

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

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Ha-Kol

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Allan Arkush, Editor

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HAPPY SUMMER

Graduation, 1994

Opening up your mailboxes and finding another issue of **Ha-Kol**, some of you might be troubled by the thought that it has come too soon. But if this is what you are thinking, you are wrong. Actually, our last issue went out too late. We held it up mostly in order to fit in the advertisements. And now the end of the semester has come and we have to put out our fourth issue before we lose the ability to do so (that is, to get it labeled, stapled, etc.). So, even though you might not be ready for it, here comes our final newsletter of the academic year.

The big news is, of course, graduation. As always, we see this as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, we are deeply proud of our graduating seniors' accomplishments. On the other hand, whatever gratification we feel is mingled with a painful sense of alarm. It is hard to adjust to the idea that certain students are just not going to be around anymore. Once in a while we have a happy surprise. After graduating last year, for instance, one of our majors, **Marjorie Feld**, decided to stay in Binghamton to do graduate work in history. But now even she is leaving, to enter the Ph.D. program in history at Brandeis.

This year's crop of graduating majors and minors likewise includes a number of people on their way to graduate school, including two who, like Marjorie, have been admitted to Brandeis. **Melissa Millman** (a Judaic Studies major, recently inducted into Phi Beta Kappa) will be entering the Hornstein Program at Brandeis. She plans to join the two-year program for an M.A. in Jewish Communal Service with a concentration in Jewish education. In addition, she may remain at Brandeis for a third year to earn an MA in Judaic Studies... **Amy Golubtchik** (a Hebrew major) is still trying to decide whether to attend the Hornstein Program at Brandeis or to go to Yeshivah University... **Rikki Gelfarb** (a Judaic Studies major) plans to attend Columbia Teachers College... **Jordanna Schmier** (a Hebrew minor, also inducted into Phi Beta Kappa) will be entering graduate school in political science at American University...

Elisabeth Neuberg (a Judaic Studies major) is heading for Jerusalem, where she plans to study at the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies and to make plans for graduate work (either here or over there)... **Achikam Yogev** (a Judaic Studies major) is also headed for Israel, where he plans to enter the army... **Daniel Margolis** (who will be graduating with highest honors in Political Science and Judaic Studies and was recently inducted into Phi Beta Kappa) will be attending the University of Pennsylvania Law School... **Gail Hoenig** (a Judaic Studies major) will be attending Emory University Law School... **Elan Koifman** (a Hebrew major) will be attending Tufts University's School of Dentistry... **Ari Dubovitzky** (another Hebrew major) will also be attending dental school, at New York University... **Neomie Friedman** (also a Hebrew major) will be attending the Health Science Center in Syracuse... **Tanya Tiamfook** will most likely be attending the Southeastern College of Osteopathic

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Guest Lectures

This semester we had a large number of memorable guest lectures. The speakers for our course on the Middle East Peace Process constituted a particularly fascinating group. The opportunity to hear world-class experts discuss current events brought dozens of additional visitors to the sessions of Judaic Studies 280P. Another very memorable occasion was Dora Polachek's JUST Lunch talk/film presentation, in which she showed and discussed a recently rediscovered Yiddish film made in Poland shortly after the end of World War II.

We also ought to single out the visit of Ruth Gay to our campus. As we announced in our previous issue, Ms. Gay gave two public slide lectures narrating the history of German Jewry. What we could not have announced in advance was how absorbing these presentations would be. Ms. Gay managed to convey to large audiences, on campus as well as at the Jewish Community Center, a vivid picture of the long, fruitful and painful odyssey of German Jewry. At the Jewish Community Center, in particular, her remarks on the recent history of German Jewry evoked a memorable discussion. German-born Jews shared their memories of the struggles of the 1930s as well as their impressions of today's Germany with an audience that sat in rapt attention. Younger people learned things about their neighbors lives that they might never had known had it not been for Ms. Gay's visit.

We ourselves (along with a score of other departments and communal organizations) can take only a small share of the credit for Ms. Gay's visit. The lion's share belongs to Mr. Norbert Adler, a tireless supporter of the study of German Jewish history and a very good friend of Judaic Studies. Ms. Gay's visit was his idea and he made it happen.

Graduation, 1994

Medicine in Miami... **Ellen Levine** (a Judaic Studies major) will be spending the summer in Israel but will be returning to this country to pursue studies in elementary education... **Edward Brody** (a Judaic Studies major) will be embark upon a career in banking at the European-American bank in New York City.

We have not been able to ascertain the future plans of **Gidon Isaacs** (a Judaic Studies major) and three Judaic Studies minors, **Mark Jaros**, **Neil Menashe**, and **Sebastian Iwanicki**. We'll tell you in our next issue.

We should also mention the awards three of our majors will be receiving at Recognition Ceremonies during the course of Commencement weekend. **Melissa Millman** will receive the Jacob and Sarah Piaker Memorial Award for Excellence in Hebrew Studies. **Gidon Isaacs** will receive the Jewish Federation of Broome County Award for Excellence in Hebrew Studies. And **Tanya Tiamfook** will receive the Bnai Zion Foundation Award for Excellence in Hebrew Studies. Congratulations!

We are not just losing our majors and minors, of course, but hundreds of other seniors whom we have had in one or more of our classes and with whom we have, in many cases, established close relationships. And we are losing part of our office staff. I should mention above all **Linette Zapata** (a psychology major). Linette is the first student to work as an intern in our office for four consecutive years. She will be remembered for more than four more years for her combination of unfailing efficiency and infectious good cheer. **Jennifer Ecker** will be leaving us after having worked in our office for only a semester. We will be applying her ingenious ideas about how to raise money for decades to come.

We congratulate everyone in the class of 1994, our majors and minors, our occasional students, our office helpers, and even those students we do not know at all. May they all go from strength to strength. And we are not the only ones who want to congratulate these graduates. Some of their parents have a few words to say too.

Dear Danny,

We are so proud of your achievements, accomplishments and the goals you have set for yourself.

But most of all we are proud that you are our son.

Love,
Mom and Dad

Rikki, Mazel Tov!

You always make us proud of you.

We wish you success and happiness always.

Love,
Mom, Dad, Shari and Lady

Melissa,

A scrap of paper hanging in your room at home reads, "It is difficult to follow in someone else's footsteps when you haven't made your own." Congratulations on making your own fine, true, and beautiful footsteps.

WE love you very much.
Dad, Mom, Jenny, and Keith

Dear Amy Tovah,

B'Hatzlacha, as you pursue your life's dreams

Mazel Tov to our firstborn granddaughter
Love,
Nana and Pop

Much happiness and success as you pursue your dreams

Love,
Saba and Savta

Arabic for Hebrew Speakers

Among our offerings for next fall will be a course that has never been taught before on our campus: Arabic for Hebrew Speakers (Judaic Studies 284A). The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the Arabic language for those students who already possess a thorough knowledge of Hebrew. The advantages of such a course are manifold. Arabic and Hebrew are Semitic languages. They share a common structure and a considerable measure of cognate vocabulary. Many of the difficulties of complex grammatical explanations are eliminated by teaching either of these language to a fluent speaker of the other.

Arabic for Hebrew Speakers will be taught by Josef Meri, a graduate student in the History Department. In addition to doing his course work, Mr. Meri has been working for the past year as Yedida Stillman's research assistant, helping her to prepare her Dictionary of Arab Dress. He himself recently received a grant of over \$5000 from the Social Science Research Council to conduct archival research in Arabic and Judeo-Arabic manuscripts and to develop a curriculum for the teaching of Arabic in general and Arabic for Hebrew speakers in particular.

Mr. Meri himself is fluent in both Arabic and Hebrew. His knowledge of Arabic stems in part from his home- in California. His parents, who moved there from East Jerusalem, spoke to each other in Arabic. He himself, however, grew up speaking English and acquired the larger part of his knowledge of Arabic through his undergraduate studies at the University of California at Berkeley, where he majored in Middle Eastern Studies. It was at Berkeley, too, that he learned Hebrew. After graduating from Berkeley, he spent a year in Israel and the West Bank, on a Fulbright. There he did a study of Palestinian folk culture, focusing on Palestinian proverbs, and also did some work with medieval Islamic and Judeo-Arabic manuscripts at the Hebrew University. Then he came to Binghamton.

"Both Arabic and Hebrew," Mr. Meri informs us, "are languages which are very important to me, close to me academically. My principal research interest is the contact between Islamic and Jewish culture in the Middle Ages." Mr. Meri feels that too much of the scholarship devoted to this period has been politically motivated. Both Arab and Jewish scholars, he contends, have all too often misrepresented the past in order to serve contemporary political aims. His own goal is to study the past in order to discern the truth about it, whatever that may prove to be.

Needless to say, Mr. Meri's interest are not confined to the past. He also wishes to obtain a deeper understanding of contemporary Palestinian Arabic culture and to teach university students about it. He sees the teaching of the Arabic language both as a goal in itself and as a means of disseminating knowledge of Arabic culture, since language and culture are inextricably intertwined. He especially wishes to facilitate mutual understanding between the Arabic and the Jewish cultural spheres. It is our hope and expectation that in teaching Judaic Studies 284A he will take a major step toward the achievement of his goals.

Congratulations, Gail
Love,
Mom and Dad

Neomie,

Always with you,
loving and admiring you
"Go from better to best"

Mom, Dad, Nim, Leora, Ruth

To Gidon,
Mazal Tov

Mom, Dad, Gil, Julie, Tali, and Matt

Zumi,

Haben yakir lanu Ephraim
Congratulations on graduation

Love, Mom and Abba

Editor Apologizes

One of my few unpleasant memories in connection with my Bar Mitzvah is my recollection of the query I heard again and again from my mother during the weeks after the ceremony. "Allan, did you write the thank you notes yet?" It wasn't that she was forgetful. I was slothful. Eventually I got them all out. And I even managed to get out of my head, for a while, the memory I am sharing with you now.

If it has come back, it's not my mother's fault. It's Yedida's. "Allan, have you written the thank you letters yet? Have you thanked so-and-so and so-and-so? They sent us a check in March, and it's April already." In response to such questions I do exactly what I did when my mother asked me a similar question. I nod, promise that it will go out soon, and all too often get distracted by some other responsibility — such as teaching a class.

Well, it's the beginning of May now, and are all the letters out? No! I'm still behind. And I don't even have a completely reliable list of donors to thank in this issue of our newsletter. I'm sorry. I'll get them out soon. I promise. Just as soon as exams are over. And in the next newsletter I'll include all the thanks I'm omitting here. But I can't delay this issue any longer. We have to get it over to Diane Raphael tomorrow (She's responsible for the attractive new format we have). If we don't, we won't be able to print it up in time to have our student interns staple, label and mail it. It might not go out until September! So please, everybody, don't think we're not grateful. Forgive me, and don't punish Judaic Studies for my tardiness. And please don't be deterred from sending us more presents!

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