

University Center at Binghamton

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Judaic Studies Program
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JUDAIC STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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History Department

1. Spring Conference on Sephardic Studies

From April 5-7, 1987, there will be an international Sephardic Studies Conference held on the SUNY-Binghamton campus. The conference is being coordinated through the offices of Professors Yedida K. Stillman, Director of Judaic Studies, and George Zucker from the Comparative Literature Department. It will be the first of its kind held in the United States. In August a call for papers was sent to almost two hundred scholars worldwide and the response has been enthusiastic indeed.

Sephardic Jews, or Sephardim, make up a large portion, if not quite half, of world Jewry. The ancestors of Jews now living in Yemen or Morocco were more than likely living in Spain in the late middle ages. With the advent of the Inquisition in the late fourteenth century, many Jews fled Spain for Europe or North Africa. However, many others, deeply rooted in local culture stayed and suffered through the Inquisition. Some, of course, converted to Christianity. They became known as maranos, Spanish for "pig." Others kept up a front of conversion but practiced their religion in secret. In 1492, Tomas de Troquemada, an Inquisitor General, expelled all Jews from Spain.

The Sephardic Studies Conference will bring together scholars from many diverse yet related fields of study. Some general topics include:

The Sephardic family and the role of women
Sephardic Jews in America and Israel
Sephardic art and music (to be accompanied by performances of Sephardic music)
Sephardic culture: history and development

Scholars from France, Spain, Latin America, and Israel, as well as many from domestic institutions, will be converging on campus for this cross-disciplinary conference. The University itself is limited in what it can offer our guests in the way of housing. Funds and grants available to the conference coordinators are barely enough to pay keynote speakers fees, travel expenses, and entertainment costs. We are turning to you, the interested public, to open your home to one or two of the visiting scholars. Please, if you can house a visiting scholar for two nights, contact Judaic Studies at 777-3070.

2. Visiting Scholars this Semester

This semester our campus life will be enriched by the presence of three visiting scholars. Two are here on the SUNY Exchange with Haifa University: Professor Ze'ev Levy and Dr. Reuven Shoham, from the University of Haifa. Professor Levy is a specialist in Jewish Philosophy, and Dr. Shoham works in Modern Hebrew Poetry. A third visitor, Professor George Zucker, comes to us from the University of Northern Iowa, via the National Faculty Exchange. Professor Zucker is a specialist in Sephardic linguistics, and he will be working with Professor Yedida Stillman on the April Conference.

3. Spring Courses

In addition to the Judaic Studies Program's regular offerings in Hebrew and Yiddish language, students can also learn about Israeli poetry with Professor Shoham and Israeli drama with Professor Michael Taub. Professor Lance Sussman will be lecturing on Jewish History and Modern Judaism; Professor Deborah Hertz is offering a course on the Holocaust. Finally, Professor Levy will enlighten those interested in Jewish Philosophy, and from a sociological perspective, Professor Silver will teach on Ethnic Relations in Israel. What a lively, lovely way to spend the Binghamton winter, curled up reading for such courses!

4. Miscellaneous

A one woman play, HANNAH SENESH, (a hero of the Holocaust resistance) will be shown on February 3 at 8:15 p.m. at the Anderson Center.

Our Program was noted in People Magazine story of December 8, 1986, entitled "It May Cost You Time and Effort, But Junior's College Degree Doesn't Have To Cost An Arm and a Leg." The conclusion of the section on SUNY-Binghamton was: "it (our campus) is now considered a gem." Our opinion too!