

YIFTACH OFEK, PhD

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(Updated: February 2025)

EDUCATION

PhD	University of Chicago Divinity School (August 2021) Dissertation: “The ‘New Jew’ of Zionist Historiography: The Social Vision and Historical Imagination of Yitzhak Baer, Gershom Scholem, and Yehezkel Kaufmann” Committee: Paul Mendes-Flohr (Chair), Na’ama Rokem, Shalom Ratzabi Examinations: History and Memory in Jewish Thought (Paul Mendes-Flohr) The Zionist Idea (Paul Mendes-Flohr, Na’ama Rokem) Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy (James Robinson) Criticism and Literary Theory (Richard Rosengarten)
MA	Harvard University (November 2014) Thesis: “Jacob Taubes and the Meaning of Jewish History” Advisor: Peter Gordon (History)
MA	University of Chicago Masters Program in the Social Sciences (August 2011) Thesis: “Christianity as a Problem in the Political Philosophy of Alexis de Tocqueville” Advisor: Nathan Tarcov (Political Science; Committee on Social Thought)
BA	University of York, UK (July 2005) Thesis: “Leo Strauss’s Critique of Nietzsche” Advisor: Jon Parkin (Politics)

AREAS OF TEACHING COMPETENCE

- Political Theory
- Philosophy of History
- Literary and Cultural Criticism
- History of Zionism
- Israeli Intellectual History
- Jewish Thought and History

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Academic	Shalem College Jerusalem, Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lecturer in the Core and in the Department of Philosophy and Jewish Thought (October 2024 – Present)
	University of Chicago Chicago, IL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching Fellow in the Divinity School and The College (September 2021 – August 2023)
Professional Experience (Select List)	Shalem College Jerusalem, Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content Editor (June 2012 – August 2013)
Military Experience	IDF Strategic Division Tel-Aviv, Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of NATO and European Union Desk (July 2008 – August 2009)
	IDF Spokespersons Unit Tel-Aviv, Israel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Junior Spokesman to the Foreign Press (Europe and North America), (November 2005 – July 2008)
	Lieutenant (Res.) in Israel Defense Forces

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Shalem College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to Political Philosophy (Second Semester, 2024-25) Introduction to Greek Philosophy (First Semester, 2024-25)
University of Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Global Revolt Against Liberalism (Spring 2023) Classics of Social and Political Thought III (Spring 2023) Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to the Medieval Period (Autumn 2022) Classics of Social and Political Thought I (Autumn 2022) Religion: Cosmos, Conscience, and Community III (Spring 2022) Jewish Civilization II: Early Modern Period to the 21st Century (Winter 2022) Jewish Civilization I: Ancient Beginnings to the Medieval Period (Autumn 2021) Classics of Social and Political Thought I (Autumn 2019) Classics of Social and Political Thought III (Teaching Intern, Spring 2019) Classics of Social and Political Thought II (Teaching Intern, Winter 2019) Classics of Social and Political Thought I (Teaching Intern, Autumn 2018)

**Other
Teaching
Experience**

- The Zionist Idea | Tikvah Fellowship Maimonides Program (Teaching Assistant, July 2018)
- Political Thought | Leadership Academy at Ein-Prat, Israel (September 2011 – May 2012)
- American Thought and Literature | Leadership Academy at Ein-Prat, Israel (September 2009 – January 2010)

**Other
Qualifications**

- Certified Writing Consultant, University of Chicago Writing Program (Spring 2018)

PRESENTATIONS

**Academic
Conferences
and Other
Scholarly
Talks**

- “Post-Liberalism, Post-Modernism, Post-Capitalism: on the Moral Core of Present Discontents”, Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting, St. Pete Beach, FL, 12th January, 2022.
- “The Idea of a Jewish Society: Yitzhak Baer’s *Israel Among the Nations* Reconsidered”, Association for Israel Studies Annual Conference, 7th June, 2021.
- “Hayden White and the Possibility of Faith in History”, The Use and Abuse of History for Theology and Ethics: Mining the Past for Present Norms: University of Notre Dame and University of Chicago Fifth Annual Joint Graduate Student Conference, March 29th, 2019.
- “Eric Auerbach 101”, The Divinity School “101” Series, University of Chicago, January 18th, 2018.
- “Gershom Scholem and Jacob Taubes on Messianism and History”, Midwestern Inter-University Workshop in Jewish Studies, University of Chicago, Nov. 2nd, 2015.
- “Nachman Krochmal and the Possibility of post-Textual Judaism”, “Ways of Knowing” Graduate Conference in Religion, Harvard University, Oct. 23rd, 2015.
- “Jacob Taubes and the Meaning of Jewish History”, The Jewish Studies Workshop, The University of Chicago, April 20th, 2015.
- “Liberalism and the Jewish Question in the Thought of Leo Strauss”, Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem, May 2nd, 2013.

**Public
Lectures**

- “Lehi and the Struggle for Jewish Independence,” Introductory Talk to the Film “Rage & Glory” (dir. Avi Nesher, 1984), Anshei Sholom Beit Israel Synagogue, Chicago, IL, Jan. 20, 2020.
- “Labor Zionism,” Hillel House, University of Chicago, March 11th, 2019.
- “What is Modern Judaism? Or: Prolegomena to Bialik,” Anshe Emet Synagogue, Chicago, IL, Feb. 21st, 2019.

- “The ‘New Jew’: Then and Now,” Temple Israel, Valparaiso, IN, May 11th, 2018.
- “Time and Timelessness in Jewish History,” Jacob Berman Community Center (Rehovot, Israel), Aug. 30th, 2015.

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

University of Chicago	The Joyce Z. and Jacob Greenberg Center for Jewish Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissertation Completion Fellowship (2020-21) • Conference Travel Grant (Oct. 2015)
	Martin Marty Center for the Public Understanding of Religion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Fellowship (2019-20)
	Division of the Social Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition towards completion of MAPSS Program (1/3) (2010-11)
Harvard University	Sidney L. Solomon Endowed Fellowship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full scholarship and stipend towards the pursuit of Master of Arts degree (2013-14)
Other Fellowships and Awards	Israel Institute <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postdoctoral Fellowship (Nov. 2023 – declined)
	Tikvah Fund Fellowship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Political Thought, Economics and Strategy” (Sept. 2011)
	IDF Officers Training School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding Cadet (Platoon), (June 2007)
	IDF Spokespersons Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding Soldier Distinction (Sept. 2006)
	Israel Ministry of Defense <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical Consciousness (<i>toda’a histori’i</i>) Youth Scholarship (Dec. 2002)

LANGUAGES

Hebrew	Native (High Pass, University of Chicago Proficiency Exam)
English	Fluent

French	Fluent (High Pass, University of Chicago Proficiency Exam; Harvard Certification Exam; <i>Certificat Militaire de langue Française</i> awarded by the French Military; lived in Belgium for 5 years)
German	Reading Knowledge (High Pass, University of Chicago Proficiency Exam)
Dutch	Reading Knowledge (lived in Belgium for 5 years)

PUBLICATIONS

ARTICLES IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

“Politics and Theology in the Historical Works of Yitzhak Baer,” *Religions* 13, no. 6 (2022): 537. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060537>

CHAPTERS IN EDITED VOLUMES

“Philip Rieff and the Politics of the Cold War,” in *The Philosophy of Philip Rieff: Cultural Conflict, Religion, and the Self*, eds. William G. Batchelder and Michael P Harding, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025), pp. 231-254.

“Leo Strauss and Existentialism” (Hebrew), in Ehud Luz, “Introduction”, in Leo Strauss, *Liberalism and the Crisis of Modern Jewish Thought* (Hebrew), ed. Ehud Luz, (Jerusalem: Leo Baeck Institute and Bialik Institute, 2012), pp. xvii-xix.

BOOK REVIEWS IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS

“Jan Zwicky, *Once upon a Time in the West: Essays on the Politics of Thought and Imagination*,” *Philosophy in Review* 44, no. 2 (May 2024): 49-52. <https://journals.uvic.ca/index.php/pir/article/view/21872>

“Strauss, Spinoza & Sinai: Orthodox Judaism and Modern Questions of Faith, ed. by Jeffrey Bloom, Alec Goldstein, Gil Student,” *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologieggeschichte* 30, no. 1 (November 2023): 183-187. <https://doi.org/10.1515/znth-2023-0006>

“Philip von Wussow, *Leo Strauss and the Theopolitics of Culture*,” *The Journal of Religion* 102, no. 2 (April 2022): 300-302. <https://doi.org/10.1086/718397>

ESSAYS IN NON-REFEREED PUBLICATIONS (SELECT LIST)

“The End of the American-Jewish Symbiosis?” *Watersheds*, Vol. I: October 7 (February 2024), pp. 107-116.

“Milan Kundera and the Question of Jewish-Israeli Identity,” *The Hedgehog Review* (Web Exclusive), Sept. 28, 2023, <https://hedgehogreview.com/web-features/thr/posts/kundera-and-the-question-of-jewish-israeli-identity>

“Paul Gottfried: Apostle of the Old Conservatism” (Hebrew) and Interview with Paul Gottfried (with Yehuda Vizan), *Debak* 14 (March 2022), pp. 447-453; 454-463.

- “Aleksandr Dugin: An Introduction to the Hebrew Reader” (Hebrew) and Interview with Aleksandr Dugin (with Yehuda Vizan), *Debak* 13 (April 2021), pp. 502-510; 511-531.
- “The Literary Essays of Mordechai Shalev” (Hebrew), *HaShiloach*, No. 15 (July 2019), pp. 163-173.
- “Hannah Arendt and the Challenge of Jewish Sovereignty,” *Counterpoint: The University of Chicago Conservative Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (February 2011), pp. 23-29.

TRANSLATIONS

- Allan Tate, “What is Traditional Society?” (English to Hebrew), with Extended Postscript, *Debak* 14 (March 2022), pp. 464-478.

BOOK REVIEWS IN NON-REFEREED PUBLICATIONS (SELECT LIST)

- “Liberalism: An Indictment” (Hebrew), on Patrick Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), *Kin’at Sofrim*, (April 5, 2023), <https://www.kinatsofrim.com/post/patrick-deneen-why-liberalism-failed-yale-university-press-2018> (publication now defunct.)
- “The End of Europe as We Know It?,” on James Kirchick, *The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues, and the Coming Dark Age*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), *Mosaic*, (May 1, 2017), <https://mosaicmagazine.com/observation/politics-current-affairs/2017/05/the-end-of-europe-as-we-know-it/>
- “The Statesman,” on Shimon Peres, *Ben-Gurion: A Political Life*, (New York: Schocken, 2011), *Jewish Review of Books*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 16-18.