

# Samuel Lebens

Office: 04-824-9547 | Mobile: 058-572-2211 | Email: slebens@univ.haifa.ac.il | Web: [www.samlebens.com](http://www.samlebens.com)

Samuel Lebens is a professor of philosophy at the university of Haifa, and an Orthodox Rabbi. His research covers various fields of philosophy, from the works of Bertrand Russell to the writings of the Hassidic masters; from philosophical theology to the philosophy and semantics of fiction. He is the author of multiple books and a renowned Jewish educator.

## Education

BA, Philosophy, University College London (2003–2006).

PhD, Philosophy, Birkbeck College, University of London (2006–2010).

Rabbinic Ordination, Yeshivat Hamivtar & Yeshivat Har-Etzion (2009–2013).

## Post-Doctoral Studies

Center for Philosophy of Religion, University of Notre Dame (2013–2014) — Host: Prof. Michael Rea.

Center for Philosophy of Religion, Rutgers University (2014–2016) — Host: Prof. Dean Zimmerman.

Department of Philosophy, University of Haifa (2016–2021) — Hosts: Prof. Saul Smilansky & Prof. Daniel Statman.

## Academic Positions

Teaching Fellow, Department of Philosophy, University of Haifa (2019–2020).

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of Haifa (2021–present).

## Professional Service and Membership

- I am or have been a **member** of the American Philosophical Association, the Bertrand Russell Society, the Association for the Philosophy of Judaism (which I co-founded), and the Israeli Philosophical Association.
- I am on the **editorial board** of the *Journal of Analytic Theology; Religious Studies; Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*; and *TheoLogica: Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* (where I serve as a Section Editor).
- I have **reviewed** paper submissions for numerous journals, including: *Journal for the History of Analytic Philosophy; Pacific Philosophical Quarterly; American Philosophical Quarterly; Faith and Philosophy; Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism; Res Philosophica; British Journal for the History of Philosophy; Analysis; Erkenntnis; Mind; Synthese; Journal of Religious Ethics; Philosophia; Religious Studies; Philosophy and Phenomenological Research; The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy; TheoLogica; Ergo and the Australasian Journal of Philosophy*.
- I have **reviewed research grant proposals** for the John Templeton Foundation (2011; 2016; 2020) and the Irish Research Council (2022).

## Public Engagement

I have served as **Scholar-in-Residence**, for multiple weeks over the summer, at Leibler Yavneh College (Melbourne, 2023-2025). I have taught **online-courses** for the public via the London School of Jewish Studies, the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, and the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education. I regularly give lectures at **Israeli Yeshivot** (including Yeshivat Orayta, Yeshivat Har Etzion, and Migdal HaTorah). I have presented at multiple **Limmud Conferences** in the UK, New Zealand, the US, and South Africa. I was a guest lecturer at the Chief Rabbi of South Africa's **Sinai Indaba** (2017). A close student of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, I was in the first cohort of "**Sacks Scholars**."

## International Academic Conference Presentations

Year	Name of Conference	Venue	Title of Talk
2007	The British Pain Society	Lake Windermere	The meaning of pain and suffering from a Jewish perspective
2008	Annual Symposium of Cognition, Logic, and Communication	University of Latvia	A substantive non-solution to the problem of unity
2009	Bertrand Russell Society	APA central, Chicago	A neglected theory of judgement
2009	Birkbeck/UCL Conference	Cumberland Lodge, Windsor	Keith Hossack's Theory of Judgement
2012	Philosophy of Religion Summer Seminar	University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis	The Izbitzer, Gareth Evans, and Berkeley on Free Will
2014	Conference on the Nature and Value of Faith	St. Louis University	Interpreting Religious Beliefs: Naïve Theology & Faith
2015	Summer Seminar on the Nature and Value of Faith	University of Missouri, Columbia	Rationality of Religiosity
2016	Summer Seminar on the Nature and Value of Faith	Western Washington University, Bellingham	The Life of Faith as a Work of Art
2018	Conference on Personal and A-personal Theology	University of Innsbruck, Austria	From Maimonides to the Ba'al Shem Tov...
2020	Inaugural Conference of the Princeton Project in the Philosophy of Religion	Princeton University	Proselytism as Epistemic Violence
2022	American Philosophical Association	APA Central Division (Keynote)	Virtue and Religious Practice
2022	Annual Ranch Metaphysics Workshop	Tucson, AZ	Comment on paper
2022	God and the Spacetime Manifold, Summer Seminar	Rutgers University	Physics & Philosophy of Religion
2023	The Global Philosophy of Religion Project	Waseda University, Tokyo	The Problem of Evil: A Jewish Perspective

2023	Rutgers Analytic Theology Seminar I	Rutgers University	Hassidic Idealism & Modal Collapse
2024	Workshop on the foundations of metaphysics	Lehigh University	Idealism & Foundations of Metaphysics
2024	Rutgers Analytic Theology Seminar II	Rutgers University	Hassidic Idealism, Centered Worlds, & Chosenness
2024	Toronto Philosophy of Religion Workshop	Ryerson University of Toronto	Serving God Beautifully
2024	Workshop on the foundations of fiction	Università degli Studi di Milano	Centered Worlds & Philosophy of Fiction
2025	Rutgers Analytic Theology Seminar III	Rutgers University	Response to Noam Oren's paper
2025	Conference on Religious Epistemology in Honour of the 25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Alvin Plantinga's <i>Warranted Christian Belief</i> .	Metropolitan University of Toronto	Dark Patches: A Philosophical Short Story

## Israeli Conference Presentations

Date	Name of Conference	Venue	Title of Talk
2011	Conference on the Philosophical Investigation of the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Midrash	Shalem Center, Jerusalem	How to Cut a Sentence into Bits
2013	Conference on the Philosophical Investigation of the Hebrew Bible, Talmud, and Midrash	Shalem Center, Jerusalem	Midrash and Metaphor
2017	Israeli Philosophical Association	Ben Gurion University	On the semantics of nonfictional names in a fictional context
2017	Conference on Rational Beliefs and Normative Commitments	University of Haifa	Rationality, Reasonability, and Religiosity
2018	Israeli Philosophical Association	Bar Ilan University	Russell and Idealism
2020	Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter	Hebrew University	Russell and the Philosophy of Philosophy
2022	Tel Aviv Workshop on Philosophical Explanation	University of Tel Aviv	Russell on Philosophical Explanation
2025	Tel Aviv Workshop on Personal Identity	University of Tel Aviv	Identity of Fictional Characters
2025	Minerva-Genta Symposium on the Epistemology of Metaphysics	University of Tel Aviv	The end of metaphysics

2025	<i>Judaism Is about Love: Exploring the Jewish Philosophy of Shai Held</i>	Shechter Institute, Jerusalem	Held, Williams, and the Ethics of Partiality
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## Invited Lectures

2013: Glazer Institute, Pepperdine: Epistemology of Religiosity.  
 2013: Philosophy Club, Pepperdine: Negative Theology.  
 2018: University of Birmingham: God and His Imaginary Friends.  
 2021: Canterbury Institute, Oxford University: The Work of Rabbi Sacks.  
 2021: Joseph Butler Society, Oxford University: Jewish & Communitarian Epistemology.  
 2023: The Shapiro Lecture, Catholic Theological Union: The identity of traditions over time.  
 2026: John & Anna Belfer Oration, University of Notre Dame, Australia: TBC.

## Colloquia and Seminar Talks

2010: Hebrew University (Philosophy Colloquium): Russell's Theory of Judgement.  
 2013: University of Notre Dame (Center for Philosophy of Religion): God and His Imaginary Friends.  
 2014: University of Notre Dame (Center for Philosophy of Religion): The Primordial Torah.  
 2015: Rutgers University (Center for Philosophy of Religion): The Primordial Torah.  
 2016: Rutgers University (Center for Philosophy of Religion): The Promise of a New Past.  
 2018: University of Manchester (Philosophy Colloquium): Philosophy of Religion.  
 2019: Tel Hai College (Philosophy Colloquium): Dying *de se* and *de re*.  
 2020: University of Toronto (Online Symposium): On Ruth, Rabbis, & Rational Pluralism.  
 2025: Hebrew University (Philosophy Colloquium): The End of Metaphysics.  
 2025: Bar-Ilan University (Philosophy Colloquium): I don't believe that I will die.

## Organization of Conferences

2018: Haifa Conference on the Philosophy of Religion, University of Haifa (with Michael Antony).  
 2019: Conference on the Meaning of Life, University of Haifa (with Iddo Landau).  
 2019: Workshop on the Philosophy of Worship, Hebrew University (with Aaron Segal).  
 2021: Workshop on the Philosophy of Worship, Hebrew University (with Aaron Segal).  
 2022: Workshop on the Philosophy of the Afterlife (with Kelly Clark and Enis Doko of the Ibn Haldun University).  
 2023-present: I'm on the organizing committee of the annual Rutgers Analytic Theology Seminar.

## Research Grants

2016–19: *Jewish Analytical Philosophical Theology* (Templeton World Charity Foundation) — \$214,710.  
 2018–20: *Worship: A Jewish Philosophical Investigation* (Templeton World Charity Foundation) — \$234,575 (with Aaron Segal).

2020–22: *Life, Death, and the Afterlife in the Abrahamic Traditions* (Global Philosophy of Religion Project)—£31,820 (with Enis Doko & Kelly Clark).

2025–2028: *Narrative, and the Analytic Philosophy of Religion* (ISF)—300,000 NIS.

## Undergraduate Teaching

Over the last ten years I have taught the following courses: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*; Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Religion; Philosophy of Language; Philosophy of Literature; Berkeley and Idealism; Time and Time Travel; Philosophy of Death; Introduction to Medieval Philosophy; English Literature and the Philosophy of Time (with Ayelet Langer); Death and the Afterlife in the Abrahamic Religions; Philosophy of Fiction; and Philosophical Themes in the Writings of Rabbi Sacks.

# Publications

## Books

1. *Bertrand Russell and The Nature of Propositions: A History and Defense of the Multiple Relation Theory of Judgement*, New York: Routledge, 2017, 296 pages.
2. *The Principles of Judaism*, Oxford Studies in Analytic Theology, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, 352 pages.
3. *A Guide for the Jewish Undecided: A Philosopher makes the case for Orthodox Judaism*, Jerusalem: Maggid Books and Yeshiva University Press, 2022
4. *Philosophy of Religion: The Basics*, New York: Routledge, 2023, 202 pages
5. *Thinking About Stories: An Introduction to Philosophy of Fiction*, with Tatjana von Solodkoff, New York: Routledge, 2024, 278 pages.
6. *God's Chosen People: Judaism's Most Divisive Doctrine*, Oxford University Press, Forthcoming in 2026, aprox. 300 pages.

## Edited Books and Special Issues

1. *Jewish Philosophy in an Analytic Age*, with D. Rabinowitz and A. Segal, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019, 368 pages.
2. *Analytic Philosophy in Conversation with World Religions*, a special issue of *The Monist*, 2021, 104/3, 144 pages.
3. *The Philosophy of Worship: Divine and Human Aspects*, with A. Segal, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025, 345 pages
4. *Rabbi Sacks' Intellectual Legacy*, with J. Saks and T. Sinensky, a special issue of *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, 2025, 57/4-58/1, 355 pages.
5. *The Oxford Handbook of Bertrand Russell*, with F. Macbride and G. Stevens, Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, approx. 500 pages.

## Articles in Refereed Journals

1. 'A Substantive Non-Solution to the Problem of Unity', 2008, *The Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication*, Volume 4: 1-27
2. 'True Succession and Counterfactual Approval,' 2013, *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*, 2 (10): 26-31

3. 'Counterfactual Approval and Idiosyncratic Counterfactual Approval', 2013, *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collective*, 2 (11): 65-69.
4. 'The Epistemology of Religiosity', 2013, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 74 (3):315-332
5. 'Why so Negative about Negative Theology: The Search for a Plattinga-Proof Apophasis', 2014, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 76(3): 259-275.
6. 'God and His Imaginary Friends: A Hassidic Metaphysics', 2015, *Religious Studies*, 51(2):183-204
7. 'Would this Paper Exist if I hadn't written it?' 2015, *Philosophical Studies*, 172 (11):3059-3080
8. 'The Life of Faith as a Work of Art: A Rabbinic Theology of Faith', 2017, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 81(1): 61-81.
9. 'Is there a Primordial Torah?' 2017, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 82(2): 216-239.
10. 'The Ashes of Isaac', 2017, *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 5:500-514.
11. 'Russell and Bradley: Revisiting the Creation Narrative of Analytic Philosophy', 2017, *Journal for the History of Analytic Philosophy* 5(7):1-10.
12. 'The Promise of a New Past,' with Tyron Goldschmidt, 2017, *Philosophers' Imprint*, 17(18):1-25.
13. 'An Advertisement of a Promise', with Tyron Goldschmidt, 2017, *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 5: 629-636
14. 'Nothing Else', *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2019, 11/2:91-110
15. 'Dormant Dispositions, Agent Value, and the Trinity,' with Dale Tuggy, *Journal for Analytic Theology*, 2019, 7:142-155.
16. 'Pascal, Pascalberg, and Friends', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2020, 87/1:109-130.
17. 'Revelation Through Concealment: Kabbalistic Responses to God's Hiddennes,' *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2020, 12/2:89-108.
18. 'Divine Contractions: Theism gives birth to Idealism', with Tyron Goldschmidt, *Religious Studies*, 2020, 56(4): 509-524.
19. 'Hyper-Past Evils: A Reply to Bogdan V. Faul', with Tyron Goldschmidt, *Open Theology*, 2020, 6: 374-377.
20. 'Missing, Presumed Not Dead,' *Philosophia*, 2021 49/3:1043-1050.
21. 'Proselytism as Epistemic Violence: A Jewish Argument against Proselytism,' *The Monist*, 2021, 104: 376-392.
22. 'On where God isn't: excrement and the philosophy of religion; two Jewish perspectives,' *Religious Studies*, 2021, 57(4): 717-731.
23. 'Abraham's Empty Altars,' *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2021, 13/4: 65-86.
24. 'Will I get a job? Contextualism, faith, and belief,' *Synthese*, 2021,199/3-4: 5769-5790.
25. 'Defining Religion,' *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*, 2022, vol. 10: 145-168.
26. 'On the Harmony between Epistemology and Pistoriology,' *Australasian Philosophical Review*, 2021, 5(1): 29-35
27. 'The Unlikely Comeback of Pascal's Wager: On the Instability of Secular Post-Modernism', with Daniel Statman, *Philosophia*, 2021, 51(1): 337-348.
28. 'Is God a person? Maimonides, Crescas, and beyond,' *Religious Studies*, 2022, 58: S34-S60.
29. 'Amen to Daat: On the Foundations of Jewish Epistemology,' *Religious Studies*, 2023, 59: 465-4781.
30. 'One God, One Truth, Many Languages: Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' Pluralism Reexamined,' *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, 2022, 54(2): 74-100.
31. 'Religion, hypocrisy, and betting on secularity: reversing Smilansky's wager,' with Daniel Statman, *Religious Studies*, 2024, 60: 174-186.
32. 'Evolution and the Genre of Scripture: Why Evolution Shouldn't Bother Jewish Theology,' *Theology and Science*, 2023, 21(4): 599-616.
33. 'Omnipotence: Dean Zimmerman, Negative Nelly, and the Divine Delegates," *TheoLogica*, 2024, 8(2): 1-21.
34. 'Time for Some Robust Atonement,' *Faith and Philosophy*, 2023, 40(1): 1-23.
35. 'Creation and Modality: A Response to Ryan Mullins,' *Philosophia Christi*, 2023, 25(1): 45-59.
36. 'Response to Critics,' *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2023, 14(4): 377-396.
37. 'Everything, Everywhere, All at Once: Maimonides on the Afterlife—Updated,' *Religions*, 2023, 14 (2): 1-28.
38. 'Was Rabbi Sacks a Theological Maverick or Mystical Traditionalist?' *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, 2025, 57(4):204-224.

39. 'The apple of God's eye: a Biblical account of holiness,' *Religious Studies*, 2025, 61(4): 850-864.
40. 'Bradley, Russell, and the Rabbis,' *The Monist*, forthcoming.
41. 'The Strong Weak Argument for the Existence of a (gift-bestowing, Biblical) God,' with Ezra Zuckerman Sivan, *Faith and Philosophy*, forthcoming.
42. 'A Heretical Re-Reading of the Theory of Descriptions,' *Synthese*, forthcoming.

## Chapters in Books

1. 'Reconciling Imagery and Doctrine,' in Daniel Franks and Aaron Segal (Eds.), *Jewish Philosophy Past and Present: Contemporary Responses to Classical Sources*, Routledge, 2016: 25-33.
2. 'Negative Theology as Illuminating/Therapeutic Falsehood', in Michael Fagenblat (Eds.), *Negative Theology as Jewish Modernity*, Indiana University Press, 2017: 85-108.
3. 'Hassidic Idealism: Kurt Vonnegut and the Creator of the Universe' in Tyron Goldschmidt and Kenneth Pearce (Eds.), *Idealism: New Essays*, Oxford University Press, 2017: 158-176.
4. 'Are you Experienced?' in Graham Oppy, Gregory Dawes, Evan Fales, Joseph Koterski, Mashhad Al-Allaf, Robert Fastiggi, and David Shatz (Eds.), *Theism and Atheism: Opposing Arguments in Philosophy*, Macmillan Reference, 2019: 135-145.
5. 'A Commentary on a Midrash: Metaphors about Metaphor,' in Samuel Leibens, Dani Rabinowitz, and Aaron Segal (Eds.), *Jewish Philosophy in an Analytic Age*, Oxford University Press: 78-97.
6. 'Ex Nihilo Nihil Fit: An Argument for Anti-Nihilism', with Tyron Goldschmidt, in Sarah Bernstein and Tyron Goldschmidt (Eds.), *Non-Being: New Essays on the Metaphysics of Non-Existence*, Oxford University Press, 2021: 187-204.
7. 'Is God a person? Maimonidean and Neo-Maimonidean Perspectives,' in S. Kittle and G. Gasser (Eds.), *The Divine Nature: Personal and A-Personal Perspectives*, London and New York: Routledge, 2022: 80-105.
8. 'Classical Theism and Jewish Conceptions of God,' in R. Koons and J. Fuqua (Eds.), *Classical Theism: New Essays on the Metaphysics of God*, London and New York: Routledge, 2023: 167-193.
9. 'Jewish Epistemology and Communitarianism,' in J. Greco, T. McNabb & J. Fuqua (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Religious Epistemology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023: 117-131.
10. 'Hassidic Idealism and the Meaning of Life,' in K. Lougheed (Ed.), *Value Beyond Monotheism: The Axiology of the Divine*, New York: Routledge, 2023: 83-95.
11. 'Crescas and Rabbi Sacks on Happiness and Joy,' in E. Brown and S. Weiss (Eds.), *An Ode to Joy: Judaism and Happiness in the Thought of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks and Beyond*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023: 159-168.
12. 'Give Truth to Jacob,' in E. Stump and J. Wolfe (Eds.), *Biblical Narratives and Human Flourishing: Knowledge Through Narrative*, New York: Routledge, 2024: 95-114.
13. 'A Design-Argument-Inspired, Midrashic Epistemology of Religion' in E.V.R. Kojonen, Shoaib A. Malik (Eds.), *Design Discourse in Abrahamic Traditions: History, Metaphysics, and Science*, New York: Routledge, 2025, pp. 165-181.
14. 'A Russellian Philosophy of Philosophy: On Systematicity and Entitlement' in A. Segal and N. Strang (Eds.), *Systematicity in Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, forthcoming, approximately 20 pages.
15. 'The Metaphysics of Russell's *Foundations of Geometry*: First Steps toward the Realism of the New Philosophy', with Fraser MacBride, in Leibens, MacBride, and Stevens (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Bertrand Russell*, Oxford University Press, forthcoming, approximately 20 pages.
16. 'David Shatz and the Puzzle of the Right and the True,' in Rynhold, Segal and Weiss (Eds.), *Keter David – David's Diadem: An Examined Torah Life – Essays in Honor of Prof. David Shatz*, Academic Press, forthcoming. Approximately 20 pages.

## Book Reviews

1. Yoram Hazony's *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*, in the *Journal of Analytic Theology*, volume 2 (2014).

2. Terence Cuneo's *Ritualized Faith: Essays on the Philosophy of Liturgy*, in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2016).
3. Eli Hirsch's *Radical Skepticism and the Shadow of Doubt: A Philosophical Dialogue*, in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2018).
4. Shira Weiss' *Joseph Albo on Free Choice: Exegetical Innovation in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, in *Religious Studies*, 56/1 (2020).
5. F. L. MacBride's *On the Genealogy of Universals: The Metaphysical Origins of Analytic Philosophy*, in *Philosophical Quarterly*, 70/281 (2020): 877–880.
6. T. M. Rudavsky's *Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages: Science, Rationalism, and Religion*, in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2018).
7. James R. Connelly's *Wittgenstein's Critique of Russell's Multiple Relation Theory of Judgement*, in *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy*, 11/2 (2023): 23-29.
8. Critical notice of Jerome Yehuda Gellman's *The people, the Torah, the God: neo-traditional Jewish Theology*, in *International journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 96/1 (2024): 99-107.
9. James Sterba and Richard Swinburne's *Could a good God permit so much suffering? A Debate*, in *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews* (2025).