

# Ha-Kol

The Newsletter of the Judaic Studies Department  
of SUNY Binghamton

Yedida Stillman  
Department Chairman

Samuel Morell  
*Ha-Kol* Editor

Fall 1991, No. 1

Greetings from the Department of Judaic Studies! It is with particular satisfaction that Ha-Kol goes to press for the first time under the departmental banner. We are looking forward to increasing activity and growth in our new garb. And, in fact, in spite of the financial squeeze which all of us at SUNY are facing, we're off to an impressive start. Of special interest is the following accomplishment, which is described by former Ha-Kol editor, Allan Arkush. Allan is away this year, but he couldn't be kept from breaking this exciting story, in his own inimitable way.

## **Yedida Stillman Garners Great Grant**

We are truly thrilled to announce that the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has invited Yedida Stillman to participate in its newly established Bradley Research Fellowship Program. "The purpose of this program," in the words of Hillel Fradkin, the foundation's Vice President for Program, "is to support the work of selected professors by providing funds for meritorious and promising graduate and post-graduate fellows." Under the terms of this new program, Yedida will receive up to \$245,000 over the next six years. This is a lot of money. Our

readers, who know well enough how happily we gloat over our acquisition of grants of a thousand or two, will understand how difficult it is for us to find words to describe our satisfaction over the receipt of a grant of this magnitude.

Dr. Fradkin has emphasized that the program is intended to provide "maximum flexibility" in the use of the available funds. The grant money will be of great use to Yedida, since it will provide her with invaluable assistance in the preparation of her projected Dictionary of Arab Dress from Classical Islamic to Modern Times. This exhaustive dictionary will be, in Yedida's words, "the first English language reference work on the relationship of dress to the culture, politics, and religion of the Islamic Arab world." In addition to facilitating Professor Stillman's research, the new program will also provide funds which will enrich our Department's course offerings. You'll be hearing more about this in the future.

Let me hasten to add that Allan himself is the recipient this year of a Bradley Foundation award, and he is hard at work on his book on Moses Mendelssohn. I'm sure we will shortly hear more of his accomplishments.

Yedida's grant is a good introduction to a

### Faculty Update

Samuel Morell has had a book published by Scholars Press, *Precedent and Judicial Discretion: The Case of Joseph ibn Lev. Norman's Stillman's* volume, *The Jews in Arab Lands in Modern Times*, was reviewed this summer in the Times Literary Supplement of London. Norman was also the keynote speaker this summer at a conference on the history and culture of Sephardic Jewry in Tel Aviv. The conference was a bit less tense than the previous one which he and Yedida attended in Israel last January. That one ended to coincide with the UN deadline for Iraq and the beginning of hostilities. This year and next will be the occasion for many activities concerning Sephardic Jewry, because of the five hundredth anniversary of the Spanish Expulsion of 1492. Yedida is the co-curator for an exhibit entitled "Golden Threads: A Tapestry of Sephardic Experience," which will open in the spring at the Smithsonian Institute, and later travel around the world.

Though increased attention is being focused on the Sephardim these days with the approach of 1992, the interests of our faculty extend to other Jewries as well. Michael Taub is continuing his research on the Yiddish and Hebrew theater and in other areas of Yiddish literature. He has published a number of articles in this area, and will shortly present the results of his work at the conferences of the Modern Language Association and the Association for Jewish Stud-

ies. He is also nearing completion of a book of modern Israeli plays in translation.

### Student Committee Formed

On September 1, 1991, students from the Judaic Studies Department met to form a Judaic Studies Student Committee. The students chosen to serve as members were Mark Kaiserman, chair, Shira Burstein, Marjorie Feld, Yael Gorodischer, Randi Halperin and Miriam Simon. The committee will assist and advise the Judaic Studies faculty as to the needs and wishes of the student body. They will also act as a liaison between the Department and the students, help with departmental decision making, programming and campus awareness of the new department, and generally assist in the Department's extra-curricular activities. It is noteworthy that the Department sought out student input from the outset, and we expect a better program in Judaic Studies to be the outcome.

Mark Kaiserman

### Under the SCUDs

Many of our students have spent time in Israel, but those who were there last year, during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and its aftermath, had a more exciting year than most. Following are two reports of their experiences in Israel by those who were in the thick of it.

---

Miriam Simon

I spent this past year studying at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I was very excited to go and a little bit nervous because I didn't know what to expect. Three days after we landed in Israel and started studying at the Ulpan, Iraq invaded Kuwait. I couldn't understand why everyone was going so crazy. After all, weren't Iraq and Kuwait a good distance from Israel? And wasn't Israel totally uninvolved with the issue? But the invasion set the tone for the next few months: the phone calls from home, and the usual topic of conversation.

My attitude was not to worry about anything until it actually happened, so I dove into other experiences. The university took us on hikes and on different tours. During the month between the end of the Ulpan and the beginning of the semester, some friends and I put on backpacks and set out to tour the Galilee for ourselves.

One of the classes that I took during the first semester was The Archeology of Jerusalem. As a result of that class, I am now the perfect tour guide to the Old City! It also added to the attraction I felt toward the Old City. We would sit there and read or write letters, soaking in the atmosphere and trying to figure out why we loved it so much. We met soldiers who patrol in that area and I got very good at asking questions.

The Gulf War took place during the break between semesters. Perfect timing! We really didn't miss any school at all. But we did miss having people around us. The foreigners started leaving in the beginning of January, and the Israelis disappeared

after the United States invaded Iraq. From our program there were less than ten people left on campus. There was plenty of room in the bomb shelters. After two weeks of air raid sirens and gas masks, we were all sent off to a kibbutz. I was in the Negev, picking peppers, clipping onions and sorting dates. After three weeks we went back to the university and had a week before school started. My friend and I decided to go to Tel Aviv for Purim. We were told that we were crazy, that Iraq was bound to do something drastic. On the bus there we found out the war was over, and we went crazy with all the Tel Avivians.

That experience was valuable for me in understanding one aspect of what it is like to be an Israeli. I noticed that my Israeli friends were treating me differently, like I was one of them. I had experienced and I understood.

When the spring semester started, I had an internship called "Social Aspects of the Israel Defense Forces." A main part of the internship was interviewing people about their army experiences, especially the women. I carried my notebook everywhere I went, and sometimes, ten minutes after meeting someone, I would ask them if I could interview them. My Hebrew got better and I learned a lot of army terms. I also gained a better understanding of what it is like to be in the army. When I interviewed guys I got a glimpse of the soldiers' side of the story of the territories.

I took many courses on Israeli sociology. For one of them I wrote a paper called "Moroccan Attitudes Towards the Aliyah of 1990." When the Moroccans arrived in Israel, they

were put into camps called *ma'abarot*, and life was very tough for them. They reacted in different ways, including the riots of Wadi Salib in 1959, and the Black Panthers in the early seventies. Children of Moroccan immigrants started the Black Panther movement, in part to protest the preferential treatment that the new Russian immigrants were receiving, in contrast to the treatment received earlier by their Moroccan parents. I decided to interview children of Moroccan immigrants, to see how they felt about the recent Russian aliyah and the treatment the immigrants were receiving. I found that the people I interviewed were glad that the Russians were coming. If they were upset over the treatment it was for personal reasons, not ethical ones as in the past.

This past year was the best year of my life, and I had many experiences that will affect me for many years, if not for the rest of my life.

Deborah Rosenthal

The year after I graduated from college, I visited the Holy Land for the first time as a member of Israel's volunteer corps, Sherut La'am. In Israel I learned about the richness of Jewish culture and religion, and I learned how it feels to live among people who are confident and proud to be Jews. I never went on a dig, and I missed many big tourist sites, but through my work, and through the friends I made, I saw aspects of Israel that most visitors never see.

I began my year in Israel on a sunny northern kibbutz, where I learned my first Hebrew sentences,

washed countless crates of vegetables and first heard of Kuwait. After an exhausting and stressful three months, I was surprised to find myself still alive and still in Israel. Saddam Hussein was threatening Israel daily, gas masks had been handed out in major cities and American troops were still being sent to the deserts of Saudi Arabia.

At the end of the ulpan, Sherut La'am drove each of us to the development town of our choice. Development towns were erected when Israel was established, in order to house the masses of immigrants who were spilling into the country. These immigrants included survivors of the Holocaust, refugees from Eastern Europe, and almost all the Jews from the Islamic lands, who were threatened with annihilation when the State of Israel was established. These towns began as tent towns. They were poorly planned and were remote from the centers of employment. The work that was available was mostly unskilled labor. When Israel became more developed these towns lagged behind. Today there is more unemployment, more social problems, a lower economic level and a lower level of education in most development towns than there is in the rest of the country.

I moved with three other volunteers to Qiryat Shmona, a small town surrounded by beautiful land, three miles from Lebanon. Qiryat Shmona was settled mostly by Jewish immigrants from Morocco, but by the time we arrived over 900 Russian Jews had moved in. Before the war with Lebanon in 1982, this town was the target of thousands of PLO-fired Katusha rockets. Children frequently

had to sleep in community bomb shelters, classes were evacuated regularly, and many people left the region. Those who stayed were apparently a mix of people who had no other options and people who would be damned if they'd let a few bombs intimidate them in their own country. Although few people actually were killed by the bombs, life had an hysterical edge to it.

Everyone in our neighborhood knew where "The Americans" lived because the apartment had been used by Sherut La'am for years. We had frequent visitors and frequent invitations for Shabbat dinner, and we were welcomed by many people to drop by anytime. One family in our building constantly insisted I come in every time I passed the door to their apartment on the way to my own. ("Come in, drink something -- don't be shy!" "Do you know what cous-cous is? Come in, I'll teach you some Hebrew!") Russians stopped me in the street and asked me for help with their Hebrew homework, and all the Moroccans I met -- at work, in stores, on the way home -- wanted to set me up with their sons. ("He's a soldier; he's handsome, smart, responsible -- a good boy!") People in this border town were understandably blasé about the prospect of missile attacks from Iraq. I felt that some could have caught a SCUD in their teeth, gnashed it to pieces and spit it out. Some were worried about relatives living in the center of the country, but most seemed resigned to the danger.

I had a hard time finding jobs which suited my skills, or lack thereof, and my level of Hebrew. I finally found work at a stress research

center where I edited papers which had been translated from Hebrew into barely decipherable English. The work was fascinating. I read about how the center had struggled to improve the community's health before and after the war with Lebanon. I also read about terrorist attacks, and how their aftermath had been handled by Israeli psychologists. Once a week I volunteered at a crafts house for blind adults. I helped them with their projects and listened to stories of their lives in Morocco, and of their early days in Israel. It was so frustrating to understand only half of what they said! I also served food at a house for soldiers who were positioned in Lebanon. I'm sorry now that I didn't work with kids as well, but my Hebrew was poor and Israeli kids are intimidating! My apartment mate taught English in a religious school and spent time with abused and neglected kids, helping them with schoolwork and giving them the attention they really needed.

My experience didn't end in Qiryat Shmona. I moved back to the kibbutz for a while and eventually, after the war ended, I started volunteering at a wonderful community center in Haifa, working on environmental issues and playing with Ethiopian kids. There I stayed until the end of August, when I rushed home to Binghamton to sign up for classes at SUNY and study for the horrible GRE's.

Spending a year in Israel changed a lot of my views, and strengthened my belief in my culture and people. I'm writing this article mostly because I'd like to encourage others to spend time in Israel. I think that volunteering is not only a great way

to support Israel, but it is one of the best ways to meet and learn about the people who live there.

**For your information:** Sherut La'am is a six-month volunteer program with an optional three-month ulpan. Volunteers, mostly college graduates from various countries, are placed in development towns and sometimes in cities. Apartments are paid for by the Israeli government, and the program provides a stipend of 300 NS each month. The program also provides volunteers with two fantastic free tours of Israel, as well as several seminars. There is an initial fee for entry; the exact amount changes every year. I will be happy to speak to anyone who has questions about this or other programs in Israel. I can be contacted through the Judaic Studies Department.

### Poetry and the Visual Arts

Milton Kessler, whose acclaim as a poet is well known throughout the university and beyond, has an interest in the visual arts as well. These have combined with his Jewish interests and have resulted in his offering to teach a course next term entitled, "Jewish Experience in 20th Century Visual Art". It is being cross-listed with the Judaic Studies Department and with the Art and Art History Department.

Though in the compartmentalized world of academe one may think of the visual arts as a discipline distinct from literature, Milt sees it as an extension of his poetry. "As a poet I'm very visually oriented," he says. "I've always felt close to artists."

The course has its genesis in an exhibit at the Jewish Museum on Jewish artists in New York between 1900 and 1945. Milt saw the catalogue to the exhibit, and decided that the book, with its historical information, together with the slides that would accompany it, would make a fine text for a course. He admits to no special expertise in the area. He merely wants to share his experiences with his students, to allow them to see, together with him, what the period was like and how it developed. That is Milt's idea of teaching, the pleasure of sharing his interests with his students.

Milt sees the whole concept of his teaching as related to the poetic imagination. "I imagine what kind of information can be communicated. I imagine where there is information in fields not being taught." He enjoys teaching newly designed courses, in fact rarely teaches the same course twice.

Milt's love of teaching is especially evident in the fact that he is teaching this course gratis. It is not the first time he has done such a thing, in fact it will be the third. We're sure his students will enjoy the experience as much as he evidently will.

### Upcoming Events

Quite a few events of interest are planned for this semester.

We take special pride in the fact that one of our Judaic Studies majors, Marjorie Feld, is representing us at Parents Weekend on October 12. Her topic is "Jewish Life on Campus," and she'll be presenting an overview of all aspects of Jewish life

here at SUNY B. Marjorie is a President's Scholar, and a junior. She'll be speaking in Lecture Hall 9 at 2:30 p.m.

Professor Paula Sanders, of Rice University, will be speaking on October 14. Her topic is, "Man or Woman? Determining the Gender of a Hermaphrodite in Medieval Islamic Law." Professor Sanders was the last assistant of the late eminent Professor S. D. Goitein, the mentor of our own Norman and Yedida Stillman.

Dr. Fred Rosner, a medical doctor who has written and lectured widely on matters of Jewish medical ethics, will speak on new developments in that field on October 30.

Professor Ruth Knafo Setton, who teaches Jewish American literature and creative writing at Lafayette College, will be reading a chapter, entitled "Street of the Whores," from her novel, *Suleika*, on December 9.

The Department sponsors a series of lunchtime talks by local talent which is called, quite appropriately, "JuSt Lunch." These are all held on Wednesdays at 12:00 in FA121 (the "Green Room"). This semester we are pleased to have the opportunity to listen to three speakers who are visiting SUNY. The series will feature:

Lidia Vianu, a Fulbright Fellow from the University of Bucharest, where she is a member of the English Department. She is here with TRIP (the Translation program) this year. Her topic is, "Art Under the Gun: The Case of Romanian-Jewish Writers." October 16.

Ervie Peña, a Visiting Professor also with TRIP. Professor Peña comes to us from California State Univer-

sity at Fullerton, where he is Professor of Spanish Language and Literature. He will be speaking on, "Miguel de Barrios Levy, or, Sephardi Art in Exile." October 30.

Avital Simchoni, a Visiting Professor of Philosophy from Haifa University. She will speak on, "A Judaism or Judaisms." November 3.

Professors Vianu and Simchoni will both be teaching courses for Judaic Studies in the Spring. See the Co-ordinated Curriculum for Judaic Studies courses appended below.

### Special Thanks to Our Donors

Professor and Mrs. Philip M. Piaker  
Dr. Jose and Joyce Sambursky  
Rabbi and Mrs. Elihu Schagrin  
Professor Yedida K. Stillman  
Dr. and Mrs. Steven Tenenbaum  
Mr. and Mrs. Julius Weiss  
Mr. and Mrs. Andy and Rachelle Zalman-Miller

COORDINATED CURRICULUM  
JUDAIC STUDIES DEPARTMENT  
SPRING 1992

CORE COURSES

JUST 241/HIST 241

BIBLICAL HISTORY

RENSBURG

TOPICS COURSES

JUST 245/HIST 245

THE HOLOCAUST

KATZ

JUST 261/HIST 261

AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

SUSSMAN

JUST 281A

JEWISH ASSIMILATION DILEMMA

VIANU \*\*

JUST 281H/HEBR 281H

MODERN HEBREW POETRY

OFEK, A \*\*

JUST 281J/ARTH 281J

JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN 20 C.

VISUAL ART

KESSLER \*\*

JUST 281M

ISRAEL & MODERN MIDDLE EAST

PODEH

JUST 281P/PHIL 260E

MODERN JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

SIMHONY \*

JUST 283/CLAS 211B/

ENG 224

BIBLE, PART II

LEVIN

JUST 284/HEBR 281G

GOLDEN AGE OF HEBREW LIT

MORELL

JUST 391

PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING

STAFF

JUST 395

INTERNSHIP

STAFF

JUST 397

INDEPENDENT STUDY

STAFF

JUST 491

PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING

STAFF

JUST 497

INDEPENDENT STUDY

STAFF

JUST 499

SENIOR THESIS

STAFF

LANGUAGE COURSES

YIDD 102

ELEMENTARY YIDDISH II

TAUB

YIDD 391

PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING

TAUB

YIDD 397

INDEPENDENT STUDY

TAUB

HEBR 102

ELEMENTARY HEBREW II

TAUB

(2 SECTIONS)

STAFF

HEBREW 204

READINGS IN HEBREW LITERATURE

STILLMAN, Y

HEBREW 204A

READINGS IN HEB LIT/ADVANCED

TAUB

HEBR 281G/JUST 284

GOLDEN AGE OF HEBREW LITERATURE

MORELL

HEBR 281H/JUST 281H

MODERN HEBREW POETRY

OFEK, A \*\*

HEBR 301

HEBREW CONVERSATION & COMP

MORELL

HEBR 391

PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING

STAFF

HEBR 397

INDEPENDENT STUDY

STAFF

HEBR 597

INDEPENDENT STUDY

STAFF

HEBR 707

RESEARCH SKILLS

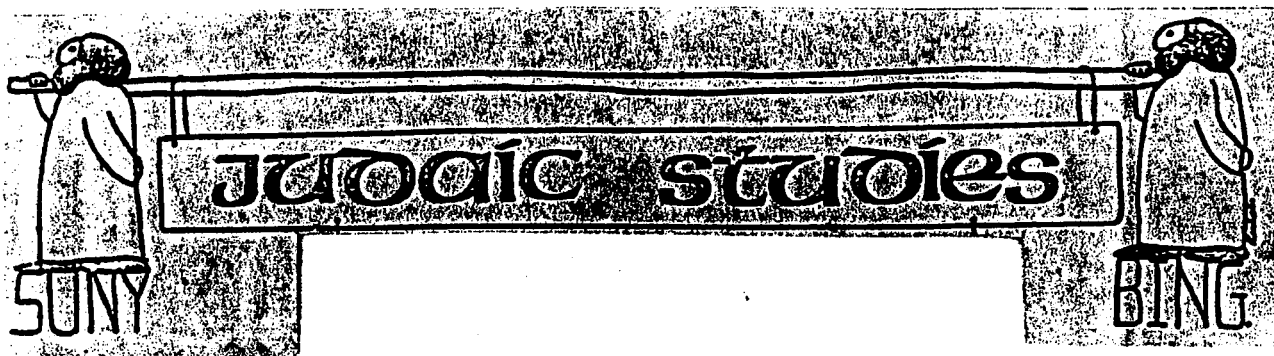
STAFF

\* NOTE: 2 CR. MINI COURSE OFFERED DURING FIRST HALF OF THE SEMESTER

\*\* NOTE: 2 CR. MINI COURSES OFFERED DURING 2ND HALF OF SEMESTER







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