

A century ago, ten thousand people gathered for a *yarid* on Mount Scopus to inaugurate the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Among the attendees were Albert Einstein, Lord Arthur Balfour, Sir Herbert Samuel, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, Ḥayyim Nahman Bialik, Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, Chaim Weizmann, and Martin Buber. People traveled from as far as Canada and South Africa to witness the moment.

Speaking on behalf of the Yishuv, Bialik warned that the new university was “an empty vessel which has yet to be filled.” Raised in traditional study yet secular in outlook, he described the heder, yeshiva, and Talmudic school as “our national spiritual fortress in the Diaspora,” though no longer able to withstand “the storm.” Yet even as he invoked ruin, he imagined renewal: that “among the ruins of those sacred institutions there still remain perfect slabs of stone” that could serve as foundations for something new.

Bialik, characteristically dramatic, overstated the ruin. Jewish learning in 1925 was not crumbling—nor is it now. The enduring challenge is not decay but distance. Over time, distance hardened into separation and separation into fragmentation. Communities formed around different centers of Jewish life—ritual, text, justice, culture—each preserving something vital, yet seldom encountering one another. The result is a Jewish world that hums with life but whose voices rarely overlap.

The American college campus once embodied the spirit Bialik invoked: a meeting ground where differences sharpened understanding. Today, that ideal feels newly fragile. Since October 7, the space for Jewish thought on campus has narrowed. The language we use to describe ourselves—and our permission to use it freely—has increasingly been defined from the outside rather than generated from within.

*The YARID* is our response: an independent forum for serious, spirited engagement with the ideas shaping Jewish life today. We draw inspiration from a long lineage of Jewish *yaridim*: the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau and Franz Rosenzweig’s Lehrhaus; the Vilna Gaon’s Beit Midrash and the Maskilic salons; the literary journal Ha-Shiloach and the Shalom Hartman Institute. In moments of hostility, it is natural to build walls. We seek instead to build a marketplace of ideas.

We are optimistic about the future. Argument, tension, and curiosity must not be symptoms of division but instruments of renewal. We hope to publish work that moves the Jewish conversation forward—creative, novel, constructive, deep, well-argued, informed, timely, and genuinely interesting. Each issue of *The YARID* will pair discourse with imagination: half guided essays around a shared theme, half open submissions of creative and cultural work, capturing the full range of Jewish expression.

We expect readers to find things they disagree with; indeed, we hope they do. When that happens, we invite them to respond in kind, articulating their own vision within our pages. Disagreement is not a flaw of this project but its engine. We believe understanding begins not with consensus but with conversation—with the willingness to risk being wrong in order to learn. The best way forward is still together: reading one another charitably, speaking across difference, and searching for unexpected points of contact. What we build can only be understood through the totality of Jewish thought.

Rabbi Nehemiah taught that “the words of Torah are poor in their place and rich in another place,” likening them to a merchant fleet bringing food from afar. The value of thought, like commerce, depends on exchange. *The YARID* is founded on our belief that Jewish thought grows richer when it travels—between disciplines, between communities, between worlds.