

HA-KOL

The Newsletter of the Judaic Studies Department
at Binghamton University

Allan Arkush, Editor

Fall 1996

No. 1

NEW SEASON

We are back again, and putting out an edition of our newsletter at an unusually early point in the semester. Why? Well, for one thing, we have allowed too much time to elapse since the appearance of our last issue. For many years, as some of you may recall, there were two issues of Ha-Kol every semester. Lately, there have been fewer. We don't want to remind you exactly how few. Suffice it to say that our rate of publication has diminished even more than the size of our faculty. Maybe, though, if we get off to a fast start, we can regain something of our old energy and publish as many as three issues this year.

LOST

Not all of us are back. To our great regret, Deborah Hertz, who was a professor in the History Department but also held a joint appointment in Judaic Studies, has left Binghamton to teach at Sarah Lawrence College. Over the years, Deborah taught a variety of courses in modern Jewish history, ranging from "Jewish Women's History" to "Herzl and Freud's Vienna". Her course on the Holocaust was one of the most heavily enrolled and one of the most widely acclaimed of the courses cross-listed by our Department. Apart from being an outstanding teacher, Deborah was also a colleague on whom we could count for all kinds of support and advice. Her departure constitutes a great loss to our department. Binghamton, without her, will be a much less exciting place.

We have had to say goodbye, too, to Rabbi Mark Raphael of Temple Israel. Readers of Ha-Kol will remember how many times our newsletter has included expressions of thanks to Rabbi Raphael for the assistance he offered to our outreach programming. But we never really thanked him enough. So, for one last time, we thank him heartily for all his help. And we thank his wife Diane, too, for the skillful formatting of our newsletter in recent years. Her departure is what has led us to revert -- temporarily, perhaps -- to our prior and much too dull

mode of self-presentation. Good luck to the Raphaels at their new congregation in Maryland!

Last, but far from least, we have to say goodbye to Sharon S. Brehm, the former Dean of Harpur College. During a very difficult period for our department Sharon Brehm was a steadfast and warm supporter. For reasons beyond her control, it was not always possible for her to extend to us the assistance that we needed. But whenever she could, she came to our aid. We are sorry to lose such a good friend. And we wish her good luck at her new position as the Provost of Ohio University.

FOUND

We are happy to welcome Dean Brehm's replacement, Professor Solomon Polochek. Formerly chair of the Economics Department, Dean Polochek is... Well, what can we say that won't sound at this point as if we are trying to ingratiate ourselves with our new leader? So let's just leave it at this: We expect only the best from him and wish him good luck in what is undoubtedly a very difficult job.

And who are we, anyhow? Who is left? Who is teaching? The following list should answer most of these questions.

COURSE OFFERINGS JUDAIC STUDIES DEPARTMENT FALL 1996

CORE COURSES

JUST 242/HIST 242	JEWISH HIST/2ND TEMPLE	/	ROEMER
JUST 244/HIST 244	MODERN JEWISH HISTORY	/	ARKUSH

TOPICS COURSES

JUST 245A/HIST 245A	THE HOLOCAUST	/	ST. CLAIR
JUST 264/CLAS 222	THE BIBLE, PART II	/	LEVIN
JUST 271	WOMEN IN JEWISH LAW	/	MORELL
JUST 281J	JEWISH COOKING	/	RITTBERG
JUST 282C/COLI 282C	ISRAELI CINEMA	/	ABEND
JUST 283P	THE BOOK OF PSALMS	/	SHAPIRO
JUST 284B/HIST 287A	JEWISH HISTORY THROUGH BIOGRAPHICAL LIT.	/	ARKUSH
JUST 289P	PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION	/	GOLDSTEIN
JUST 391	PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE TEACHING	/	STAFF
JUST 395	INTERNSHIP	/	STAFF
JUST 397	INDEPENDENT STUDY	/	STAFF

JUST 491	PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE		
	TEACHING	/	STAFF
JUST 499	SENIOR THESIS	/	STAFF

LANGUAGE COURSES

HEBREW 101	(01)	ELEMENTARY HEBREW, I	/	SHEPKARU
HEBREW 101	(02)	ELEMENTARY HEBREW, I	/	SHEPKARU
HEBREW 101	(03)	ELEMENTARY HEBREW, I	/	SHEPKARU
HEBREW 203		INTERMEDIATE HEBREW	/	MORELL
HEBREW 261		ISRAELI POETRY & PROSE	/	MORELL
HEBREW 391		PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE		
		TEACHING	/	STAFF
HEBREW 397		INDEPENDENT STUDY	/	STAFF
HEBREW 597		INDEPENDENT STUDY	/	STAFF
HEBREW 707		RESEARCH SKILLS	/	STAFF
YIDDISH 101		ELEMENTARY YIDDISH, I	/	WEINSTEIN
YIDDISH 391		PRACTICUM IN COLLEGE		
		TEACHING	/	WEINSTEIN
YIDDISH 397		INDEPENDENT STUDY	/	WEINSTEIN

The two new names on this list are St. Clair- and Shapiro. Paul St. Clair is a Ph.D. candidate in the History Department who will be filling in for Deborah Hertz. Dr. Miriam Klein Shapiro, a newcomer to our institution in need of a special introduction, is a visitor from New York City. Educated at Barnard College, Columbia University's School of Social Work, and the Jewish Theological Seminary, she has taught at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, and Rockland Community College. Professor Shapiro's doctorate from JTS is in biblical studies, and she will be teaching a mini-course for us on the Book of Psalms. It will meet once a week during October and November (on Tuesdays from three to six in the afternoon). This course, like all our courses, is open to the general community. Any of our local readers who are interested in attending it can call our office for further details. But why only local readers? After all, Professor Shapiro herself will be commuting weekly from White Plains. So let's broaden the invitation, and include everyone who lives within a three hundred mile radius of Binghamton. You're all welcome to come.

THANKS

Just mentioning our far-flung readers and supporters reminds us of the need to reiterate in this newsletter our gratitude to those of you who have given us financial support in recent months. We thank all of you -- alumni, friends, neighbors, parents of current and past students, colleagues, and other well wishers:

Pearl Barron, Bruce Becker, Leora Berkowitz, Dr. and Mrs. Jerome Blumenthal, Sandy Bodzin and Shoshanna Gross, Rabbi Matthew S. Cutler, Gary Donner, Jennie Eber, Dr. Adam Edwards and Ms. Rebecca Rostorfer, Amy Feld, Joel and Deborah Gellen, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Goldin, Dr. Jeffrey Gorelick, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Hoenig, Susan Hubal, Paula Kramer, Dr. and Mrs. Silviu Landman, Donald Leibowitz and Karen Brodsky, Dr. Ted and Mrs. Sharon Major, Seth and Dinah Marlowe, Lisa Mendelsohn, Karen Michels, John Nissenbaum, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Piaker, Philip Piaker, Bessie Pierson, Rev. and Mrs. Carl Roemer, Dr. Irwin and Barbara Rosenberg, Rabbi Elihu Schagrin, Prof. Melvin and Mrs. Claire Shefftz, Dr. Jill Thierman, Harris Tilevitz and Ms. Rebecca Moshief.

In addition to the individuals named above, we would like to thank the Joe and Emily Lowe Foundation for once again coming to the aid of our Hebrew program and the Dorot Foundation for renewing the summer scholarships in Israel that six of our students received last year.

And now, we inaugurate a new feature in our newsletter, an editorial page.

EDITORIAL

JUDAIC STUDIES AND THE JEWS

Allan Arkush

Most of the time, what we think of as the larger world of Judaic Studies, beyond our campus, is not a big enough world to be noticed by very many people outside of the field. But there are those rare occasions when even the **New York Times** takes notice of events occurring within it. Many **Ha-Kol** readers were no doubt thrilled to find our sometime Binghamton colleague, Professor Gary Rendsburg, quoted in a Times story in July on the identification of the Philistine city of Ekron. Important as it was, however, this was not the big Judaic Studies story of the summer. An enormous amount of ink was spilled in the Times and elsewhere over another matter, a dispute that took place at an institution that bears a certain resemblance to our own, Queens College.

The Queens College Administration named Professor Thomas Bird to be director of its Jewish Studies Program. Professor Samuel Heilman, a well-known sociologist of modern Jewry who teaches at Queens college then objected to this appointment in the following words: "He's not Jewish, he does not have a Ph.D. in Jewish Studies, and he doesn't speak or understand Hebrew." This remark and the subsequent resignation from the directorship of Professor Bird, who has taught

Yiddish literature at Queens College for many years, provoked an international debate over the question of the relationship between Jewish identity and the teaching of Jewish studies on college campuses.

It has, in fact, been a very one-sided debate. The overwhelming majority of academic and non-academic commentators on this matter have supported the Queens College administration and disapproved of Professor Heilman. Sometimes they have done so by emphasizing what they see as the positive aspects of this whole episode. What an appointment like that of Professor Bird underscores, wrote Stuart Schoffman in *The Jerusalem Report*, "is that Jewish studies is not only of parochial interest to Jews, the province of a members-only club, but an integral part of a well-rounded education." Others, however, have emphasized the negative. One of the harshest of the many criticisms of Professor Heilman appeared in *The New Republic*. "Why must a Jewish Studies program be headed by a Jew?" wrote its editors. "In a university, all that should matter is scholarly and pedagogic competence. If one has it, then one's ethnic or racial identity should be of no consequence; and if one does not have it, then one's ethnic or racial identity should be of no consequence... We thank Heilman for reminding us that one can be Jewish, have a Ph.D. in Jewish Studies, speak and understand Hebrew, and still be a fool."

Without sharing its judgment of Professor Heilman, who has done some very valuable work, I would like to express my complete agreement with the opinion stated in *The New Republic* editorial. I agree, too, with what Schoffman wrote. I have nothing at all to add, in fact, to the views quoted above. Nor do I think that what I am saying is likely to generate any controversy among our readers. But I may be wrong. I am therefore opening these pages to anyone who would like to defend Professor Heilman's position on this matter. (Readers may respond by snail mail or by contacting the editor at the following e-mail address: arkjustbb @ aol.com.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are planning on having a gathering of Judaic Studies professors, majors, and minors in the course of the fall semester. How should we do it? Any ideas for a program? If you have any, let us know.

We're still planning our annual Temple Beth El lecture, which we hope to be able to hold before the end of October. Better organized than we are, the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CEMERS) is sponsoring a lecture on Friday, October 4 at 4:00 by Dr. Barbara

in Fine Arts
258

Wisch, Associate Professor of Art History at SUNY-Cortland. Her lecture bears the following title:

"Since it is absurd and improper that Jews...."
Sacred Spectacle and Antisemitism in Renaissance Rome

The CEMERS program has provided us with a brief description of the lecture, which we will gladly reprint:

The "mystery play" or multi-media sacred spectacle was an elaborate form of popular religious theatre during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. The slide lecture will focus on the Passion play s presented during Holy Week in the Colosseum -- by far the largest and most spectacular theatrical productions in Renaissance Rome. The performances, begun in 1490, were prohibited by papal decree in 1539 due to the violence they engendered against the Jewish community. This "rite of violence" has received scant attention in the scholarly literature on Jewish life in Renaissance Rome.

The lecture will explore general as well as specific causes of the antisemitic attack of 1539 by examining the complex status of the "Pope's Jews." Special charters and privileges were counterbalanced by enforced and humiliating public participation in major festivities, such as carnival and the papal posse (inaugural procession). The fluid boundaries between life and sacred spectacle in early modern society afford a remarkable view of the increasing vehemence of antisemitism in sixteenth-century Rome.

Economic, social and cultural repression of the Jews was then given full legitimacy by the 1555 papal bull, named by its opening words, Cum nimis absurdum ("Since it is absurd and improper that Jews..."). In addition to renewing all restrictions imposed by established papal policy, the new law required all Jews in the Papal States to live in an enforced ghetto, to sell all their real property to Christians, and to limit their commercial activities with Christians to the selling of second-hand clothes. These laws endured for more than 300 years.

Penultimate announcement: Allan Arkush will be teaching a 2-credit minicourse on Modern Antisemitism during the second half of the semester. It is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday evenings, 6 to 9 o'clock. Consult campus bulletin boards or the Judaic Studies Department for further details.

Final announcement: Aaron Suckert, one of our seniors, has designed a terrific poster to advertise Miriam Klein Shapiro's course on the Book of Psalms. We are reproducing it as the final page of the newsletter.

Shanah Tovah

NEW COURSE!
BEGINS OCTOBER 1

JUDAIC
STUDIES
283 P

meets on
Tuesdays, 3-6

THE
BOOK OF
PSALMS

Prof. Miriam
Klein Shapiro

2 credits

