

# PROGRAM IN JEWISH STUDIES

## ANNUAL REPORT

2010 - 2011



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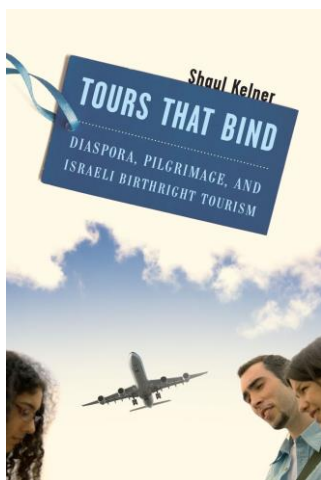
## Jewish Studies Annual Report 2010-11

The Program in Jewish Studies has had another happy and productive year of consolidation, with the largest number of undergraduate majors in our history. What follows is a survey of major accomplishments during the 2010-11 academic year.

### Faculty

This year we passed important milestones for the program. Martina Urban, the first faculty member hired by Jack Sasson when he launched the Jewish Studies Program at Vanderbilt, received tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor. We also awarded a Vanderbilt five-year pin to Professor Allison Schachter, the first tenure-track faculty member to be hired with a tenure home in Jewish Studies as opposed to one of the traditional departments, such as History, English, Sociology, or Religious Studies. Since Professor Schachter came, all of our tenure-track faculty have been hired directly into the Program in Jewish Studies and as a result the program is achieving a cohesiveness that it otherwise would have lacked. We are very proud of our young scholars. With Professor Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman's highly successful "Jewish Law" course, taught at the Law School during Spring, 2011, we have expanded the reach of the program from the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate Department of Religion into the Law School.

As usual, our faculty have been very professionally active during the past year. Professors Lieberman, Cohen, Schachter, and Kelner presented papers at the Association for Jewish Studies annual conference. In addition, our faculty have been invited to give papers at prestigious international venues. Professor Lieberman presented a paper at a conference on Jewish migration at the University of Capetown, South Africa, and Professor Schachter offered new work on Jewish modernist novelist Leah Goldberg at a Tel Aviv/Jerusalem conference commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Goldberg's birth. Julia Cohen spent much of the summer in Istanbul, Turkey on a Vanderbilt Research Scholars Grant, which was awarded for additional research towards the completion of her book manuscript, *Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Belonging*.



A major event was Shaul Kelner's winning of the AJS Jordan Schnitzer Book Award for his book *Tours that Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York: NYU Press, 2010). The Schnitzer Award was created by the Association for Jewish Studies in 2008. It awards prizes in eight fields on a rotating basis, so that two prizes are awarded each year and each prize represents the best work in its field during the previous four years. Kelner's book was the winner in the broad area encompassed by "Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore." We are enormously proud of Professor Kelner's award and the luster that it brings to Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt. During the AJS reception honoring him for the award, our faculty presented him with a gift to show our recognition of the value of his achievement. Our brilliant young scholars were on display that evening and helped make the Jewish Studies scholars from around the country aware of the quality and

vitality of our program.

Another banner event from 2010-2011 was the appointment of Professor Amy-Jill Levine, a member of the Jewish Studies core faculty, to a highly prestigious University Professorship. University Professors have the right to teach in two different schools across the university – in Prof. Levine’s case, Divinity and Arts and Science. Prof. Levine is the first woman in the humanities who has been appointed University Professor and we congratulate her on this important honor. Her new title is Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies and University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies.

### **Course Offerings**

We continue to expand the range of courses we offer to reflect strong interest on the part of undergraduate and graduate students. During 2010-2011, we offered the following courses:

#### **Fall, 2010**

- JS 115F.01 In a Pluralistic Age: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Spain (Lieberman)
- JS 115F.04 Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs: Black-Jewish Relations in the 1950s and 1960s (Meyer)
- JS 115F.09 Jews and Muslims: A Modern History (Cohen)
- JS 122 Classical Judaism: Jews in Antiquity (Lieberman)
- JS 136W Imagining the Alien: Jewish Science Fiction (Klass)
- JS 155 American Jewish Life (Kelner)
- JS 156 The Holocaust (Joskowicz)
- JS 180W Introduction to Jewish Studies (Meyer)
- JS 248W Jewish Storytelling (Schachter)
- JS 255 Zionism: Politics, Religion, and Ethnicity (Urban)
- JS 257.01 Topics in Ancient and Medieval Jewish History: Jews and Greeks (Wasserstein)

#### **Spring, 2011**

- JS 115F.10 Jewish Responses to Catastrophe (Lieberman)
- JS 124 Perspectives on Modern Jewish History (Joskowicz)
- JS 137W Black-Jewish Relations in Post-War American Literature and Culture (Meyer)
- JS 222 Jews in Egypt from the Biblical Joseph to the Suez Crisis (Wasserstein)
- JS 235W Hebrew Literature in Translation (Schachter)

JS 245	Major Themes in Jewish Studies: Jewish Studies in the Academy (Kelner)
JS 20	Is G-d Guilty? The Problem of Evil in Jewish Thought (Urban)
JS 253W	Witnesses Who Were Not There: Literature of the Children of Holocaust Survivors (Meyer)

For the first time, Jewish Studies allowed interested members of the Vanderbilt and Nashville communities to audit our courses, subject only to the professor's permission. A few stalwart souls took advantage of this opportunity and we hope for more Vanderbilt and Nashville participation in the future.

### **Undergraduate Majors**

Since the beginning of the program, the number of our majors has gradually increased. 2011 was a banner year with four students graduating with a BA in Jewish Studies. We never expect a large number of majors because our language requirement -- two years of modern Hebrew or another language of the Jewish people -- represents a barrier for many students. In the future, we may consider lowering the language requirement but for the present, we are happy to congratulate our four gifted majors from the class of 2011: Aliza Berger, Maia Kane, Shira Paul, and David Schnabel.

### **MA and PhD Programs**

During 2010-2011 MA candidates Nick Schaser and Rachael Whitley completed their coursework towards the degree. Both are now close to finishing their theses. We are gradually building the groundwork for a PhD program by creating alliances with existing PhD programs. Last year, the Department of Philosophy agreed to create a degree track in Philosophy and Jewish Studies; this new track will facilitate the careers of emerging PhDs by allowing them to compete in two job markets instead of one: Philosophy and Jewish Studies. A similar proposal was made to the Graduate Department of Religion at the end of the 2011 school year; its status is still pending. In the future, we plan to approach the Department of History with a similar proposal. Eventually, we expect to receive funding for one or two Jewish Studies PhD candidates per year, and these candidates will pursue their degrees in one of the departments with which we have agreements for Jewish Studies degree tracks.

## Lecture Series

During 2010-11, the program planned and sponsored the following events and speakers:



September 21, 2010 - INTERNATIONAL LENS - *Little Town of Bethlehem* -  
Presented by: Allison Schachter, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies



October 7, 2010 - Anne Lapidus Lerner - "Sarah's Speech and Silence"



November 2, 2010 – Alan Rosen - "Killing Time, Saving Time: Calendars and the Holocaust"



November 18, 2010 - Sabine Schmidtke - "Jewish Contributions to Islamic Learning in the Medieval and Late Medieval Muslim World"



December 2, 2010 - Olga Borovaya - "Moses Almosnino's Extremos y Grandezas de Constantinopla: Travelogue of an Ottoman Jew or Philosophical Treatise of a Hispanic Rabbi?"

January 24, 2011 - Jonathan Freedman - " Graves and Images: 'Once Upon a Time in America' and the Unmaking of Jewish Memory"



April 5, 2011 -Etgar Keret - "The Dark and the Surreal: An Evening with Israeli Writer Etgar Keret"

April 13, 2011 - Noam Pianko - "Zionism and the Roads Not Taken: Nation Beyond State in Jewish Political Thought"



We also take it as part of our mission to co-sponsor other campus lectures related to Jewish Studies topics. Last year's lectures co-sponsored by Jewish Studies include:

September 24, 2010 – Isa Afacan – "Civil-Military Relations and Democratization in Turkey," co-sponsored with Istanbul Center

October 22, 2010 – Barbara Hahn/Esther Dischereit - "Before the High Holidays the House was Full of Whisperings," sponsored by the Max Kade Center for European and German Studies, The Department of German, and The Program in Jewish Studies, Vanderbilt University

November 4-5, 2010 – David J. Halperin – " The Mystic and the Moon-Woman: A Case Study in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century Religious Experience," and "UFOs—Visitors From Inner Space," – sponsored by: The Vanderbilt Divinity School, Program in Jewish Studies, Department of Religion, Department of History

November 9, 2010 - David Ussishkin - "Canaanite Megiddo in View of Old and New Excavations," co-Sponsored by: Divinity School, Jewish Studies, Anthropology, Classical Studies, Religious Studies

November 17, 2010 - Biblical Colloquium – Gershon Galil "The Hebrew Inscription from Khirbet Qeiyafa/Neta'im Script, Language, Literature and History," sponsored by Vanderbilt Divinity School & The Program in Jewish Studies

November 17, 2010 - David Runia - "Dogma and Doxa in the Allegorical Writings of Philo of Alexandria," sponsored by the Divinity School and JS advertised it

March 1, 2011 - Yishai Fleisher - "Sovereignty in the State of Israel: Self-Determination, Indigenous Rights and International Law," co-sponsored by: Christians United for Israel (CUFI), Dore for Israel (DFI), and Vanderbilt Program in Jewish Studies



March 4, 2011 – Elhanan Yakira – “The New Israeli Problem – is or is it not a new form of Antisemitism?” as a lecture for Jewish Studies and “Spinoza on Body and Soul – How Did He Become Parallelist Without Even Knowing?” co-sponsored with Philosophy

### **Jewish Studies Faculty Suppers**

Every year the Program in Jewish Studies sponsors three or four Jewish Studies Faculty Suppers that give Jewish faculty and friends from around the university the opportunity to mingle and discuss questions of mutual interest. Last year’s seminars were all extremely interesting, and we thank the presenters and participants.

September 13, 2010 - Ed Saff and Ruth Smith - "Finding Family Roots in the Ukraine"

October 26, 2010 – Michael Aurbach - " You Make the Call: Jewish Identity and the Art World"



February 21, 2011 - Ari Joskowicz - "Jews, Roma, and Sinti in the 20th Century"

May 2, 2011 - Aliza G. Berger - "Songs to Welcome the Sabbath"

## **Conclusion**

The Program in Jewish Studies would like to thank all the faculty, student, administrative, and community participants who have helped to make the past year's programs a success. We are looking forward to further expansion of our events and course offerings, and to an enhanced presence at Vanderbilt and in the Nashville community.