

RAPHAEL A. HALFF

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EDUCATION

Harvard University

Ph.D. in Comparative Literature

Cambridge, MA

Expected 2028

Tel Aviv University

M.A. in Yiddish Literature, Summa Cum Laude

Tel Aviv, Israel

August 2022

Thesis: *Fayner's Fire: The Making of a Destructivist.*

Advisors: Dr. Hannah Pollin-Galay, Prof. David Roskies.

Columbia University, School of General Studies

B.A. in Computer Science

New York, NY

February 2017

Jewish Theological Seminary, Albert A. List College

B.A. in Jewish Literature

New York, NY

May 2017

FOCUSED STUDIES

JTS/AJL Certificate in Judaica and Hebraica Librarianship

A five-course certificate program for focused library studies

New York, NY

Fall 2024–Present

Middlebury Russian Immersion Program

Immersive 8-week Russian language program

Middlebury, VT

Summer 2023

YIVO: Yiddish—The Next Level

Advanced course for those already teaching, researching, or performing in Yiddish

New York, NY

Summer 2021

University of Wisconsin–Madison, Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture

Mayrent Graduate Seminar on the theme of “The Yiddish Object”

Madison, WI

May 2–3, 2021

Naomi Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program

Program in Yiddish Language and Literature

Tel Aviv, Israel

Summer 2019

World Jewish Congress, International Yiddish Center

Seminar on Yiddish language and culture, in partnership with the Israel National Authority for Yiddish

Vilnius, Lithuania

June 21–23, 2019

Vilnius Yiddish Institute, Summer Program

Program in Yiddish Language and Literature

Vilnius, Lithuania

Summer 2015

Yiddish Book Center

The Steiner Summer Program in Yiddish Language and Culture

Amherst, MA

Summer 2014

RELEVANT WORK

Brandeis University Library (Rachel Greenblatt)
Special Collections Intern

Waltham, MA
Summer 2026–Present

- Creates library guides for the collection of Jewish periodicals (Yiddish, Hebrew, and English), paired with comparative statistics on their holdings.
- Develops computer tools for computing these statistics that can be applied to other collections by laymen and librarians alike.
- Undertaken as the internship component of the JTS/AJL Certificate.

Leyzer Ran Memoir Committee (Faye Ran)
Associate Editor

New York, NY
Summer 2025–Present

- Transcribes and edits the Yiddish manuscript of Leyzer Ran’s gulag memoirs, to be published alongside the translation prepared by his daughter, Faye Ran.

Harvard University (Prof. Verena Conley and Prof. Tom Conley)
Research Assistant

Cambridge, MA
Fall 2023–Spring 2024

- Prepared course syllabi and materials; edited articles.

Joliciel Informatique
Programmer

Tel Aviv / New York
June 2019–June 2020

- Contributed to a Yiddish–French text corpus for the [LJTRAD project](#), under Assaf Urieli (Joliciel Informatique) and Valentina Fedchenko (INALCO).
- Worked on the full pipeline: OCR, conversion to YIVO orthography, conversion to TEI, bilingual alignment, backend search, and user interface.

Tel Aviv University (Prof. Hannah Pollin-Galay)
Research Assistant

Tel Aviv, Israel
Nov 2019–April 2020

- Digitized, transcribed, and summarized handwritten and typewritten manuscripts.
- Created [annotated digital finding aids](#) for uncatalogued archives.

Haifa University (Prof. Sinai Rusinek)
Programmer and Transcriber

Haifa, Israel
Feb–Aug 2019

- Developed automated digitization and OCR processes for newspaper collections as part of a [large digital humanities project](#).
- Corrected the Yiddish texts output by these processes.

Yiddish Book Center
Fellow

Amherst, MA
Sept 2017–Aug 2018

- Developed templates for code-lessly making [Yiddish language-learning games](#).
- Wrote finding aids and articles for and about the Center’s collections.

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

Hear, O, Felye! The Quiet Pains That Talk in H. D. Nomberg’s “Shvayg, shvester!”
In geveb. Invited to resubmit.

BOOK CHAPTERS

Madu’a likro et K. Tsetnik beyidish [Why read K. Tsetnik in Yiddish?] by Pollin-Galay and Halff
Pardes, Haifa, Israel, 2023. [Hebrew]

PUBLISHED SCHOLARSHIP

The Boston Dictionary Project: The Balebos of verterbukh.org by Raphael Halff and Jonah Lubin [\[link\]](#)
In geveb, February 4, 2026.

Adventures of a Bad Researcher: The Mystery of the Last Yiddish Linotype [\[link\]](#)
Yiddish Book Center, 2018.

770 Eastern Parkway [\[link\]](#)
Mapping Yiddish New York, May 12, 2016.

TRANSLATIONS AND REVIEWS

The Ringelblum Archive: Underground Archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, Vol. 9: Letters on the Shoah
translations from the Yiddish by Bergman, Halff, Steinlauf, and Watson [\[link\]](#)
The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, 2023.

Review of Sutzkever Essential Prose, translated by Zackary Sholem Berger [\[link\]](#)
In geveb, June 23, 2021.

A Problem, by Joseph Opatoshu translated by Zeke Levine and Raphael Halff [\[link\]](#)
In geveb, July 1, 2019.

We Travel, by Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman translated by Cooper, Halff, Levine, and Sperling [\[link\]](#)
PaknTreger, 2018.

FICTION AND EXPERIMENTAL

Di letstse yidishe bekeray [The last Yiddish bakery]
Naye Levone, forthcoming. [Yiddish]

Fayner's Fire: The Making of a Destructivist with photos and linocuts by Olivia Cowley [\[link\]](#)
Soca Laelaps Press, 2023. [English, Yiddish, Hebrew]. One-of-a-kind, held at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Idioms in Translation [\[link\]](#)
Bad Quarto, February 2023.

A briv der post [A letter to the post office] [\[link\]](#)
Forverts, October 10, 2019. [Yiddish]. Reprinted in Hert a mayse: antologye [Hear a story: anthology], edited by Dov-Ber Kerler et al., Olniansky Tekst, 2020, pp. 15–21; and Yidishland, vol. 6–7, Oct. 2020.

A srayfe in bruklin: A dankbriv di murashkes [A fire in Brooklyn: A thank-you letter to the ants]
Forverts, April 2019. [Yiddish]

PRESENTATIONS

[Institutional and Private Archives and Libraries](#) June 26, 2025
Moderated the above-titled panel at the Association of Jewish Libraries' digital conference. Panelists: Nadine Epstein, Alexander Ivanov, Noam Sienna, and Elias Messinas.

[Yiddish Initials: Digital Beginnings](#) April 10, 2024
Presentation at the symposium "Letters That Link Us: Histories and Mysteries of Hebrew Type," on the panel "Hebrew Type Between Analogue and Digital Design." University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

A briv der post: Yiddish Material Nostalgia and the Yiddish Postal Service in the US, 1908–1918 Feb 29, 2024

Presentation at the 12th JSGSA Annual Conference, Indiana University, Bloomington, on the theme “The Dimensions of Being and Belonging,” in the session “The Dimensions of Yiddishland.”

Fayner’s Fire: The Making of a Destructivist

Dec 21, 2021

Presentation at the Association for Jewish Studies 53rd Annual Conference, Chicago, in the session “The Spaces and Specters of Holocaust Memorialization.”

“Struggle Must Make a Noise”: Guest Lecture on Ka-Tzetnik’s Postwar Evolution

April 12, 2021

For the Tel Aviv University literature course “Words and Violence: Holocaust Literature and the Problem of Language,” taught by Prof. Hannah Pollin-Galay.

Pinkes khelem by Daniel Galay, Book Launch

Jan 20, 2021

Respondent (in Yiddish). Presented by Leyvik House and the Association of Yiddish Writers and Journalists in Israel.

“Aroyf un arop, nor tomid foroy’s”: Yidishe poezye inem 21stn yorhundert [Up and down, but always onwards: Yiddish poetry in the 21st century—a poetry reading with Beruriah Wiegand]

Jan 11, 2021

Respondent (in Yiddish). Presented by The Goldreich Family Institute, Tel Aviv University.

Panel, Yiddish Weekend Retreat, YO—Yiddish Ort

Dec 7, 2019

Panelist with the two other winners (Ethel Niborski and Shiri Shapira) of the Israel National Yiddish Short Story Contest (see Awards; in Yiddish).

AWARDS AND GRANTS

Harvard University–Hebrew University of Jerusalem Exchange Program

2026

Stipend of \$20,000 for dissertation-related work at the Hebrew University.

Harvard University, Svetlana Boym Fellowship Award

2025

Award of \$2,500 for research on Rivke Rubin and a translation of her Yiddish story collection, *Yidishe froyen*.

Harvard University, Weatherhead Center Foreign Language Grant

2023

Grant of \$7,500 for language study. Graduate Student Affiliate.

Harvard University, David Center, FLAS Fellowship for Language Study

2023

Grant of \$7,500 for language study.

The Yiddish Book Center Translation Fellowship

2021

Grant of \$5,000 to translate an anthology of Yiddish literary manifestos of my own selection.

Knapp Family Foundation AJS Travel Grant

2021

Tel Aviv University, The Goldreich Family Institute AJS Travel Grant

2021

Naomi Prawer Kadar Foundation Research Grant

2021

Grant of \$5,000 for the “Lerer Roskes Archive” (see Digital Projects).

Tel Aviv University, The Goldreich Family Institute Scholarship

2018–2020

Full scholarship for the Tel Aviv University M.A. in Yiddish Literature.

Israel National Authority for Yiddish, Yiddish Short Story Contest

2019

Third prize (3,000 NIS) for “A briv der post” [A letter to the post office].

Tel Aviv University, The Goldreich Family Institute Travel Grant	2019
Covered travel to the WJC seminar on Yiddish studies in Vilnius (see Focused Studies).	
Bina Appleman Memorial Education Award	2017
Albert A. List College, The Jewish Theological Seminary.	

TEACHING

Harvard University	Cambridge, MA
<i>Teaching Fellow</i>	Fall 2024–Spring 2026
Led writing labs and facilitated discussion sections for “Hum10,” the intensive reading and writing course for first-year students.	
Boston Workers’ Circle	Brookline, MA
<i>Yiddish Instructor</i>	Fall 2022
Taught beginning Yiddish over Zoom.	
Tel Aviv University	Tel Aviv, Israel
<i>Naomi Praver Kadar Int’l Yiddish Summer Program, Teacher</i>	Summer 2022
- Taught beginning Yiddish to students without a background in Hebrew. - Served as resident advisor in the dormitories.	
Tel Aviv University	Tel Aviv, Israel
<i>Naomi Praver Kadar Int’l Yiddish Summer Program, Teaching Assistant</i>	Summer 2021
- Teaching assistant for the advanced language class taught by Dr. Miriam Trinh and the literature seminar taught by Prof. David Roskies. - Assigned and reviewed writing assignments; led discussion sections around the themes of the two courses. - Served as resident advisor in the dormitories.	
Columbia University	New York, NY
<i>Summer High School Program, Assistant Teacher</i>	June–Aug 2016
- Taught C programming to high school students with little to no experience. - Designed and graded quizzes and assignments; assisted students one-on-one.	
International Rescue Committee	Brooklyn, NY
<i>Refugee Youth Summer Academy Intern</i>	July–Aug 2011
Taught mathematics, English, music, and athletics to a multilingual group of elementary students.	
Teaneck High School	Teaneck, NJ
<i>Assistant Summer Teacher</i>	Summer 2009
Instructed middle school students needing remedial work.	

DIGITAL PROJECTS

All Things Hebrew: The Alan Mintz Archive	Ongoing
Based on the “All Things Yiddish: The Lerer Roskes Archive” project, focusing on the collection of the Hebraist Prof. Alan Mintz.	

Yiddish Initials Project

Ongoing

Founded an initiative to catalog, document, and digitize ornamental initials in all languages that use the Hebrew alphabet, in order to enrich scholarship on an overlooked aspect of book art and to encourage contemporary transcultural use of Jewish initials.

All Things Yiddish: The Lerer Roskes Archive

2024

Originated and curated a first-of-its-kind digital archive of literary and pedagogic resources, academic texts, and institutional-history documents, collected from the personal archives of Prof. David Roskies.

Mendele Listserv Archive

2024

Designed and implemented a new home for the archives of the Mendele listserv.

Nakhman Blumental Archive

2020

Developed an unofficial finding aid for the uncatalogued collection of Nakhman Blumental's papers held at YIVO.

The Online Treasury of Yiddish Poetry

2018

Built a website exhibiting Yiddish verse and prose embedded in a Talmud-like page of digital commentary, with lexicographic analysis tools.

OTHER PURSUITS

Chatham Fire Department, Ocean Company

Chatham, NY

Volunteer Firefighter

October 2020–Sept 2023

- BEFO certified; on academic leave since 2023.

Our Daily Bread

Chatham, NY

Baker and Vendor

Sept 2021–June 2022

- Worked in a team of four bakers producing hundreds of gluten-free loaves, bagels, and buns a day.
- Sold the bakery's regular and gluten-free products at the Glens Falls farmers' market.

Main St. Goodness / PieconicNY

Chatham, NY

Baker

Sept 2020–Jan 2021

- Produced the bakery's staples—muffins, cookies, and dozens of kinds of pie—and initiated a new regimen of croissants, breads, and select, often Vilna-inspired, pastries.

United States Postal Service

Teaneck, NJ

City Carrier Assistant

March–August 2020

- Full-time letter carrier for the suburban town of Teaneck, NJ.

Levain Bakery

New York, NY

Bread Baker

Feb–Aug 2017

- Produced the daily breads for two retail locations, as well as brioche, muffins, pizzas, bomboloncini, scones, and sticky buns.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Brooklyn, NY

Discovery Garden Volunteer Docent

July 2016–Aug 2017

- Ran rotating educational activity stations for children ages two to fifteen, and sensory-focused activities for children ages zero to five.

Intrusion Detection Systems Laboratory, Columbia University*Undergraduate Intern*

New York, NY

Jan–Dec 2016

- Contributed to an investigative project on websites that exploit vulnerabilities in anti-virus scanners.

Architectural Metal Fabricators, Inc.*Welding and Metallurgy Intern*

New York, NY

Summer 2013

- Learned welding from one of New York’s finest custom metal and glass architectural project companies.
- Contributed to the design, fabrication, and installation of custom projects.

Columbia University Players*Set Designer*

New York, NY

Spring 2013

- Designed and built the set for a student-run theater production.

LEADERSHIP

Harvard Graduate Student Union*Trustee*

Cambridge, MA

Spring 2026

- Audited the union and ran general membership meetings.

Harvard Graduate Student Union*Finance and Benefits Committee Member*

Cambridge, MA

Spring 2025

- Reviewed benefit and reimbursement applications from union members.

Harvard University*Comparative Literature Student Event Planner*

Cambridge, MA

Fall–Spring 2022

- Planned events for students and faculty of the department and coordinated the “Professing Literature” course.

Jewish Theological Seminary, Albert A. List College*Class President*

New York, NY

April 2014–Jan 2015

- Managed monthly class-wide events and informed the student body of upcoming academic and non-academic opportunities.

Columbia University, General Studies*Student Council Relations Committee Member*

New York, NY

Fall 2013

- Improved communication and relations between JTS and Columbia through active student council presence, student polling, and event planning.

LANGUAGES

Language	Level	Yrs	Notes
English	Native		
Yiddish	Near-native fluency	5	University courses, intensive summer programs, and regular academic and social use.
French	Advanced	3	Lived in France from ages 7 to 10 and raised in a bilingual French–English family; speaking is near-native.
Hebrew	Advanced	3	Advanced speaking, reading, and writing. Completed graduate courses in Hebrew.
Russian	Advanced	3	Two years of formal study plus an intensive summer program.

Programming: C, C++, Java, Python, HTML, jQuery, JavaScript, PHP.