

# Jewish Studies Program

Spring Semester 2008

Michigan State University

College of Arts & Letters  
301 Linton Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1044  
Telephone: 517-432-3493  
Fax: 517-355-4507  
Web: www.jsp.msu.edu  
E-mail: jewishst@msu.edu

*Kenneth Waltzer, Director*  
*Michael Serling, Chair, Advisory Board*  
*Milo Woodard, Administrative Assistant*

## Jewish Studies to Do Self-Study

**A**t the invitation of the Provost's Office, our faculty will be conducting a self-study during spring 2008 and creating a new strategic plan for Jewish Studies.

Since Jewish Studies began in 1992, the program has grown substantially, hired four new core faculty members, attracted core or affiliated support from a dozen more faculty, created an undergraduate specialization, and built an expanding Hebrew program.

We have elaborated an active schedule of events annually, undertaken special projects, such as an award-winning museum exhibit, Israeli film festivals, Holocaust teacher training workshops, and more, built a substantial study abroad component focused on Israel and to a lesser extent on Poland, led the way nationally in reopening study in Israel, and become a nationally visible program.

To date, with help from Michael and Elaine Serling, Ed and Julie Levy, and others, we have raised over \$4 million from benefactors, including funds for an Israeli Studies Chair, for scholarships for student study in Israel, and for annual lectures or performances on the Holocaust, on Modern Israel, on Yiddish language and culture, on Jewish art and music, and on Jewish film.

We have won praise in the *Detroit Jewish News* as part of the renaissance of Jewish life and culture at MSU. Most importantly, we

have recruited talented faculty in national and international searches and our faculty's scholarly accomplishments and teaching successes signify the program's rising quality and promise.

Now, fifteen years later, having put all this in place where before there was no specialization, no Hebrew, no annual events, and no development initiative, it is time for the Jewish Studies program to take stock and offer a revised vision and agenda for the next period.

Associate Provost June Youatt writes that "The accomplishments of the program – publications, lecture series, study abroad opportunities, new courses, films, speakers, research initiatives, and development successes—are impressive and important to MSU." It is now time to "review the current status and future directions of Jewish Studies," including its strengths and new ideas, and find possible additional partners at MSU that "might expand both resources and opportunities."

The vision shaping Jewish Studies to date has been to focus primarily on the great transformation in Jewish life in the past 120 years, during which what was once central, Europe, became peripheral, and what were peripheral, North America and Israel, became central. In 2007, 11 million of 13.2 million Jews in the world live either in North America or Israel. This formula has thus seemed to make sense to decide what faculty to hire, courses to develop,

language instruction to emphasize, and programming to create. Our task will be to test this vision, refine, and develop it, or provide a new one. Does the "transformation and two centers" focus have staying power? Does it fit well with the thrust of a global land grant university? What revised vision is possible? Other tasks will be to develop new ideas and new initiatives, new ways to serve students and faculty, and new ways to attract support.

At a retreat during fall 2007, faculty began talking about new directions, including developing a subject code for Jewish Studies, creating a core course, developing a language intensive track or cluster, elaborating Hebrew instruction to the 300 level, creating other new courses, like a course on global Jewish literature, exploring course offerings off-campus, and investigating other possible initiatives like an on-line Masters of Education in Jewish Studies. Lynne Goldstein has taken the initiative to begin creating a core course, with help from other faculty. Mike Kaplowitz is already pioneering a new short study abroad program on environmental policy in "a green Israel."

We look forward to taking advantage of the self-study to demonstrate the strengths of the program, explore new directions, and broaden our support. If readers of our newsletter have suggestions, please contact us.

~Ken Waltzer, Director

**16th Annual David and Sarah Rabin Holocaust Lecture**  
**Elliot Caplan on his film in process *Hidden Things***  
7:00 pm, Lincoln Room, MSU Kellogg Center



*Hidden Things*, a film being made by Picture Start Films, in cooperation with the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture and Yad Vashem, is a powerful visual poem that will illuminate the lives of children who experienced the Holocaust. Jewish children, who spent precious years in Nazi concentration camps or in hiding, were a special target in the scheme to eradicate the Jews, for they were the crucial link to the future. Who were these

children? How did they muster the will and ability to survive under such enormous duress?

**Third Annual Israeli Film Festival: March 30, 31, and April 1**  
147 Communication Arts & Sciences



*Aviva Ahuvati*  
(*Aviva My Love*)  
Monday, March 31 at 7:00 pm  
\$5 public, \$3 students

*Three Mothers*  
Tuesday, April 1  
at 7:00 pm  
Free



*Sisai*  
Sunday,  
March 30  
at 1:00 pm  
Free

And more—see film festival insert for details!

Tuesday, January 22

*"A New Tale of Jewish Migration: Postwar Detroit's Jews"*

Lila Corwin Berman, Asst Professor of History and Religious Studies, Pennsylvania State University

12:00—1:30 pm, 321 Linton Hall



Thursday, February 7

*"It Sounds Better in Amharic"*

Presented by the Nephesh Theater of Israel. Starring Yossi Vassa, written by Yossi Vassa and Shai Ben Attar, translation by Howard Rypp and directed by Shai Ben Attar.



7:00 pm, RCAH Theatre Snyder-Philips Hall (Terrace)

Thursday, February 14

*"Middle East Strategic Overview: An Israeli Perspective"*

Charles Freilich, Former Israeli Deputy National Security Advisor, Senior Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School

3:15—4:30 pm, C102 Wonders Hall



Wednesday, February 20

*"Solomon Maimon and the Heresy of Modern Jewish Thought"*

Benjamin Pollock, Asst Professor of Judaism and Modern Jewish Thought, MSU

4:45—6:00 pm, Honors College Seminar Room, Eustace Cole Hall



Wednesday, March 19

Serling Modern Israel Lecture  
*"Israel At 60 Years"*

Avishai Margalit, George F. Kennan Professor, Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton U.

7:15—9:00 pm. MSU Union Gold Room "B"



Thursday, March 27

*"Jewish Tales of the Supernatural"*

Howard Schwartz, University of St. Louis at Missouri

7:00—9:00 pm,  
MSU Union Green Room



Tuesday, April 15 and  
Wednesday, April 16

Film: *The Buchenwald Ball*

7:00—9:00 pm,

4/15: 339 Case Hall

4/16: RCAH Theatre  
Snyder-Philips (Terrace)



Thursday, April 17

Film: *The Boys of Buchenwald*  
7:00—9:00 pm, RCAH Theatre  
Snyder-Philips (Terrace)



## Study Abroad in Israel, Summer 2008

### Jewish Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem

June 26—July 30, 2008 (8 cr.)

Deadline: March 1, 2008

This program in the Israel Studies Institute at the Rothberg International School enables students to earn 8 credits in the arts and humanities or social sciences while living and studying at the Hebrew University. Dr. Marc Bernstein is leading the program, which focuses on the history, society and culture of Israel. Two courses, on the Making of Modern Israel, and on The Land of Israel in Historical Perspective, are offered. Courses meet SMWTh, with excursions on T. Jewish Studies offers Levy scholarships to students who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact: [msb@msu.edu](mailto:msb@msu.edu)

### Environmental and Natural Resource Sustainability in a Green Israel

June 10—25, 2008 (4 cr.)

Deadline: March 1, 2008

This new program emphasizes experiential/service learning focused on sustainable development and environmental stewardship. Students learn about environmental policy, natural resource management, and aspects of "a green Israel." The program is located at Tel Aviv University, Tel-Hai College, and Keren Kayemet Lelsrael at the Lake Hula Reserve in the Upper Galilee. Students will have hands on experiences with reforestation and water quality projects, biological surveys, and ecotourism. Dr. Michael Kaplowitz is leading the program. Jewish Studies offers Levy scholarships to students who meet the eligibility criteria. Contact: [kaplowitz@msu.edu](mailto:kaplowitz@msu.edu)

## SECOND ANNUAL SERLING LECTURE ON MODERN ISRAEL

Avishai Margalit, George F. Kennan Professor, Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton University, Professor Emeritus, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*"Israel at 60 Years"*

Wednesday, March 19: 7:15—9:00 pm, Union Gold Room "B"

Avishai Margalit is one of the foremost thinkers and commentators on the contemporary human condition and key moral issues of our time. A philosopher, Margalit is highly regarded for his profound observations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader struggle between Islam and the West. He is author of *The Decent Society* (1996), *Views in Reviews: Politics and Culture in the State of the Jews* (1998), *The Ethics of Memory* (2002) and *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies* (with Ian Buruma, 2004). His appointment at Princeton began in 2006 and extends to 2008. Professor Margalit will also lead a faculty/student seminar on Thursday, March 20, 10:00 am in 321 Linton Hall.



## THOUGHTS ON A NEW(OLD) PEACE PROCESS

By Ken Waltzer, Director-Jewish Studies

The news from Annapolis was that Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) have committed to a new bilateral peace process to address all issues – borders, refugees, Jerusalem, and more -- by late 2008. The peace settlement under U.S. sponsorship, with the U.S. as sole monitor and referee, will seek to make two states for two peoples, including a new independent, contiguous, viable Palestinian state, no doubt with its capital in East Jerusalem.

One wonders if peace can be achieved. Mahmoud Abbas, PA president, has shaky power at best. Hamas, which may be as strong in the West Bank as in Gaza, declares no way it will participate, refusing to accommodate to Israel's existence. Hamas believes Palestinian lands run from the sea to the river, terms Abbas a traitor, and commits to do all it can to suicide bomb and rocket the process. Iran is readying a conference of rejectionist Palestinian factions.

Neither does Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert appear to have the strength to compel broad support among Israelis, although a small majority, as also of Palestinians, favors a two-state solution. Some in Olmert's fragile governing coalition oppose a two-state solution, others refuse to give up any part of Jerusalem; still others simply can't see dealing with Abbas, who they think cannot deliver effectively.

We cannot expect that the Arab states will do much on behalf of peace. While most wish Israel and the Palestinians to engage, they do so to strengthen regional security against Iran, not to create a committed peace.

So where does all this leave the prospects? The US/Middle East Project, Inc. (Brent Scowcroft, Zbigniew Brzezinski, et al.) argues the process must succeed to stem a rising tide of violence in the Middle East. The outlines of an agreement must include two states, Jerusalem as two capitals, special arrangements for the Old City, a solution to the refugee problem, and appropriate security considerations.

But all this comes back to the power and strength of the participants to make concessions politically and survive and to enforce real changes on the ground. It comes back to making real changes in people's lives. All of it also comes back to the willingness of the United States to actively and continuously promote and press the process. The record is not inspiring.

Remember the U.S sponsored road map of 2002? Thus far, nothing has been accomplished. The first step for the Palestinians was to disarm and dismantle the militant groups. Instead, Abbas lost Gaza. What peace is possible without PA control of Gaza?

The first step for Israel was to dismantle

illegal settlement outposts. This too has not been done. Even President Bush scowls that it has not been done.

Finally, despite all the show that the President and Secretary of State are willing to actively involve the U.S. in monitoring and evaluating the process, there is limited time in Bush's term or sign that Americans will press for big changes.

Maybe this is too pessimistic. After all, when did such an ingathering occur? Annapolis has set in motion new peace talks and has shifted the rhetoric by key parties. European states appear to be ready to extend significant financial assistance to a Palestinian state. Maybe even Arab states will do better, even pressure Hamas for unity or to give up Gaza. Yet all is unlikely, save for continued talking...

What is most likely to happen in the next year is confirmation that Palestinian demands outpace Israeli concessions, Israeli demands dwarf Palestinian abilities to abandon romantic views on refugees, and American involvement is too little and too late. Israelis will wrestle hard with borders, settlements and Jerusalem; Palestinians will express continued yearnings for a huge return to Israel. And a U.S. Secretary of State who is out of her element will not bridge the gap.

### ANNAPOLIS: REASONS FOR HOPE

Yael Aronoff, Serling & Friends Assistant Professor of Israeli Studies

Although a comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and the PA by the end of 2008 is not *probable*, it is *possible* – and there is cause to be cautiously optimistic. This is based on seven reasons: 1) the Israeli and Palestinian publics have consistently supported a two state solution; 2) negotiators came very close to reaching such an agreement at Taba 7 years ago; 3) Abbas and Olmert have changed sufficiently to make significant concessions; 4) Olmert, Abbas, and Bush are all in positions where they need to show success; 5) the strategy of unilateral withdrawal has been delegitimized and the need for negotiation highlighted; 6) most regional states are now willing to accept Palestinian concessions and Israel's existence; and 7) there is growing recognition that no agreement is more dangerous than the alternative.

Despite violence, disillusionment, and frustration, the majority of Israelis and Palestinians say that they support a two state solution. Sixty-eight percent of Palestinians supported the Annapolis process. Multiple surveys show that Hamas' electoral success was due not to Palestinian opposition to a two-state solution but dissatisfaction with Fatah's corruption.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators came close to reaching an agreement at Taba seven years ago. Saeb Erakat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, has said that negotiations were already completed and that the U.S. only needed to push the leaders to sign. Israeli and Palestinian negotiators came as close as a 3% difference over borders. The Palestinian negotiators seemed to realize that there could never be full implementation of the right of return. If the deadlock over principles can be turned into a numbers game, compromise becomes possible. At Taba, too, negotiators agreed on dividing Jerusalem, and the remaining contentious issue was the Temple Mount or Harim al Sharif.

Not only are people willing to accept, and the negotiators have laid groundwork for compromise, but the leaders are open as well. Fatah leaders know an agreement means life or death. They will lose power, Hamas will get stronger; the territories will remain destitute. Abbas has spoken against suicide bombing and rocket attacks for two years now and, since the Hamas coup, has grown more serious on clamping down on terrorism against Israel in the West Bank.

Olmert was a key influence on Sharon's change of attitude toward withdrawals from the West Bank and Gaza. Dividing Jerusalem would not be easy, but Olmert is capable of it. Bush is also anxious for a foreign policy success in the Middle East.

Much of the Middle East is ready to sanction Palestinian concessions and accept Israel's existence if Israel makes peace with Syria and the Palestinians. For the first time there is a shared greater threat to everyone – namely, Iran and Islamist groups who threaten the present regimes. This perceived threat from Iran is coupled, of course, with recognition that they cannot militarily defeat Israel. Even Syria is courting the U.S. and is signaling readiness to negotiate with Israel.

The time to reach a peace agreement is now. There are risks, but the risks of failing to reach an agreement are more severe. Without an agreement, Hamas will be strengthened and support for a two state solution will decrease. Meanwhile, waiting for a new U.S. president to devote adequate attention to negotiations may take several years. This too may move leaders to pursue negotiations.

There is a realistic possibility for an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians by the end of 2008. All these reasons provide me with a hope for peace which I have yearned for my entire life. Before the Oslo agreement, nobody predicted that it would happen, and afterwards everyone pointed to the reasons why it did. Success primarily depends on active mediation and dedication on the part of U.S. leaders. Implementation after 2008 will pose its own challenges, perhaps even greater than reaching an agreement itself.





Michigan State University

College of Arts & Letters  
301 Linton Hall  
East Lansing, MI 48824-1044

Phone: 517-432-3493  
Fax: 517-355-4507  
Email: jewishst@msu.edu  
www.jsp.msu.edu

MSU is an affirmative-action,  
equal-opportunity institution.

Non Profit Org  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
East Lansing, MI  
Permit #21

---

## Academic News

---

**Yael Aronoff's** essay review of *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (edited by Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, 2007) is forthcoming in *Political Science Quarterly*. She will also present "Predicting Peace: An Israeli-Palestinian Final Agreement by 2009?" at the Association for Israel Studies Conference in New York in May 2008.

**Marc Bernstein's** erudite book *Stories of Joseph—Narrative Migrations in Judaism and Islam*, was nominated for a National Jewish Book Award. Marc will direct the MSU Jewish Studies study abroad program at Hebrew University's Rothberg School in Israel in summer 2008 and teach a course on *The Land of Israel in Historical Perspective*.

**Ilana Blumberg's** excellent memoir, *Houses of Study: A Jewish Woman Among Books*, was runner up for a National Jewish Book Award in Women's Studies, and is one of five finalists for the Sami Rohr Prize in Jewish Non-fiction Literature. Ilana will present as part of the Michigan Writers' Series at the MSU Library on February 12, 2008.

**Kirsten Fermaglich** has researched about name-changing among American Jews during the 20th century while on leave in 2007-08. She organized a roundtable "Funny, You Don't Look American: Integrating American Jewish History into the History of the United States" at the Association for Jewish Studies in December 2007. She also published a review essay, "More Than Plantations and Pastrami: Southern Jewish History Comes of Age," *Southern Jewish History* (2007).

**Steve Gold** received the Charles Horton Cooley Award for Distinguished Scholarship in Sociology from the Michigan Sociology Association (2007). His chapter, "Using Photography in Studies of Immigrant Communities: Reflecting Across Projects and Populations," appeared in *Visual Research Methods: Image, Society and Representation*, edited by Gregory C. Stanczak in 2007, and another on "Israeli Emigration Policy" appeared in *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation*, ed. by Nancy Green and François Weil.

**Michael Koppisch** participated in a faculty trip to Israel during January 2008 sponsored by the Israel Studies Institute at Touro College in New York and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Anna Norris** taught a graduate seminar on the issue of memory and war in French literature and cinema. This spring, she is organizing two panels at the Women in French conference on women and war. She will present an essay on anti-Semitism and self-hatred in writings by Irene Nemirovsky.

**Benjamin Pollock** presented at the American Academy of Religion conference in San Diego in November, 2007 on "Between Talmud and Philosophy: Salomon Maimon on Judaism's True Teaching." He also presented twice at the Association for Jewish Studies meeting in Toronto in December, on Salomon Maimon's "Esotericism," and on "As if I speak with Isaiah": Franz Rosenzweig on Politics, Vision, and the Kingdom of God." In spring 2008, *The Philosopher as Witness: Fackenheim and Responses to the Holocaust*, a collection of essays Pollock edited with Michael Morgan, will appear with SUNY Press.

**Ellen Rothfeld** studied *ulpan* methods of teaching Hebrew in Israel in summer 2007 and has been hard at work coordinating spring events, including the Israeli Film Festival, and "It Sounds Better in Amharic."

**Keely Stauter-Halsted** presented two papers on eugenics in Poland at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and on anti-Semitism—one at the annual meeting of the Slavics Association, and the other at the American Historical Association Convention, in 2007.

**Ken Waltzer** has been invited to give the Weinmann Lecture at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington DC, May 15, 2008 on "The Rescue of Children and Youth at Buchenwald." He has also applied to participate in a research seminar during July at the USHMM on Studying Anti-Semitism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. If invited, he will research "The American Left and the New Anti-Semitism: 1967-2007."