Exploring the Contemporary Relevance of German-Jewish History

William H. Weitzer, Executive Director

Our founders and members over the past sixty years have supported LBI because of our unwavering belief that the history of German-speaking Jews that was nearly obliterated by the Nazis must be preserved. While that will remain at the core of our mission, we also believe that we can add value to our work by finding the relevance of our history to the contemporary world. The past and present depend on one another, each imbuing the other with context and meaning, and we embrace this dynamic in our continuing explorations of German-Jewish history.

Relevance can be found simply by connecting the dots between Jewish life today and its antecedents in German-Jewish history. I hope that many of you saw our exhibit on the Wissenschaft des Judentums, the movement in the 19TH century of German Jews who first began to apply scientific methods to the study of Jewish history and culture. The exhibit spelled out the relevance of Wissenschaft to the 21ST century explicitly. For example, Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox Judaism, even and especially as practiced here in the US, all have their roots in this movement, as do secular Jewish Studies programs at universities across the globe.

Our history can also provide perspective to our approach to contemporary challenges. In the last year, we have seen the greatest increase in migration since the end of World War II. This is an issue that is on the minds of Americans in this election season and clearly on the minds of Germans since Angela Merkel’s bold pronouncement that Germany would take one million Syrian refugees in 2015. In late October, LBI will hold a workshop in Leipzig with the Simon Dubnow Institute on the migration of Jews from central Europe in the 1930s. We fully expect that the scholars attending this workshop will observe both the differences and similarities between these two refugee crises.

It is also important to remember that our history is relevant to the more than 200,000 Jews living in Germany today. Last October, a group of German-Jewish scholarship students from Germany visited LBI. While the family backgrounds of a majority of the students are from the former Soviet Union, the students took great interest in the history of German-Jews who lived in the country where most of them were born and intend to live their lives. I was struck by the remark of one student who said that she saw an opportunity to use the narratives of German-Jews in the early 20TH century and American Jews today to help build her own narrative about living in Germany today.

These are just three examples of the many ways that we are making the historic legacy that LBI commemorates relevant to today. It is our hope that these efforts will attract new generations of supporters who will carry on our vital work.
Cover image, above, and right:
The New York City-based design firm C&G Partners created this 3D model of the center of Berlin, which uses computer projection to show how the cityscape transformed over the last century. It specifically traces the history of properties owned by Jewish families. In many cases, these properties are otherwise invisible to the modern visitor, lost to bombs, razed and replaced with new edifices, or effaced by a changed urban grid.

The model is on display as part of the exhibition, Stolen Heart, in the Katherine and Clifford H. Goldsmith Gallery at the Center for Jewish History through October 2016.

**Projects**

Descendants of Expropriated Berlin Families Gather For Exhibition Opening

Family of Rare Book Donor Visits LBI

Digitization and Beyond: LBI Staff Report on Library and Archives Trends

A New Online Presence for the Leo Baeck Institute(s)

**People**

Genealogy Success Stories

In Memoriam: Ernest Michel

In Memoriam: Fritz Stern

2015 Gerald Westheimer Fellows

Between Memory and Oblivion—The Jewish Cemeteries in Vienna

Tim Corbett

**Collections**

The Roedelheim Mahzor Collection

Tarnschriften: Camouflaged Publications in Resistance Against the Nazis

**Programs**

Events and Exhibits at Leo Baeck Institute

**Save the Date**

2016 Annual Award Dinner Honoring Robert Morgenthau on November 10, 2016
Descendants of Expropriated Berlin Families Gather for Exhibition Opening

Before the opening reception in late March for the new exhibit, *Stolen Heart: The Theft of Jewish Property in Berlin’s Historic City Center, 1933–1945*, some very special guests met to share how the expropriation of Berlin’s Jews had touched their own families’ lives. Carolyn Winchester, a grandniece of the artist Eugenie Fuchs, whose story is told in the exhibition, was not able to attend but sent a moving letter to be read in her absence. Her great-aunt was an accomplished painter who had studied with Lovis Corinth before fleeing to Paris. Fuchs was deported from France in 1943 and murdered at Majdanek.

“Eugenie Fuchs was the cousin of my grandfather and aunt to my mother. I would love to have known her. While knowledge of Eugenie has been fragmented by time and events, letters to family members scattered and lost, her place in our family is not forgotten. Like most in our family, Eugenie was reputed to have a great sense of humor, was warm and generous. She had strong ties to her parents, her four older brothers and her extended family. It was only after the early death of her father in 1893 that the twenty-year-old Eugenie really started to paint….Most of what she painted is now either missing or destroyed.

I would, on behalf of the Fuchs family, like to thank both Lutz Mauersberger at the Berlin Mitte-Archives and the Leo Baeck Institute for this celebration of the life and paintings of a much loved family member. May her memory be a blessing.”

—Carolyn Winchester

Family of Rare Book Donor Visits LBI

This spring, an exhibition in the David Berg Rare Book Room at the Center for Jewish History displayed rare books from the collection of Frank L. Herz. The works on display included Johannes Reuchlin’s *Augenspiegel* from 1511, one of the earliest treatises against antisemitism and intolerance.

Descendants of Herz who attended the exhibition opening were moved seeing the collection of their father, father-in-law, and grandfather being presented to the public. Janet Stahl, daughter-in-law of Frank Herz, explained that “despite the power of words, which was at the heart of the exhibit, words cannot express our family’s joy that the passion that Frank Herz had for his beloved book collection can now be shared with all. We know Frank was hovering over us in spirit. He would have loved that the expertly curated display illustrated how such seemingly ancient texts still resonate today. It goes without saying that he would have been overjoyed seeing the respect given to the Augenspiegel, which he considered the jewel in his collection.”

Sibylle Quack, the historian and friend of Frank Herz who arranged the donation of the collection to LBI, said the exhibition brought back treasured memories: “I was very lucky to have known Frank and his wife Susanne, both close friends of mine. I had many talks on Reuchlin with Frank. He was particularly interested in the question of how Reuchlin defended Jewish rights and fought against antisemitism in the Christian church. When I inherited the collection from Frank, it became immediately clear to me to donate the great books in Frank’s memory to the LBI.”

At the exhibition opening, the family also met with Peter Wortsman who translated Reuchlin’s treatise on Jewish books and wrote a play based on his life that was later performed at the CJH, and Elisheva Carlebach, a leading scholar of Jewish history in early modern Europe at Columbia University.

Online

Frank L. Herz Rare Book Collection in DigiBaek
www.lbi.org/herz-collection

*Burning Words* Exhibition and Performance
www.lbi.org/burning-words
Digitization and Beyond: LBI Staff Report on Library and Archives Trends

LBI Library staff engaged with current issues and developments in librarianship at several conferences in 2015 and 2016. Renate Evers, Director of Collections, gave a presentation entitled “Leo Baeck Institute – New York | Berlin: Digitization of a special collection and beyond” at the 6th International Library Congress in Leipzig in March 2016. The event, attended by about 3,500 librarians, was organized by Bibliothek und Information Deutschland (BID). The United States was the guest country of honor to increase the cooperation between American and German libraries and their associations.

In her presentation, Evers shared her observations of the process of the digitization of the entire LBI archive, the collaborative NEH/DFG-funded Freimann digitization project together with the Judaica Collection in Frankfurt, the digitization of parts of the Periodicals Collection, an outlook on planned new activities, as well as user experiences and feedback.

In fall of 2015, Evers had presented LBI projects at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Judaica Collections in Germany, a loose association of Jewish museums, synagogues, memorials, libraries, archives, and research institutes as well as individuals from Europe, Israel, and the United States. Another presentation Evers gave on new projects at the LBI was part of the panel “Digitization and Libraries” at the 2015 conference of the Association of Jewish Libraries, in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Having digitized nearly its entire archive as well as significant portions of its books and periodicals holdings, LBI has gained considerable experience preserving cultural heritage through a variety of media. To exchange lessons learned and gain further insight into the new frontier of preserving born-digital items, Ginger Barna, Head Librarian, and Tracey Felder, Associate Librarian for Cataloging and Periodicals, attended the symposium “Let’s Get Digital” in spring 2016. The symposium, organized by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York, featured presentations on web archiving, grant writing for digitization projects and new types of software facilitating the handling of digitized items, all addressing issues LBI staff have come across in their everyday work.

Lauren Paustian, Associate Librarian, presented a poster at a joint conference of the Art Libraries Society of North America and the Visual Resources Association in Seattle, Washington, in spring 2016. “The conference included many highlights relating to my work at the LBI, such as sessions about digital humanities, managing rights and reproductions of collection items, and open access initiatives for scholarly innovations.” Paustian presented a newspaper preservation project which the LBI Library has undertaken. Staff digitized, microfilmed, and built custom enclosures for more than 100 newspaper titles.

“One of the things I took away from the conference is that digital humanities is more than simply hosting a digitized collection. Digital humanities is dynamic: It can be collaborative, it can provide a visual representation of information, and it can reveal new connections to other fields.” Examples of digital humanities projects are the geolocation of data points on a virtual map, or the creation of word clouds to reveal the most commonly used words in a text.

A New Online Presence for the Leo Baeck Institute(s)

Since 2010, LBI staff in New York have engaged with donors, scholars, genealogists, and others on the Institute’s Facebook page. In between two and six posts per day, archivists and librarians share unique items from our collections, news articles that touch on German-Jewish history, and updates about our programs and fellowships. A very active community of over 3,000 people engage with LBI on the social network, commenting on and sharing posts, posting research inquiries, and on occasion even helping to identify mysterious items in the collections.

In June, LBI will launch a new Facebook presence that better represents the overlapping missions of the Leo Baeck Institutes in New York, London, and Jerusalem, as well as LBI – New York’s new office in Berlin. Two thirds of LBI – New York’s current followers live outside the United States, with German-speaking countries representing by far the largest segment within that group. Accordingly, the language of this new forum will be German. The content there will continue to focus on the collections of Leo Baeck Institute that are held in New York, but it will also include news from the Leo Baeck Institutes in London and Jerusalem, LBI New York’s Berlin Office, and the LBI’s academic working group in Germany.

Online at:
Leo Baeck Institute – New York
www.facebook.com/lbinyb
Leo Baeck Institute International
www.facebook.com/lbi-international
Genealogy Success Stories

LBI and the Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute at the Center for Jewish History (CJH) asked researchers to share their stories of discoveries made in LBI collections. The following submissions were presented at the meeting of the Jewish Genealogical Society of New York at the CJH in May, 2016 along with the books and original documents that helped these family historians add branches to their family trees.

Jane Vogel-Kohai, Moshav Mesillat Tziyon, Israel

When I began my genealogical research about 17 years ago, I was excited to learn that my grandfather’s papers were preserved at LBI. My grandfather, Rabbi Dr. Leo Baerwald, was an early member and leader of LBI, which has preserved his documents in the Leo Baerwald collection. Two months after my discovery, I traveled to NY (from Israel) and combed through the treasure trove that is my grandfather’s own genealogy research. It includes documentation going back to 1798 that shows that my great-great-grandfather was Leyser Lewin Baerwald, born in 1770. His papers showed Leyser Lewin’s children, whose descendants I have since contacted. I also found some old family portraits which were mislabeled; the faces of these ancestors were so distinctive that I could easily identify them based on old photos that I had.

After I contacted these distant cousins, some of them sent me their own amazing documents. Among them was a journal recording all the births, deaths, and marriages of the descendants from 1800 on. One of the descendants was the philanthropist Paul Baerwald of the Joint Distribution Committee, my grandfather’s second cousin who helped him escape Germany to NY.

Three years ago, about 100 Baerwald descendants met in Oakland for a family reunion, commemorating the centennial of the 50TH wedding anniversary of Lesser and Pauline Baerwald in 1913. A copy of the book commemorating the history of the Baerwald family is also part of my grandfather’s collection.

Collections
Leo Baerwald Collection, AR 3677.
www.lbi.org/leobaerwald

John Lowens, Point Lookout, New York

It was about 1995. I’d just read Dan Rottenberg’s book, Finding Our Fathers, in which the LBI was listed as an important source of information for German-Jewish genealogical research. I went to LBI and asked if they could help me trace my Lowenstein family from Wallau near Wiesbaden. Karen Franklin, LBI’s director of family research, quickly found a book by Franz Luschberger entitled Juden in Hochheim: Eine heimatgeschichtliche Exkursion (Zechnersche Buchdruckerei, Speyer: 1988). In the book’s index I found my great-grandfather’s name! I did not know that he had been the leader of his local Jewish Community.

Opposite the page that mentioned my great-grandfather was a photo and story about a certain Ludwig Schwarzschild from the same Jewish Community. Ludwig was a member of the crew of the commercial submarine, “U-Boot Deutschland”. I’d been told by two Lowenstein cousins that their fathers visited the “Deutschland” when it was docked in Baltimore in July, 1916. It became clear that the old family story was true and why.

The book Karen found for me that day is one of hundreds of detailed histories of Jewish communities in Germany in the LBI’s collections. In 1995, before the internet provided easy access, those books were invaluable sources. They are still a great source of detailed Jewish history for small towns in Germany.

Collections

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Gina Burgess Winning, Surrey, England

In a bundle of German papers I’d been given, many of them faintly copied, I found the text of a letter sent to the LBI in 1956 by Wilhelm (later William) Buchheim, one of my grandmother’s cousins. In the letter, Wilhelm stated that his great-grandfather Levi had come from Buchheim near Cologne and taken the name of his native town after moving to Wohra near Marburg. Since I was working on a chapter for a German memorial book to commemorate the Jews deported from Marburg in 1942, including my grandparents and uncle, I was very interested to know the source for William’s claim. Did the LBI have any evidence that Levi had come from Buchheim?

Indeed. William Buchheim’s digitized papers at the LBI include his memoir The Story of the Buchheim Family 1780–1957, his WWI and WWII diaries, and several photographs. William’s evidence that Levi was born in Buchheim turned out not to be very compelling but, more importantly, his memoir included recollections of his uncles, including Hirsch, my great-grandfather. Having grown up with next to no information about even my immediate German-Jewish relations, it was astonishingly enriching to learn about Hirsch. He was imprisoned twice for standing up to antisemitism; my admiration for his courage mingles with dismay at his treatment. William’s memoir also provides firsthand accounts of the antisemitism he experienced in the 1890s as a small child in Germany, which sheds light on the possible experiences of my own grandmother. A former teacher, William includes a potted history of the Hessian region of Germany, outlining the fluctuating tides of emancipation and antisemitism during the late 18TH and 19TH centuries, an invaluable context for the lives of countless relatives across my family tree.

Collections


Joyce Goldberg Gaines, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

My mother’s parents fled Nazi Germany with her in 1936 when she was just 18 months old. To my knowledge, all immediate family was able to leave barring one or two aunts and a delay for some which resulted in a stay in the Gurs detention camp.

I started my search by looking up the names of the cities where my grandparents were born. To my utter amazement and delight, I found a book in LBI’s collection all about the small town of Spiesen where my grandfather was born. The book is written in German but contains huge genealogical listings. Even with my limited German, I was able to understand some of the story. This book opened up my world!

Not only did it tell me who my great-great-grandparents were, but it extended back five generations to the mid 1700s. I learned that I had connections to nearly the entire Jewish population of the town. I was also astonished to discover that my great-grandfather was the youngest of 9 siblings. He was the only one to remain in Germany while the other 8 emigrated to the US in the mid 1800s, settling in St. Louis. This was unknown to both my mother and me.

I have since purchased the book and have developed an e-mail correspondence with the author, Mr. Stephan Friedrich, who is delighted to help me learn more. I am providing him with information about the family in the USA while he conducts research in Germany. He is also instrumental in the current Stolpersteine project in St. Ingbert, Germany, where my family will be remembered with memorial stones.

Collections


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“...Having grown up with next to no information about even my immediate German-Jewish relations, it was astonishingly enriching to learn about Hirsch. He was imprisoned twice for standing up to antisemitism...”
I knew that my great-great-great-great-grandfather was Mordechai Schiff from Wollstein in Posen Province, but for many years I was not able to find any information on him. One evening in 2013, I adjusted my search to look for ‘Marcus Schiff’ instead and suddenly, there he was: Marcus Schiff from Wollstein, married to Johanna Salomon. The approximate dates fit as well. I quickly wrote to the person who had posted this information on a genealogy site and his response was that it had come from a digital collection at the LBI, the Frieda Friedlander Collection, 1891–1981.

Most interesting to me were three folders in the collection, which contained family trees from 1901 and 1910. In them, I found not only my 4x great-grandfather who had eluded me for more than a decade of research, but also my previously unknown 4x great-grandmother Johanna along with information on both and even portraits of the two. I was elated!

To see pictures of one’s ancestors who passed away almost 200 years ago is pretty special. But it didn’t end there. The family trees also listed the children of Marcus and Johanna, enabling me to link most of the Wollstein Schiffs I had come across in years of researching my family. I had always suspected that they were somehow related but until then had never been able to link them conclusively. Now I could, and in one instant my family tree had grown exponentially!

In Memoriam: Ernest Michel

It is with sadness that LBI mourns the passing of Ernest W. Michel, a longtime Board Member and supporter of the Leo Baeck Institute. Born in Mannheim, Germany in 1923, Michel survived six years of slave labor in concentration camps. He dedicated the rest of his life to Jewish communal service, serving as executive vice president of the United Jewish Appeal from 1970–1989. A brilliant writer and speaker, he helped to honor the memory of German-Jewish life and advocate for Holocaust survivors in books and public lectures around the world. His archival legacy and published work are preserved in the collections of the LBI and the American Jewish Historical Society.

In Memoriam: Fritz Stern

LBI mourns the loss of Fritz Stern, whose probing scholarship on Germany in the 19TH and 20TH centuries helped explain the rise of National Socialism and the multi-faceted relationship between Germans and Jews. A longtime professor of history at Columbia University, Stern published extensively on topics close to the mission of LBI.

Born 1926 in Breslau to a prosperous family that had converted to Lutheranism in the late 19TH century, his early experiences with persecution shaped the intellectual project that defined his career. “Though I lived in National Socialist Germany for only five years, that brief period saddled me with the burning question that I have spent my professional life trying to answer: Why and how did the universal potential for evil become an actuality in Germany?” he wrote in the introduction to his 2006 memoir, Five Germanys I Have Known.

His expertise on Germany’s national transformations made him a sought after advisor to global leaders, especially as the world came to grips with yet another new Germany following the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1993, the late diplomat Richard C. Holbrooke summoned him to serve as an advisor to the US Embassy in Bonn. When Stern was awarded the Leo Baeck Medal in 2004, Holbrooke explained why Stern was so highly regarded on both sides of the Atlantic: “a tough, uncompromising intellect, a staggering historical knowledge, an unyielding search for truth no matter where the facts may take you, and a belief that we can learn from the past.”

Left: The archival box containing the Frieda Friedlander Collection. Right: Genealogical documents from the collection.
What dimensions of the Holocaust can literary and filmic reworkings of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial (1963–1965) commemorate and convey that do not fit easily into the concepts, practices, and purposes of the legal trial? While legal scholars and historians have examined the first major Holocaust trial in West Germany, there has been no systematic examination of the literary and filmic reworking of this important legal attempt to work through the past. To close this research gap, I will compare the Holocaust narratives of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial to those of texts and films engaging directly with it. German-Jewish and German authors, such as Jean Améry, Hannah Arendt, Peter Weiss, and Grete Weil, to name a few, use the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, its documents, and unofficial transcripts as Vorlage to rework the material and to open new perspectives on the facts and narratives established by the trial.

I will argue that the literary and filmic reworkings of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial go beyond the accusatory and punitive functions of the trial: they narrate, investigate, and commemorate aspects that the trial either failed to consider or misrepresented, such as affects, the origins of the Holocaust, the organizational structure of Auschwitz, and the suffering of the victims, especially the specific experiences of women. Thereby, the texts and films contribute significantly to the working through and the memory of the Holocaust, for which the criminal trial performs the preparatory work. The 2014 film by Giulio Ricciarelli, Im Labyrinth des Schweigens, about the background of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, demonstrates that the impact of this trial on the memory and imagination of the Holocaust and the artistic dealing with the past still continues until today.

As a Gerald Westheimer Career Development Fellow, I am working on my book, tentatively entitled Alternative Enlightenment: Mathematics and German-Jewish Modernity. My book is an archeology of the constructive role that mathematics played in shaping German-Jewish modernity. The story it tells starts with the emancipatory and inclusionary potential of mathematics for German-Jewish philosophers in the Enlightenment. It culminates in a project shared by Gershom Scholem, Franz Rosenzweig, and Siegfried Kracauer that employs metaphors from mathematics to rescue and continue the Enlightenment promise of an inclusion of difference in a world threatened by the homogenization of religious assimilation, mass culture, and capitalism. This possibility hinged not on Einstein’s new physics or the post-Darwinian life sciences, but instead on mathematics’ intimate relationship to modern anxieties over language and knowledge, truth and faith. That such potential may seem now surprising or even unlikely is, I argue, far less a relic of C.P. Snow’s division of the sciences and humanities into “two cultures,” than it is the conscious product of another interpretation of mathematics by German Jews, namely the Frankfurt School. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno’s critical framework, which polemicized against mathematics’ alleged exclusion of language and the individual, covers up the emancipatory potential that the subject once provided for other forerunners of Critical Theory. Aimed at rehabilitating the productive role of mathematics in modern German-Jewish intellectual and cultural history, my book draws on a wide range of interdisciplinary sources and archives in the United States, Germany, and Israel. Alternative Enlightenment thus hopes to rediscover a prospective intellectual ally in mathematics that the humanities have long neglected due to its equation by the Frankfurt School with the type of instrumental reason that it associates with the Holocaust.

Online
LBI Fellowships and Fellows
www.lbi.org/fellowships
Between Memory and Oblivion—The Jewish Cemeteries in Vienna

Tim Corbett, Prins Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Jewish History

It is early afternoon in late summer in one of Vienna's old Jewish cemeteries. The trees rustle in the breeze, muffling the distant rumble of urban commotion. Footsteps crackle in the spring undergrowth growing wildly around partly submerged, musty old tombstones. Golden sunbeams pierce through the leafy green canopy, dancing off the weathered inscriptions, illuminating arcane Gothic and Hebrew scripts—forgotten words from long ago. Up ahead, the pathway disappears into a distant floral vanishing point, framed by imposing structures of hewn rock. Grand yet dilapidated, the weight of time shows on the cracked marble faces.

This idyllic representation is neither arbitrary nor unusual. This is, to be sure, one of the faces these cemeteries adopt on sleepy, sunny afternoons, as the world rushes by, oblivious, outside the old cemetery walls. More significantly, however, this is how Vienna's Jewish cemeteries are often portrayed in Austrian media. It is reflective, by subtle inference, of how Austria chooses to remember its Jewish past—while forgetting the desecrations wrought upon the cemeteries in the course of the Nazi cultural genocide. One history of the Vienna Central Cemetery mentions the “clear space where until very few years ago the beit tahara [ritual funerary home] stood,” without mentioning that it was blown up by Nazi thugs and their Viennese hangers-on during the November Pogrom (Havelka, 1985:57). Another claims that the Jewish cemeteries “survived the catastrophe of the Holocaust as though through a miracle.” It thereby characterizes both the Shoah and the partial survival of these spaces—with no mention of the severity of their desecration—in naturalistic terms which obfuscate the destructive agency of local Austrians (Bauer, 2004:216). Vienna’s crumbling Jewish cemeteries, sites of profound cultural gravitas fallen victim to decades of neglect, are frequently romanticized by non-Jewish Austrians as picturesque sites, “like an overgrown garden which visualizes the evanescence of all earthly things” (Barta, 2000:37).

For Harvey Fireside, known as Heinz Wallner before he was forced to flee the country of his birth at only eleven years of age, this forlorn vista is not a sight of mystical beauty. It is a visceral manifestation of violence and neglect. Fireside returned for the first time after sixty years of exile in September 2000. The trip, organized by the Jewish Welcome Service in Vienna, included a visit to one of the Jewish cemeteries. “We could see others in our group walking by gravestones, many of which were lying on the ground or tilted at odd angles,” he recalled. “High weeds made it difficult to decipher the markers. It was a disheartening sight.” In Fireside’s mind, the weathered face of the cemetery was nothing less than the embodiment of a society that had chosen to forget: “The frustration of this visit still rankled: a morning of stumbling through an unkempt jumble of decaying gravestones covering old bones. Couldn’t the Viennese, with their compulsive neatness, tidy up the place?” (Harvey Fireside, “Visit to a Viennese Cemetery”, unpublished memoir, 2004, LBI, ME 1486).

Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries are the most profound memorials to the long but anfractuous history of Jewish life, culture, and community surviving in the present cityscape. Vienna is today regarded as one of the cradles of modern culture, and the role of Jews in the genesis of Viennese culture has been the focus of intense interest in recent decades. Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries testify to the profound enmeshment but also the conflicts of Jewish life within Viennese society reaching from the Middle Ages right into the present day. They stand at the nexus of Vienna’s Jewish history. The sites reflect the development of complex codes of belonging and (self-)representation located within the interaction of the Jewish community with Viennese society and Austrian polity. This process was driven by change and
innovation on a multitude of levels. It affected and reflected issues of religiosity, economy, class, gender, profession, and education, among others. At the same time, the development was continuously drawing on, sustaining, advancing, or contesting Jewish sepulchral traditions. The consequence was a unique yet multifarious Jewish-Viennese sepulchral culture. Therein, the cemeteries became a principle locus of the negotiation of ‘Jewish’ and ‘Viennese’ or ‘Austrian’ cultures and of the challenges which these continuously evolving categories posed to individual and communal codes of belonging.

No integrated history of Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries exists to date, though some works on specific cemeteries have appeared sporadically (most notably Steines, 1993; Veran, 2002; and Walzer, 2011). The origins of the Jewish cemeteries as communal spaces, and the over 100,000 grave-memorials located therein, are material artifacts of enormous cultural and historical significance. To date, they have not been subjected to sustained analysis. Their textual-semiotic encoding with a matrix of profound (self-)representations evinces the increasing enmeshment of the Jewish community, or at least segments of it, within Viennese society. This was, however, accompanied, by a deep social fragmentation resulting in a profound blurring of lines between ‘Jewish’ and ‘Austrian’, or between ‘Jewish’ and ‘non-Jewish’.

A characteristic example is the honorary grave-memorial of Leopold Kompert, the Bohemian-born progenitor of ‘ghetto literature’, located in Section 5B, Row 1, Plot 2 of the older Jewish section of Vienna’s Central Cemetery. This reads in German: “PhD, imperial and royal government councilor. Citizen and city councilor of the City of Vienna. Lower Austrian state school councilor, representative of the Jewish community organization, knight of various orders etc.” Kompert’s epitaph represents a broad intersection of realms: academic, professional, political, communal, and noble. The multiplicity of belongings is underscored through the simple word ‘etc.’, an allusion to Emperor Franz-Joseph’s 119-word official title, which was punctuated throughout with ‘etc’. The epitaph further names Kompert simply but powerfully a ‘citizen of Vienna.’ This was a popular epithet amongst Viennese Jews in the late nineteenth century, representing their inclusion into Viennese civil society after centuries of ostracism.

Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries are some of the most potent sites for the construction, negotiation, and contestation of memory of Austria’s Jewish heritage, and all the profound achievements and ruptures associated therewith, to survive in the present citiescape. These sites evince the perennially powerful discourses concerning culture, community, and belonging both within the Jewish community and within Viennese and Austrian society that continue into the present day. They offer a compressed picture of a long and convoluted history defined through incessant vicissitude. Discontinuity and the successive ruptures of modern Austrian and Central European history are as characteristic of it as is the evident longevity and influence of Jews and Jewish culture within this history.

As Austria grapples today with its conflicted histories of cultural genesis and cultural genocide, faced with perennial issues of immigration and social change and the challenges these pose to the country’s social cohesion and national self-understanding, the city’s grand yet dilapidated Jewish cemeteries continue to exert a powerful presence in politics and society, as sites of negotiation and contestation of Jewish belonging in modern Austria and of the role and meaning of Austria’s Jewish history in the present day. These houses of death remain as some of the most significant betei hachaim, or houses of life. They testify to the life of Jews in Vienna, providing for Vienna’s Jews the mnemonic and physical link between the past and the present, here, in the “houses of their fathers’ sepulchers.”

WORKS CITED:

Tim Corbett is a Prins Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Jewish History in New York. His current project, entitled “Once the ‘Only True Austrians’: Jewish-Austrian Memory and Identity after the World Wars”, investigates interactive constructions of ‘Jewishness’ and ‘Austrianess’ through the 20th century, in particular drawing on the vast collection of memoirs of and interviews with Jewish Austrians held at the Leo Baeck Institute. His book on Vienna’s Jewish cemeteries, based on his 2015 dissertation, entitled Die Grabstätten meiner Väter: Die jüdischen Friedhöfe in Wien, will be published in Austria in 2018.
The Roedelheim Mahzor Collection: Change and Continuity

The Jewish holidays provide structure and meaning to the more quotidian rhythms of life, and the mahzor, the Jewish festival prayer book, has been integral to the ways that generations of Jews have marked the passage of seasons and years.

Recently Moriah Amit, a librarian at the LBI and the Center for Jewish History, finished cataloging a unique collection of mahzors published in Roedelheim. These editions, comprising 15 complete sets of the prayer books, were published between 1800 and 1923 in Roedelheim, Germany. Over more than 140 hours, Amit cataloged 304 volumes of 77 editions that are preserved in the LBI library collection. Their appearance—the change in printed layout and language chosen by the publisher, as well as notes and inscriptions by the owner, or generations of owners—reflect the interplay of continuity and change that mark all religious-cultural traditions.

Wolf Heidenheim (1757–1832), a scholar, translator, and commentator on Jewish liturgy, shaped the development of the Roedelheim mahzor for the first three decades of the 19th century. Upon founding his publishing house in Roedelheim in 1799, the mahzor was one of the first books he printed. Its continuous publication became a life-long project for Heidenheim, one through which he contributed to the preservation of Jewish traditions as well as to their rejuvenation. Heidenheim was the first publisher who reviewed old manuscripts and texts to correct errors that had been passed on in the mahzor. He also removed those piyyutim, Jewish liturgical poems recited on holidays, that were no longer understood. Typographic layout and outward appearance of the books were another aspect Heidenheim transformed: Over time, the books included more decorative embellishments.

Over time, different rites were incorporated and published, not only in Hebrew. The Roedelheim Mahzor included the first complete translation into German, first written in Hebrew characters. From 1838 on, the Heidenheim press published editions in Hebrew which included a translation into German, while continuing to publish some editions with the Judeo-German translation. With diverse and changing features such as rite, language, and layout, there were up to three different versions of the prayer book published in a given year. While Heidenheim’s innovations were criticized by some Orthodox authorities at the time, many of the great 19th-century rabbinic leaders in Germany...
embraced his work. Even today, many Orthodox congregations with German roots in the Western World and Israel use the liturgical order composed by Heidenheim.

After Wolf Heidenheim’s death in 1832, the publishing house was taken over by his son-in-law and remained in the family for generations. Heidenheim’s name remained part of the imprint of the book. Similarly, the prayer books were typically passed on from one generation to the next. As a result, several of the mahzors in LBI’s collection carry lists of handwritten names and dates between their book covers, family histories in miniature, attesting to the continuity of the celebration of Jewish festivals that they have helped facilitating.

Online
Roedelheim Mahzor in DigiBaeck
www.lbi.org/rodelheimmahzor

Tarnschriften: Camouflaged Publications in Resistance Against the Nazis

The Roedelheim mahzor in a bilingual edition, showing German text on the left and Hebrew on the right side.

The titles seem designed to elicit a yawn: a treatise on the latest traffic regulations for cyclists, a guide on how to shield potatoes from frost. That was no different in the Germany of the late 1930s and 1940s. Little could a random reader or even a suspicious investigator know that the unassuming manual contained not horticultural wisdom, but explosive political content.

Critics of the rising Nazi regime became inventive after Hitler rose power in 1933. As minister for propaganda, Joseph Goebbels enforced strict censorship on everything from art to educational and political publications that were not in line with the Nazis’ teachings. When the dissemination of critical thought became more important than ever, it also became riskier than ever.

Tarnschriften, or camouflaged publications, were one way to avoid censorship in Germany between 1933 and 1945. The Communist Party of Germany produced about 80% of the estimated 9,000–10,000 publications, which were issued with up to 40,000 copies per title. Two of these books have been acquired by the LBI library.

Instead of informing its readers of how to navigate city traffic on a bike, one of the publications contains socialist and antifascist thought, all geared towards enlightening and organizing resistance against the Nazi regime. The compilation of writings by a variety of authors, among them Iwanow, Stalin, and Anna Seghers, covers both programmatic and practical questions. “Some Questions on the Fight against Hitler’s War Policies” are followed by reflections on “Spain and the Duty of the German Antifascists”. Additionally, authors provide book reviews and discuss how to best support political prisoners and their families and to what extent it is beneficial to volunteer in official positions, such as helper in an air-raid shelter.

The second Tarnschrift held by the LBI Library is disguised as the inflammatory antisemitic book Die Grundlagen des jüdischen Volkes: Eine notwendige Abrechnung (The Foundations of the Jewish People, a Necessary Reckoning) by Walter Poetsch. In stark contrast to its ostensible content, it contains an account of the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany. As the author writes “hunderte deutscher Juden sind seit 1933 ermordet worden. Geschöpfe. Menschen wie wir.” (Hundreds of German Jews have been murdered since 1933. Humans. People like us).

While the book originally published under the title comprises 188 pages, the camouflaged version consists of only 22 pages. Not only the length is reduced: Each Tarnschrift is just the size of a palm—easily hidden in the pages of another book, or slipped into a pocket, and vanished.

Online
Tarnschriften in DigiBaeck
www.lbi.org/tarnschriften

One of the booklets is addressed to fellow Germans, educating about and appealing to them to stop persecution of Jews.
LECTURE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 2016, 3:30 PM
German-Jewish Women in Czech Lands after WWII
Rennert Memorial Chapel, Center for Jewish History
After examining the collections of Leo Baeck Institute and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Monika Hanková, Prins Foundation Fellow for Emigrating Artists and Writers-In-Residence at the Center for Jewish History, will present the unique biography of Magdalena Robitscher-Hahn, a German-Jewish doctor from the Sudetenland, whose life story is taken as a basis for further work on the theme, especially for deep analysis of specific theoretical issues connected with biographies of German-Jewish women from former Czechoslovakia. This particular life story is a part of a biographical publication in progress which will focus on several biographies in gendered perspective. The aim is to demonstrate significant differences in Jewish women’s perception of their post-war experience using the example of selected life stories of individuals originating from different language environments existing in Czechoslovakia at that time, and subsequently their experience from emigration.

Co-presented with the Center for Jewish History
Admission free, RSVP by email to jkaplan@cjh.org

CONVERSATION
WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 2016, 6:30 PM
In Plain Sight: The Marvelous, Unlikely History of Bard Professor Justus Rosenberg
Forchheimer Auditorium, Center for Jewish History
Refugee, smuggler, resistant, intellectual. Even before the age of 21, Justus Rosenberg had lived many lives. Sarah Wildman, author of a major profile of Rosenberg for the New York Times, will speak to Rosenberg about his life and work.

Rosenberg is believed the last living member of the American-sponsored Emergency Rescue Committee (headed by Varian Fry). Working out of Marseille, Fry’s gang smuggled anti-fascist artists and intellectuals out of occupied Europe. Rosenberg himself was a refugee, born in 1921 in the Free City of Danzig. He had the good fortune of skill with language, youth, and an “Aryan” appearance. After a year as a courier for Fry, the Emergency Rescue Committee was shut down and Rosenberg set out on his own. He was captured by the Gestapo in a round-up of mostly foreign Jews in Grenoble but escaped from a transit camp and joined the French Resistance. In the last year of the war, Rosenberg served the Americans in reconnaissance and, post-war, worked for UNWRA.

Professor Emeritus of comparative literature at Bard College, where he still teaches, and a former professor at the New School, Professor Rosenberg now heads the Justus & Karin Rosenberg Foundation, dedicated to increasing understanding about, and combating, anti-Semitism and hatred. Join us to hear his story on this special evening.

Admission Free, RSVP at www.lbi.org/rosenberg

FILM
SEPTEMBER 12–16, 2016, 6:30 PM
Berlin in Film
Center for Jewish History
Stolen Heart, LBI’s current exhibition on the expropriation of Jewish properties in Berlin shows how Jews helped shape the urban landscape of pre-WWII Berlin. Join us for three films that bring that lost world to life:

Grand Hotel (USA, 1932) At a luxurious Berlin hotel between the wars, the once-wealthy Baron Felix von Gaigern (John Barrymore) supports himself as a thief and gambler. In this lavish adaptation of the Austrian-Jewish writer Vicki Baum’s genre-defining 1929 novel, Menschen im Hotel, the baron romances one of his marks, the aging ballerina Grusinskaya (Greta Garbo), and teams with dying accountant Otto Kringelein (Lionel Barrymore) against his former boss, crooked industrialist Preysing (Wallace Beery), and his ambitious stenographer, Flaummchen (Joan Crawford).

Mensch am Sonntag (Germany, 1930) Years before they became major players in Hollywood, a group of young German- and Austrian-Jewish filmmakers—including eventual noir masters Robert Siodmak and Edgar G. Ulmer and future Oscar winners Billy Wilder and Fred Zinnemann—worked together on the once-in-a-lifetime collaboration People on Sunday (Menschen am Sonntag). This effervescent, sunlit silent about a handful of city dwellers enjoying a weekend outing (a charming cast of nonprofessionals) offers a rare glimpse of Weimar-era Berlin.

Mendelssohn’s Incessant Visions (Israel, 2011) He drew sketches on tiny pieces of paper and sent them from the WWI trenches to a young cellist who was waiting for him in Berlin. She thought he was a genius and helped him become the busiest architect in Germany. Years later, when the Nazis came to power, Erich and Louise Mendelssohn escaped Germany forever. The buildings which Erich built, scattered as a trail of their journey, changed the history of architecture. Mendelssohn’s Incessant Visions is a cinematic meditation about the untold story of Erich Mendelssohn, whose life and career were as enigmatic and tragic as the path of the century.

Showtimes will be announced at www.lbi.org/berlin-films
Micrographic illustrations in the Catalan Mahzor

Facsimile Editions offer yet another solution: the production of facsimiles of important manuscripts as one-to-one reproductions, designed to imitate the original down to the last detail.

This event will focus on the Falters' stunning recreation of the Catalan Mahzor as well as the original book's remarkable journey. Once held in the collections of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, it was thought lost until it resurfaced at auction in the 1980s. Thanks to the efforts of the German-Jewish philanthropist Ludwig Jesselson, the Mahzor and many other works from the Hochschule's collections were returned to Jewish institutions.

Co-presented with Yeshiva University Museum
Admission free, RSVP at www.lbi.org/catalan-mahzor

THE 59TH LEO BAESS MEMORIAL LECTURE
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2016, 2:30 PM
The Other in the Mirror: Jewish Interpretations of Christian and Islamic Origins

Forchheimer Auditorium, Center for Jewish History

Susannah Heschel is the Eli Black Professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth College. Her scholarship focuses on Jewish-Christian relations in Germany during the 19th and 20th centuries, the history of biblical scholarship, and the history of anti-Semitism. Her lecture will compare the work of 19th-century scholars Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz on the origins of Christianity and Islam.

Admission Free, RSVP at www.lbi.org/heschel

SYMPOSIUM
SUNDAY NOVEMBER 13, 2016
Martin Luther and Antisemitism

The Morgan Library & Museum

Five hundred years ago a monk in a backwater town at the edge of Germany took on the most powerful men in Europe: the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope, and he changed the course of history. Martin Luther's ire was not reserved only for the powerful and corrupt, however. In his early works, Luther had discouraged mistreatment of the Jews and advocated their conversion by proving that the Old Testament could be shown to speak of Jesus Christ. As the Reformation continued, Luther lost hope in large-scale Jewish conversion to Christianity and grew increasingly hostile toward the Jews. This program, in conjunction with the Morgan Library's exhibition, Word and Image: Martin Luther's Reformation, will discuss Luther's changing opinion on Jews as well as the impact of the Reformation on Christian-Jewish relations in the 16th century.

Details will be announced at www.lbi.org/luther
SAVE THE DATE
Thursday, November 10, 2016
FOR THE:
Leo Baeck Institute Annual Award Dinner
HONORING
The Honorable Robert M. Morgenthau
AT THE
Center for Jewish History

Robert M. Morgenthau stepped down from his post as Manhattan’s longest-serving District Attorney in 2009 after 35 years in office, but his commitment to public service remains as strong as it was when he joined the US Navy while still an undergraduate in 1940. Still of counsel at the Law Firm of Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen and Katz, Morgenthau is also Chairman of New York City’s Police Athletic League, life Trustee of Temple Emanu-El, and a Board Member of the Immigrant Justice Corps. An outspoken advocate for the rights of undocumented immigrants, he has linked the need for opportunities and legal protections for immigrants to his own family's history. His paternal grandfather, Henry Morgenthau Sr., came to the United States from Germany in 1866 and rose to become US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I, using his position to speak out on behalf of Armenians who faced deportations and massacres. His father, Henry Morgenthau Jr., continued the family tradition of public service as Secretary of the Treasury during the Great Depression and World War II, playing an instrumental role in forging the New Deal and advocating within the Roosevelt Administration for Jewish refugees.

Robert M. Morgenthau also recognizes the vital importance of Jewish history and was instrumental in the creation of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. As Founding Chairman, he helped to establish the Museum as a major cultural presence in Lower Manhattan. At the LBI Award Dinner, former Director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, David G. Marwell, will engage Mr. Morgenthau in a discussion of his extraordinary career and his continued work to build a better society.

More information online at www.lbi.org/morgenthau