

The Newsletter of the
Judaic Studies Department
Yedida Stillman and Allan Arkush
Co-Chairs

BINGHAMTON
UNIVERSITY

Ha-Kol

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Michael Taub, Editor

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Dorot Foundation Scholarships

Binghamton undergraduates interested in pursuing any kind of academic program in Israel next summer (archeological dig, seminary study, university study, Hebrew language study), are eligible to apply for \$1,000 scholarships from the Dorot Foundation. Ten scholarships are available.

Application forms are available in the Judaic Studies office, and should be turned in to us by February 1, 1994. Winners will be announced by March 1.

Community Development Committee Reception

On November 14 Judaic Studies and its Community Development Committee hosted a reception at the Anderson Center for the purpose of raising money to fund a permanent Hebrew language position in the department. The event was attended by members of the Binghamton community, university administration, our entire faculty, as well as a number of our majors.

Distinguished Professor Phil Piaker opened the evening by recounting the history of the idea and by praising the many accomplishments of our department. He explained the administration's commitment to fund half the line while the rest of the money is to be raised by outside sources. He stressed the importance of Judaic Studies courses to the community, urging people to contribute generously to this worthy cause. Finally, Professor Piaker reminded those present that these are "not normal times" at SUNY. If they were, the administration would surely recognize the need for additional faculty and fund such a position on its own.

Marjorie Feld, a recent BA in Judaic Studies, described her experiences as a student in the department. She praised the professional character of our program and the friendly atmosphere in which it operates. As a graduate student in history here, she continues to call Judaic Studies home, periodically visiting teachers and friends in our offices in the Fine Arts Building.

Sharon Brehm, Dean of Arts and Sciences, also spoke highly of the faculty, recounting its many activities here, around the nation, and abroad. She pledged her support and concluded by stating that a strong Judaic Studies Department is "an investment in the future of Binghamton University."

Vice President Thomas Kelly remembered his college days when he studied philosophy with a local rabbi who taught at his university. This, according to him, demonstrates how valuable "town and gown" relationships can be. He expressed his pleasure at the support Judaic Studies receives from the Binghamton community and wished us luck with the drive.

A large part of the evening was devoted to discussion of another aspect of our current fund-raising activities, one that has to do with a recent work by noted local artist Cecil Poppolo. The work of art in question is a remarkable portrait of Elie Wiesel. As was explained by Dr. Ted Major, the chairman of the subcommittee coordinating this effort, our plan is to sell "shares" in the painting in order to purchase it for the university. The proceeds from this fund drive (minus the cost of the painting) will go to the Judaic Studies Department. After explaining this plan and displaying the painting, Dr. Major introduced Mr. Poppolo himself, who said a few words about how he came to paint it. Sharon Major then spoke of the universal spirit of the painting and Elie Wiesel's message of peace and brotherhood. She promised to do everything in her power to help with, both, the instructorship drive, and the purchase of the painting.

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Spring, 1994 Courses

CORE COURSES

Biblical History	Sussman
Medieval Jewish History	N. Stillman

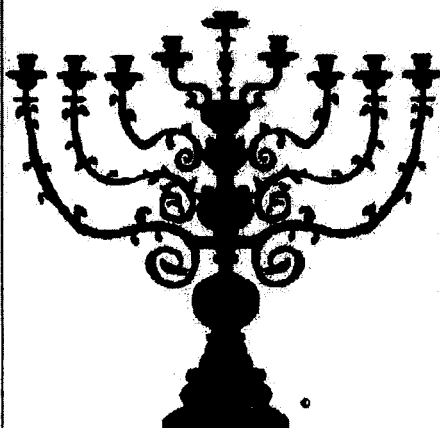
TOPICS COURSES

Rebirth of Israel	Arkush
The Art of the Synagogue	Gruber
Heretics and Messiahs	Arkush
The Mid East and the Peace Process	Y. Stillman & Menashe

Fundamentals of Jewish Law	Morell
Internship	Staff
Independent Study	Staff
American Judaism	Sussman
Practicum in College Teaching	Staff
Senior Thesis	Staff

LANGUAGE COURSES

Elementary Hebrew 102 (3 sections)	Morell & Staff
Readings in Hebrew Lit. Hebrew 204	Y. Stillman
Hebrew Conversation and Composition	
Hebrew 221	Taub
Golden Age of Hebrew Lit.	Morell
Practicum in College Teaching	Staff
Independent Study	Staff
Research Skills	Staff
Elementary Yiddish 102	Taub
Yiddish Lit. in Translation	Taub



Alumni News

MIRIAM SIMON wrote to us recently from Jerusalem. The past summer she had made aliyah and is very excited to be an Israeli citizen. She is particularly relieved that she no longer has to be defensive whenever someone asks her, "so when are you coming to live here for good?" Miriam is completing an MA in sociology and anthropology at Hebrew University, and admits that studying in Hebrew is not easy even though she is fluent in it. She is happy that her roommate is Israeli, so she can speak Hebrew at home too. Being in Israel is exciting to her; she especially loves her friends and the many interesting trips she has taken to various parts of the country.

ACHIKAM YOGEV Here is Achikam's letter, from India, dated 10.28.93.

Dear Profs. Norman and Yedida Stillman,

Greetings from India. I am halfway through my journey around the world and I must admit that this is a voyage which will have a major impact on my life. I feel it. So far I have spent time in Japan, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, and today, we have arrived in India. I am most anxious to get off the ship and begin exploring this extraordinary culture.

I am writing first of all to say hello and let you know that I miss you all very much, and that I often think of Binghamton, Judaic Studies, and the JSU. I visited a synagogue in Singapore- the only one there, called Beith Avoth- it was a Sephardic congregation of Iraqi Jews and I want you to know that I almost got married there! Instead of asking me my name, or how old I was, they wanted to know if I was single. I almost did not get out of it without a wedding ring, but it was great nonetheless.

Anyway, I wanted you to know that I will be arriving in Casablanca, and I wondered if you could recommend certain sights that would interest me. I will be in Morocco on Dec. 9-12 during Chanuka, and would like to be in a synagogue. On a separate sheet you have the addresses to communicate with me.

I hope all are doing well in Binghamton. Send my love to everyone, especially Riva and the Slonims.

Lots of love,
Achikam

In addition, we received a wonderful letter from Shari Tellerman, which was passed from hand to hand, until it got lost! Unable to locate it in time for this issue, we will soon resume the search. We hope to find it in time for the next issue. Letters were also received from Bob Herrnsen, and Lior Jacob Greenberg. They will be printed in the next Ha-kol

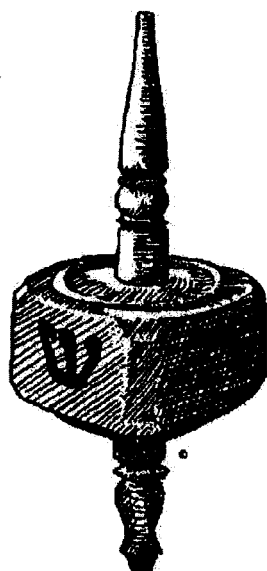
Donations

We are grateful for gifts received from: Ms. Miriam Abrams-Stark (class of 1980), Mr. Daniel Friedman ('86), Rabbi David Holtz ('82), Prof. and Mrs. Saul Levin, Mrs. Lisa Mendelsohn ('80), Rabbi Mark Raphael, Ms. Shari Tellerman ('90), Mr. Michael Wyler ('81), and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Zalman-Müller.

Showcase for Judaica Videotapes

Over the years we have accumulated numerous videotapes on Israel, the Holocaust, the Sephardim, and other subjects of Jewish interest. It has become necessary to organize the tapes in order to make it easier for faculty and students to use them more efficiently. We are happy to announce that Martin Taub of Riverdale, New York, has offered to fund the construction and installation of a showcase to display these tapes. Martin and the Taub family have dedicated this glass case to the memory of Huna Arich Taub.

We are deeply grateful for this wonderful gift.



Faculty News and Research

Lance Sussman

Professor Lance Sussman is the author of a reference book on Reform Judaism: Reform Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Source Book. Greenwood Press, 1993. He also wrote essays in American Jews and the Separationist Faith, edited by David Dalin, Washington DC, 1993; When Philadelphia was the Capital of Jewish America, edited by Murray Freedman, Balch Institute, 1993. In the Fall semester Sussman taught a course funded by the Chautauqua Society. The course attracted a wide array of students including undergraduates from the most diverse background.

Michael Taub

Michael edited a collection of Israeli drama (Translated two plays, edited the third, "Preface" and "Introductions"), published by Modern International Drama, Fall, 1993. On Oct. 20 he spoke on Peretz's Yiddish drama at an international Yiddish Theatre conference held in Warsaw, Poland.

Norman Stillman

Since the last issue of Ha-Kol appeared, Norman A. Stillman, professor of Near Eastern History, Languages and Cultures gave guest lectures at SUNY-New Paltz, the Maimonides Society of Pittsburgh, and the College of Jewish Studies in Binghamton, and was scholar-in-residence at the Hebrew Institute of White Plains. He just brought out another issue of the AJS Review (the journal of the Association for Jewish Studies), of which he is the editor.

He has the honor of being named the first Sherman Lecturer at the University of London and will give a series of four lectures there in March on "Sephardi Religious Responses to Modernity." These lectures will be published as a book.

Prospective Students

From time to time we introduce our readers to some of our students, especially our Judaic Studies majors. What we have never done before, though, is to acquaint them with some of our merely prospective students. We would now like to share with you two letters we recently received from high school students who have visited our campus and who aspire to attend Binghamton. We reproduce their letters (omitting only their names). We hope that they succeed in reaching their goals!

Dear Professor Stillman,

As you know, I toured other campuses and talked to other professors. I was the most impressed with Binghamton University. Out of the schools I have considered, Binghamton has the most interesting, challenging courses in Jewish studies, including advanced Hebrew classes, Jewish history, Talmud, religion, and ethics. Thanks to Marjorie, I got a chance to visit the kosher kitchen and talk with Jewish students who were not only happy and succeeding at Binghamton academically and socially, but also Jewishly. Although Marjorie told me that the Reform movement on campus does not regularly organize Shabbat services, I am willing and looking forward to helping R.O.C. (Reform On Campus) with Shabbat services, social events, and giving Reform students an outlet to be religious yet comfortable while praying as proud Reform Jews on campus.

I want to thank you and your husband for meeting with my mother and me, and for spending time listening to my questions about Jewish programs at Binghamton. I feel that I will succeed at Binghamton, and grow as a Jewish leader. Your department has so much to offer me; I have a strong Jewish background, but a lot to learn. Binghamton, I feel, is the best place for me to study, learn and grow.

Sincerely,
A. P.

Dear Dr. Stillman,

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for taking your time to speak with me about the various opportunities available in the field of Judaic Studies at Binghamton. After visiting the campus, I have made the decision that I would like to attend Binghamton University. I feel that this school is right for me because of the vast opportunities in course study, and the campus is absolutely beautiful. However what I like most about the school is that as a practicing conservative Jew, I feel welcomed by the many programs available to me, as well as by the large Jewish population on campus. This strong Jewish and even Zionist presence is a very important factor in the appeal of the school.

I have been an active member of Young Judaea as a club mazkir during my four years in high school. After spending three summers at Camp Tel Yehuda, the national camp of Young Judaea, I now consider myself a Zionist as well. My experiences have been further enhanced by my participation in Machon-in-Israel, a six week leadership program in Israel, sponsored by Hadassah.

I have just been awarded a full scholarship to attend the 1994 March-of-the-Living, a program in which I, along with 5,000 other Jewish teens from countries around the world, will commemorate a special Yom Hashoah. As a participant, I will visit the concentration camps in Poland, then celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut in Israel.

Recently, I was notified of my acceptance by Penn State, at University Park, as well as the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey. I have also been selected as a Bloustein scholar, an honor which accompanies a \$1,000 annual scholarship toward any New Jersey college or University. Nonetheless, I still regard Binghamton as my first choice of schools. No matter what course of study I choose to pursue, I believe that this school will provide a challenging, and highly rewarding four years.

Once again I would like to thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
M. S.

Poland 1993: Yiddishkayt without Jews

By Michael Taub

In October I went to Poland to read a paper on the Yiddish drama of I.L. Peretz as part of a conference on the Yiddish Theater in Poland before 1939. This historic gathering was organized by drama people at the University of Lodz and Warsaw, and with the support of Poland's Ministry of Culture. The conference followed the publication of a 500 page volume of essays on the Yiddish Theatre in Poland and elsewhere, by Poland's leading theatre journal, *Pamiętnik Teatralny*. This extraordinary issue was, needless to say, another historic event.

Since I grew up in Romania, I am quite familiar with Eastern Europe- totalitarianism, anti-semitism, low standards of living, etc. However, I had never been to Poland, or any other Communist country after the fall of Communism. Despite the many changes that have occurred in the past five or so years, I still expected to find there a rather primitive, disorganized, society. Instead, I found a surprisingly well run country- good roads, working phones, good hotels, great food, and courteous service. The conference organizers, Professors M. Leyko and Anna Kuligowska, both from the University of Lodz, went out of their way to make our stay in Warsaw as pleasant as possible. We were "wined and dined", taken to the theatre every night, and shown the Jewish sights. The conference was covered by Polish television, newspaper, and radio. Papers were given in Polish and English, with simultaneous translation. Posters about the conference appeared in hotel lobbies all around Warsaw. Of the sights we visited, the most moving were the Warsaw Ghetto monument and the Jewish cemetery. The monument stands in a beautiful park, and is surrounded by a large, empty space, covered with cobblestones. The simple, stone figures, depicting the ghetto fighters- young and old- inspire both pride and sadness, a sense of triumph over evil, hope in a better future.

The Warsaw Jewish cemetery, among the oldest in Eastern Europe, is vast. We laid a wreath at the tomb of Esther Rachel Kaminska, the grand dame of the Yiddish Theatre, and the mother of Ida Kaminska, whom Americans know best from the amazing movie, *Shop on Main Street*. This visit assumed a personal dimension since Esther Rachel's granddaughter and great granddaughters, who live in New York, were present at the ceremony. We also payed homage to two giants of Yiddish literature buried there: I.L. Peretz and S. Ansky.

Most of us are familiar with Peretz the story teller, the recaster of folk and hasidic tales. Ansky, as everyone knows, is the author of the most famous Yiddish play, *The Dybbuk*. My paper was to be on Peretz's theatre, and here I was, at his grave, only a day before! Besides its incredible architecture and size, the cemetery is unique in its sharp contrasts. There are graves of writers, leaders of Poland's Socialist Party, Dr. Zamenhoff, the founder of Esperanto, and a memorial stone for Yanus Korczak, the famous Polish doctor who went to Auschwitz with his

Jewish children. But, there are also graves of Tzaddikim, leaders of hasidic sects. On their stones one finds memorial candles and "kvitlech", little notes from devoted followers asking their Rebbes to intervene on their behalf in Heaven.

The cultural program of the conference included three evenings at Warsaw's Yiddish Theatre. I knew that such a place existed, but until I was inside and actually heard Yiddish on stage, I did not believe it. Indeed, there is Yiddish Theatre in Poland, in 1993! The repertoire includes variety shows and straight dramas from the classic Yiddish literature-Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, Ansky, Ash. One evening we saw a collage of songs and skits written by Galicia's own son, Mordechai Gebirtig, a prolific song writer of the prewar period. The other show was a special performance by Leah Konig, a famous Yiddish and Hebrew actress now living in Israel. Shortly after the war she lived and worked in Poland and Romania, and knows many languages, including Romanian. She was surprised, when after her appearance I went over and spoke to her in Romanian. After all these years she is still the greatest.

Surprises did not end with Leah Konig. The third planned evening at the Yiddish Theatre was *I'm not Rappoport*, a play most of us know from Broadway or Broadway's traveling company that, in fact, appeared with it in Binghamton, only a few years ago. This show, however, was produced by a newly formed Yiddish company from Israel under the direction of Shmuel Atzmon, formerly of Habima. So, here I am, a Romanian-born, former Israeli, American citizen, watching an American play about a Jew and an African American, in Yiddish, by Israeli actors, in Warsaw!

If you are wondering who goes to see Yiddish theatre in Warsaw in 1993, the audience includes adult Poles who listen with earphones to simultaneous translations, Jewish and Gentile tourists, and large groups of Polish high school students, attending as class assignment. Sadly, only a few dozen out of probably five hundred spectators, knew Yiddish. It was as interesting to see the public's reaction as to see the action on stage. The Poles still take theatre very seriously: the men wear suits, the women long dresses. There is electricity in the air. It's an event.

Another evening we were treated to a performance of I.B. Singer's *Gimpel Fool*, staged in Polish by a sort of Off Broadway company from Warsaw. Since I do not speak Polish I had to rely on my memory of the story. I must say that seeing Jews on stage with tzitzis hanging out and yarmulkes on their heads, speaking Polish, was a strange experience. Overall, it was a fine production, if one bears in mind that the play was actually a stage adaptation of the famous novel.

The conference lasted 4 days. After it ended I traveled to Cracow and Auschwitz. In the next Newsletter I will attempt to describe my experiences there.

Just Lunch

Last semester we heard lectures by Prof. Melvin Schefftz on "Jews and the European Left", Prof. Saul Levin on "Reading the Torah-the Taamim", and Prof. Milton Kessler on "The Secretly Simple Son". Not surprisingly, all were interesting and stimulating talks.

Prof. Schefftz described the role of Jewish left-wing intellectuals in shaping European politics, especially the complicated relationship between Jewishness and nationalism, ethnic identity and patriotism.

Prof. Levin showed a videotape he made in Israel in the 1960's about the various hand signs employed in helping Torah readers in communities in North Africa and Yemen. His talk was followed by a lively discussion on the question of readers' constraints in interpreting Biblical passages-which are more, which less dramatic, what to emphasize, and what to underplay.

Prof. Kessler recounted his childhood in the Bronx, as the son of a traditional mother and a socialist father. He explained the conflicts, the guilt he felt for not living up to expectations that he grow up to be a "good Jewish boy", i.e. educated in Jewish subjects. As he poignantly pointed out, these tensions eventually forged his creative process. Kessler ended his presentation by reading several poems from his Grand Concourse cycle.

Spring Just Lunch/Tentative Plans

For the coming semester we hope to host Prof. Leonid Chekin, a Visiting Fellow at Cornell's Institute for European Studies, who will speak on some aspect of Jewish contributions to Russian culture. Prof. Dora Polachek, another Cornell faculty, will show and discuss a unique Holocaust film, "Unzere Kinder". Finally, Michael Taub will talk about his recent visit to Poland, and show some of the slides from the trip.

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