

February 2021

## GTU's Center for Jewish Studies Receives Major Gift from Taube Philanthropies



Dr. Sam Shonkoff, Taube Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies, and the first holder of the Taube Family Chair in Jewish Studies.

The Graduate Theological Union (GTU) is honored and overjoyed to announce that it has received a generous endowment gift of \$750,000 from Taube Philanthropies, which will contribute directly to the establishment of the Taube Family Chair in Jewish Studies. The gift recognizes the long-standing, fruitful relationship between the GTU's Richard S. Dinner Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) and Taube Philanthropies, which has supported the research and scholarship of CJS faculty and students for decades.

“For over fifty years, the GTU has been the proud home of the Center for Jewish Studies – the first of our centers to be established following the formation of the GTU consortium in 1962,” said GTU President, Dr. Uriah Kim. “With this generous gift, we are confident that the important work of CJS and its faculty will continue well into the future, for another fifty years and beyond.”

Looking ahead, the Taube Philanthropies gift will support the faculty position of Dr. Sam Shonkoff as the Taube Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies, and who will also be the first holder of the Chair. Dr. Shonkoff joined the GTU in 2019 and currently serves as Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at CJS, where he teaches on Jewish religious thought and modern Jewish cultures. Dr. Shonkoff is co-editor with Ariel Evan Mayse of *Hasidism: Writings on Devotion, Community and Life in the Modern World* (Brandeis University Press, 2020), and he is the editor of *Martin Buber: His Intellectual and Scholarly Legacy* (Brill, 2018). Dr. Shonkoff's current book project focuses on themes of embodiment in Martin Buber's representations of

Hasidism, and it will offer the first major hermeneutical study of Buber's tales vis-à-vis the original Hasidic sources.

“This gift from Taube Philanthropies ensures the continued contributions of CJS to the interreligious study, culture, and cooperation at the heart of the GTU’s mission,” said Dr. Deena Aranoff, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies. “For decades, CJS faculty members have been among the most pre-eminent in the field of Jewish Studies. This gift will allow us to continue to play a central role in the study of Jewish culture, history and thought; to train the next generation of scholars and educators; and to maintain our commitment to bridging scholarship and the public sphere. We are truly honored to be entrusted with this legacy.”

“As a long-time advocate for Jewish studies and interreligious studies, I've been consistently impressed by GTU's leadership and academic achievement," said Tad Taube, founder and chairman of Taube Philanthropies. "Accordingly, Taube Philanthropies has been supporting GTU continuously for many years. I'm proud to have seen this multi-religious environment grow and to have played a part in the development of the Center for Jewish Studies into a premier center for graduate studies. By endowing this chair, I hope to secure and underscore the importance of Jewish Studies for future generations."