidents in 2015 is thus more relative than absolute: it is not far below the number for 2011 and is still far above the number of antisemitic incidents that prevailed in the 1990s. For another thing, there were fewer inciting incidents in 2015 compared to the prior year—for example, no war in Gaza or the territories of the West Bank. But while it is true that ISIS and its allies have largely chosen to direct their energy toward attacking the West in general, and other Muslims whom they see as traitors to the faith, this doesn't quite explain why antisemites became less active in 2015. Rather, we can attribute much of this decrease to the improved security efforts protecting Jewish people and property, especially in Europe. During a recent trip to Paris, I saw more security guards in front of a small synagogue near the Bastille than in front of the Senate. How much longer France and other countries can maintain this level of protection—especially with the more diffuse threats they now face, including threats to churches—is a real question and cause for deep concern.

Meanwhile, increased terrorism, coupled with the arrival of unprecedented numbers of refugees and other immigrants, has raised the political profile of far-right, xenophobic parties throughout Europe. While some of these parties, such as Jobbik in Hungary, are openly antisemitic, others, such as the National Front in France, have modulated their former antisemitism in an effort to convince Jewish voters to embrace their anti-Muslim stance. With support for France's Socialist leadership at record lows, the National Front has a real chance of prevailing in next year's elections.

In my opinion, the United States faces a similar threat in the form of Donald Trump. While Trump has largely refrained from making antisemitic statements, and frequently

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From the Director... (continued)

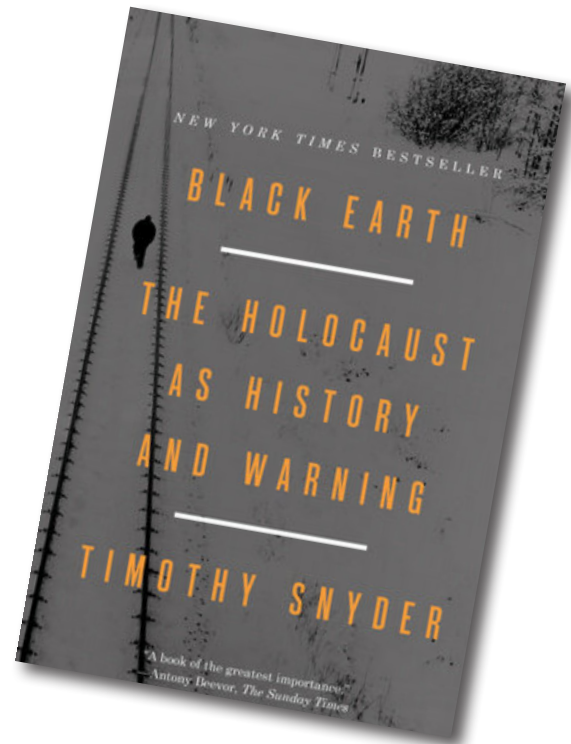
touts the fact that his daughter converted to Judaism, many of his followers are openly antisemitic. On several occasions, Jewish reporters critical of Trump have been the victims of vicious hate-speech on social media from Trump supporters. The Trump campaign has either refused to disavow this antisemitism or been slow to do so. Just recently, when Trump tweeted an image denouncing Hillary Clinton's supposed corruption, showing a Jewish star superimposed on a background of dollar bills, the implications were deadly clear. Were this not enough to give pause, those worried about antisemitism must feel deeply concerned when a candidate makes derogatory comments about any ethnic or religious group, as Trump has done repeatedly throughout the campaign.

For these reasons, the work of YPSA has never felt more important. While I was on sabbatical this past year, my colleagues stepped in to organize the Benjamin and Barbara Zucker lecture series exploring the problem of antisemitism, past and present. I am extremely grateful to all of my colleagues who helped, but especially to Francesca Trivellato and Carolyn Dean for shouldering the heaviest burden. As in past years, there was a balance of lectures on historical and contemporary forms of antisemitism.

The lectures on current topics included Patrick Weil (CNRS/Yale), “After the Paris Attacks: Is There a Future for the Jews and the Muslims in France?”; Ran Halévi (CNRS), “War and the Fabric of Israeli Democracy”; Ilan Greilsammer (Bar-Ilan), “The New Historians of Israel: Is the Destruction of National Myths a Delegitimization of Zionism?”; and Steven Beller (independent scholar), “When Does It Make Sense to Call Hostility towards Jews Antisemitism; and When Does It Not? Some Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Debates.”

Several lectures provided new perspectives on the Holocaust. These included Anna Bikont (psychologist, journalist, and writer), “The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne”; Yale's own Timothy Snyder, “Introducing Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning”; and David Motadel (London School of Economics), “Muslims under Nazi Rule, 1941–1945.” Two events focused on antisemitism in relation to critical theory: a roundtable organized by Seyla Benhabib; and a lecture by Michael L. Morgan (University of Toronto and Indiana University), “Sartre, Levinas, and Antisemitism.”

Bat-Zion Klorman-Eraqi (Open University of Israel) spoke about “Jews in Tribal Yemen: Religion, Magic, and Otherness.”



Yale's Adina Hoffman gave our audience an advance reading from her new book *Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City*, published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. And finally, the renowned historian Natalie Zemon Davis (Princeton University and University of Toronto) delivered a lecture entitled “Languages of the People: A Romanian-Jewish Linguist on Yiddish, Romanian, and French.”

Thanks to the continuing support of the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Foundation, YPSA was able to award eight research grants—three to Yale undergraduates, three to Yale graduate students, and two to Yale faculty members. Topics explored by our winners include the Wannsee House as a site of memory; French Jewish immigration to Israel; American Holocaust memorials; the history of Christian interpretation of Matthew 27:25; Holocaust memorials in France; antisemitic art criticism in interwar Berlin; the history of Jews in the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (1250–1517); and French Jewish writing in the Maghreb. We are very grateful to Charles Knapp and the Baron Foundation for making this important research possible.

As one of only two university programs in the United States dedicated to the study of antisemitism, YPSA has an important role to play in calling attention to antisemitism and in developing strategies to combat it. As debates about race and ethnicity take

of Yale's quality studying this topic is critical for us [...] to combat this kind of scourge."

— Ira Forman, US State Department Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism

center stage at Yale and around the country, our presence at the Whitney Humanities Center, at the heart of the Yale campus, helps ensure that the problem of antisemitism remains part of the discussion. With your support, we could do even more. We are currently raising funds to bring postdoctoral students to campus to teach courses relating to antisemitism and to develop model curricula for distribution to other schools; to produce more videos on topics relating to antisemitism, such as the one by Cary Nelson on "The Ten Worst Things about BDS," currently available on the YPSA homepage; and to expand the Iranian Archives Project, which seeks to record the testimonies of Jews who have left Iran, to include Jews from other Muslim countries. If you are interested in becoming a YPSA sponsor, please do not hesitate to contact me at maurice.samuels@yale.edu.

Let me urge you to visit our website (<http://ypsa.yale.edu>) for a full list of our activities. Let me also express my deepest gratitude to everyone who helped make our work this year possible, especially the YPSA Advisory Board; Gary Tomlinson, Alice Kaplan, and the staff of the Whitney Humanities Center;

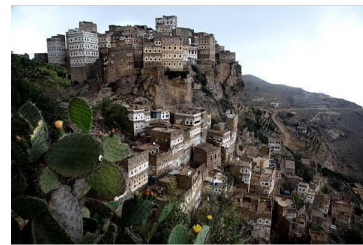


Bat-Zion Klorman-Eraqi, Open University of Israel

Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism

Bat-Zion Klorman-Eraqi

Professor of History at the Open University of Israel



Tuesday, March 1

5:30pm

"Jews in Tribal Yemen: Religion, Magic, and Otherness."

Co-Sponsored by the Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism (YPSA), and the Whitney Humanities Center

Location: LC 102, Linsly-Chittenden Hall, 63 High St.

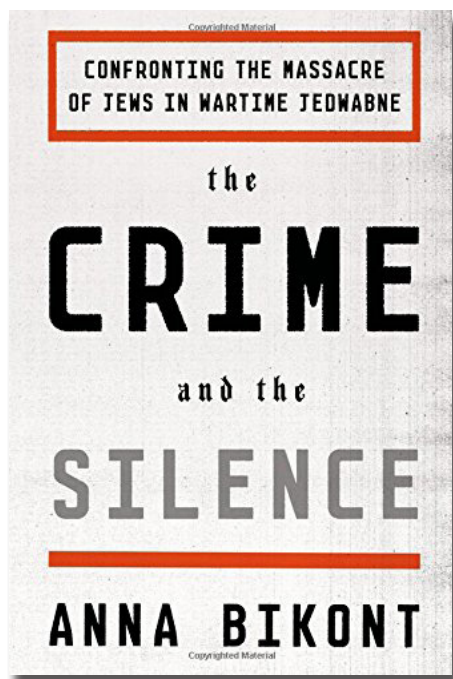
Emily Bakemeier and the Provost's Office; and our wonderful YPSA administrator, Inessa Laskova.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge with deep sadness the loss of Geoffrey Hartman. In addition to helping create the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Geoffrey was instrumental in the founding of YPSA in 2011 and was a valued member of our Advisory Group. His wise counsel, gentle demeanor, and fierce intellect will be sorely missed.

A handwritten signature of Maurice Samuels.

Maurice Samuels

Director, Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism



Thursday, September 24

Patrick Weil, Yale Law School, CNRS, Université Paris 1

“After the Paris Attacks: Is There a Future for the Jews and the Muslims in France?”

Tuesday, September 29

Timothy Snyder, Bird White Housum Professor of History, Yale University

“Introducing Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning”

Thursday, October 15

The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Anna Bikont, psychologist, journalist, and writer; author of *Le Crime et le Silence*

“The Crime and the Silence: Confronting the Massacre of Jews in Wartime Jedwabne”

Thursday, October 29

The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Ran Halévi, Director of Research, CNRS; Professor, Raymond Aron Center for Political Studies
“War and the Fabric of Israeli Democracy”

Co-sponsored by Yale Center for the Study of Representative Institutions

Thursday, February 18

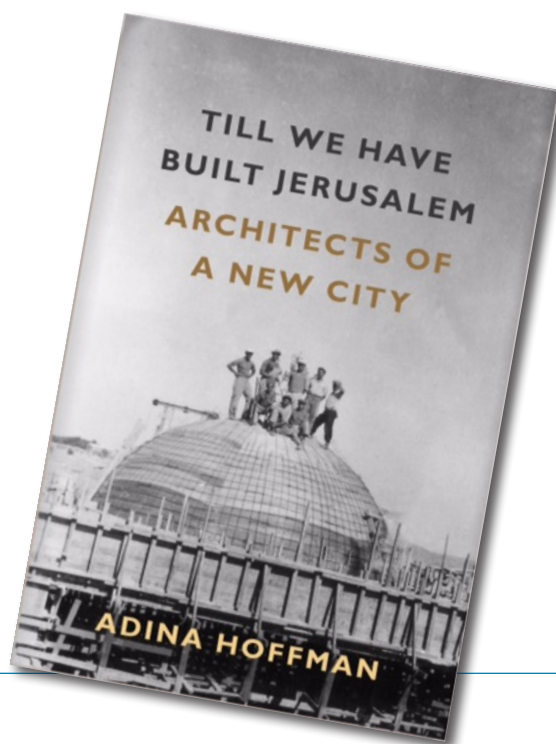
The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Steven Beller, independent scholar
“When Does It Make Sense to Call Hostility towards Jews Antisemitism; and When Does It Not? Some Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Debates”

Wednesday, March 9

The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Michael L. Morgan, Senator Jeremiah S. and Carole S. Grafstein Professor of Jewish Philosophy, University of Toronto; Chancellor’s Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Jewish Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington
“Sartre, Levinas, and Antisemitism”





Ran Halévi, Director of Research, CNRS; Professor, Raymond Aron Center for Political Studies

Tuesday, March 29

The Benjamin (Yale 1962) and Barbara Zucker Lecture Series

Ilan Greilsammer, Professor of Political Studies, Bar-Ilan University

“The New Historians of Israel: Is the Destruction of National Myths a Delegitimization of Zionism?”

Tuesday, April 5

Adina Hoffman, essayist, biographer, and Windham Campbell literature prize winner

“Till We Have Built Jerusalem: Architects of a New City”

Co-sponsored by the Council on Middle East Studies

Tuesday, April 12

Maurice Samuels, Betty Jane Anlyan Professor of French, Yale University

“The Right to Difference: French Universalism and the Jews”

Co-sponsored by the Naomi Schor Memorial Lecture Fund, the Department of French, the Women Faculty Forum, and the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Thursday, April 14

David Motadel, Assistant Professor in International History, London School of Economics

“Muslims under Nazi Rule, 1941–1945”

Tuesday, May 3

Natalie Zemon Davis, Professor of History, Princeton University and University of Toronto

“Languages of the People: A Romanian-Jewish Linguist on Yiddish, Romanian, and French”

Co-sponsored by the European Studies Council and the Judaic Studies Program

MUSLIMS UNDER NAZI RULE
1941-1945

David Motadel
Assistant Professor in International History,
London School of Economics

Thursday | April 14 | 4:00 PM
Luce Hall Room 202 | 34 Hillhouse Ave.

Refreshments will be served

At the height of the Second World War, German troops encountered large Muslim populations in North Africa, the Balkans, the Crimea and the Caucasus. Nazi officials saw Islam as a powerful force and one hostile to the same enemies as Germany - the British Empire, the Soviet Union, and Jews. The paper will not only discuss Berlin's attempts to promote Nazi Germany as a patron of Islam, but also show that the realities on the ground were often very complex: In the first weeks after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, thousands of Muslims, specifically prisoners of war, were executed by SS squads on the assumption that their circumcision proved that they were Jewish. In North Africa, the Balkans, and the Eastern front, German soldiers were confronted with heterogeneous Muslim populations, including Muslim Roma and Jewish converts to Islam. Historians interested in Nazi Germany's relations with the Islamic world have so far predominantly focused on the collaboration of prominent figures like the Mufti of Jerusalem. The paper will show that the history of Nazi Germany's engagement with Islam was far more complex than that. More generally, it will contribute to our broader understanding of the politics of religion in the Second World War.

Sponsored The Yale Program in Italian Studies, The Yale Program for the Study of Antisemitism, The Yale Department of History, The European Studies Council, and The Council on Middle East Studies at The MacMillan Center

2016 Recipients of Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Research Grants

Students

Douglas L. Furth, *Master of Divinity Student*

For my research project, I will examine the history of early Christian interpretation of Matthew 27:25, the infamous “his blood be upon us” verse. My analysis will include the timing, geographical location, frequency, and manner of usage of this passage. Matthew 27:25 has frequently been read as meaning that all Jews, regardless of when or where in history they may have been born, are guilty of killing Jesus. Contemporary scholarly exegesis suggests that the traditional anti-Judaic reading is an anachronism because the purpose of Matthew was to persuade a largely Jewish readership that following Jesus was the scripturally mandated way to be a Jew after the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. Matthew 27:25 is better read as a polemical theological argument rather than a statement concerning an ethnic group. My hypothesis is that understanding the early exegetical history of Matthew 27:25 is a reasonable proxy for understanding when, where, and in what manner anti-Judaic thought and sentiment developed in the early Church. The fact that Matthew was not intended as an anti-Judaic text is what makes it a useful historical marker. I intend to create a chart referencing among other things the name, date, location, and author of each text to the extent that this information is available. The chart will also contain a comment on each text that attempts to summarize the context in which the citation appears. An annotated map showing dispersion may also be helpful, although it is premature to judge whether this will be feasible. Last, I will write a paper that analyzes the data to examine trends and to see whether reasonable conclusions can be drawn.

Samuel Gurwitt, *Yale Undergraduate Student*

I will intern this summer at the House of the Wannsee Conference, helping with educational programs and conducting research on Holocaust memory and the evolution of the Wannsee House over the course of its existence as a site of memory. The House of the Wannsee Conference, where Nazi officials met in 1942 to coordinate the implementation of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question,” now serves as a museum, memorial, and educational site. Through work on the museum’s educational programs and through individual research, I hope to examine how the site has changed its methods of presenting Germany’s Nazi past over time. Why did the original attempts to found the site fail in the ’60s and ’70s and why did they succeed in 1992? How have the interests and makeup of visitors changed since 1992? What aspects of the exhibit were emphasized at what points in the site’s history? By researching these questions, I hope to gain insight into the role the Holocaust might play in the discourse surrounding the refugee crisis.

Charlotte Kiechel, *Yale Graduate Student in History*

My project examines the stakes and significance of Holocaust commemoration in postwar France up until the present day. More specifically, I am interested in examining the extent to which in the postwar decades Jewish and non-Jewish communal organizations have come to see commemoration and “awareness raising” as preventative acts—that is, remembrance has become a means of preventing future mass atrocities. This summer I will be approaching this line of inquiry by looking at the institutional transformation of one organization in particular, La Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l’Antisémitisme (LICRA). Founded in 1927, LICRA serves as a notable case study. While for the first forty-nine years of existence, it was dedicated to preventing and fighting against antisemitic violence, in 1976 it expanded its mission to include the fight against racism, broadly defined, as part of its institutional purview. My project asks how and why that came to be. With the aim of tackling these questions, this summer I will be visiting three archives in Paris: those of LICRA, le Mémorial de la Shoah (Center of Jewish Documentation), and the National Archives of Paris. Ultimately, my ambition is to map how in the postwar decades Jewish associations both responded to and defined a larger movement within France to consider the value and import of Holocaust commemoration in universalized and preventative terms. My archival work this summer is an integral part of my pre-dissertation research and I am tremendously grateful for the YPSA’s support in making it possible.

Amelia Nierenberg, *Yale Undergraduate Student*

This summer I will conduct research on French Jewish immigration to Israel. In Ashdod, I intend to track a few French families who have recently immigrated to Israel as they acclimate to their new life. Specifically, I am curious about the shift from an “and” identity (both French and Jewish) to an “or” identity (suspending the French part of identity because the Jewish renders that unsafe)—and back to an “and” identity in Israel. Concretely, I intend to focus my attention on the French neighborhoods of Ashdod, where the French Jews have transplanted much of French culture, and are learning to adapt to their new life—learning Hebrew, buying apartments, finding employment again. It seems to be a community easing itself into a new identity, and I really want to track this development. As a journalist, I will do this through a long form piece (~4,000 words) and also through a series of photo essays about the community at large.

Abigail Sneider, *Yale Undergraduate Student*

In contemporary America, 76% of states are home to at least one local Holocaust memorial or museum. In Boise, the Idaho Anne

Through the generous support of the Salo W. and Jeannette M. Baron Foundation, YPSA was able to award eight research grants to Yale students and faculty this year.

Frank Human Rights Memorial displays bronze statues of Anne Frank and her diary. In Denver, Babi Yar Park commemorates the plight of Russian Jews with a stone monument and a path outlining a star of David. Minutes from popular vacation beaches, the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial shocks unprepared vacationers with graphic sculptures of skeletons crying out as they claw at an upward-reaching iron arm. What these monuments have in common is not structural similarity, but the lack thereof; what they share is their distinctiveness. No two monuments have the same form, character, or story. For my senior essay in history, I will be exploring the prominence of the Holocaust in American memory by researching the proliferation of local American Holocaust memorials. Recently, the number of Holocaust memorials and museums in America has only continued to rise. Since 2000, at least thirty new monuments and museums have been created across the country. These memorials have been constructed under a variety of circumstances. What is surprising is the abundance of monuments built on public land, with strong municipal and state support. These monuments raise a number of questions: Why do Americans seek to commemorate an event that, compared with other traumas like slavery and the Vietnam War, is relatively removed from their history? What about the Holocaust compels individuals and governments in Idaho, Iowa, South Carolina, and Colorado to physically and publicly commemorate its legacy? In my senior essay, I plan to explore these matters by traveling to five cities across the country, visiting their monuments, and conducting archival research. Using this subset of monuments, I will examine how the Holocaust, a largely European event, has acquired a place of prominence in American historical memory.

Margaret Traylor, *Yale Graduate Student in History*

My project examines the relationship between the critique of avant-gardism and expressions of antisemitism in interwar Berlin. By examining popular culture, circulating media, and personal accounts from the end of World War I to the early years of the Third Reich, I hope to trace the way in which modernist forms of expression became conceived as “Jewish” within the public sphere, and how that association was absorbed into broader currents of antisemitism. I hope to reveal a continuity in cultural attitudes and taste often masked in historical narratives by myopic focus on the institutional upheavals of the early 1930s. This project will address oft-ignored visual and technical continuities between avant-garde art and material culture produced within the Third Reich to suggest that antisemitic notions of modernism that were developed in the previous decade actively informed the aesthetic (and not merely the content) of antisemitic, anti-Bolshevik, and anti-American propaganda after 1933.

Faculty

Thomas Connolly obtained his BA in Modern Languages from the University of Oxford in 2002. He spent three years at the École normale supérieure (Ulm) as “élève de la Sélection internationale,” and completed a “Maîtrise” and a “DEA” at the Université de Paris IV–La Sorbonne. He received a PhD in Comparative Literature from Harvard University in May 2012.

Thomas is completing a book entitled “Unfinished Poetics: Reading Poetry, Reading Celan,” which attempts to formulate new modes of reading in the “sous-oeuvre,” the unauthorized, incomplete, and often overlooked elements of an author’s textual production. His new research project examines literary ekphrasis as it operates in cultures in which there has traditionally been a prohibition on representative images, focusing on Maghrebi Francophone poetry.

Liran Yadgar is the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Postdoctoral Associate in Medieval Judaism at the Judaic Studies Program of Yale University, where he studies the history of Jews in the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (1250–1517). Liran completed his PhD in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago in June 2016. In the academic year 2016–2017 he will examine the representation of Jews and Judaism in the thought of Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), a renowned theologian of the city of Damascus. Ibn Taymiyya was a prolific writer, and many of his works are devoted to polemics – against Christians, Mongols, and Shiite Muslims – although not a single tract is devoted to polemicizing against Judaism. Thus, in order to study his position regarding Jews, one has to comb through his polemics against Muslims and non-Muslims (where Jews are often compared to other “enemies” of Islam), read his theological works, and extract the discussions on Judaism from the multivolume publication of his legal opinions, *Majmu’at al-fatawa*. Another source of investigation is the history of Ibn Taymiyya’s times, where Jewish matters are discussed, such as the regulation of distinctive garments to Christians and Jews, and the encounter of Ibn Taymiyya with Jewish converts to Islam. One of these converts, ‘Abd al-Sayyid al-Isra’ili (the “Israelite”), a physician and ophthalmologist, conducted theological discussions with the great Muslim theologian and adopted Islam in 1302. The importance of Ibn Taymiyya nowadays lies in his position as the most-quoted medieval scholar among modern Jihadist and Salafi thinkers, due to his strict and uncompromising stand against deviant Muslims as well as against heretical non-Muslims. Therefore, a research on Jews in this scholar’s writings is a much-needed contribution to Islamic and Judaic Studies.

THE RIGHT TO DIFFERENCE

*French
Universalism
& the Jews*

Maurice Samuels

NEW BOOK

**The University of Chicago Press,
November 2016.**

Universal equality is a treasured political concept in France, but recent anxiety over the country's Muslim minority has led to an emphasis on a new form of universalism, one promoting loyalty to the nation at the expense of all ethnic and religious affiliations. This timely book offers a fresh perspective on the debate by showing that French equality has not always demanded an erasure of differences.



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