The Appointments Committee

The Faculty of Law at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to respectfully submit my application for the tenure-track position of the Alfred Landecker-Nathan Feinberg Lectureship/Chair for the Study of Individual and Group Rights, in the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

I am currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Jacob Robinson Institute for the History of Individual and Collective Rights at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. My research covers international criminal law, law and collective memory, Holocaust trials in Israel and Germany, and the history of the Israeli legal system. In particular, my work involves analyzing legal responses to atrocity and mass violence crimes in criminal and civil litigation.

My doctoral dissertation, approved in May 2018, presented a novel normative and historical discussion of the legal case of Ivan Demjanjuk, who stood trial in Israel in 1986 on the charge of being the notorious “Ivan the Terrible” from the Treblinka extermination camp, but was ultimately acquitted. Through the discussion of the Demjanjuk proceedings, my research reveals the challenges that the exoneration of an accused war criminal presents in relation to attaining educational and political goals by conducting state and international criminal proceedings against such individuals.

As can be seen in my detailed CV, my research has won several prestigious awards, including the Wistrich Prize (2017), the Varborg Prize (2015), and the Wiesenthal Prize (2015). A revised manuscript based on my doctoral dissertation, *Der Demjanjuk-Prozess*, was accepted for publication (in German) in April 2019 as part of the Studies of the Dubnow Institute series,[[1]](#footnote-1) and will soon be published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht publishing house in Göttingen. The manuscript, whose translation is currently being edited, was awarded the Alexander Dushkin Foundation Prize in November 2020. A version of the manuscript in Hebrew, titled *The Last Trial: The Demjanjuk Trial* *and the End of Nazi Prosecution in Israel* was accepted for publication by the Hebrew University’s Magnes press in June 2021, after being awarded an honorable mention by the Bartal Prize committee for the promotion of historical research in Israel.

During my postdoctoral research at the Simon Dubnow Institute (DI) for Jewish History and Culture in Leipzig, Germany, I participated in the Recht (Law) research group, headed by Dr. Elizabeth Gallas. During my work with this group, and in DI in general, I was exposed to diverse research methods, tools, and critical theories that have enriched my own work. In September 2018, two research colleagues from DI, Dr. Katharina Stengel and Dr. Dagi Knellessen, and I were accepted to present our work at the prestigious Deutsche Historikertag, the main biennial historical conference in Germany. In 2020–2021, I was selected to participate in the highly competitive Young Scholars Forum in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities, headed by Prof. Israel Bartal, after being recommended by the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. During the meetings (in which Dr. Renana Keydar from the Faculty of Law also participated), I met and collaborated with scholars from different disciplines, whose research fields were related to the chosen topic for that year (“Racism, antisemitism, genocide: the Holocaust in its historical, ideological, and cultural contexts”). In 2021, I joined the research team at the newly-founded Robinson Institute in the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University. Since then, I have worked on a number of research projects, two of them in collaboration with other colleagues—the first with Dr. Iris Nachum from the Department of History, and the second with Prof. Dan Porat from the Department of Education. The latter collaboration resulted in a joint article that was published recently in the journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Oxford University Press).[[2]](#footnote-2) During my postdoctoral studies, I have been invited to present my work at international conferences, including in the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

Alongside my extensive research work, since submitting my doctoral thesis, I have worked fulltime as a senior law clerk at the Israeli Supreme Court, first for Justice Yosef Elron and in recent years for Justice Prof. Daphne Barak-Erez. In this role, I write opinions in principled cases in the fields of constitutional, administrative, criminal, and civil law, and also head the legal team at the chambers. This is a challenging, sensitive, and important legal position, which I consider a mission of the highest order, particularly in this current period. I have therefore undertaken my research work as a “second job,” and it should be considered accordingly. If granted the opportunity to devote my full time and energy to research, I believe that I will be able to achieve even more impressive results.

During my doctoral studies, I gained a great deal of teaching experience (weekly frontal classes), when I taught the course “Jewish Law” in the Faculty of Law (with Prof. Berachyahu Lifshitz and Prof. Benny Porat). My teaching feedback was excellent, and I was ranked among the best lecturers in the faculty during this period. In the upcoming year, I am scheduled to teach a new course for history undergraduates (also open to law students) on the subject of Historical Trials.

I believe that my extensive experience in practical legal work, gained both during my years in my role in Israeli courts and in my work as a litigator in a law firm, will prove highly beneficial as a lecturer in the Law Faculty. Indeed, the importance of combining excellence in research and teaching was embraced by the founders of the Law Faculty under the leadership of Prof. Nathan Feinberg, which I noted in my recent article.[[3]](#footnote-3) My dual training at both the Faculty of Law and the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry should prove highly valuable, having helped me gain the breadth of knowledge required of a university educator.

The Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University was my second home throughout my years as a student, and helped mold me as a researcher and scholar. It is my sincerest wish that I will be granted this precious opportunity to return to it.

Kind regards,

1. See: https://www.dubnow.de/en/publications/series/studies-of-the-dubnow-institute [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dori Deston, Yehudit and Porat, Dan. 2023. A Prisoner, Legislator, and Jurist: Joseph Lamm’s Legal Legacy in Relation to the Nazis and Nazi Collaborators (Punishment) Law, 1950. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 37(1): 74–89. https://doi.org/10.1093/hgs/dcac059 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dori Deston, Yehudit. 2023. “It is our mission to prepare law-trained professionals to serve the public and the administration in the Jewish state: The establishment of the faculty of law at the Hebrew University.” In Yfaat Weiss and Uzi Rebhun (eds.). *The History of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (fifth volume).* Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press. (in Hebrew). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)