Postdoctoral Fellows

Alex "Eli" Pottash
University of Maryland, College Park >> Weizmann Institute of Science

Alex "Eli" Pottash was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue his research project, "Enabling Inhalation of mRNA Therapies to Treat Lung Disease," with Professors Yinon Rudich and Gideon Schreiber at the Weizmann Institute of Science. His research aims to solve underlying problems in mRNA delivery and could be adapted to the treatment of lung cancer, infection, and other lung diseases.

Eli completed his BS and PhD in bioengineering at the University of Maryland, College Park. In his graduate work under Dr. Steven Jay, he investigated the loading of RNA into extracellular vesicles, which are cell-derived nanoparticles used as vehicles for gene therapy. In addition to the technical aspect of his project, Eli is interested in how culture shapes the invention and acceptance of technologies, such as inhalable drugs.

Ben Y. Israeli
Princeton University >> Weizmann Institute of Science

Ben Israeli was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue his project titled "Wave Turbulence and Renormalization: Tackling Divergences in the Wave Kinetic Equation" at the Weizmann Institute of Science, in which he will apply tools from quantum field theory to the statistics of turbulent ensembles of waves. This work will provide insights into the limits of validity of models of wave turbulence, and into the onset of strong turbulence in waves in oceanic, atmospheric, and astrophysical systems.
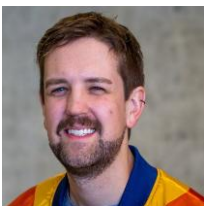
Ben received a BS in applied physics from Columbia University, and an MA and PhD in plasma physics from Princeton University. At Princeton, he produced a dissertation concerning instabilities and turbulence in astrophysical and laboratory dusty plasmas, as well as results concerning magnetic field topology and its application to photolithography systems.

Carrie Anne Thomas
The Ohio State University >> Oranim Academic College of Education

Carrie Anne Thomas was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to carry out her research project titled "Engagement with Diverse Picturebooks in Israel" under the mentorship of Dr. Rachel Ravid at Oranim Academic College of Education. This research project is a qualitative inquiry seeking to investigate the intrapersonal and interpersonal cultural and linguistic connections that diverse students in Israel make when engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse picturebooks during a researcher-led book club. Immediately prior to receiving her Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship, Carrie Anne studied for her PhD in literature for children and young adults at The Ohio State University. She also holds a Master of Science in applied linguistics from the University of Oxford and a Master of Arts in educational leadership and policy from Beijing Normal University. Additionally, she is a licensed K-12 teacher and has taught English language arts and English as a second language in multiple countries.

Derek Burrell
University of Arizona >> Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Derek Burrell received a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to carry out his research project titled "Characterizing and Denoising Hyperspectral Imagery for Super Resolution Object Detection in Scattering Media" in the Photonics and Electro-Optics Unit at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He earned his BS in electrical engineering from Michigan Technological University and his MS in optics and photonics from the University of Central Florida. As an undergraduate he participated in a European Project Semester at Oslo Metropolitan University on a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. He received his PhD in optical sciences from the University of Arizona. While working on his PhD, he collaborated with the US Air Force Research Laboratory to study and mitigate effects of coherent noise in tracking and wavefront-sensing systems. Derek also supports field experiments on long-range active imaging with performance comparisons in various spectral bands and gain configurations.

Frankee Lyons
University of Illinois Chicago >> University of Haifa

Frankee Lyons was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship for her research project What Homeland?: Polish Jewry and the Second Repatriation, 1953-68 at the University of Haifa's Interdisciplinary Unit for Polish Studies. Her project traces the stories of Jewish migrants in the post-Stalinist period, following their journeys from the Soviet Union through Poland to Western and Southern Europe and Israel. This research emphasizes both the agency and precarity of migrants as they navigated nationalization, political upheaval, spatial displacement, and cultural exchange in the early Cold War.

Lyons earned her BA in history from George Washington University and her PhD in modern Eastern European history from the University of Illinois Chicago. Her dissertation, Jewish Belonging on the 'Polish Road to Socialism:' Migration and the Re-Making of Polish Jewry, 1956-60, examines perceptions of Jewish belonging in post-Stalinist Poland, focusing on migration policies generated during and after the Polish Thaw from 1953 to the early 1960s. This research was funded by the U.S. Fulbright Program, Title VIII Grant Program, Auschwitz Jewish Center, the JDC Archives, and the Kościuszko Foundation.

Jeffrey Cross
University of Minnesota Twin Cities >> The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Jeffrey Cross was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue his research project, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic Stoicism: Contributing to a More Equitable Intellectual History," under the mentorship of Professor Noam Mizrahi at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In this project Jeffrey examines conceptual similarities between the Dead Sea Scrolls and texts representing the views of Hellenistic Stoicism. In addition to demonstrating philosophical engagement between Jews writing in Hebrew, and Greek and Roman intellectuals, this research challenges the study of these literatures in isolation and models a more equitable intellectual history of the ancient Mediterranean. Jeffrey studied classics for his BA at Baylor University. He then received his MA and PhD in classical and Near Eastern religions and cultures at the University of Minnesota. There he wrote his dissertation on scribal rewriting and textual development in the legal texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, under the direction of Professors Bernard Levinson (University of Minnesota) and Molly Zahn (Yale Divinity School).

Justin Oh
The University of Texas at Austin >> University of Haifa

Justin Oh won a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship for his project "Improving Constructions of Pseudorandom Generators and Efficient Derandomization from Weaker Assumptions" at the University of Haifa, where he will be hosted by Professor Ronen Shaltiel. During his PhD in theoretical computer science at the University of Texas, Austin, Justin studied how to derandomize randomized algorithms in an efficient manner, and how to obtain useful randomness from low quality sources of randomness. This project aims to continue this line of inquiry initiated during his PhD concerning the limits to which randomness can help computation.

Levi Prombaum
University College London >> The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Levi Prombaum was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue his research project, "Exhibiting & Collecting Palestinian Art in Israeli Art Institutions, 1967–Present." In this project, he analyzes field-wide patterns of inclusion and omission of Palestinian art and artists within the Israeli art world, with a particular focus on understudied exhibition and collection practices, originating from within Israeli art institutions, that have amplified the perspectives of Palestinian art and artists during the last fifty-five years.

Prior to his studies in Jerusalem, Prombaum was a curator at Colby College Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. He was an American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) postdoctoral fellow at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and a Getty/ACLS postdoctoral fellow in the history of art. He holds degrees from University College London (PhD in art history), the Courtauld Institute of Art (MA in art history), and the University of Wisconsin-Madison (BA in art history and political science).

Rachel Neve-Midbar

University of Southern California >> The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Rachel was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue her research project, "Poetics of a Survivor: The Long-Term Effects of Trauma in the Poetry of Holocaust Poet Abba Kovner," with Professor Amos Goldberg from the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Rachel received her PhD in literature and creative writing from the University of Southern California, where her research focused on the poetics of the deep body. Her first full-length book of poems, Salaam of Birds, was published by Tebot Bach.

Rachel plans to work on translating the complete collected poetry of Holocaust survivor and poet Abba Kovner (1918–1987). Kovner was a leader of the Jewish rebellion in the Vilna Ghetto during World War II and the author of the first manifesto naming the Nazi's intent to eliminate world Jewry. Rarely translated into English, Kovner's poetry is historically vital, serving as both witness and a record of the long-term trauma that recurs well after the victim is safe from harm.

Rachelle Grossman

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign >> Tel Aviv University

Rachelle Grossman received a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue her project, "Afterwords: Yiddish Publishing in the Postwar World," at the Goldrich Institute for Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture at Tel Aviv University. Her work addresses the politics of Jewish cultural creation and salvage after the Holocaust. She focuses on the transnational links between Yiddish readers, writers, publishers, and funders that made up a literary network stretching between Poland, Argentina, the United States, Israel, and beyond.

Rachelle earned a BA from Columbia University and a BA and MA from the Jewish Theological Seminary. She received her PhD in comparative literature from Harvard University. In 2024, she was an Azrieli postdoctoral scholar at the University of Haifa's Interdisciplinary Unit on Polish Studies. She is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Comparative and World Literature at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

Justin Oh

The University of Texas at Austin >> University of Haifa

Rafael Deliz-Aguirre was awarded the Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Weizmann Institute of Science, where he will work with Professor Uri Alon. Rafael's research uses interdisciplinary approaches to advance translational medicine. His goal is to improve disease diagnosis and therapies. For this project, Rafael will apply complex systems physics to mathematically model patient samples analyzed with spatial proteomics.

Rafael earned a BS in biology from Baylor University and an MS in biology from Texas A&M International University. He then completed a doctoral degree in theoretical biophysics at Humboldt University of Berlin in collaboration with the Max Planck Society. He has also worked at a medical clinic in South Texas and conducted research at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Beyond his research, Rafael is passionate about global health and has participated in conferences organized by the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Rafael Deliz-Aguirre

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin >> Weizmann Institute of Science

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Shuyi Yin

Columbia University >> Bezalel Academy of Art and Design Jerusalem

Shuyi Yin was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue her research project titled "Use of Digital Technologies in Urban Heritage Management for Public Engagement and Sustainable Development: A Study of Tel Aviv, with Implications for Jerusalem and Beyond." She is conducting this research under the guidance of Professor Architect Michael Turner at the UNESCO Chair in Urban Design and Conservation at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. This research project aims to explore the significant role of urban heritage in sustainable development and examine how cities can use digital technologies in urban heritage to create interactive and immersive experiences that educate, inspire, engage, and empower the public. Shuyi received her Bachelor of Architecture at Zhejiang University and her Master of Science in historic preservation, concentrating on conservation science, at the University of Pennsylvania. She also holds a Master of Environmental Design (MED) with a specialization in architectural and preservation history. Her Ph.D. in historic preservation from Columbia University, advised by Professor Jorge Otero-Pailo, Professor Erica C Avrami, and Professor Mario Santana-Quintero, is focused on the history of 3D digitization technologies and their global networks in heritage documentation and preservation.

Zachary Sercel

Caltech - California Institute of Technology >> Technion - Israel Institute of Technology

Zachary Sercel was awarded a Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship to pursue "The Development of a Nickel-Catalyzed 'Cut and Sew' Ring Expansion of Highly Substituted Cyclopropanes" with Professor Ilan Marek at the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology. The envisioned chemical reaction would, in a single step, transform readily accessible cyclopropanes into valuable, highly substituted cyclopentenes with potential applications in organic synthesis. Zachary's research interests lie in the synthesis of complex molecules and the development of synthetic methods.

Zachary completed his PhD in chemistry at Caltech, where he primarily studied the total synthesis of a bioactive marine alkaloid. He received a BS in chemistry from California State University, Los Angeles.

Distinguished (Senior) Scholar Fellows

Dan Edidin

University of Missouri >> Tel Aviv University

Dan Edidin is professor of mathematics at University of Missouri. He received his undergraduate degree at Johns Hopkins University and his PhD from MIT, both in mathematics. Before joining the faculty at Missouri, he was an NSF postdoctoral fellow at the University of Chicago.

Dan's original training was in algebraic geometry, which studies the solution sets of systems of multivariate polynomial equations. His early work was on problems that arise when a symmetry group acts on the system of equations. In recent years, Dan's research has focused on applying the techniques he developed in algebraic geometry to questions in applied mathematics. While in Israel, Dan will work with Dr. Tamir Bendory of the School of Engineering at Tel Aviv University on the project "Representation theory and molecular imaging".

Eric H. Cline

The George Washington University >> University of Haifa

Eric H. Cline is currently Professor of Classics and Anthropology, as well as Director of the Capitol Archaeological Institute, at George Washington University in Washington DC. He is an archaeologist and historian with a focus on the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, who received his undergraduate degree in classical archaeology from Dartmouth College; his M.A. in Near Eastern languages and literatures from Yale University; and his Ph.D. in ancient history from the University of Pennsylvania. He is an active field archaeologist with more than thirty seasons of excavation and survey experience in Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Cyprus, Greece, and the United States, including ten seasons at Megiddo (biblical Armageddon) and another ten seasons at Tel Kabri, where he currently serves as co-director. He previously received grants from National Geographic, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Getty, and had a Fulbright grant to Greece while a graduate student. He is the author or co-author of more than 120 peer-reviewed articles and has written or edited more than twenty books, both solo and with colleagues. Among his best-known publications are 1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed (Princeton University Press 2014; revised edition 2021) and After 1177 B.C.: The Survival of Civilizations (Princeton University Press 2024). As part of his Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Fellowship, he will be at the University of Haifa, working on the third book in this trilogy.

Jody Kahn Lawrence

University of Northern Colorado >> Oranim Academic College of Education

Jody Kahn Lawrence is an associate clinical professor and the field-experience coordinator of the Elementary Education Program at the University of Northern Colorado. She focuses on literacy instruction, with areas of expertise that include writing workshop methods, inquiry-based pedagogy, and the impact of student-teacher interactions. Jody is particularly interested in how educators create a learning environment that fosters belonging, and how belonging drives positive student engagement.

Jody was awarded a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Fellowship at Oranim Academic College, where she will support educators in expanding their repertoire of culturally sustainable literacy practices to meet the needs of diverse student populations. Jody earned her PhD in instruction and curriculum from the University of Virginia. She also holds an MA in education and a BA in psychology from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Since 2006, she has taught, published, presented, mentored, and consulted with countless pre-service and practicing teachers.

Michael J. Therien

Duke University >> Weizmann Institute of Science

Michael J. Therien is the William R. Kenan, Junior Professor at Duke University. He received his undergraduate education at UCLA and St. Andrews University. He earned his doctoral degree in chemistry at UCSD. Following a postdoctoral fellowship at Caltech, he took a faculty appointment at the University of Pennsylvania, where he was the Alan G. MacDiarmid Professor. In 2008, his laboratory moved to Duke University. Earlier honors include Dreyfus and Sloan Foundation Fellowships, and young investigator awards from the Beckman Foundation, the Searle Scholars Program, the Society of Porphyrins and Phthalocyanines, and the NSF. He has been recognized with the ACS Philadelphia Section Award, elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and awarded the Francqui Chair in the Exact Sciences (Belgium). He was recently named a Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2021) and was recognized with the R. B. Woodward Award in Porphyrin Chemistry (2022), the American Chemical Society Florida Section Award (2023), and the Inter-American Photochemical Society Award in Photochemistry (2024).

Miriam R. L. Petruck

University of California, Berkeley >> The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Dr. Petruck is an award-winning independent scholar, with close ties to the University of California, Berkeley, where she obtained an M.A. and a Ph.D. in linguistics, having written the first dissertation in frame semantics and the lexicon. She received a B.A. in linguistics from Stony Brook University.

Petruck is one of the co-creators of FrameNet, a cutting-edge semantic technology research and resource development project, based on frame semantics and construction grammar, the two theories in which her work is grounded. The FrameNet database provides critical information about the mapping between form and meaning in language that has proven useful in natural language processing (NLP) application development, like semantic role labeling, a necessary first step in NLP development, information extraction, and frame induction, to name a few. Her early work addressed issues of lexical semantic description and analysis, including comparative and contrastive lexicology. Recently her interests expanded to meaning representation, and knowledge base development, as well as lexical and grammatical resource development for Natural Language Processing and Natural Language Understanding. Petruck is about to complete a manuscript about FrameNet and Natural Language Processing, a work that introduces the FrameNet project and surveys the use of FrameNet data in natural language processing (NLP) application development.

Master's Degree Fellows

Cherie Miner

Hanover College >> University of Haifa

Cherie Miner graduated magna cum laude from Hanover College with a BA in psychology and a minor in French. During her tenure at Hanover, she received several research scholarships and awards, including the Globalink Mitacs Research Internship for studying leisure and somatic therapeutic modes in Moncton, NB, Canada (conducted remotely due to COVID-19), and the Richter Grant for research on self-actualization and adult attachment using Amazon MTurk participants. After graduation, she worked as a data analyst at OSU-CHS where she co-developed and published the Oklahoma Adversity Surveillance Index System. This system integrates data across healthcare disciplines to address childhood trauma at the community level effectively. She is currently a statistical programmer at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, analyzing the impacts of social determinants on public health through an interdisciplinary approach. Through the MPH program at the University of Haifa, Cherie aims to blend her background in data analysis and psychology with Israel's advanced healthcare analytics and interdisciplinary practices. She hopes to influence global health policies by developing trauma-informed, community-centered, and culturally sensitive public health interventions. Ultimately, Cherie seeks to bridge cultural, technological, and disciplinary gaps to drive innovation in psychology and medicine, contributing to healthcare systems worldwide.

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Gabriella Vulakh
Brown University >> Tel Aviv University

Gabriella Vulakh graduated from Brown University with a BS in neuroscience. She completed an honors thesis for the degree studying neurodevelopmental disorders with induced pluripotent stem cells. Gabriella also worked with Brown Emergency Medicine as a medical scribe in emergency departments around Rhode Island, helping to document patient encounters and support the treatment teams in both lower acuity triage areas and high-intensity critical care areas. She shadowed neurosurgery operations at Rhode Island Hospital and rounds in the neurology intensive care unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, both accredited Level 1 Trauma Centers. Gabriella has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to pursue an MA in disaster management at Tel Aviv University. She plans to combine her experiences in neuroscience and emergency medicine to investigate the intersection of disaster planning and traumatic brain injury. Gabriella's future goals are to attend medical school and apply the fellowship coursework to her clinical interests in emergency medicine and neurosurgery.

Margaret Culuris-Harp
University of California, Davis >> The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Margaret Culuris-Harp completed her first MA in ancient Mediterranean art history in 2024 at the University of California, Davis after receiving her BA from the University of Nevada, Reno. During her studies, she specialized in late Roman art history and archaeology in both the Levant and North Africa. Margaret's research is interdisciplinary, relying on archaeology, art history, Jewish studies, and religious studies to better understand the cultural spaces that produced the material religion of interest. Before receiving the Fulbright fellowship, Margaret first received a research grant from UC Davis to travel to Beit Alfa and the Israel Museum to conduct on-site research for her MA thesis, titled "The Beth Alpha Zodiac Wheel, a Jewish Iconographic Reaction to Roman Rule and Jewish Literature." Using both apocryphal and canonical Hebrew literature, she connected descriptions of David and the divine to the visuals within the Beit Alfa synagogue. She will pursue an MA in archaeology and the ancient Near East at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to expand upon her interest in Jewish material religion from the Second Temple Period.

Richard Seeno
University of Oxford >> Tel Aviv University

Richard will be completing an MA in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at Tel Aviv University., He received his Bachelor's degree in Global Liberal Studies and Italian Studies from NYU-New York University and a Master of Studies in comparative literature and critical translation from the University of Oxford. Richard was an instructor of Italian and English at the International School of Palermo in Sicily, Italy.

During his time at TAU, Richard plans to study the language education systems in Israel such as the national Ulpan program, Hebrew state schools, and the Arabic education system for Arab-Israeli citizens. He plans to apply what he learns from his coursework to his teaching practice in order to structure language learning programs and initiatives.

Stephanie Chavez
University of North Texas >> The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Stephanie Chavez attended the University of North Texas, where she graduated summa cum laude with a B.A. in international studies: Global development & humanitarian affairs and a minor in Spanish. During her undergraduate years, she volunteered in various non-profit organizations in Denton, Texas, and in Granada, Spain. Since graduating and returning from Spain in late 2022, Stephanie has served as a life skills coordinator at a non-profit organization aiding asylum-seeking minors from various Latin American countries.

Stephanie has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to pursue an MA in nonprofit management and leadership at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Her proposed project, "Non-Profit Management: Helping Efficiently in a Globalized World," will investigate the impact of migration policies on aid provision to unaccompanied minors in the United States and Israel. Stephanie aims to apply her findings to enhance services for this demographic as she advances her career in the nonprofit sector.

PhD Research Fellows

Elon Slutzky
Northeastern University >> Bar-Ilan University

Elon received a master's degree in mental health counseling from Northwestern University in March 2024, his bachelor's degree from Amherst College in biology and English, a masters in secondary education from Pace University, and a J.D. from Cornell Law School. Elon's project is titled "Extending Schema Therapy to a Transdiagnostic Model of Therapy." Elon's research focuses on applying wellness-focused psychotherapy to populations whose needs extend beyond classic models of psychopathology, especially in the context of problems that arise for highly skilled professionals, such as doctors and lawyers. Elon's interest arises in the context of his previous work as an attorney focusing on complex litigation and his ongoing interest and training in schema therapy, an attachment focused form of psychotherapy whose case conceptualization revolves around core emotional needs. During his Fulbright fellowship, Elon will contribute to ongoing research at Bar-Ilan University aimed at developing brief therapeutic interventions organized around core emotional needs.   He will also conduct independent research on how practicing psychotherapists adapt existing therapeutic approaches to clients presenting for therapy in search of improved wellbeing or in search of benefits beyond relief from psychopathology.

Open Study/Research Fellows

Tiba Hamza
Caltech - California Institute of Technology >> Technion - Israel Institute of Technology

Tiba Hamza was awarded an open study research fellowship to pursue the "Development of Synthetic Cells that Express Gas Vesicles" with Professor Avi Schroeder at the Technion - Israel Institute of Technology. The envisioned project aims to express gas vesicles, a hollow protein nanostructure encapsulating air that produces ultrasound contrast, in synthetic cells. The cells are easily engineered cell-mimicking microparticles with protein-production capabilities. The potential applications include the integration of the technology with ultrasound for remotely activated drug release and localization as well as contributing to the understanding of the impacts of synthetic cells in the body. Tiba's research interests lie in the usage of medical imaging technologies for therapeutic purposes.

Tiba completed her BS in chemical engineering with a biomolecular focus at Caltech, where she worked on the implementation of remote control of mechanochemical reactions using gas vesicles and ultrasound with Professor Mikhail Shapiro.