

# Forged by *Jewish Historical Experience*:

The Study of Jewish History as a Crucible for  
Jewish Professional Learning

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*To be an educational leader you need to be able to take something and make it more, give it the meat around it. Nothing is floating in air. None of this that we're teaching floats in air, so we need an understanding of what it is.*

[Lisa]

It's May 2020. In North America, the COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc with people's work and lives for almost three months. The participants in Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion's Executive M.A. Program in Jewish Education are about to start a new course, the 10th in their two-year degree program. The program has a blended format, part online, part in person. This six-week course—*XED 505 Jewish Historical Experience*—is taught entirely online by Prof. Leah Hochman, an intellectual history professor at HUC–JIR who also teaches at the University of Southern California. As before every course, Hochman asks her students to complete a short survey about their prior experiences teaching or learning modern Jewish history. She checks what the students are curious about and whether they have any concerns about which they want her to be aware.<sup>1</sup>

A couple of responses provide a flavor of the course context and the current moment. Rebecca, an engagement professional, opens a window on her prior experience with Jewish history:<sup>2</sup>

*I have not taken any formal [Jewish studies] courses ... aside from an undergraduate course in college, Classic Jewish texts. ... Most of my Jewish education came from my own initiative. ... Prior to HUC, I have never been part of any Jewish movement and had no formal Jewish education. My grandfather fought in WWII and a lot of my Jewish knowledge comes from family narrative, experiences, and literature.*

Yael, a director of education at a community organization, was probably speaking for the rest of the group when she shared some additional concerns:

*No questions really. Just an admission that I'm spread extremely thin right now with COVID and homeschooling my 5-year old and being the de facto spiritual leader of a community beginning to experience loss on a larger scale is really draining. I will do my best to keep up but I'm anticipating a real struggle.*

<sup>1</sup> Our research team was given access to all course materials in real time. We observed synchronous sessions and some student-instructor “tutorials.” We interviewed a sample of students at the end of the course, as well as the Executive M.A. (EMA) Program Director and Dean of the School of Education. We interviewed the instructor, Prof. Leah Hochman, three times: before the start of the course, immediately after its conclusion, and again after completing all other interviews.

<sup>2</sup> All student names and identities have been disguised. The names and identities of educators have not.



Before the semester's start, Hochman knew it would be hard enough to engage a highly diverse group of Jewish professionals, required to study graduate-level Jewish history while they continue to fulfill their day-job responsibilities. In spring 2020, those difficulties were exponentially intensified by the challenges she and her students faced staying on top of their professional and personal commitments during the first global pandemic in 100 years.

**How this course—part academic exploration, part personal odyssey—touched the lives of its participants provokes questions about how Jewish educators might grow through academic and professional learning experiences, and toward what ends.**

## **A Master's Program in Jewish Education**

*XED 505 Jewish Historical Experience* is one element in a two-year program of graduate education aimed at mid-career leaders in the field of Jewish education, people who typically have been in the field as leaders for at least five years. HUC's website depicts the program in the following terms:

Strengthen your authentic voice as a leader to better position yourself within your own organization and in the greater Jewish educational landscape. Strengthen your skills and knowledge while continuing to live and work where you already are.

If you are a Jewish educator with a minimum of five-years' experience in an educational leadership position, our Executive M.A. in Jewish Education is the next step in broadening your professional impact. Gain the skills, knowledge and dispositions to effectively enable contemporary American Jews to access Jewish wisdom and connectedness at the key moments in their lives.

Like many other graduate programs for educators, and especially those “executive” programs designed for individuals already in senior positions who continue to work during their studies, the payoff from this program comes in the form of personal growth, professional development, and career advancement. As Miriam Heller Stern, National Director of HUC's Schools of Education, elaborates, it is too limiting to characterize this program simply as professional development.

*I think it's a step higher and deeper. It's a Master's degree, it's total self-actualization and gaining status in a profession. ... This catapults them to a new level in earning power, career, sophistication in how they think about problems, and in their professional networks. Because it fits all those check marks, it's in a different category than Professional Development.*

Referring to the Jewish Historical Experience course, she continues:

*This course is also a hallmark of moving beyond Professional Development because it situates the students in an academic discipline of Jewish studies. It provides a frame and language for all they do. It gives a perspective on why we're Jewish educators at all, because we have this history. These are the historical forces that shaped that.*

This breadth of vision is reflected in a sophisticated curriculum structure within which the Jewish Historical Experience course fits. The two-year program is made up of 13 courses: three 10-day, in-person seminars and 10 online courses. It includes ongoing clinical mentoring with senior personnel in the field and concludes with students completing a capstone project focused on leading other educational leaders in deliberations over a particular value in tension—an “enduring dilemma”—in their work. Complemented by three 2- or 3-day intensives in which all current EMA students come together, students spend time over the course of two years at all three of HUC’s US campuses and its Israel campus. The hope is that, in the long term, this program will help build a growing cadre of educational leaders for the broader field of Jewish education.

Program Director Lesley Litman sketches the main elements in the program’s architecture and the thinking behind them. It is a model designed with the careful and step-by-step aim of developing an intentional and considered leadership voice in participants, and it has evolved over the 10 years and eight cohorts during which the Executive MA has been in existence.

*The program is made up of three pillars and two threads. The pillars are philosophy, practices, and leadership. Each leads into the next. Jewish Educational Philosophy explores what am I, what’s important to me, what thinkers and ideas inform me. As a Jewish educational leader, who do I look to? Educational Practices asks who are my learners? How do I think about what they’re learning and why? How do I help others do that? That brings students to...Leadership: What’s my voice? Who am I as a leader and how do I have an impact on the system? ...Those are the pillars. ... The threads are the thread of Jewish studies, whether, for example, it’s history or biblical studies. The other thread is creativity and the arts; we model creative thinking and a creative stance. ... We punctuate the program with particular experiences, and weave them throughout the courses. ... I think of it as loom, the pillars and the threads. We try to weave a tapestry.*

This is complex, time-consuming work, something Litman recognizes and sees as fully necessary:

*What we’d say is that deep professional learning happens over time and space, and happens across a multiplicity of experiences—academic, deep mentoring, social, cohort-building, sharing learning, building learning communities. ... This takes time.*

## Why Sign Up?

This is a demanding program. Litman reports that potential candidates can be “skittish” about how they’ll be able to cope. She sees one of her jobs as building up the courage of people with potential who wouldn’t otherwise consider the program. Many in the current cohort admit they would not have applied without her strong encouragement, sometimes in the course of conversations over many years. At the same time, even while encouraged to apply, every potential candidate has to successfully complete a prerequisite online course before being admitted to the program. It is understood that this program is not for everyone; enrollees have to be ready for a demanding experience. Litman explains:



*This is intense and rigorous and the stakes are high, because of the degree. ... That's why we ask every potential candidate to take a pre-course, a six-week introduction to Jewish educational leadership. It tells them if this is the program for them. ... People select out. We usually have about 20-25 [enrollees], and up to 16 go through. People don't feel rejected by HUC, they just move on to the next thing.*

Why then do people enroll in the program? Members of the current cohort express three predominant motivations: (1) They have reached a point in their careers where they anticipate not being able to move any further without advanced accreditation. Some had followed a consistent path to this point but hadn't had the time or opportunity to invest in further education until now because of personal commitments. Others moved into Jewish education from other fields and are now ready to build their knowledge in this one. They want to grow as professionals. *"I was at the point in my career where it made sense to pursue a higher degree in my field. ... I started looking into programs I could do while working full time, having a family and all that."* (2) Some cohort members indicated they were drawn to the Executive MA Program, and at the same time were acutely anxious about it, because they were already holding a position of responsibility as educators (in early childhood education, in a congregation or teen organization, for example), and they lacked sufficient background, generally in education and specifically as Jewish educators. *"I wanted more knowledge and understanding, I wanted to feel more comfortable in my role."* *"I knew what I was doing was right, but I needed to be familiar with the methodologies. ... I wanted some of the language and the verbiage."* *"What led me here is that I don't have a strong Judaic background. ... I went to Jewish camp, had a Bat Mitzvah, but never felt I really had a strong knowledge of Jewish history and culture. I knew what we did, but never why."* (3) Finally, and this was not mutually exclusive, they wanted to grow personally, were curious, and wanted to learn. *"I had a personal spiritual longing, and I think that also drew me to the program."* *"I want to be the best I can be and give the best I can, and in order to do that I have to receive the best."* *"I love education. I love to read, grow my mind in any way."*

These motivations are probably not so different from those of peers in the small and diminishing number of Master's-level degree programs in Jewish education offered by other institutions in North America, especially those with a practice orientation rather than a research focus. This group is probably unusual in the diversity of sectors from which students come: early childhood; afterschool; youth-serving organizations; camps; national synagogue movements; and more. This diversity is part of its appeal. This particular group is also unusual in one further way: historically, there had always been many more women than men in the program (as is the case in Masters of Education programs more generally), but this was just the second time in 10 years that all of the cohort participants were women.

## **Why Jewish History?**

For those who were concerned about their lack of Judaic studies background, Jewish Historical Experience seemed, at the outset, the most forbidding course they were required to take; "scary" was the description some used. Reflecting their discomfort, a couple of students argued that the course's purpose was not self-evident. As Maya put it:

*This is the first course I thought, do I really need this? It's out of my comfort zone. It's a lot of work for something that doesn't clearly fit in. I know it's there for a reason, I know that HUC doesn't do anything without intentionality, but it's not clear to us how this fits into the trajectory. Everything else was immediately translatable to what I was doing, and this course is a question mark for me.*

These are concerns Hochman was fully aware of even before students completed her pre-course questionnaire. Her emphasis on personalizing the study of history, motivated in large part by her goals for these particular students as educational leaders, helps provide a more inviting pathway into the otherwise esoteric material. In the first of two real-time classes—where the topic was the early Hassidim and their opponents—she argued for this relevance of history:

*The way we feel about this material is the way we teach it and integrate it in our personal lives, which is why I didn't call this a history class, but an experience class. It is our experience of this history and how we personally relate to it that will shape how we teach.*

She returned to this theme later in the course in a short prerecorded lecture. There, in a session on civil agency and religious denominationalism in Western European Jewry, she made the case to the women that, as educators, they were helping people make sense of the things that happen to and around them. Making meaning of Jewishness is, she proposed, a similar kind of meaning making to the historical meaning making they were being asked to do in their major course assignment (described below). This course, she implied, despite its immediate appearance, modeled and even initiated students in profoundly important professional practices.

In an interview at the end of the course, Hochman elaborated on her goals:

*The academic goal is to make people unafraid of thinking about Jewish history as an untouchable or inaccessible thing. That's why I changed it from Modern Jewish History to Modern Jewish Experience. ... If they befriend historical experience as something not scary and academic and separate, but as part of their past, as something they can engage with, they can help others do the same. I want to provide pathways into educational leadership by giving them entry into a field that three-quarters are afraid of going into and see as a scary thing. The first goal is to make it unscary. The second goal is to allow entry for themselves. And the third goal is to provide some accurate content. ... And to be perfectly frank, what they get doesn't matter to me. ... Whatever, it's their own thing. I've given them accurate data and ... I don't care what they poke at, as long as they poke at something.*

When pushed to clarify how different these goals are from those when she teaches other graduate courses in history, she makes clear that this would not be her order of priorities in other settings. Providing a broad framing for her choices, she underlines how in a seminary context, even one with a strong and historic intellectual mission, the ultimate goal is what she called “professional formation”—empowering professionals, enabling people to grow, to go out into the world and make a difference to the quality of Jewish life. That's especially the case in an executive graduate program.

*There is a tension between this is what you do as a practitioner, and this is what you do as a learner. This class tries to straddle that tension. I made it much friendlier than if it was traditional graduate school.*



With the COVID-19 pandemic providing a less than benign backdrop to the entirety of the class, she acknowledged having an additional goal at this time:

*This year was so atypical, so this year I was trying to give them an anchor in a storm. ... What they needed [was to see how] there have been other crises, how have people weathered them. This is the transitional moment. And what I provided for them was a way to organize.*

This was what prompted her to choose to preface the class with a reading of the early 18th century memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln, a Jewish businesswoman who in her own time was dealing with a pandemic while building her own life and that of her family. In formal terms, the memoir provided an opening to intellectual issues of periodization and the determination of historical significance, central issues in the course. Informally, it established a deeper message of history's capacity to provide a point of reference for our present challenges; history helps us decenter. In Hochman's terms, this was history providing an anchor in a storm. One might even say, this was history as therapy at a time of real pain.

## Course Structure

If these are the distinctive circumstances and concerns that have shaped the design of XED 505 *Jewish Historical Experience*, the course bibliography and its introductory framing in the syllabus look a lot like other college offerings in the field of Jewish history. The course reader, Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz's *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, is surely the most widely used compendium of primary sources in high school, undergraduate and graduate courses on modern Jewish history. The course description and the related objectives are also largely what one would expect in an intellectually progressive academic setting:

This course focuses on experiences of Jews throughout history as they have navigated cultural, religious, political and social shifts of meaning and purpose. Students will engage in different genres of historical writing and expression (memoirs, scholarly essays and literature) as a way of exploring issues related to Jewish identity and longevity. Students will have the opportunity to trace educational patterns and identify transitional moments throughout modern and contemporary Jewish experience.

The classes that make up the course are fairly conventional, too. In a six-week program, slightly shorter than usual due to COVID, the course is made up of four units, comprising six subunits in total. Each week there are required readings—many of which make up the DNA of college-level modern Jewish history programs: “The New Israelite Temple Association,” the (1817) Constitution of the Hamburg Temple; George Washington's (1790) “Reply to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport;” Haim Hazaz's (1962) “The Sermon.” Primary sources of this kind help build familiarity with a general sense of the trajectory of Jewish history over the last 200 years. Some readings are a little more unconventional: in a sub-unit about “Becoming American,” the students must select from options that include Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's “Kitchen Judaism,” Philip Roth's short story “The Conversion of the Jews,” and

Employing a widely used learning management system, some weeks students are asked to post responses to trigger questions in whole class discussion forums that require them to respond to one another and not just to the instructor's prompts. On a couple of occasions, they're required to submit reflections directly to the instructor in response to a selection of thought questions.

These components constitute a kind of rhythm section that propels the course forward, week by week. In many history programs, that's about as far as it goes; these themes and resources provide the backing track for the contemporary Jewish experience. What makes this course so interesting, what makes it sing, to take this metaphor further, is the melody Hochman lays down on top of this familiar soundtrack of Jewish history. The melody is carried by the central course assignment, conducted in predetermined groups of two or three (*"havrutot"*) and expanding week by week.

## Making Meaning of History

In the course syllabus, the central assignment is introduced for the first time in the following way:

Part of the process of understanding history includes the practice of periodization, i.e., determining historical periods and identifying moments of transition between them. In pairs, learners will create timelines spanning the period of time of Jewish experience our class covers (roughly 1650–present) by picking and describing the importance of 25 key dates.

This laconic description barely captures what is a challenging, gradually evolving, and ultimately meaningful process. It begins with each student engaging in a solo-brainstorming, “without reference to aids,” of “20–30 events in Jewish history that they think are important for modern and contemporary Jewry;” the brainstorming, as explained in the syllabus, is intended “to allow you the opportunity to see how you conceive of the development and unfolding of Jewish life.” Through progressive iterations, the groups eventually arrive at an agreed-upon list of 25 key events that altered or impacted Jewish history and about which they write an explanatory narrative. The road to this final, collaborative product involves a process of negotiation with fellow havruta members, ongoing fact checking, and both oral and written feedback from Hochman, who helps students home in on single events (rather than date ranges) and pushes them to clearly articulate their historical significance. As Hochman subsequently elaborated during interviews, the timeline is a means by which students come to organize, with ever greater precision and intentionality, their own story of Jewish history and proudly take ownership of it.

This timeline is accompanied by a similarly iterated and negotiated list of 25 people—“movers and shakers”—that each group thinks made major contributions to modern and contemporary Jewish experience. As they refine this list, students are asked to interrogate various important considerations: How many people on your list are men? How many on your list are nonbinary? In what fields or areas do most of your people contribute (e.g., theology, politics, philanthropy, education)?



Finally, these two creations are supplemented by one more, a lexicon: “a sort of working vocabulary list of key words you think are ... the most salient and representational ... of key aspects of Jewish experience in the US, with a brief (one sentence) definition.”

Together, these three products make up a course capstone, what Hochman calls a “cheat sheet,” “a graphic organizer for 500 years of Jewish experience.” In handy form, the students have in their grasp a story of modern Jewish history—one they themselves helped to shape, narrate, and imbue with meaning. As Hochman told one pair of students while workshoping their timeline with them:

*This is a cheat sheet for you, and you will own 25 days in Jewish history, days you know, and understand their implication. The whole goal of this assignment is to empower you. ... Make this what you want it to be. My timeline is how I see it. What you're creating is your narrative, your list. You'll come back to this list and mine it for early childhood education and for adult education. Maybe you find that Adam Sandler is more important than Golda Meir for this. You don't have to do this for some academic in an ivory tower. This is about the people who will be before you, and what you want to have in your pocket to help them.*

## The Alchemy of History

The cheat-sheet exercise is a multilayered, multidimensional piece of work. It is also an unusually personal, even subjective, assignment in the context of a graduate program of education where the emphasis is, typically, on initiating students into the norms of scholarship and academic rigor.

While Hochman inherited the timeline component from the course's previous instructor, she has made it a signature of her own pedagogy and of what she is trying to accomplish with this group, in this setting. This exercise transforms the course from a conventional exploration of modern Jewish history to a kind of lived experience of learning to tell the Jewish story, or to be more precise, a Jewish story.<sup>3</sup> And for students, the mechanics of this exercise—especially the process of negotiating with their peers about what events matter—are as important as gaining an opportunity to become familiar with previously unknown moments in the Jewish past.

A brief look at the work of one pair, Natalie and Lisa, provides an intimation of this process. In its first iteration, the section of their timeline concerned with events between the US's Declaration of Independence and the establishment of the State of Israel was as follows:

1788	The ratification of the US Constitution
1824	First American Reform Jewish Group was organized in SC
1885	Pittsburgh Platform Adopted

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<sup>3</sup> This intentional language correction, from the definite “the” to the indefinite “a,” is part of Hochman's pedagogy as well, through frequent reminders in both formal lectures and informal interactions with students to use indefinite articles. This both emphasizes the multiplicity of stories, perspectives, and experiences throughout Jewish history and may also make it easier for them to participate in scholarly exchange.

1890	The Dreyfus Affair
1896	Theodore Herzl – “The Jewish State”
1905	Albert Einstein published The Theory of Relativity
1910	First modern Hebrew dictionary
1938	Kristal Nacht
1948	State of Israel

Six weeks later, they reviewed the same period through the prism of an expanded set of historical coordinates, most of which were articulated with much greater specificity.

Dec 15, 1791	The First Amendment establishes the separation of church and state, prohibiting the federal government from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion.”
1817–1818	Eduard Kley, teacher and preacher, brought to Germany the convention of giving sermons in the native language of Hamburg.
Feb 4, 1838	Rebecca Gratz establishes the first Jewish Sunday School in Philadelphia in response to a fear that Jewish children would want to join the Sunday School classes of their non-Jewish friends.
Feb 1896	Theodor Herzl publishes “The Jewish State”, proposing having a Jewish State as a solution to antisemitism.
Jan 13, 1898	Emilie Zola publishes the letter “J’Accuse” in the French newspaper “L’Aurore.”
1902	Solomon Schechter took over as the second president of The Jewish Theological Seminary and played a vital role in establishing his vision of Conservative Judaism.
1910	Eliezer Ben-Yehuda publishes the first modern Hebrew dictionary.
April 1, 1925	The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is founded as an international organization, with many of the best minds of the early parts of the 20th century among them, including Otto Warburg, Sigmund Freud, Martin Buber, Paul Ehrlich, Chaim Weizmann and Albert Einstein.
Aug 5, 1942	Janusz Korczak with nearly 200 children and orphanage staff members were rounded up for deportation to <a href="#">Treblinka</a> , where they were all put to death.
1946	Golda Meir is appointed acting head of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department.
May 14, 1948	President Harry Truman recognizes Israel as a state.



How students made the journey from telling one kind of Jewish story to another is part of what they themselves found so compelling about this exercise. This journey was partly about what they learned from one another.

*I loved working with a partner and having the conversations, and that added to the experience... I learned things about Russia I'd never know, and [one member] was part of the LGBTQ community and I learned about people from her I'd never know....] And that's what havruta has continued to bring ... a new insight into classmates and teaches me something new about them, and that's a really important piece for educators, seeing someone else's perspective and taking it in*

It was partly about how Hochman pushed the group to think about historical significance with greater intentionality. For example, listing when famous people were born did not really meet a test of significance. As one of the students involved in these particular examples wrote in her final reflection:

*It was when I read Dr. Hochman's note that babies usually do not alter or impact history that I forced myself to take a step and really think about what I was doing. I started again and tried to really focus on events.*

In no small part, these changes were also about learning the process of making and defending intentional choices rather than simply retelling the story that has always been told by others; participating in this process increases the students' confidence in those choices and in themselves. The continued emphasis on this process underscored that there is no single story of the Jewish people, and helped students tell a story of Jewish people that is their own story.

## Living History

What, then, did students come away with from the course? Interviewing them in the months following the course's end, when they had greater distance from this experience, they made clear how strong is the urge among educators toward "application," to think about how to adopt and adapt the things they encounter to their work as educators.

*I thought I could make a cool lesson plan out of that, as someone who works with teens that could be an interesting project.*

*The process of having to negotiate selections for the timeline made me think about how our team determines what makes it into our curriculum.*

*I see how you can have people create a timeline in 15 minutes, and from that the conversation seems to naturally appear; great questions and reflection and thought. It'd be interesting to ask children in your class to create a timeline of their year with you.*

These reactions speak to some of what makes a course of study useful in an immediate sense, through its contribution to what people do with the resources they encounter. These comments don't do justice, though, to what makes learning personally significant and professionally meaningful, how professional learning is not just a coaching of the hand, but of the head, heart, and soul. Jodie refers to one of these additional dimensions, to a change of perspective on the world and on oneself:

*I think the biggest thing, from working on the timeline and looking at history, is really thinking about how history has impacted our lives as parents, as educators, in the religious and secular world. And that's something I'm thinking about a lot, what does it mean to us to have this history, and how has it shaped us as individuals.*

She goes further, clarifying how a change in perspective comes from knowing things one didn't know before, seeing things more clearly:

*Now I have this slice, and it's not just from my perspective, we built it from different ages and places in the country, so it seems more cohesive than if I just did it on my own, especially with the feedback and building it out. And as scary and time-consuming as it was to source everything, it was really useful to have that information. It's a really nice backbone to my personal knowledge as a Jew and an educator, and I can see building something from it.*

In Hochman's stated goals for the course, these no doubt commendable outcomes were proximate; perhaps they even had a lower order of value. As we have seen, her teaching was driven by something greater: a desire to change the students' relationship to the Jewish past and to historical knowledge itself. This is not just to make them more knowledgeable, but to position them as participants in the production of knowledge, if not as experts or scholars, per se. The goal, in this sense, is that they come away with greater confidence—able to stand taller as educators and as Jewish leaders in relation to the Jewish past. This, Maya reported, was how she felt at the course's end:

*That perhaps I know more than I think I do, and ... that it's okay to not be an expert in everything, even as an educator. We get bogged down thinking we have to know everything we teach, and this made me think more about what it's like to go on an educational journey with my students.*

As a course outcome, this surely prompts one to say, as the Passover song puts it, “*dayenu*”—that would have been sufficient; these are worthy outcomes of Jewish professional learning. And yet, the students' reflections point to a further register of significance, what we previously eluded to as a coaching of the soul: professional learning that shifts the personal identity of the learner. This learning is not about what students can do, or what they think or feel; it's about who they are. This, for sure, is not something that happened for all the participants in *XED 505 Jewish Historical Experience*—especially not those whose lives were turned upside down by the pandemic, having been made redundant, for example, or having experienced family loss. But among the six cohort members we interviewed, there were two or three, about half, who indicated that something still more profound was shifted by this course. Marjorie was most articulate in expressing what this meant:



*Obviously, this course is more of the foundations of my own Judaism and faith as a Jewish person and as a Jewish educator. Not about how do I teach this to the kids, but rather strengthening my own foundation and building on that, and really deepening my own thoughts and really giving me that opportunity to really dig deeper into how I'm part of this history. So, this course was more, for me, in some instances realizing who I am, and in others digging deeper and strengthening my own faith, and through that understanding that wasn't there as strongly before.<sup>4</sup>*

This is the kind of shift that Hochman was eluding to in her distinction between Jewish history and Jewish experience. In this sense, Jewish history does not exist somewhere out there, as someone else's story. It is our story. It shapes who we are, here and now, as individuals and as Jewish educators. If, as Parker Palmer argues, we teach who we are, then crafting our own Jewish history is foundational to the growth and practice of Jewish professionals.

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<sup>4</sup> Marjorie may have been unusual in seeing things so clearly so soon after the course. The program leaders argue that most if not all students eventually gain this grand perspective through the aid of their capstone project. Many students don't fully appreciate where they've reached until they're fully through the capstone experience.