



Michael and Elaine Serling Institute
for Jewish Studies and Modern Israel
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Leonard Gilman Lecture on Jewish Culture: Dear Editor: Advice Columns and the American Yiddish Press with Ayelet Brinn

Monday, Oct. 27, 5:45-7:15 p.m.

Multicultural Center Room 1020: Multipurpose Room B, 535 N. Shaw Ln.

At the turn of the twentieth century, American Yiddish newspapers overflowed with advice columns offering implicit and explicit guidance to readers about how to live their lives. From the Forverts's famous "A Bintel Brief" to more practical advice columns, such as Der tog's "Letter Box" column, these publications printed countless letters from readers asking editors to help them navigate personal tribulations, American political infrastructures, and Jewish communal life. Editors and publishers introduced these features to entertain newspaper readers and to increase circulation. But these features also encouraged audiences previously unaccustomed to reading newspapers to view these publications as central sources for information and guidance about acclimating to American life. Eventually, these interactions spilled off the page as well. Yiddish newspapers became so successful at marketing themselves as fountains of advice that they had to create open office hours and hire staff members whose job it was to correspond or meet with readers eager to receive personal counsel from their favorite papers. This talk will explore the crucial role of advice columns in the development of the Yiddish press. It will highlight how these columns shaped the relationships between newspapers and their readers and how central advice columns became to the acclimation process of new immigrants eager to learn more about American life.

Ayelet Brinn is an Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies and History at the University of Hartford, where she holds the Philip D. Feltman Assistant Professorship in Modern Jewish History. Her first book, *A Revolution in Type: Gender and the Making of the American Yiddish Press*, was released in the fall of 2023 with New York University Press. She is currently a 2025-2026 fellow at the University of Michigan's Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, where she is working on a new book project about the Espionage Act and the censorship of the American Yiddish press during World War I.



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