

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*

Thesis Title: Fayner's Fire: The Making of a Destructivist

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

Tel Aviv, Israel
August 2022

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

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

Madison, Wisconsin
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

Harvard University, Prof. Verena Conley and Prof. Tom Conley

Research Assistant

- Helps prepare course syllabi and materials, edits articles.

Cambridge, MA
Sept 2023–Present

Joliciel Informatique

Programmer

- Under the supervision of Assaf Urieli of Joliciel Informatique and Valentina Fedchenko of Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, as part of the [LJTRAD project](#), write programs for building a Yiddish-French text corpus, which consists of the following stages: OCR, conversion to YIVO orthography, conversion to TEI format, bilingual alignment, backend search functionality and a user interface

Tel Aviv / NY
June 2019–June 2020

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

- As part of [large digital humanities project](#), developed automated processes for the digitization and optical character recognition of newspaper collections
- 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 computer games](#)
- Wrote finding aids and articles for and about the Yiddish Book Center collections

PUBLICATIONS

ARTICLES AND BOOK CHAPTERS

Peer-Reviewed:

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.

Haifa, Israel: Pardes, 2023. [Hebrew]

Published Scholarship:

Adventures of a Bad Researcher: The Mystery of the Last Yiddish Linotype

[Yiddish Book Center](#), 2018.

770 Eastern Parkway

[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

[The Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute](#), 2023.

Review of *Sutzkever Essential Prose*, translated by Zackary Sholem Berger

[In Geveb](#), June 23, 2021.

A Problem, by Joseph Opatoshu, translated by Zeke Levine and Raphael Halff

[In Geveb](#), July 1, 2019.

We Travel, by Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman, translated by Cooper, Halff, Levine, and Sperling

[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

[Soca Laelaps Press](#), 2023. [English, Yiddish, Hebrew]. One-of-a-kind, held at Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Idioms in Translation

[Bad Quarto](#), February 2023.

A briv der post [A letter to the post office]

[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 a 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 included Nadine Epstein, Alexander Ivanov, Noam Sienna, and Elias Messinas.

Yiddish Initials: Digital Beginnings

April 10, 2024

Presentation at a symposium entitled, "Letters That Link Us: Histories And Mysteries Of Hebrew Type" on a panel entitled, "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 at Indiana University, Bloomington, on the theme "The Dimensions of Being and Belonging," on the session entitled, "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, at a session entitled, "The Spaces and Specters of Holocaust Memorialization."

"Struggle Must Make a Noise," Guest Lecture on Ka-Tzetnik's Postwar Evolution

April 12, 2021

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

***Pinkes khelem* by Daniel Galay, [Book Launch](#)**

Jan 20, 2021

Respondent (in Yiddish), presented by Leyvik House, the Association of Yiddish Writers and Journalists in Israel

["Aroyf un arop, nor tomid foroyt": 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). Event presented by The Goldreich Family Institute, Tel Aviv University.

Panel, Yiddish Weekend Retreat, YO—Yiddish Ort

Dec 7, 2019

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

AWARDS

Harvard University, Svetlana Boym Fellowship Award

2025

Award of \$2,500 for my research on Rivke Rubin and a translation of her Yiddish collection of stories, *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 center.

The Yiddish Book Center Translation Fellowship

2021

Awarded a \$5,000 grant 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 Praver Kadar Foundation Research Grant Grant of \$5,000 for the “Lerer Roskes Archive” (see <i>Relevant Work</i>)	2021
Tel Aviv University, The Goldreich Family Institute Scholarship Full scholarship for Tel Aviv University Master’s in Yiddish Literature	2018–2020
Israel National Authority for Yiddish, Yiddish Short Story Contest Third prize for “A briv der post” [A letter to the post office]: 3,000 NIS	2019
Tel Aviv University, The Goldreich Family Institute Travel Grant Covered travel expenses for the WJC seminar on Yiddish studies held in Vilnius (see <i>Focused Studies</i>)	2019
Bina Appleman Memorial Education Award Albert A. List College, The Jewish Theological Seminary	2017

TEACHING

Harvard University <i>Teaching Fellow</i>	Cambridge, MA Fall 2024–Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led writing labs and facilitated discussion sections for the intensive reading and writing course for first-year students known as “Hum10” 	
Boston Workers’ Circle <i>Yiddish Instructor</i>	Brookline, MA Fall 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught Yiddish for beginners over Zoom 	
Tel Aviv University <i>Naomi Praver Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program, Teacher</i>	Tel Aviv Summer 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught Yiddish for beginners without a background in Hebrew 	
<i>Naomi Praver Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program, Teaching Assistant</i>	Summer 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching assistant for the advanced students in the language class taught by Dr. Miriam Trinh and the literature seminar taught by Prof. David Roskies Assigned and reviewed writing assignments and led discussion sections around the themes of the two courses 	
Columbia University <i>Summer High School Program Assistant Teacher</i>	New York, NY June–Aug 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught C-language programming to high school students with little to no programming experience Designed and graded quizzes and assignments, and assisted the students one-on-one 	
International Rescue Committee <i>Refugee Youth Summer Academy Intern</i>	Brooklyn, NY July–Aug 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught mathematics, English, music, and athletics to a multi-lingual group of elementary students 	
Teaneck High School <i>Assistant Summer Teacher</i>	Teaneck, NJ Summer 2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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, but focusing on the collection of the Hebraist, Professor Alan Mintz	
Yiddish Initials Project	Ongoing

Established 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 encourage contemporary transcultural usage 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 documents concerning institutional history, collected from the personal archives of Professor David Roskies

[Mendele Listserv Archive](#)

2024

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

[Nakhman Blumenthal Archive](#)

2020

Developed a (unofficial) finding aid for the uncatalogued collection of Nakhman Blumenthal's papers held at YIVO

[The Online Treasury of Yiddish Poetry](#)

2018

Developed a website to exhibit 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 bakeries 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 current 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 breads daily for two retail bakery locations as well as brioche, muffins, pizzas, bomboloncini, scones and sticky buns

Brooklyn Botanical Garden

Brooklyn, NY

Discovery Garden Volunteer Docent

July 2016–Aug 2017

- Ran one of several fun and educational activity stations (on a rotating basis) for children ages two to fifteen and sensory-focused activities for children ages zero to five

Intrusion Detection Systems Laboratory, Columbia University

New York, NY

Undergraduate Intern

Jan–Dec 2016

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

Architectural Metal Fabricators, Inc.

New York, NY

Welding and Metallurgy Intern

Summer 2013

- Learned the art and science of welding from one of New York's finest custom metal and glass architectural project companies
- Contributed to the elaborate process of design, fabrication, and installation of custom projects

Columbia University Players, Columbia University*CU Players Set Designer*

New York, NY

Spring 2013

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

LEADERSHIP

Jewish Theological Seminary, Albert A. List College

New York, NY

Class President

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

New York, NY

Student Council Relations Committee Member

Fall 2013

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

LANGUAGES

	Language	Level	Years	Comment
Human:	English	Native		
	Yiddish	Near native fluency	5	University courses, intensive summer programs, and regular academic and social use.
	French	Advanced	3	From having lived in France from 7 to 10 years old, 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	2 years of formal Russian-language study and intensive summer program.
Machine:	C, C++, Java, Python, HTML, jQuery, JavaScript, PHP			