

THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH
STUDIES
AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Annual Report
(2002-2003)

Jack M. Sasson
Program Director

512 Kirkland Hall
(615) 322-5026

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/>

THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

Year-end Report (2002-2003)

FRONT-PAGE SUMMARY

The program in Jewish Studies was formally launched in August 2002, when Provost Nicholas Zeppos appointed Jack M. Sasson to a three-year term as its director and commissioned a 7-member committee to shape the program. The first year of work has been creative and productive, with signal progress in creating a curriculum, filling the first of three faculty appointments, establishing a community of interest in Jewish Studies and forging communication within and without Vanderbilt. Challenges remain and it will be the business of Jewish Studies to develop new and imaginative ways to expand its contributions to the academic community.

FIRST YEAR UNDERTAKINGS

Faculty development

- Filled a junior position in JS and Religious Studies (Martina Urban, Berlin and Jerusalem)
- Invited Nina Warnke (Univ. of Texas) as visiting faculty, to offer courses on Yiddish culture
- Invited Adam Meyer (Fisk University) to teach a course on Black-Jewish relations

Curriculum development

- Assembled potential JS courses already at Vanderbilt
- Created a Major and reshaped a Minor in Jewish Studies and developed an Honors program
- Stimulated the creation of JS courses by Vanderbilt
- Began discussion about joint work with Peabody

JS program development

- Stimulated faculty awareness about JS through such events as supper-seminars
- Created a student awareness about JS, via the web, brochures, open-house and advertisement
- Initiated discussion about a Junior Year in Prague program
- Presented lectures and prepared for biennial conferences on JS topics

SECOND YEAR PLANS

Faculty development

- *To fill a senior position in JS and History*
- *In alliance with other departments or school, to develop a 2-year post-doc program*
- *To stimulate the production of more JS courses within Vanderbilt and without*

Curriculum development

- *To launch a Junior Year abroad program (Prague, Jerusalem)*
- *To develop a Graduate Certificate in JS and a Master of Arts in JS programs*
- *With Peabody College, to create such programs as Master of Education in JS, with multiple focus*

JS program development

- *To continue seminars for faculty and launch equivalent forums for undergraduates*
- *To broaden public interest in JS through lectures and conferences*

FULL REPORT

PREPARING FOR JEWISH STUDIES AT VANDERBILT

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

In separate reports on their external review (2001-2002) of the potential for Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt, Professors Tamar Rudavsky, Kalman Bland and David Ruderman agreed that we have strengths in Hebrew Bible, Hellenistic Judaism, medieval Jewish philosophy, and twentieth-century Central and Eastern European Jewry as well as in library resources, Jewish life, and administrative commitment. They urged building on these strengths by adding faculty at strategic departments (proposing diverse expertise, the modern Middle East a unanimous choice), by making comparative and interdisciplinary linkage with the professional schools, and by developing an attractive major for undergraduates. Highly desirable would be giving undergraduate access to courses presently offered beyond A&S, such as in the Divinity school. They called for building an infrastructure with broad faculty support, requisite staffing, and educational and promotional capacity that included conferences, lectures, and websites.

COMMITTING TO THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

After broad consultation with relevant University faculty and officials, and acting on the recommendations of the reviewers, in August 2002 Provost Zeppos named Jack M. Sasson, The Werthan Professor of Judaic and Biblical Studies (Divinity school), as the program's director during its three-year construction period. Among the Provost's commitments to the Program were:

1. An annual budget that can be used for a Visiting Scholar program, conferences, visiting speakers, and undergraduate research and scholarship support. These funds carry over from year to year;
2. Adequate operational funds, including secretarial and office support;
3. Three faculty appointments (one junior untenured, one middle level tenured, and one senior tenured) within the coming three years. These appointments were to support the new Program, but also to build upon strength in existing schools and departments.

STEERING COMMITTEE AND ITS WORK

After broad consultation, the Provost invited faculty members from across the University to join a Steering Committee for Jewish Studies, with a staggered two-year term of office. For 2002-2003, the members were:

Dan Cornfield (Professor in Sociology, A&S)
Ellen Goldring (Professor of Education Policy and Leadership, Peabody)
Frank Bloch (Professor of Law)
Jay Geller (Senior Lecturer, Divinity School)
Lenn Goodman (Professor of Philosophy, A&S)
Nathalie Debrauwere-Miller (Assistant Professor of French, A&S)
William P. Smith (Professor of Psychology, A&S)

This committee, meeting 3 times each semester, proved hard-working, stimulating, albeit also feisty. As well as making major decisions on faculty and curriculum development, the committee formulated a number of policies regarding funding of lectures, subsidizing non-JS programs, contributing on-going Vanderbilt programs (such as the Holocaust Lecture series), disbursement of faculty research funds, etc. (No gratitude is adequate to convey the Director's appreciation of its protean and wide-ranging work.)

- For 2003-2004, the Director proposes the following committee, with the first three members in their second of a two-year stint:

Dan Cornfield (Professor in Sociology, A&S)
Ellen Goldring (Professor of Education Policy and Leadership, Peabody)
Lenn Goodman (Professor of Philosophy, A&S)
Helmut Smith (Professor of History, A&S)
Michael Rose (Associate Professor of Music, Blair)
Leah Marcus (Professor of English, A&S)
Martina Urban (Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies and Religious Studies)
Beverly Moran (Professor of Law)

At a supper that launched the work of the Program (18 September 2002), Provost Zeppos gave the committee its charge. On that occasion, Director Sasson proposed the following agenda for the first year's work:

1. Faculty development

- a. Filling a junior position in JS and Religious Studies
- b. Inviting visiting faculty, to enhance course offering
- c. Stimulating creation of courses within Vanderbilt
- d. Enriching course offering through visiting faculty

2. Curriculum development

- a. Assembling potential JS courses already at Vanderbilt
- b. Creating a Major and reshaping a Minor in Jewish Studies
- c. Begin discussion about joint work with Peabody

3. JS program development

- a. Creating a faculty awareness about JS
- b. Creating a student awareness about JS
- c. Presenting lectures and preparing for biennial conferences on JS topics
- d. Developing outreach programming

At its meetings, the JS committee gave the Director guidance on each of the above items. Although during the course of the year there was simultaneous work on all of the above issues, in actuality focus gravitated from one goal to another during the academic year. In this Report, it is convenient to document these activities seriatim.

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

The Status of JS Faculty

Even as the Program was taking shape, the Provost and the Dean of A&S had come to an agreement that the first JS appointment was to be a junior hire that resides in Religious Studies. This choice made eminent sense because Religious Studies is a major entry to the interdisciplinary study of human religious behavior. For Vanderbilt's comparatively homogeneous undergraduate body, a JS appointment in Religious Studies, therefore, offered a fine avenue through which to explore the rich diversity of theological and religious sensibility worldwide.

From the outset, however, it became important to establish the status of the appointment. For its budget and for its direction, JS turns to its sponsor, the Provost's office; yet its initial curriculum is aimed at undergraduates and therefore emulates those obtaining in A&S. Early on, it was important to work out the guidelines on how to treat the holder of the position as far as tenure and promotion are concerned. Too, it was crucial to insure continuous commitment on the part of the host department to the aims and principles

of JS as well as to safeguard against isolation and divided loyalty. In meetings with Dean McCarty of A&S and with Volney Gay, the chair of Religious Studies, a protocol for appointment was shaped:

1. *The appointee holds two titles, one connected with JS, the other with the host institution*
2. *While all personnel actions (tenure and promotion) are vetted within the host department, through its Director or its appointee, JS will have a voting presence*
3. *Search committees will be co-chaired by a delegate from JS and from the host departments with equal representation from both bodies*
4. *Courses taught by the appointee will divide equally between JS and the host department, all courses being cross-listed.*

The First Search: with the Department of Religious Studies

The search itself was, as usual, time consuming, but also exciting because a global response brought in almost forty dossiers, a good number of which were very strong. The relevant text of the advertisement read as follows:

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY. The Religious Studies Department and the Program in Jewish Studies invite applications for a tenure-track, Assistant Professor position, beginning Fall 2003, in the field of Jewish mystical tradition or of modern Jewish intellectual thought. Ph.D. required. Research competence should include the use of comparative methodologies and broad knowledge of social-religious contexts. This is the first of three planned appointments in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt.

A search committee co-chaired by Gay and Sasson included Lenn Goodman and Dan Cornfield (Jewish Studies, Lewis Baldwin (Religious Studies) and Matthew Ramsey (History). Three candidates were brought to campus and proved to be almost as equally compelling. Nevertheless, the search committee decided on **Martina Urban**, a Berlin scholar with an (at that time forthcoming) Hebrew University doctorate (*Hermeneutics of Renewal. A Study of the Hasidic Anthologies of Martin Buber: Die Geschichten des Rabbi Nachman (1906) and Die Legende des Baalschem (1908)*), with Paul Mendes-Flohr and Rachel Elior). The committee decided on Martina Urban because, as a modernist, she would help most to inaugurate the program, especially when placed in a Religious Studies Dept. Her presence links the program with a number of departments and schools while her archival training will prepare graduate students to exploit the fine Zimmerman Judaica collection now housed in the Divinity Library.

The Second Search: with the Department of History

The JS committee held many discussions on the nature of the second faculty position. The consensus was quickly reached that a historian of Judaism would be the most useful addition to the Vanderbilt mission of research and teaching. This decision is in agreement with advice offered by the board of reviewers. There was much discussion about the rank that will be attached to the position, as JS had available to it a mid-level and a senior position, both tenured. There was also discussion about whether or not to attach an administrative objective to the search, in the hopes of attracting a future JS Director. Once the History Department was targeted internally as a potential home for the second appointment, Director Sasson held fruitful talks with the Chair of History, Marshall Eakin. Eventually, the decision on all sides was not to require evidence of administrative talent from candidates, but rather to concentrate fully on research and teaching credentials. (The expectation 'hope' among JS committee members is that there exists enough talent within Vanderbilt from which to draw the next director.) All concerned urged a search with an open rank beyond tenure. The following potential advertisement was hammered out after much debate:

- **Jewish History.** *The History Department and the Program in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee invite nominations and applications for an experienced scholar in Jewish history and culture at a tenured associate or full professor level. The appointment will be for a scholar with a distinguished record in research and teaching. Although we welcome applications in all fields of Jewish history we have a strong interest in any of the following areas: modern Middle East (with proficiency in Hebrew and Arabic); medieval/early modern (any geographic area); modern Eastern Europe; or the diaspora into the Americas.*
- *Residing in the History Department, the successful candidate will also hold an appointment in -- and contribute instruction to-- the interdisciplinary Program in Jewish Studies. This would be the second of three appointments in the Program, adding to Vanderbilt's present strengths in Jewish studies. The first of the three was in Modern Jewish Thought and has been filled in the Department of Religious Studies.*

Meeting with Sasson and Eakin (May 8, 2003), Dean McCarty enthusiastically supported the appointment, provided it does not call on A&S resources, now or later.

Visiting Faculty Appointment

Program funds had been set aside with which to invite visiting faculty to Vanderbilt. In inviting scholars with expertise that is not locally at hand, either at Vanderbilt or regionally, the aim is to broaden the repertoire of course offers available to students as well as to enrich faculty discourse, if only temporarily. The work of Dr. Nina Warnke, currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas, Austin, came to the attention of the JS Director. Dr. Warnke has taught courses on the classical period of Yiddish literature in Eastern Europe, on Yiddish drama, theater and film, and on Yiddish culture in America from the immigrant period to the present. After discussion within the JS committee, and among Dean McCarty, Dietrich Sevin, chair of German Studies, and the JS Director, it was agreed that JS and A&S will jointly fund a one term appointment for Dr. Warnke. She is to be here either in Fall 2004 or Spring 2005 and is likely to teach a course on the East European Jewish immigrant experience and one on the Yiddish theatre.

- *There is much hope that this joint sponsorship of visiting scholars will continue in the future. Within JS, discussion has begun on whether to develop a two-year post-doctoral program that calls for applications on a broad array of JS expertise. Alliances with diverse A&S departments will be pursued and opportunities to attract a senior scholar for briefer visits not be neglected.*

Course Enhancement

The launching of a fuller range of JS studies courses awaits the hiring of new faculty. JS has nonetheless followed two paths toward increasing what is currently offered on the Vanderbilt campus.

1. Development of JS courses through current Vanderbilt faculty

Sasson held talks across the campus with a number of faculty members (from Law, Divinity, Blair, Peabody, and diverse A&S departments) who might have an interest either in creating new courses with JS component or in reshaping existing courses to deepen their JS contents. Almost all approached eagerly endorsed the proposed goal. Among those approached were Carol Swain (“Hate Groups in America”), Sonya Smith and David Williams: (“Incorporating Racial and Ethnic Ideologies on Campus”), Konstantin Kustanovitch, (“Russian Jewish Culture: History of Survival and Search for Identity”), and Claire Smrekar (“The Social and Philosophical Aspects of Education”).

At least one new course has been slated for Fall 2003(Kustanovitch’s), with the expectation that there will be others in the coming semesters. (Lenn Goodman’s “Jewish Philosophy” [Phil 261] is scheduled for Fall 2004.) JS has funds to pay Vanderbilt faculty members who create and teach courses on an overload basis. So far, this has not been necessary, but the offer may prove most attractive to Vanderbilt colleagues currently with adjunct or lecturer status. Among those approached were faculty members from law, education, and the Blair School of music.

- *During the forthcoming academic year, JS will increase effort to facilitate the creation of JS courses through targeted mailing and through personal contact.*

2. Inviting the creation of courses by regional faculty

Director Sasson met with colleagues from Fisk University who have special expertise on topics with JS contents. One professor, Adam Meyer, has accepted to teach a course this Fall on “Black-Jewish relations in History, Literature, and Art.” The course will be cross-listed with the African-American Studies curriculum. Discussions are progressing with colleagues at other neighboring campuses.

CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT

The creation of a JS major and the reshaping of JS minor were primary objectives for the year. After much discussion within JS and A&S, in November 2002, the Program submitted proposals for a major, a minor, and Honors in Jewish Studies. From the outset, their scholarly and pedagogic integrity were uppermost goals for all concerned. After a number of A&S committees offered constructive emendations and improvement, the plans were approved in April 2003. The inauguration of the program that included its rationale was published twice in *the Hustler*, Vanderbilt’s student newspaper, and a number of stories about it appeared in the media.

The new catalogue (as well as the JS webpage <vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/curriculum.html#current>) carries the full language of these programs. Here is a gist of their main features:

MAJOR IN JEWISH STUDIES

The major in Jewish Studies requires a minimum of 36 hours. Elementary knowledge of Hebrew (Hebrew 111a-b) is prerequisite to the major.

Core, up to 24 hours

- *Foundational course*, 3 hours. JS 150: Major Themes in Jewish Studies.
- *Hebrew*, 6 hours. Intermediate Hebrew (Hebrew 113a-b). Proficiency can be demonstrated through testing.
- *Focus Courses*, 12 hours. Select from the following sub-fields of study
 - ? Biblical Studies
 - ? Antiquity and Medieval Thought
 - ? Modern and Contemporary Experience
 - ? Culture, Philosophy, and Literature.
- *Senior Seminar*, 3 hours. JS 250: A Senior seminar.

Electives, up to 18 hours

Select from a list of courses drawn from departments and the professional schools. Non-traditional course-work may also be selected, including archaeology at Tel Megiddo (Israel), Service learning, Internship, and Honors. Studies abroad are encouraged. See internet listing for more detail.

MINOR IN JEWISH STUDIES

The minor in Jewish Studies provides a basic understanding of Jewish history and culture across continents and the past three millennia. Elementary Hebrew (Hebrew 111a-b) is prerequisite. The minor requires a minimum of 18 hours.

Core, 12 hours

- *Foundational course*, 3 hours. JS 150: Major Themes in Jewish Studies.
- *Focus Courses*, 9 hours

Selected from two of the following sub-fields of study:

- Biblical Studies
- Antiquity and Medieval Thought
- Modern and Contemporary Experience
- Culture, Philosophy, and Literature.

Electives, 6 hours

Select from a list of courses drawn from departments and the professional schools. Non-traditional course-work may also be selected, including archaeology at Tel Megiddo (Israel), Service learning, and Internship. Studies may be carried out abroad.

HONORS IN JEWISH STUDIES

The honors program in Jewish Studies affords superior students a more intensive concentration within their major field. The program requires:

- A 3.0 cumulative grade point average
- A 3.25 grade point average in Jewish Studies
- Completion of the junior year
- 6 hours in Honors sections (JS 298a-298b), including completion of thesis (298b). These hours may count toward the major
- An honors thesis to be completed by mid-Spring of the senior year and approved minimally by two faculty members, including the thesis adviser
- Successful completion of an honors oral examination on the topic of the thesis.

Students pursuing honors may apply for funds (up to \$1,250) to help research a thesis. The funds must be spent a full month before submitting a thesis. The recommendation of a thesis adviser must accompany the application.

CURRICULAR PLANS FOR 2003-2004

The JS committee has set a number of curricular objectives for 2003-2004. There are sure to be some adjustments to the major and minor as presently conceived. Especially deserving of attention is the crafting of clearer goals and contents for courses with credit for Service learning and for Internship training and research. But the main tasks will include the following:

- ***Developing a Junior Year Abroad program.*** Director Sasson is currently working with representative (campus and national) of a Prague program that looks promising. If the political climate permits it, it will also be time to quicken the Jerusalem program.
- ***Graduate Certificate in Jewish Studies.*** Patterned after similar certificate programs now offered in Women Studies and in the Carpenter Program in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality, the JS Graduate Certificate will be open to full-time students enrolled in graduate studies (A&S) and in professional schools (Law, Divinity, Music, Education). Requirements will be set.
- ***Master of Arts in Jewish Studies.*** Likely to be created as a track within the Graduate Department of Religion, this degree will permit qualified students to obtain a graduate degree that will strengthen their credentials for doctoral studies.

Peabody Connection

Among curricular innovations that have interested the JS Committee were those that would create a linkage with Peabody College. There are many peer universities that are strong in Jewish Studies, but few that are linked to premiere educational institutions. During its first year, the committee began discussing the challenges and opportunities in developing programs for Jewish educators and in Jewish social services. As there are currently no uniform standards for such programs, exploring connections with Peabody College presents both challenges and opportunities.

- *The JS committee will continue to debate possible avenues such as teaching licensure for Jewish Day Schools or a 5-year combination BA plus MA in Teaching program. It will also examine how Peabody resources and departments (for example, the program in Human and Organizational Development) might allow JS majors to shape a future in areas such as early childhood education, community, development, counseling, or organizational leadership. A number of majors in diverse Peabody programs allow for minoring, and potential connection with JS is worth developing. These explorations will be an important part of JS discussions in the coming year.*
- **Masters of Education in Jewish Studies.** *This is a potentially productive area for JS to pursue, but it will require framing graduate programs across schools. Two areas of focus are worth exploring:*

***Curriculum Focus.** For graduate students in pursuing graduate degree in teaching, essentially in Jewish day schools*

***Community Focus.** For graduate students pursuing graduate studies in NHO segments of Jewish life.*

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

To fulfill its mission of instruction and research in a secular institution of higher learning, JS needs to establish a presence in the University community, earning scholarly credibility among faculty and administrators, appealing to students, and becoming a resource for information and knowledge to the wider community. This agenda is particularly a challenge for JS as its mission is often confused (even by colleagues) with that of Hillel (*The Schulman Center*), for which the raising of Jewish consciousness is the primary assignment. In fact, JS is no different from any other interdisciplinary academic program with the distinct aim of facilitating the critical study of Jewish history, religion, language, philosophy, politics, culture, society, music, art, and literature, across continents and over millennia.

Having completed its first year, JS has made significant progress in interpreting its objectives to Vanderbilt colleagues, it has begun to broadcast its resources among undergraduates, but it has made only occasional forays into public presentations.

CREATING AWARENESS ABOUT JS

The Internet and brochures

Working with the Office of Creative Services, JS has mounted an attractive website at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/>

The staff at Creative services has also created a fine brochure that will be widely distributed, directly from the JS program or from other administrative and student life offices.

Faculty Supper-seminars

On December 11, 2002, Prof. Helmut Smith (History Department) gave a talk featuring his book, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002). In attendance were about twenty colleagues, from every segment of the University. In this way was inaugurated the "Faculty Supper-Seminar" with the intent of fostering a community of faculty interest in Jewish Studies. Participants schmooze, listen to a presentation, sup, and discuss issues of common interest, all within 90 minutes.

Subsequently, two other similar events brought together up to thirty colleagues to hear Vivien Fryd speak on "A Century Ago: The Jewish Artist in America" (March 10) and Frank Bloch reminiscing movingly about his family's odyssey in "Between Two Worlds" (April 1). Most impressive was the turnout from across the campus,

- *This program will continue next academic year, with 2 Faculty Supper-seminars per semester to be scheduled.*

Lectures

The Program has sponsored or co-sponsored number of lectures since its inception, but it has not yet gotten into full gear in the range and type of scheduling that it needs to carry out. It has been very receptive to the calls for co-funding by colleagues, and this posture is likely to draw more requests as the JS is better defined in their minds. The program has committed to contribute yearly to the campus Holocaust series. During academic 2002-2003, the Program has sponsored or co-sponsored the following lectures, all open to the public:

With the Divinity School

Oct 30, 2002 J.P.- Dessel (University of Tennessee, Knoxville) "Rural Elites in the Biblical World: The Archaeology of Tell 'Ein Zippori, Israel."

With the the Carpenter Program in Gender and Sexuality and Women's Studies

Feb 2-3, 2003 Renée Melammed (Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, Israel).
- Feb. 2, "Defying the Spanish Inquisition: The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile"
- Feb 3, "The Forgotten Holocaust Victims: Sephardic Jewry"
- Feb 3, "'He Said, She Said': A Woman Teacher in Twelfth Century Cairo," a faculty lunch-seminar that drew over 25 colleagues from across the campus.

- *Future lectures are in the planning, including a presentation by Jodi Magness (Univ. of NC) on the Qumran community. Sharper coordination is contemplated with the Schulman Center in sponsoring presentations that appeal beyond Vanderbilt.*

Biennial Conferences

For 2004, The Program has committed to sponsor an international conference celebrating the 800th anniversary of the death of the great Theologian/Philosopher/Physician Moses, son of Maymun (Maimonides, April 4, 1204). Professors Goodman and Dobbs-Weinstein are coordinating plans that involve a number of departments and segments of the larger community.

Director Sasson is currently discussing a number of potential ventures that he will present to the JS committee in the Fall, among them a conference on the "Future of Jewish Liberalism" (with the Divinity School and the Center for Religion and Culture) and on the Jewish Cinema. Other potential programs will exploit the holdings in the Glatzer collection (Divinity School Library).

Seminars for students

- *The Program will adapt its Faculty Supper-seminars series for undergraduates, possibly as luncheons, with the aim of attracting them to the promise of JS as part of their educational career. Now that JS has accessible space for office and programming, such occasions can be multiplied. It is essential that early in its history JS come to be recognized by students as an attractive learning (as well as a potential career) avenue. Coordinating such occasions to moments when the parents of students are on campus might prove useful.*

TOWARD THE SECOND YEAR of JS at VANDERBILT

As it enters its second year of existence, the Program has every reason to be hopeful about its presence at Vanderbilt. It has enjoyed strong support from the administration and has attracted a welcoming response from colleagues. Students will come to know about it better through lectures, forums, brochures, the web, and the like. As it continues to fill newly created faculty positions, to develop an attractive curriculum, and a broader selection of courses, JS has also every reason to be hopeful about its academic contribution to Vanderbilt.

The future of Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt indeed is bright.

COMMENTS WELCOME

As you finish reading this report, by all means consider emailing any comment, suggestion, encouragement, or even caution to the program's director at: <jack.m.sasson@vanderbilt.edu>

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512 Kirkland Hall
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<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/>