

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

BINGHAMTON
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Ha-Kol

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Allan Arkush, Editor

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New Video Showcase

Over the years our department has acquired a fairly large number of videos. They cover a wide spectrum, extending from documentaries concerning Jewish life in Eastern Europe to contemporary Israeli movies to American movies dealing with Jewish subjects. From time to time we all make use of them in our classes. Needless to say, they are of great utility in conveying a more vivid picture of lost or distant worlds to our students. Until very recently, these videos were stored in our secretary's office. Now, thanks to the generosity of the Taub family, we are able to house them in a new showcase just outside our conference room. The showcase is dedicated to the memory of Huna ArieH Taub.

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Two New Mini-Courses

The Judaic Studies Department at Binghamton University extends a warm welcome to the newest member of its staff, Dr. Samuel Gruber, a visiting professor from Syracuse University. Professor Gruber, a specialist in art and architectural history, will be teaching a "mini-course" during the second half of this semester on the "The Art of the Synagogue." This course is being supported by the Jesselson Foundation of New York City, which has generously contributed to many Judaic Studies-sponsored programs in the past.

Through lectures and slides, this course will survey the form and function of synagogues and synagogue art as they developed in response to Jewish religious and communal needs and broader cultural, legal and aesthetic influences, especially those of Christian and Islamic societies. The course will focus on such questions as What defines Jewish art? What role have art and architecture played in Jewish life? To what degree has interaction with other cultures determined the production and appearance of Jewish art?

In addition to teaching at Syracuse University and now Binghamton University, Dr. Gruber is an active member of the World Monuments Fund, which preserves international Jewish sites and structures. He is the Director of the Jewish Heritage Council and has worked extensively with Joel Zach of New York City and Yedida Stillman, Co-chair of the Judaic Studies Department, in organizing and planning an architectural and photographic survey of the Jewish heritage in Morocco.

This course had its introductory session on March 16 and will meet every Wednesday (except for March 30) until May 6. Meetings will be held in Lecture Hall 8 and will take place between 3:30 and 6:30 in the afternoon. All sessions are open to the public.

Professor Yedida K. Stillman will also be teaching a mini-course during the second half of the current semester. Its subject will be The Middle East and the Peace Process. In the context of this course a number of guest lecturers will be coming to the Binghamton University campus. All of them are internationally known experts in their areas of special interest. Several of them are well-known to the local community, having spoken here at various times in the past. Two of them are newcomers to this area.

Professor David Menashri of the Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University (and currently a visiting professor at Cornell University) spoke on March 16. Professor Menashri, who taught a seminar at Binghamton University several years ago, is an internationally renowned expert on Iran (where he was born). On March 23 the speaker will be Ephraim Ben-Matityahu, an experienced veteran of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs who is currently serving as Consul for Academic Affairs in the United States at the Israeli Consulate in New York. Mr. Ben-Matityahu has never been to Binghamton before.

On April 13 the speaker will be Dr. Rafi Danziger, Director of Research and

(continued on page 4)

Lectures by Ruth Gay

Ruth Gay, the author of the recent and highly acclaimed study The Jews of Germany: A Historical Portrait (Yale University Press, 1992), will be coming to our community in April to deliver two slide lectures on "The Jews of Germany- Their Long Life and Sudden Death." The first lecture will be entitled "Inventing the Diaspora — From Israelites to Jews." It will cover the first thousand years of Jewish life in the German lands - from the fourth century C.E. to the Black Death (1348). It will be held in Room 133 in the University Student Union on Monday, April 11 at 7:00 p.m. The second lecture, entitled "From Jew to German -

The Price of Leaving Home," will take place at the Jewish Community Center on Tuesday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m. A bus will be leaving campus for the Center at 7:15 p.m. These lectures will be sponsored jointly by Judaic Studies and a host of other departments and organizations, all of which were galvanized into action by one of the local Jewish community's most energetic supporters of Jewish education and a longtime supporter of our department, Mr. Norbert Adler.

Advertisements

This is something that we have never done before and never would have thought of doing were it not for the assistance of our office intern this semester, Jennifer Ecker. Jennifer (BU '94) not only conceived of the idea of including advertising in the newsletter but actively searched in a variety of different ways for interested advertisers. This time we have three of them! Next time we hope to have more.

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

Alumni News

We really should begin with Shari Tellerman's letter, a truly wonderful letter. But, as we mentioned in our previous newsletter, somebody misplaced it last semester and it is still missing. We are too embarrassed to ask Shari to send us a copy, but we would be very grateful if someone else would take the trouble to do so.

Shari's was not the only gratifying letter to show up on our mail shelf. In October we heard from Bob Herrmson, who reported that "this must be my year! I got a job teaching at the Rashi School, the Boston area's only Reform Jewish Day School (and one of only ten in the entire country). I am teaching a fifth and sixth grade bridge-class and am responsible for all subject matter, including both secular and religious studies. My class is great, I love my job, and mine is a dream come true!

"I was also very fortunate in that I got a job leading a summer tour to Poland, Hungary, and Israel. Again, the kids (this time teens) were really well behaved and well-informed. One of the highlights of the Polish leg of the trip was visiting the orphanage established by Janusz Korczak...

"Being a tourist in Israel was quite difficult for me. I eventually fell into educator mode and sublimated my desire to be an Israeli. However, at the end of my trip, after the teens had returned to the states, I spent ten days driving all over and visiting old friends. I even met up with Aharon Appelfeld this summer [the celebrated Israeli author whose writings Bob had studied years ago at Binghamton and whose meals he had delivered only the previous year at a deli in Brookline]. We kept on missing each other. Once I called, and although he was happy to hear from me, he couldn't speak for long as he was meeting with the President. The President over me! Hmmm! I eventually caught up with him at Beit Ticho, where he often writes...

Naomi Pine Wilensky ('91) writes that "I always enjoy reading the latest Judaic Studies newsletter. I decided it was about time to let you know what I was doing too! Last May I married Joe Wilensky ('91) and we now live in Oswego, New York. I'm looking for employment as an English teacher, but am currently the Director of Education and Community Programming at Temple Adath Israel. Part of my job is to work as a liaison with the SUNY Oswego Jewish Student Union..."

Ethan Rivel, a more recent graduate ('93), has written us a shorter missive. In a letter to Yedida he writes that "I think you would be very pleased to know that since graduating in May of 1993, I have been working at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Philadelphia, in Elkins Park. I am an assistant teacher for the first grade in both Jewish and general studies." Yedida and the rest of us are indeed pleased to learn this and to learn that Ethan has plans to further his own education as well.

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Mini-Courses (con't)

Information at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Dr. Danziger, who is the editor of AIPAC's newsletter, Near East Report, and has been a frequent guest on the MacNeil-Lehrer report and other important television news programs, has lectured in Binghamton on two separate occasions in the past. On April 20 the speaker will be Dr. Laurie Mylroie of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Dr. Mylroie is also a frequent guest on the MacNeil Lehrer report. She has written on Middle Eastern affairs for The Wall Street Journal, the op-ed page of The New York Times, Commentary magazine and other major newspapers and magazines. She last spoke in Binghamton during the Gulf Crisis (about which she wrote an important and best-selling book). The final speaker, on April 27, will be Dr. Amaziah Baram of Haifa University. Currently a visiting scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Institute, Dr. Baram is one of the world's leading experts on Iraq. He has never been to Binghamton before.

All sessions of the mini-course will take place on the Binghamton University campus, in Lecture Hall 9, at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. All of the lectures listed above are open to the general public.

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Diplomatic Pursuits

Norman and Yedida Stillman escaped the travails of January in Binghamton by leading a tour group to Morocco. There they were caught in the snow only once — in the Atlas Mountains. Their trip had its odd moments, however, as Yedida reports:

On the third day of our tour, just as we left Casablanca, one of the younger members of our group announced — much to his parents' chagrin — that he had forgotten his passport at the hotel. Back we went. But we couldn't find it. We weren't too worried, though, since we were on our way to Rabat, where a former student of Norman's was serving in the U.S. embassy, and where we therefore assumed that we would be able to have the young man's passport reissued expeditiously.

Later that day, as we approached Rabat, some surprisingly alert members of our group spotted on the back window of a passing car nothing other than a Binghamton University sticker! Commonplace as such insignia are in Broome County, they are far from ubiquitous in Morocco. It seemed, in fact, reasonable to assume that the car belonged to the man we hoped to find at the American embassy. We did everything we could to get the attention of the driver of that car. We honked, yelled, waved our hands — but all to no avail. The Binghamton car was two or three cars ahead of us and its passengers were apparently unaware of the commotion we were creating. Before long, it got further ahead of us and we lost sight of it.

Incredibly enough, once we got to Rabat and had parked our bus near the folk art museum that we were scheduled to visit, we spotted the car again — parked, this time. Norman left a note with our names and Binghamton affiliations on the windshield. We proceeded to the museum, and then returned to the car to check on our note. It was gone. We assumed that it had been snatched by a street urchin, until we were accosted by a distinguished looking man who spoke with what sounded to us like a slight Scandinavian accent. He had come back to his car, he said, just after we had left and had decided to wait for us. He introduced himself to us as the Danish Ambassador to Morocco. And the Binghamton sticker on his car? His two children are students at our university! And how had he heard about Binghamton University here in Rabat? His family had lived for six years in New York City, when he was the Danish Ambassador to the United Nations. While there, they chose our school.

Needless to say, we were all overwhelmed by this coincidence. We, of course, invited them to visit us in Binghamton whenever they came to visit their children, and we are sure to see them again. And what about Norman's student? Regards were passed on to him by the Ambassador, but with all the excitement, we didn't even have a minute to call. And the passport? It was found in a suitcase."

This story has a happy sequel. Since this accidental meeting, Ambassador Branner has been coordinating secret

discussions between the Stillmans and representatives of Iraq! The aim of these discussions is to create a framework within which Israeli-Iraqi peace negotiations can occur. If all this works out, the Stillmans may yet be numbered among the winners of the next Nobel Peace Prize. Yedida has already promised that if this happens she will contribute her share of the prize money to the establishment of a permanent instructorship in Hebrew at Binghamton University.

All-Binghamton Issue

We do not have room in this issue for a full-scale faculty update. We wish to take note, however, of an interesting phenomenon. The latest issue of the AJS Review, the journal of the Association for Jewish Studies, contains articles and reviews by no less than four of our faculty members: 1) Allan Arkush's article on "Voltaire on Judaism and Christianity," 2) Samuel Morell's review essay on "The Religious Dimension of Jewish Civil Law," 3) Yedida Stillman's review of Alex Weingrod's The Saint of Beersheba, and 4) Michael Taub's review of Anita Norich's The Homeless Imagination in the Fiction of Israel Joshua Singer. Of the five members of our department, only Norman Stillman failed to make a contribution to this issue of the leading U.S. journal of Judaic Studies. Perhaps he was too busy serving as its editor.

JUST Lunch Resumes

Our highly acclaimed luncheon lecture series, JUST LUNCH, recommenced on March 9 with a lecture by Professor Leonid Chekin, Visiting Professor at Cornell University. His talk was on the subject of "The Jewish Khazars and the Russian Jews." Professor Dora Polachek, also of Cornell, will present and discuss a short Yiddish Holocaust film, "Unzere Kinder," on March 23. Professor Michael Taub, JUST LUNCH program coordinator, will share his impressions of a recent trip to Poland on April 20.

Meetings are held in the "Green Room" of the Fine Arts Building (Fine Arts 121). Despite its name, JUST LUNCH, is really everything but lunch. You must bring your own. We will serve coffee, tea and cookies. And we will listen to whatever you have to say.

Kaiserman Returns

Only a few days after the new semester began we had a most welcome visitor, Mark Kaiserman. One of our Judaic Studies majors, Mark is a 1992 Binghamton graduate. Readers of Ha-Kol will probably remember him best for the part he played in events surrounding the Gulf War. He began his junior year of studies in Israel, it will be recalled, in the fall of 1990. For three months he studied in Jerusalem and had, in his own words, "one of the best times of my life." But then, even before the air war commenced, his parents asked him to come home. Mark found himself in a quandary. As he wrote to us at the time, "I knew the danger that was possible if I remained. I also knew the fun I was having, the friends I was making and the things I was looking forward to doing. However, my parents have generally been right in the past. They were so candid on the phone, that I felt that returning to America was the best course of action. A week later, I left."

After returning to the United States, Mark discussed his decision to heed his parents' request in a column that appeared in this newsletter. Among other things, he said the following: "The Hebrew expression mah la'assot? (What is one to do?) keeps coming to mind. What should I have done? The expression is usually answered simply and obviously with la'assot. One does what one has to do. I did what the situation dictated for me alone. What is there to do? Do what you think is most honest to your feelings. That's what I did."

Shortly after this column appeared, we received a letter from Shari Fisch, another one of our majors, who had graduated from Binghamton the year before. Clearly agitated by the outbreak of fighting and its impact on Israel (her letter was dated January 23, 1990), she sent us what sounded, by her own admission, "like a UJA appeal." What we must do "is support Israel." If people "are wary of going there, which is understandable," they "should Buy Israeli Products! Give to UJA!! Buy trees! Something!" Then, addressing Mark more directly, she wrote that "Yes, you chose to leave for now, but you can promise to return after the hostilities are over- and then do it!"

Well, Shari, if you still read Ha-Kol, you will be happy to learn (if you do not already know) that Mark did it! He finally spent a year in Israel, not as an undergraduate but as a rabbinical student. And now he is once again back in this country, continuing his studies at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati. He is enthusiastic about the program there, and equally enthusiastic about his periodic visits to the community which he serves as a sort of apprentice rabbi, a small synagogue in Texarkana, Texas. Without having discussed the matter with them, we are confident that his congregants are likewise quite happy with him. To be assured of this, one only had to see the way Temple Concord in Binghamton geared up to welcome him back. Mark taught there when he was a student here. For his visit, in January, the Temple was festooned with colorful banners and crowded with his loyal ex-students.

Mark has just accepted a new position as the head of our local Hillel's alumni association. We wish him luck in that job as in all else.

Fund-Raising Continues

The *New Republic* recently concluded a contest in which it invited its readers to submit descriptions of "meetings we would like to miss." Among the most notable entries was an account of the Delmarva Meat Goat Conference in Salisbury, Maryland ("Topics include pasture management, hay quality and reproductive management... The registration fee includes goat barbecue.") The winning entry, described by the editors as "the year's most boring meeting," referred to a gathering that took place in Berkeley, California. The advertisement for this meeting read as follows: "A Mensch Among Men: Jewish men rarely have the opportunity to come together and speak openly and honestly with other Jewish men. Join us for an afternoon of discussion and interactive exercises in which we will explore the many joys and challenges of being a Jewish man. All Jewish men are welcome."

Even this meeting probably sounds more exciting than another article in *Ha-Kol* about our fundraising efforts. We talk about these things all the time, and by doing so are probably running the risk of driving our readers away. But what choice do we have? We have to alert our supporters and thank our benefactors.

Our campaign to raise money for a permanent Hebrew instructorship has made a considerable amount of headway. Thanks to the efforts of our Community Development Committee, and especially to Sharon and Ted Major and Phil Piaker, we have raised nearly half of what we need.

We have many more people to thank. We extend our special thanks for contributions to our Hebrew instructorship campaign to Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Becker, Mr. and Mrs. Jack F. Berman, Ms. Jennie Eber, Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Piaker, Mr. and Mrs. Phillip Piaker, Dr. Israel J. Rosefsky, Dr. Carl Roemer, Dr. Jose and Joyce Sambursky, and the management of Endicott Coil and the Endicott Research Group.

We also wish to express our deep gratitude to Joseph and Marilyn Aigen, Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Blumenthal,

Dr. and Mrs. Donald Bronsky, Mr. and Mrs. Barry Raff, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Goldin, Dr. and Mrs. Gerald Hubal, Professor Saul Levin, Drs. Solomon and Dora Polachek, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Savitch, Dr. and Mrs. Stephen S. Schneider, Mr. and Mrs. N. Theodor Sommer, Dr. Ted and Sharon Major, Dr. and Mrs. Irwin Rosenberg, Ms. Hazel F. Schwab, Dr. and Mrs. Mayer Schwartz, and to ourselves, Professor, Professor and Professor Norman and Yedida Stillman, Rabbi and Professor and Mrs. Lance Sussman, and Professor Allan Arkush.

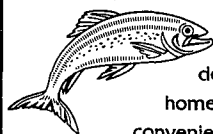
And while we're extending thanks, we should mention the rest of our donors, whose contributions have not been specifically earmarked for the new campaign. Thanks to Ben Weitsman and Sons, Inc., Ms. Ellen S. Baker, Dr. and Mrs. Bruce P. Metzger, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Stone, Mr. and Mrs. Tiberiu P. Vaida, Mr. and Mrs. Serge Ben Nathan, Ms. Jean Bennett, Mr. Frederick Berk, Mr. and Mrs. Herman Berkowitz, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Dubinsky, Mr. and Mrs. Stephan Greenberg, Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Horowitz, Ms. Carolyn Scheer, Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Shaw, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Zuckerman, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Aronowitz, Dr. Karen Brodsky, Mr. Eugene Brody, Mr. James Gitlitz, Ms. Natalie Jacoby, Dr. and Mrs. Silviu Landman, Mr. Donald Leibowitz, Mr. Leon Levy, Mr. Andrew Mestel, Mrs. Susan Neuberg, Mr. and Mrs. George Peters, Mr. Mark Reisman, Mr. and Mrs. Mark Salsberg, Rabbi Elihu Schagrin, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Silberman, Ms. Karen Slater, Dr. Michael Wolff, Ms. Ida Bernstein, Mr. Gary Donner, Ms. Shari Fisch, Mr. Michael Getman, and Mr. and Mrs. Marc Goldberg, Mr. Michael Marks, Mr. Harris Tilevitz

Finally, we thank once again the Jesselson Foundation and the Lowe Foundation for their very generous support of our endeavors. We will never take their grants for granted, and hope that we continue to earn the indispensable assistance with which they supply us.

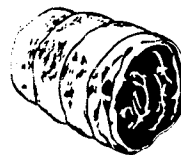


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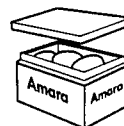
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Greenberg's Summer

Lior Greenberg, an undergraduate who serves as a teaching assistant in some of our Hebrew courses and a recipient, last year of a DOROT scholarship, has provided us with an account of his summer which we believe will be of interest to all:

I have been to Israel several times before — I lived in Ashkelon for three years (1979-1981, 1983), and have returned every summer for 4-5 months since 1984. I completed 1st-3rd grade, and after 1984 (4th grade) I would study for one month in Israel (end of the year), stay the summer vacation, and then start school in Israel for another month before returning to the U.S. This "double curriculum" (which my Israeli mother made possible) allowed me to keep in contact with many of my friends in Israel.

The summer before my freshman year in the University was the shortest and most emotionally trying for me in my life. In August of 1992 I parted with my friends in Israel who in two weeks would join the Pioneer Corps of the Israeli Army on a kibbutz in the Galilee. They assured me that when I completed my first year in college I could join them at the kibbutz. Though it seemed unrealistic that I could return after a year's separation, I did.

My friends in Israel are part of IDF unit called the Nahal, an acronym for "Fighting Pioneer Youth." Instead of the usual three year service (two for females), they all volunteer an extra

year to help a kibbutz or a settlement. The settlement of choice was Hanaton, a tiny kibbutz in the Galilee.

As part of a Gar'in (core) living side by side with the kibbutz, we found that supporting ourselves was not easy in Israel's hostile economic climate. We had some jobs associated with the kibbutz, such as helping with the children, working in the vineyard, the dining hall, and in the educational center (secretarial jobs and leading youth tour groups from around the world). The core was very active during the year in supporting and counseling new branches of the Israeli Conservative Youth Movement (Noam). The core also volunteered to teach Hebrew to Russian immigrants in a nearby settlement. But these jobs were limited and we had to rely on working outside the kibbutz in order to feed ourselves. Such jobs included working in a plastics factory, an overnight camp, a shelter for underprivileged children and a core-promoted jam factory.

We learned first-hand how to be totally self-sustained, especially in such a socialistic society. As a core, we shared all the chores equally... Most importantly, we learned how to function as a unit, and not individuals. This was a sobering lesson in kibbutz life, having to share all individual revenues and privacy for the sake of the whole. Living within the fold of Israeli society, especially in the Army framework, was an invaluable maturing experience for me..."

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