

HA-KOL

The Newsletter of the Judaic Studies Program
at SUNY-Binghamton

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No. 1

WE HAVE MOVED

JUST has a new headquarters, only a short walk from our old headquarters, but a long elevator ride. We have relocated our program's office, our director's office, and the offices of two other faculty members from the remote heights of the Library Tower to the more easily reachable third floor of the Fine Arts Building (Rooms 347-349, directly above the Rosefsky Studio Art Gallery). The advantages of this move are already apparent. From our new suite of spacious, well-lit offices it is proving easier to coordinate our manifold operations. Some of us, at least, spend considerably less time standing in the lobby of the Library Tower waiting for the occasional elevator to appear. The announcements we post seem to remain on the walls longer. And we and our plants get a great deal more sunlight.

AND WE'RE STILL MOVING

New offices are nice, but what we really want is a new status, departmental status. Last year, as Ha-Kol readers are well aware, we made rapid progress toward attaining this goal. Our proposal made it as far as the Harpur College Council. By the time this issue of Ha-Kol goes to press it will once again be before the Council, where we hope and expect it will receive the favorable consideration it deserves.

AND WE'RE ALL HERE

Nobody's on sabbatical, for the fall term at least, nobody's overseas, nobody's hiding at home. We have a visitor, too, for the entire year, Professor Michael Heltzer of Haifa University, who will be teaching courses in one of his areas of expertise, Biblical Studies. Turn the page if you want to know what he and the rest of us will be teaching.

FALL 1989 COORDINATED CURRICULUM

CORE COURSES

JUST 242/HIST 242	2nd Temple	Arkush
JUST 244/HIST 244	Modern Jewish History	Arkush

TOPICS COURSES

JUST 240/HIST 240	Judaism: A Religious History	Stillman, N.
JUST 261/HIST 261	American Jewish History	Sussman
JUST 263/CLASSICS 211 ENGLISH 223	The Bible: Genesis to Malachi	Levin
JUST 381B	Jewish People in Biblical Times	Heltzer
JUST 384/HEBREW 284	Genres of Jewish Religious Creativity	Morell
JUST 395	Internship	Staff
JUST 397	Independent Study	Staff
JUST 499	Senior Thesis	Staff

LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE COURSES

YIDDISH 101	Elementary Yiddish I	Taub
YIDDISH 397	Independent Study	Staff
HEBREW 101	Elementary Hebrew I	Taub, Shoer
HEBREW 203	Intermediate Hebrew	Stillman, Y.
HEBREW 262T	Israeli Drama	Taub
HEBREW 284/JUST 384	Genres of Jewish Religious Literary Creativity	Morell
HEBREW 321	Topics in Biblical Literature	Morell
HEBREW 331	Hebrew Through Songs	Stillman, Y.
HEBREW 380	Advanced Readings in Hebrew	Morell
HEBREW 397	Independent Study	Staff

RECENT TSORES

We are still dealing with the repercussions of the vandalization, last November, of the Jewish Student Union offices. There is no need for us to rehash here the well-known story of Professor Sid Thomas. We should note, however that Professor Thomas has been dismissed from the university faculty. In an unrelated development, unrelated, that is, to the events of last fall but related to the personnel of our program, Professor

Khalil Semaan was similarly dismissed. Both cases are under appeal.

Most disturbingly, the former president of the Jewish Student Union, James Oppenheim, was arrested on September 14 and charged with painting antisemitic slogans on the walls of the JSU offices last November. Oppenheim is being charged with two misdemeanors, false reporting an incident and criminal mischief. He will be arraigned in Vestal Town Court on September 21.

Students and faculty have responded to this troubling news in a measured fashion. Everyone seems well aware that that a person is innocent until proven otherwise and that no one should prejudge the matter. We are, needless to say, hoping that justice will prevail.

THANKS AGAIN

We are happy to report on the enthusiastic response over the summer to our recent appeal for funds. Thanks to our friends Ira and Esther Cohen (a)*, Sheila Gottehrer (a), Andrew and Lisa Klein, Murray Rappaport, Bonnie Schwartz (a), Dr. Barry M. Shaw, and Pearl Sterling. Thanks to our associates Rosalie Becker, Jennie S. Eber, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Esserman, Lisa and Otto Furth, Robert and Judith Groman, Paula Kramer (a), Isabelle S. Levene, Dr. and Mrs. Fritz Loewenstein, Saul Rasnick, Brian and Susan Savitch, Rabbi and Mrs. Elihu Schagrin, Dr. Stephen S. Schneider, Richard and Naomi Shore, Bess Sinclair, Max Shulman, Joyce A. Stillman, and Jill and David Thierman.

Some of our friends and associates made their contributions in memory of Haya Kalfon, the recently deceased mother of Yedida Stillman.

Thanks, also, to Beth David Synagogue for its generous contribution to our program, and to David Becker and Finkle Rosenberg for the texts which they donated to Judaic Studies.

Let us remind you, once again, that we are more than happy to accept contributions not only during the summer but at absolutely any time during the year. Our needs remain endless.

* (a) denotes SUNY-B alumni

SPECIAL THANKS

We have received many grants over the years from various sources and for various reasons. It is hard to recall any grant that has given us as much satisfaction and filled us with as much of a sense of our responsibilities as the one recently presented to us by Mr. Martin Taub and Mr. Moshe Winer of Riverdale, New York. Most of us first had the opportunity to meet these two men when they came to Binghamton, this past spring, to participate in

our Yom HaShoah program. Both men are the children of Romanian Holocaust survivors. Both are deeply committed to the perpetuation of Jewish culture in general and, in particular, to the preservation of the Yiddish language, the language of their parents. As an expression of their commitment they have offered us an annual grant of three thousand dollars to support our program in Yiddish language and Holocaust studies. We deeply appreciate this vote of confidence in our Judaic Studies Program. We hope that Messrs. Taub and Winer will continue to visit us and that they will continue to find our work worthy of their support. We know that they will be as pleased by the following item as we are.

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Joseph C. Landis, Professor Emeritus of Yiddish at Queens College and currently the President of the American Association of Professors of Yiddish, told Michael Taub, and Michael Taub told us, and we are proud to tell you, that SUNY-Binghamton's Yiddish program has the **largest enrollment** of any such program in the country! This semester we have more than forty students enrolled in our Yiddish courses. An unprecedentedly high number (35) of students are now taking elementary Yiddish. We hope and expect to see many of them move on to more advanced courses in the years ahead.

FACULTY UPDATE

Our faculty members are, as usual, lecturing all over the place and publishing their spoken and unspoken thoughts in books and journals. They are so busy that it is often hard to get them to sit down and list their recent accomplishments. Nevertheless, Ha-Kol has succeeded in squeezing the following information out of them: **Allan Arkush** delivered a lecture on "Judaism, Zionism and Pluralism" at the annual conference of Canadian Professors for Peace in the Middle East in Toronto this past May. His article on Alexander Altmann's contribution to the study of Moses Mendelssohn appeared in the Leo Baeck Institute Year Book (1989). Elsewhere in this issue he reports on his trip to Jerusalem... **Shmuel Morell's** review essay on Elliot Dorff and Arthur Rossett's book A Living Tree: The Roots and Growth of Jewish Law appeared recently in Modern Judaism... **Norman and Yedida Stillman** have published their translation (from the Hebrew) and scholarly edition of Samuel Romanelli's Travail in an Arab Land (University of Alabama Press, 1989). This volume has already been chosen as an Alternative Selection of the Jewish Book Club. Yedida, we are pleased to note, was recently promoted to Professor of Near Eastern Studies at SUNY-B. She gave the plenary lecture, on

Sephardic women, at the meeting of the American Sephardi Federation in Seattle, Washington, last May. Both Yedida and Norman spoke at a seminar on Jerusalem, held at Cornell in July... **Lance Sussman** did not have another baby. Forced to keep himself otherwise occupied, he contributed three articles to the Encyclopedia of American Jewish History and Culture edited by Jack Fischel and Sanford Pinsker. He also continued his work as editor of the Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook of Reform Judaism in America, which will be a collection of two hundred essays on major figures in the history of Reform Judaism... **Michael Taub** spoke in May at SUNY-Cortland on Sholom Aleikhem's use of humor. He also spoke (in Yiddish) on "Successes and Failures in the Teaching of Yiddish" at the conference, held this summer in New York, of American Professors of Yiddish.

HA-KOL EDITOR VISITS HOLY LAND

(Ha-Kol editor Allan Arkush returned to Israel in August after a regrettably long absence. He has asked himself to share with our readers some of his memories of his week-long visit.)

The main reason I went to Israel this summer was to participate in the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies. Held every four years, the World Congress is the largest and most diverse gathering of its kind. This year over nine hundred scholars from all over the world read papers. Hundreds of others were in attendance. I myself delivered a paper on Moses Mendelssohn and attended as many of the other sessions as I could. I was particularly interested in the panels dealing with the history of the Jewish community in the Land of Israel from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. This is a field of study which has expanded greatly in recent years, mostly as a result of the work of young Israeli researchers. I had read much of the work produced by these scholars and wanted to see them in action.

I was not disappointed. I heard very interesting presentations on subjects ranging from "Jewish emigration from the Land of Israel in the period from 1882 to 1914" to "Rabbi Kook and the Issue of Jewish-Arab Relations in the Land of Israel, 1904-1935." I also heard a comprehensive survey of recent trends in American Jewish life, a number of excellent talks by French and American scholars on the impact of the French Revolution on the Jews, as well as many, many other presentations.

Whenever I could, I descended from the ivory tower of Mount Scopus to the city below. I looked up old friends, some of whom I hadn't seen in more than a decade. I tried to talk to taxi drivers, clerks, fellow passengers on city buses, SUNY students

spending the year abroad- anybody who could help me get a sense of the mood of the country (or, to be more precise, of the Jews of Israel, since the Arabs seemed much less accessible). What I found neither pleased nor surprised me. Regardless of their ideological orientations, people seem very weary and increasingly frustrated with the government and "the situation." There is a lot of talk of emigration, and even people who would never really contemplate leaving Israel muse wistfully about doing so.

My last evening in the country I spent visiting an old friend who now teaches Hebrew literature at the Hebrew University. After a couple of hours at his house we went to meet and have drinks with a group of his friends, people I didn't know. Among them was a correspondent for the Labor Party newspaper Davar, a man named Danny Rubinstein. "What are you doing in the country?" Rubinstein asked me, hours before I was to leave it. I told him. That led someone else to mention a friend of his, an Israeli, who had also participated in the Congress. This friend, he said, had spoken about the growth of the Moshav movement in the 1920s and 1930s. That made Rubinstein laugh. "That's something people talk about at an academic conference?" he exclaimed incredulously. "Did he talk about the increase in egg production? The improvements in book-keeping?"

The whole thing reminded Rubinstein of a conversation he had had years earlier, in the Knesset cafeteria, with Pinhas Sapir, who was then the Finance Minister. Sapir had been telling him about a young American who had come to him looking for a job. What were his qualifications? He had recently completed a doctoral dissertation, in the United States, on the subject of the use of Passover haggadahs in the different kibbutz movements. Just as Sapir was describing him, the young man in question walked into the cafeteria. "Here he is," Sapir cried out, "the doctor of kneidlach!"

I laughed as hard as anyone else. But I spent a good deal of time on the plane the following day trying to persuade myself that my hundreds of colleagues in Jewish Studies and I were, in the final analysis, something more than a host of doctors of kneidlach.

JOEL WEISS SPOTTED

In Jerusalem this summer Ha-kol caught up with Joel Weiss, a SUNY-B undergraduate spending his junior year at the Hebrew University. Weiss, who had only recently arrived in the country, was dividing his time between trips all over Israel and the study of the Hebrew language (on an advanced level). He described to us, among other things, the unusual experience of speaking Hebrew not with Israelis, but with a group of French, German and Chinese fellow students who had no other common language. While in Israel Weiss will be doing research relating to his projected senior thesis dealing with the impact of the

Holocaust on Israeli politics in the period prior to the Eichmann trial. We wish him the best, and we will interview him as well as the other SUNY-B students currently studying in Israel when they return to us next fall.

JUST LUNCH

JUST LUNCH remains a misnomer. What we provide is not lunch (though we do supply coffee and donuts) but something to do while you eat the lunch you have to bring with you. Here is our schedule for the coming semester.

October 4: Michael Heltzer	"Russia's Baltic Jewry in the Age of Glasnost"
November 15: Aryeh Ullman	"The Kibbutz Economy"
December 6: Michael Taub	"On Sholom Aleikhem: A Comparative Translation Study"

JUST LUNCH is highly informal and open to the public. Exactly where it will be held this semester is still not clear. Look for notices on campus or call the Judaic Studies office for further information.

OTHER GOINGS ON

"Beyond the Catskills," the much acclaimed exhibit on local Jewish history, is back- not to SUNY this time, but to the Binghamton Jewish Community Center, where it will be open to the public until October 26... The second annual meeting of a SUNY-wide Judaic Studies Faculty Group took place in September at SUNY Cortland, with four SUNY-B faculty in attendance. The meeting was productive and informative.. Shelly Tennenbaum of Clark University in Worcester, Mass., a sociologist of American Jewry, will be speaking on campus in October...

The holidays are just around the corner, so we wish you all
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