

HA-KOL

**The Newsletter of the Judaic Studies Department
at Binghamton University**

**Yedida Stillman,
Allan Arkush, Co-chairs**

**Allan Arkush,
Ha-Kol Editor**

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TEMPLE BETH EL DONATION OF \$25,000 LAUNCHES ENDOWMENT FUND

Temple Beth El of Endicott has closed its doors and sold its building. Most of the proceeds from the sale have gone to local institutions, including, we are happy to announce, our department. It is our intention to use the \$25,000 we have received to spearhead the endowment we are setting up for a Visiting Professorship in Israel Studies and community Scholar-in-Residence.

For Binghamton area residents, this grant is old news already, but for us it is a cause for continual rejoicing. Our joy is mingled, of course, with regret at the demise of Temple Beth El, an institution with which we have had a long and fruitful relationship. While we are sorry to see the Temple go, we look forward to working together in the future with its former members (many of whom have taken our classes). We are deeply moved by their vote of confidence in us and by the way in which they have chosen to express their gratitude for the various services that our department has rendered to the local community.

The endowment which we are establishing, which will perpetuate the name of Temple Beth El, will enable us to bring Israeli professors to our institution on a regular basis. The \$25,000 which we have received constitutes a great beginning for the endowment, but it is only a beginning. We still need another \$125,000. In order to raise this money we are busily barking up every tree in sight. We need all the help we can get, and are about to launch a major fundraising effort. So please open, read, and answer all the mail that we are about to send you!

MINI-COURSES ENJOY HUGE POPULARITY

This semester we offered two mini-courses, abbreviated courses for which students receive two credits instead of the usual four. Both proved to be extremely popular. Visiting Professor Edwin Seroussi's course in Jewish music was expanded to include fifty-six students (regrettably, still more had to be

turned away due to limits on classroom space). Reva Rittberg's course in Jewish cooking around the world would probably have been equally large had it not been necessary, for practical reasons, to limit it to fifteen.

In the spring, Professor Seroussi will be teaching another mini-course, this time devoted to Israeli music in particular. Registration for this course is already closed! Even so, we have every reason to expect that next semester dozens of the students who were unable to obtain a place in the class will appear in our offices, pleading for special consideration. Regrettably, we cannot oblige them all. But we do have other courses in which they may be interested, all of which are listed below:

CORE COURSES

JUST 241/HIST 241	BIBLICAL HISTORY	SUSSMAN
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TOPICS COURSES

JUST 247/HIST 247	REBIRTH OF ISRAEL	ARKUSH
JUST 263/CLAS 221/ ENG 223	BIBLE, PART I	LEVIN
JUST-W 280B/JUSTWE 280B		
PHIL-W 280B/PHILWE 280B	JOB AND THE PROBLEMS OF EVIL	WILCOX
JUSTWE 282,MDVLWE 270S	CRESCENT, CROSS & STAR	ZAJKOWSKI
JUST 283A/MUS 283A	MUSIC IN ISRAEL	SEROUSSI,E*
JUST-W 285M/CINE-W 285M	ABIE'S IRISH ROSE PONDER'S MAUS	JACOBS
JUST 286/HEBR 286/ HIST 280J	JEWISH TRAVELERS & ADVENTURERS	STILLMAN,N*
JUST 287	FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH LAW	MORELL
JUST 288	JESUS IN CONTEXT	ROEMER
JUST 289/COLI 289	HOLOCAUST LITERATURE & FILM	TAUB
JUST 343/HIST 343/ JUST-W 343/HIST-W 343	MIDEAST JEWS IN MODERN TIMES	STILLMAN,N
JUST 381E/HIST 380E	THE ENLIGHTENMENT & THE JEWS	ARKUSH
JUST 382F/HIST 382F/ WOMN 380Y	JEWISH WOMEN IN HISTORY	HERTZ
JUST 395	INTERNSHIP	STAFF
JUST 397	INDEPENDENT STUDY	STAFF
JUSTWE 490Q/HISTWE 490Q LINGWE 490Q	JEWISH LANGUAGES IN HISTORY	STILLMAN,N
JUST 491	PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING	STAFF
JUST 497	INDEPENDENT STUDY	STAFF
JUST 499	SENIOR THESIS	STAFF

LANGUAGE COURSES

HEBREW 102	ELEMENTARY HEBREW II, SEC. 01	MORELL
	SEC. 02	SEROUSSI, Y
HEBREW 204	READINGS IN HEBREW LITERATURE	TAUB
HEBREW 261A	CONTEMPORARY HEBREW POETRY AND SHORT STORIES	SEROUSSI, Y
HEBREW 286/JUST 286/ HIST 280J	JEWISH TRAVELERS & ADVENTURERS	STILLMAN, N*
HEBREW 331A	TALMUD	MORELL
HEBREW 397	INDEPENDENT STUDY	STAFF
HEBREW 707	RESEARCH SKILLS	STAFF
YIDDISH 102	ELEMENTARY YIDDISH II	TAUB
YIDDISH 391	PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING	STAFF
YIDDISH 397	INDEPENDENT STUDY	STAFF

*2 credit mini-course offered the 2nd half of the semester

JUST LUNCH

Our JUST Lunch meetings were held in the Public Service Center this semester instead of the Fine Arts Green Room (to which we shall be returning next semester). This change of venue did not, however, prevent us from running what Michael Taub, our JUST Lunch Coordinator, has characterized as a "well-attended, thought-provoking and diverse series."

The series was kicked off by the ubiquitous (at least in this newspaper) Edwin Seroussi, who, in fact, literally kicked it off by becoming the first JUST Lunch speaker to dance, or at least to sway, in the course of his lecture, which was devoted to Sephardic Jewish music. (For the record, we should perhaps mention that Martin Bidney of the English Department was the first of our speakers to sing for his lunchtime presentation.) Lacking any comparable talents, Allan Arkush confined himself to words in his discussion of Voltaire's view of the Jews. Finally, Sandy Cypess of Romance Languages presented a stimulating and insightful paper exploring some of the Jewish dimensions of contemporary Mexican fiction.

Next semester's series is already in the planning stages. Professor Taub has authorized us to report that we will be hearing from Joanna Bankier, a visitor in the Translation Research and Instruction Program who is a veteran translator from Yiddish to... Swedish!

ALUMNI NEWS

Speaking of JUST Lunch, only a few days after our last newsletter went out, we received the following letter from Shari Fisch ('90):

"Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur have a strange effect on the Jewish people. Every year, about this time, Jews cluster around the synagogue participating in various levels of self-evaluation and repentance. I, a conformist by nature, find myself reviewing the myriad scenes of my life along with the congregants of my synagogue.

This year, in anticipation of the High Holy Days, I thought back on my years at SUNY-B (or is that Binghamton University?) and I recalled one of the more pleasurable experiences of my college years: JUST Brown Bag Lunches. The lectures I heard were an integral part of my college experience. As you can well imagine, after two years away from Binghamton, my mind has atrophied to something resembling pulp, and I cannot recall the topic of one single lecture. But I am blessed with an amazing mental capacity for trivial data and I do remember all the goodies Yedidah would buy, i.e. donuts, danish, etc.

Since Rosh HaShana/Yom Kippur is not only a time for forgiveness but for tzedakah, enclosed please find a check for _____ [we only mention the specific amounts in Ha-Kol when we are recording major institutional grants, ed.], which I hope will help underwrite the cost of a JUST lunch. I wish I could do more for the Department, but right now I am cash poor and nostalgia rich."

Our recollection of Shari Fisch's mental capacity forces us to doubt the veracity of her confession of forgetfulness, which obviously reflects the undue severity of her Ellul-induced self-evaluation.

We have heard from other alumni as well, including Howard Sendrovitz ('90), who writes: "Enclosed please find a very modest check. I wish it could be more but I am still a full-time student (University of Michigan Law School). I have very fond memories of Judaic Studies and all my time at Binghamton. I Hope my peers have been more generous than I. Beth Kanter ('91) writes, after receiving our last newsletter, "Thanks for the update. I'm glad to hear so many exciting plans are in motion for the new semester. I'm currently working within the Washington, D.C. Jewish Community, freelancing and applying to grad school..." Natalie Jacoby ('91): "Shalom. How are you? I was very excited to receive your letter and to hear the Department is doing well. I hope it keeps growing and growing. Law school is going well and hopefully in a couple of years it will enable me to contribute a lot more to the department..."

Joel Weiss ('91) tried to scare us by writing, in October, that "I have just completed my first week of studies in the Jewish History Department [at Hebrew University] and my last." But he didn't drop out, he only switched to a different Department, Contemporary Jewry. Things are going well, he reports. Mark Kaiserman ('92) is in Jerusalem, too, at HUC-JIR. He wrote us a note, recently, which has

been misplaced. Someone else brought us volume I, Issue 1 of Sha'arei She'arim, however, the newsletter of the students at the Jerusalem branch of HUC-JIR. To our immense delight, we see that one of the editors of this journal is none other than Mark Kaiserman! [Readers of Ha-kol blessed with long memories will remember an article in our journal, more than two years ago, relating how Mark was forced by the Gulf War to cut short his junior year in Israel, and will be gratified to learn that he is receiving ample compensation for heeding his parents' wishes.]

Heather Capell ('92) dropped by recently. Heather, who graduated in May, 1992, was a Judaic Studies, Political Science and History major here at Binghamton. She studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during her junior year, 1990-91. She now works at the Graduate Admissions Officer and the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut area Representative for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Office of Academic Affairs in New York City. The purpose of her visit was to recruit Binghamton students for the Hebrew University's various study opportunities abroad, including one year, semester, summer, and graduate programs. Anyone interested may contact her at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Office of Academic Affairs, 11 East 69th Street, New York, New York, 10021. Telephone: 212-472-2288.

Two alumni from the more distant past (**Debbie** and **Mark Solkoff**) remembered "reading that if we alumni had any office supplies, etc. to donate, that you could use whatever you could get." They have consequently donated to us what they call an "old" electric typewriter, but it looks pretty new to us. They write, in addition, that they are doing well. Debbie is currently getting her MSW at Yeshiva University while working full-time as an adoption and foster care homefinder for Lakeside Family and Children's Services in Brooklyn. Mark teaches social studies and theatre in a middle school in Queens, where he also leads an Improvisation Theatre Guidance Workshop and a Drama Club after school.

'Tis the season to be wishing, it seems, and even though we, in the eyes of Santa and his helpers, probably do not count as good boys and girls, it never hurts to try. After all, we wished for an electric typewriter (for jobs for which our computers are unsuitable), and we got one. So here, for our alumni, is our wish list. We wish that you would all keep in fairly regular contact with us, that you would tell us what you are doing, and that once in a while (or, since this is a wish list, all the time) you would send us money, office equipment, books, or whatever you can spare that might be of use to our Department.

FACULTY UPDATE

Some of our alumni (class of 1991) may still be in possession of the certificates we awarded them upon their graduation, documents which entitle them to a free copy of one of three books which were then on the road to publication. Well, two of these volumes are now in print, Samuel Morell's Precedent and Judicial Discretion: The Case of Joseph Ibn Lev, and Michael Taub's Modern Israeli Drama in Translation. Professor Morell's book deals with the judicial methodology of Joseph ibn Lev, an important rabbinic authority in sixteenth century Turkey. It explores the way in which extra-legal considerations and the subjective judgment of Ibn Lev make themselves felt in his legal decisions. Professor Taub's volume consists of an introduction to Israeli drama, by Professor Taub himself, as well as six recent Israeli plays translated by Taub and others. Any student who still has his or her certificate may now mail it in to us and receive a gift copy of either of these books. Or, you may hold on to your certificate for a while longer and wait until Allan Arkush's book on Moses Mendelssohn appears/ (Don't hold your breath, though. A completed manuscript is now being considered by a publisher and its publication is no doubt a long way off).

Yedida Stillman has been relieved of instructional duties this year and is functioning mainly as a Bradley Scholar, working on her research on the history of Arab attire. She was recently invited to Vienna by a prestigious institute (whose name would take up an entire page of our newsletter) to deliver a lecture on "The Medieval Islamic Vestimentary System: Evolution and Consolidation." More recently, she was a guest lecturer at Colgate University's Columbus Quincentennial Observance, hosted by Africa and Latin American Studies and Jewish Studies. She presented a slide lecture entitled "Not in Sombre Colors: The Artistic Heritage of the Sephardim." **Norman Stillman** delivered this year's prestigious Alexander Colloquium at the University of Pennsylvania on November 11. His lecture was entitled "Middle East Jewry's Encounter with Modernity." In this year of the five hundredth anniversary of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, both Stillmans have been lecturing on Sephardic Jewry in all corners of the universe.

STAFF UPDATE

The unsung heroes of the Judaic Studies Department are our work-study students. They play a part in virtually all of our operations. They do a vast amount of our paper work and perform a host of other chores. Why, they fold, staple and mail the very newsletter you are now reading! Almost all of them have been good workers, but some have worked out better than others. One of the best ever, a student who has been with us for three years now, is Edwin Miranda. Unfortunately, Edwin has to leave Binghamton this winter- before he graduates. He is going to be a policeman in New York City. This, of course, will be an

easy chore compared to the work he has been doing for us. We wish him well, and we are sure that he will adhere to his resolve to complete the few remaining requirements for a B.A. We hope that he will carry out his plan to do so at Brooklyn College, the alma mater of Susan Hubal, Sam Morell and Michael Taub.

BENEFACTOR UPDATE

Fred and Sandra Weitsman of Owego have announced that they will be giving the Judaic Studies Department a generous five year grant. They hope that this grant "will encourage others in the community to give to JUST, because moneys donated will enable you to continue offering valuable courses on all aspects pertaining to Judaism. Preserving our heritage is so very important, and the Judaic Studies Department plays a vital role in achieving that goal." We are deeply grateful to the Weitsmans for their enthusiastic show of support, and we will continue doing everything we can to merit their confidence.

Other recent donors (beside the alumni mentioned above) include Shoshana Gross ('91), Marsha Krohnengold, Andrew Miller and Rochelle Zalman-Miller, John Nissenbaum, Joyce and Jose Sambursky, and Mr. and Mrs. Julius Weiss.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

It was at a meeting of our Community Development Committee in October that Marilyn Aigen first announced Temple Beth El's extraordinary gift to our Department. The committee is currently in the midst of sending to members of the local community (on handsome new stationery) the first notification of our new fund drive. We are pleased to announce three new members of the committee. They are Dr. Fred Isaacs, Mr. Abe Piaker and Dr. Joe Newmark.

OBITUARY

Judaic Studies mourns the passing of Eve Kur of Binghamton, one of our staunchest supporters and most devoted volunteers. Whenever we called on her to come and help us, she was ready to do so with enthusiasm. We could always count on her, too, to bring some of her innumerable friends with her. We will all miss her very much.