

Rabbi Ordained at Hebrew Union College Says His Alma Mater Tried to Sell Ancient Books from Its Rare Books Collections

Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein says the college's engagement of Sotheby's Judaica consultant to assess "top value items" caused the Director of Libraries to resign

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EINPresswire.com/ -- [The world-renowned Klau Library](#), located on the historic Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), contains one of the world's most important collections of volumes that tell the story of the Jewish people. It is second in stature only to the National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. The Klau Library's collections include its considerable compendium of ancient, rare books—many of which are the only ones in existence.

In 2022, HUC-JIR announced that it would close its Cincinnati campus by 2026. In 2024, HUC-JIR engaged Sharon Liberman Mintz, the senior Judaica consultant of the Sotheby's auction house, to come to the Cincinnati campus to review the "top value items in the collection." Soon thereafter, Dr. Yoram Bitton—HUC-JIR's National Director of Libraries—resigned his position.

"Dr. Bitton resigned because he refused to participate in 'selling the treasures of the Jewish people to the highest bidder,'" writes Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein, D.D., rabbi of Temple Israel in Memphis, Tennessee in [a pointed essay](#) on Substack. "Bitton also said that to 'remove any of the treasures would be like removing a limb.'"



Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein, D.D. has served as the rabbi of Temple Israel in Memphis, Tennessee for three decades— sustaining the Temple's position as the largest synagogue in Tennessee and the Deep South.

[In public statements](#), HUC-JIR president Dr. Andrew Rehfeld has said that HUC-JIR was not pursuing the sale of rare books from the Klau Library. Rabbi Greenstein, who was ordained in Cincinnati at HUC-JIR in 1991, wrote his essay to explain why he believes these statements are not true; and why they erode trust in the college.

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HUC-JIR was seeking to ascertain the worth of their “top-value” rare books, how they should be sold, and how to “craft the most appropriate messaging.”

Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein

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This rare book in the collections of the Klau Library is a manuscript of Rashi's commentary on the Bible. Rashi—a rabbi—was one of the most influential Jewish commentators in history. He was born in northern France in 1040.



Several of the Klau Library's rare books

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