

HA-KOL

The Newsletter of the Judaic Studies Program
at SUNY-Binghamton

Yedida Stillman,
JUST Director

Allan Arkush
Ha-Kol Editor

Fall 1990

No. 1

THE NEW SEMESTER IS UNDER WAY

Readers dismayed by the banality of our opening headline should instead rejoice along with us that, for a change, we have nothing more dramatic to report. It's not that nothing's happening around here; it's just that nothing special has occurred yet. No incidents, no controversies- just business as usual. Perhaps this is merely the calm before the storm. But even if it is, why can't we just relax and enjoy it?

We are no closer to attaining departmental status than we were when our last issue appeared, but also- we hope- no further from it. What's going to happen next? We don't know, but when we find out, we'll tell you.

There have been some changes around here. Our visiting faculty member from Israel, Professor Michael Heltzer, has returned to the University of Haifa after what we hope was a fruitful year for him and what we know was a valuable experience for all of us. Whether he was disclosing to us some recent discovery concerning the fate of Zerubavel or shedding light on developments in the Soviet Union, Professor Heltzer was a constantly enlightening presence. His voice will echo in our halls for a long time to come.

After assuming his new responsibilities as Rabbi of Temple Concord in Binghamton, Professor Lance Sussman has had to reduce his level of involvement in campus activities. However, he will still be an adjunct member of the faculty of the History Department and a member of the Judaic Studies program, teaching one course a semester. We cannot help but regret that Professor Sussman has taken a step out of our door, but that still leaves plenty of Sussman behind.

Ynon Merhavy, our veteran Hebrew instructor, has completed his studies in the School of Management and departed for the business world. We wish him the best of luck. And we are happy to welcome his replacement, Sima Kenett, a graduate of Bar Ilan University in Israel and now a graduate student in SUNY-B's Department of English.

Lots of students are gone forever, but new ones have come to take their places. There are new interns and work-study students

helping out in the office, where the rest of us can still be found. We are also happy to welcome to the office Mrs. Joyce Sambursky, who is working as conference coordinator for the Sephardic Jewry conference scheduled to be held this spring.

FALL 1990 COORDINATED CURRICULUM

CORE COURSES

JUST 242/ HIST 242	2nd Temple Period	Arkush
JUST 242/ HIST 243	Medieval Jewish History	Stillman, N.
JUSTWE 244/HISTWE 244	Modern Jewish History	Arkush

TOPICS COURSES

JUST 245/ HIST 245	The Holocaust	Hertz
JUST-W 280C/ COLI-W 211B/ THEA-W 289D	Jews on Stage: From Shylock to Shayna Maidel	Taub
JUST 281/ HEBR 281/ WOMN 281A	Women in Jewish Law	Morell
JUST 395	Internship	Staff
JUST 397	Independent Study	Staff
JUSTWE 490G/ HISTWE 490G	Freud and Herzl's Vienna	Hertz
JUST 491	Practicum in Teaching	Staff
JUST 499	Senior Thesis	Staff

LANGUAGE COURSES

YIDD 101	Elementary Yiddish I	Taub
YIDD 391	Practicum in Teaching	Taub
YIDD 397	Independent Study	Taub
HEBR 101/HEBR 707	Elementary Hebrew I	Staff
HEBR 203/HEBR 703	Intermediate Hebrew	Stillman, Y.
HEBR 203A	Intermediate Advanced Hebrew	Morell
HEBR-W 283/ COLI-W 231N	Modern Israeli Fiction Translation: A.B. Yeho- shua & Amos Oz	Taub

HEBR 301

Hebrew Conversation and
Composition

Morell

HEBR 397

Independent Study

Staff

(For those who are not in the know, the following explanations may be of some assistance: Many of our courses are cross-listed with other departments. COLI, for instance, designates comparative literature; WOMN women's studies. W and WE attached to these or other less esoteric abbreviations refer to courses with special writing requirements.)

JUST LECTURES

We've already had our first of the semester. On Tuesday, September 25 more than fifty students, members of the faculty and guests from the local community heard a lecture by Dr. Carl E. Roemer, Protestant Chaplain and Director of Pastoral Care at the Binghamton Psychiatric Center. Dr. Roemer, who recently completed his Th.D. at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, spoke on "Guerillas, Neviim, and Messiahs: The Boiling Pot of First Century Palestinian Judaism as Context for Understanding Jesus and the Movement he Initiated." In his talk Dr. Roemer sketched the difficult political, economic and social conditions in first century Palestine and the way in which various Jewish groups reacted to them. He concluded by explaining some of the similarities and differences between the movement led by Jesus and other contemporary Jewish responses to Roman oppression.

Our next speaker will be Professor Alexander Fischler, who teaches French and comparative literature here at SUNY-B. Professor Fischler will be speaking on his own experience of "Growing up as a Jewish Child in the Holocaust." His lecture will be on Monday, October 8, at 7:30 p.m., in Fine Arts 258. On November 28 we will once again make use of local talent: Professor John Wilcox of the Department of Philosophy will lecture on the book of Job, on which he himself has recently published a book. Time and place to be announced.

We have other speakers lined up for the spring, but it's too soon to tell you about them. If we have any other speakers this fall- and we might- we'll send out special notices.

THE ISRAEL CONNECTION

On Sunday, September 16 the Israel Action Committee of the Jewish Student Union and the Reform group on campus jointly sponsored a panel discussion on the various programs in Israel in which SUNY students have participated in recent years. A dozen students took part in the panel. The group included students who had spent semesters at the Hebrew University as well as at the Universities of Haifa and Tel Aviv. There were some students who had spent time at religious institutions or on various kibbutzim and others who had been in the country for briefer periods in the framework of the "Volunteers for Israel" program. And there was an audience of another twenty-five students and two JUST professors (including our reporter).

Each and every student on the panel spoke enthusiastically about his or her experiences. Those who had been at the major universities were, it seemed, most appreciative of the opportunities they had had to study Middle Eastern history and politics on the spot in classes taught by world-class experts. The men and women who had been at yeshivahs or at the Hebrew Union College's Israeli branch were glad to have had the opportunity to approach religious texts in ways that they are not studied here at SUNY. Those who had participated in non-academic programs spoke of such experiences as picking avocados on a kibbutz and cleaning oil barrels on an army base as being either the best thing they had ever done, or at least as being more fun than one might think.

They argued- amicably- about whether it was better to be in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, almost as if they were real Israelis themselves. Some of them, in fact, practically are, or at least have to worry about dealing with an Israeli government that might think they are, since they are of Israeli origin (and perhaps eligible for the draft- immediately). One student, who was apparently not in such a position, expressed his sense of attachment to the country in the following manner: "Where else can you go and protest against a government that isn't even yours?"

Needless to say, it was gratifying to see how highly the students valued their experiences in Israel. We were also pleased, though, to see that none of them lamented being forced to return to SUNY-B.

FACULTY UPDATE

It's been a long time since we've run a faculty update. The list of our accomplishments has consequently grown to almost unprintable length. In order to save space and also to avoid the

inflation of our collective ego, we have restricted ourselves to mentioning only some of what we've been doing.

Allan Arkush's essay "Judaism, Zionism and Pluralism: A Theoretical and Practical Inquiry" appeared in the Fall 1990 issue of Middle East Focus. His article on "Judaism as Egoism: From Spinoza to Feuerbach to Marx" will appear in the next issue of Modern Judaism... Samuel Morrel's article "The Samson Nazirite Vow in the Sixteenth Century" appeared in the most recent issue of the AJS Review (the Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies). He recently completed the manuscript of a book to be entitled Precedent and Judicial Discretion in Jewish Law: The Case of Joseph ibn Lev... In April the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago invited Norman Stillman to give the Momigliano Seminar. He presented a series of five lectures on "Jews Among Muslims." During the summer Professor Stillman was invited to Madrid, Spain, to the 17th International Congress of Historical Sciences. He spoke there on "Frenchmen, Jews or Arabs? The Jews of the Arab World Between European Colonialism, Zionism and Arab Nationalism." Yedida Stillman spoke at SUNY-Cortland in May on "Muslim and Jewish Women in the Middle East." She gave a lecture in Chicago (in September) to the American Sephardic Federation's annual meeting on "The Moroccan Jewish Experience: Past, Present and Future." Norman and Yedida together gave four seminars on Morocco to the Department of Anthropology and Middle East Center at the University of Utah (in May)... Lance Sussman's review of Marc Lee Raphael's biography of Abba Hillel Silver will appear in the next issue of the AJS Review. He is almost finished with his editing of a Biographical Dictionary of American Reform Judaism, which should be published next year... Michael Taub's translation of Israeli playwright H. Mittelpunkt's "Driver-Painter" served as the basis of an off-Broadway production this summer. It was performed in July at the New Raft Theatre Company as part of an International Theater Project. Professor Taub chaired a session on modern Israeli literature at the June conference of the National Association of Professors of Hebrew at Yeshiva University.

ALUMNI UPDATE

Every once in a while we send out the message that we want to hear from our alumni, especially those who are currently working in fields related to Judaic Studies. Unfortunately, we don't get as many responses as we would like. But if our graduates themselves don't always have the time to write to us, their parents sometimes do. Recently, for instance, we heard from Pearl and Gerald Rhode, formerly of the Binghamton area and currently of Charlotte, North Carolina. We learned from them that their son Ira, a Judaic Studies major who graduated from SUNY-B in 1986, has been appointed to the post of Hazzan at

Congregation Shearit Israel (located at 70th and Central Park West in New York City). This synagogue, as many of our readers are no doubt aware, is the oldest functioning synagogue in the United States. We take pride in Ira's accomplishments and wish him the best of luck.

Let this serve as an example to all parents, wives, friends, etc. of SUNY-B graduates. If your child, spouse, friend, etc. is neglecting to keep Ha-kol abreast of his or her latest achievements, seize the initiative and write to us yourselves. As you can see, we're only too glad to come by such information and to share in the nachas.

MORE DONATIONS

Speaking of nachas, we are happy to report that Martin Taub and Moshe Winer have renewed for the fall of 1990 the Taub/Winer Grant for Yiddish and Holocaust Studies. We are extremely grateful both for the additional funds and for their vote of confidence in our work.

We also extend our thanks for their generous contributions to Mr. Merle Englander, Ms. Lorraine Ginsburg, Mr. and Mrs. Carl B. Kaiserman, Mr. and Mrs. Harold N. Krohnengold, Ms. Nancy H. Moskowitz, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Savitch, Mr. Jay I. Safier, Rabbi and Mrs. Elihu Schagrin and Ms. Joyce A. Stillman. Thanks, too, to our anonymous donors.

Thanks to Mr. Jack Berger, Mr. and Mrs. Allen Brown, Dr. and Mrs. Maynard C. Goldberg, Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Groman, Mr. Alan Hershey, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Kalvar, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry P. Mahn for their generous donations specifically earmarked for support of our Yiddish program. And, last but far from least, thanks to Professor and Mrs. Philip Piaker for their generous donation designated for the purchase of films on Jewish subjects.

NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

(Jeanne Eichelberger, our Judaica librarian, has formulated a riddle for us, to which she has supplied her own solution.)

Question: When is an art book not an art book?

Answer: When it's a history book or a philosophy book or ...

... in the case of Judaic Studies, any number of other things. It doesn't take long to recognize the wide-ranging, truly interdisciplinary nature of this field. "Judaic Studies" can

encompass virtually all areas of the humanities and social sciences- which is one of its most appealing aspects from the standpoint of those studying it, but also one of its most awkward ones for those trying to organize and "control" its scholarly literature. The other day, for example, the Library received an unusually beautiful book, A Temple Treasury, containing descriptions and photographs of the artifacts in the Judaica Collection of the Congregation Emanu-el of New York City. To all appearances, this book is an exceptionally fine "catalogue raisonne", with photographs so clear as to appear three-dimensional, standard descriptions of dimensions, materials, etc. such as are found in art exhibition catalogues, and very nice short scholarly commentaries accompanying the descriptions. Surely this book will find a good home in the Fine Arts Library, no? No. As a matter of fact, its call number (for anyone who is interested in enjoying it) is BM657.A1 T47 1989, which is in the Philosophy-Religion section of the main library. The discovery that such a beautiful art book should be "officially" considered an intellectual treatise prompted a bit of snooping under subject headings about liturgical and ceremonial artifacts. Sure enough, many- if not most- of such books are considered either philosophical or historical, with a little spillage into Folklore-Anthropology. This is not, incidentally, the result of local vagaries of our library (we do have our vagaries, but this is not one of them). This particular classification comes to us courtesy of none other than the hallowed authority of the Library of Congress, whose practices we are expected to follow without too many questions. The Library of Congress considers this a philosophy book, and who are we to argue? But since this quirk came as something of a surprise to one who has worked in the Fine Arts Library for a year and been Judaic Studies Bibliographer for four years, perhaps the rest of the world would enjoy a little edification on the matter. For future reference, the Fine Arts Library does have some books on Jewish religious art- see especially the call number ranges N5020 and NK1672. However, don't end your search there; remember to check call numbers in the BM657 range, plus any areas of history you happen to be interested in (DS135, for example, includes some books on synagogues of Eastern Europe). Truly, life is full of surprises, some... well, less rational than others...

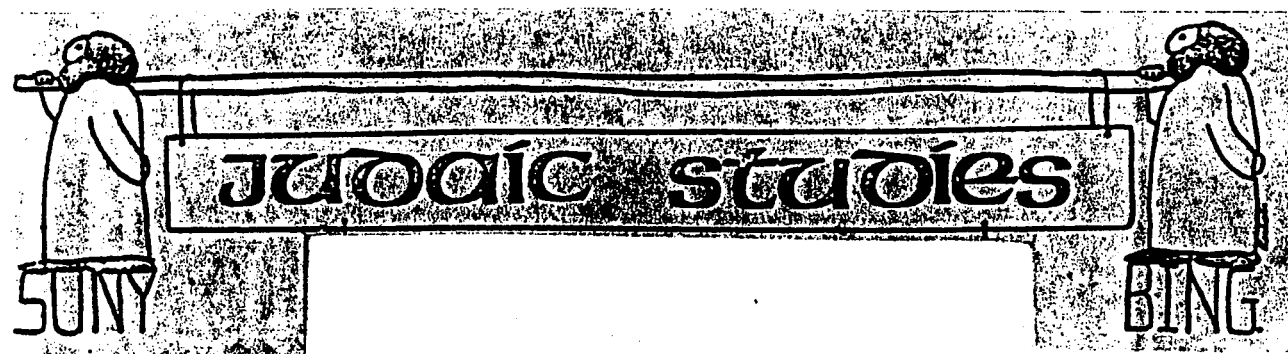
Coming in our next issue:

A report from Israel from JUST major Mark Kaiserman

An interview with Norman Stillman on the Arab world's reaction to the events in the Persian Gulf

And much more, but until then,

Happy New Year!



Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 61
Binghamton, N.Y.