

# Jewish Studies Program

Fall Semester 2013



Michigan State University

College of Arts & Letters  
C-730 Wells Hall  
619 Red Cedar Road  
East Lansing, MI 48824  
Telephone: 517-432-3493  
Fax: 517-355-4507  
Web: jsp.msu.edu  
E-mail: jewishst@msu.edu

*Kenneth Waltzer, Director*  
*Michael Serling, Chair, Advisory Board*  
*Bill Bilstad, Newsletter Editor*

## A Fruitful Partnership

Today, Michigan State University ranks among the top sixty schools American Jewish students attend and is twentieth among public universities. This was not the case historically.

Before WWII, Michigan Agricultural College (M.A.C.) was hardly a destination for the children of the great East European Jewish immigration; the focus on scientific agriculture and the dominant Protestant ethos on campus did not draw college-going Detroit Jews. These attended Detroit City College (Wayne State University); a few went to the University of Michigan.

Yet, some did come to M.A.C. Abe Eliowitz, a left-handed throwing, signal-calling fullback from Detroit Western, earned All-American honors in the early 1930s. The Alpha Epsilon Pi Jewish fraternity founded a chapter in 1934. Hillel opened in 1939. A sprinkling of Jewish students came during the Depression, and more came in the mid and late 1940s. Leo Keeps studied animal husbandry in the mid-1940s; Roslyn Schneider came for medical technology. Distinguished alumnus and nationally known real-estate developer Albert Ratner, from Cleveland Heights, Ohio, studied forestry and graduated in 1951. Eli Broad, from Detroit, for whom the business school and new art museum are named, was an accounting major and graduated in 1954.

Then, in the mid-1950s and 1960s, things began changing. Under President John Hannah, the grandchildren of immigrants started coming to the new Michigan State University. MSU joined the Big Ten in these years, grew in size from 16,000 to 34,000 in 1965, and began to

alter in its culture. Among the newcomers were many Jewish (as well as ethnic Catholic) students from Detroit, Detroit's inner suburbs, and numerous small cities and towns. Jewish enrollment more than tripled from 1958 to 1968, shifting from 500 to 1,800, or about 5 percent of the student enrollment. This marked the beginning of collaboration between MSU and Michigan's Jewish community.

Jewish alumni from the late 1950s and 1960s say they comprised a larger percentage of the total enrollment than earlier or later. They also say many Jewish students attended from major urban areas in the East, including Pennsylvania and New York. A few came to play sports; a few came for academic scholarships. Many were interested in business or the liberal arts, and some went on to achieve significant success. Jewish faculty also arrived, especially from elite universities and big cities in the Midwest and the East. In those years, four Jewish fraternities and two sororities functioned on campus; Jews were not yet welcomed in other fraternities and sororities. The Detroit Jewish Federation began supporting MSU Hillel in 1967.

Michael Serling (1966), who followed older cousins to MSU, says he truly lived the land grant experience at MSU. Others in his dorm called him "Heeb" or "Jew," but they eventually embraced the new guy from Detroit. Overall, with students from all over Michigan, as well as from the East, the university was an open, welcoming place where students from diverse backgrounds exchanged ideas. Serling says: "MSU

prepared me for a larger world, which was very different from the Jewish world I had come from." Jeff Leib (1964), who came to play baseball and was initially pre-med, recalls memorable trips with the baseball team through the segregated South. MSU's team was integrated, staying in Negro hotels so as not to divide the team, and played ball teams on U.S. Army bases.

Since the 1960s, the Jewish presence among MSU students has continued to grow slowly. MSU has stayed an attractive choice because of the Colleges of Business and Education, key programs in the core colleges (History, English, Psychology, Biology), and the residential colleges, especially James Madison and Lyman Briggs. Many grandchildren of immigrants moved into the professions with MSU's help. Some grandchildren of Holocaust survivors who settled in Detroit after WWII also attended MSU. Sam Raimi, English major, now a prominent movie director (*Spider Man*), was among these. So, too, the children and grandchildren of Russian Jewish newcomers began coming in the 1990s.

Despite the relationship elaborated from Hannah's time forward, MSU in the early 1990s was less alluring than possible to Jewish students. There was no Hebrew language instruction, no courses on Israel, no annual events related to Jewish history, life, or culture. Despite the university's postwar international thrust, there was no link with the Jewish state (or other states) in the Middle East. There was no study abroad in Israel.

*(continued on page 2)*

### Serling Modern Israel Lecture "Israeli Counterterrorism: Successes, Failures, and Challenges Ahead"

Monday, October 7  
12:40-2:00 pm  
Club Spartan, 3rd Floor,  
Case Hall

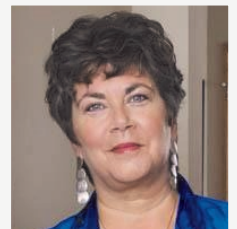
Professor **Daniel Byman**, Georgetown University, Security Studies, is the Senior Fellow and Research Director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, and is the author of *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (2012).



### Fall Jewish Studies / Hadassah Brunch "Challenges Facing Jews in 2013"

Sunday, October 27  
10:00 am-12:00 noon  
Henry Center, Rooms B106-B107  
3535 Forest Road, Lansing

**Hannah Rosenthal**, president of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, will be the featured presenter. Rosenthal was the U.S. State Department's envoy for monitoring and combatting anti-Semitism from 2009-12 under President Obama. Brunch tickets are \$21 in advance, \$27 at the door.



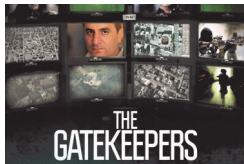
## Recent and Upcoming Events

### Tuesday, September 24

Film *"The Gatekeepers"* (2012), director Dror Moreh

Documentary based on interviews with the former heads of Israel's secret agency, *Shin Bet*. Nominated for an Oscar in 2013 for best Documentary Feature. In English and Hebrew, with English subtitles.

7:00 pm, 147 Comm Arts



### Thursday, September 26

Michigan State University Study Abroad Fair

Learn about the MSU Jewish Studies Summer Program at the Hebrew University/Rothberg School.

12:00 noon-6:00 pm, Breslin Center



### Monday, October 7

*"Israeli Counterterrorism: Successes, Failures, & Challenges Ahead"*

Daniel Byman, Georgetown University Professor Byman is Senior Fellow and Research Director at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institute. His latest book is *A High Price: The Triumphs and Failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (2012).

12:40-2:00 pm, Club Spartan, Case Hall, 3rd Floor



### Tuesday, October 15

*"The Arab Spring Upheavals, Syria, Egypt, and Israel"*

Moshe Maoz, Hebrew University Professor Emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Hebrew University, Dr. Maoz is Visiting Fellow, Frankel Judaic Studies at UM during fall 2013.

12:40-2:00 pm, James Madison Library, Case Hall, 3rd Floor



### Monday, October 21

Jewish Studies Brown Bag Lunch

*"Ethiopians in Israel and the United States"*

Solomon Addis Getahun, Central Michigan University Solomon Getahun is a student of Ethiopian immigration and, most recently, the co-author of *Little Ethiopia of the Pacific Northwest* (2013). Getahun is from Gondar, Ethiopia, the origins of most Falasha immigration to Israel.

12:00-1:30, C742 Wells Hall



### Thursday, October 24

Kessler Jewish Film Event

Film *Havah Nagilah: The Movie* (2012), director Roberta Grossman

Introduction by Ken Waltzer, with discussion afterward by Joanna Bosse, musicologist, College of Music. Co-sponsored by the MSU Library.

7:00-9:00 pm, MSU Main Library, 4th Floor West



### Sunday, October 27

Fall Jewish Studies / Hadassah Brunch

*"Challenges Facing Jews in 2013"*

Hannah Rosenthal, CEO Milwaukee Jewish Federation Former U.S. State Department envoy for monitoring and combatting anti-Semitism. Advance tickets for the brunch are \$21; brunch tickets at the door are \$27.

10:00 am-12:00 noon, Henry Center, Rooms B106-B107, 3535 Forest Road, East Lansing, MI



### Thursday, November 7

Ada Finifter Lecture

*"Culture Shaped by History: The Jewish Community of Janina, Greece"*

Annette B. Fromm, Florida International University Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Museum Studies at FIU, Fromm is speaking on the Jews of Janina with co-support by the MSU Library, which will be hosting a traveling exhibit on Romaniote Jewry.

7:00-8:30 pm, MSU Main Library, 4th Floor West



### Tuesday, November 19

Film *"The Other Son"* (2012), director Lorraine Levy

Two young men, one Palestinian, one Israeli, learn they were by accident switched at birth, then discover what family truly means. In French, English, Arabic, and Hebrew, with English subtitles.

7:00 pm, 147 Comm Arts



*(A Fruitful Partnership, continued from page 1)*

All this began changing under President Peter McPherson and Provost Lou Anna Simon. Aided by a Max Fisher Foundation grant through the Detroit Federation, Hebrew instruction began. Faculty organized a multidisciplinary Jewish Studies program in the College of Arts and Letters. President McPherson and Provost Simon played critical roles aiding the program's growth, lending prestige and support in terms of new positions while calling on community leaders for funding assistance. Michael Serling, a leading environmental lawyer, took on the challenge of heading a Board of Advisors to grow the program. At the same time, MSU Hillel, with the lay leadership of David Bittker, began raising funds for a beautiful new Hillel Center, with key support from Patrice Phillips and the Prentis-Morris Family Support Foundation.

Recently, a Jewish renaissance has occurred. The numbers of Jewish students attending MSU has risen toward 3,000. Hebrew instruction is offered through intermediate level. There is a Serling and Friends Israeli Studies chair in Jewish Studies and James Madison College. MSU has courses on American Jewish history and culture, Israeli politics, society, and culture, the Israeli-Arab conflict, Israeli foreign policy, Judaism, Jewish literature, and more. The Lester and Jewell Morris Hillel Jewish Student Center welcomes hundreds of students for individual programs and initiatives yearly, including Birthright trips to Israel and popular Friday night Shabbat dinners and Sunday brunches. The Jewish Studies Program oversees an annual schedule of events, including

*(continued on page 3)*

## MSU Jewish Studies Summer Programs June 27 to July 31

— “There is no way Israel will ever leave my heart. There is forever a special place in my heart for this land!”

— “This really has been a trip of a lifetime! It was absolutely amazing.”

— “How do you sum up the best experience of your life (and I’m not using this term lightly, I truly believe it)?”

The quotations above reflect some of the excitement and lasting memories generated by past MSU Jewish Studies Summer Programs at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Join us from June 27 to July 31 for summer 2014 at Hebrew University!

We will be spending four weeks studying, touring, and interacting with Israelis in the city of Jerusalem. The focus of one course will be on the historical geography of Jerusalem, with a strong element on current political and social issues. This is one of the contentious problems in the current Israeli-Palestinian talks. We’ll be joined by an impressive list of guest speakers including journalists, community activists, politicians, and religious leaders from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities. Class meetings will take place in the field. A second course will be taught by **David Mendelsson**, on the history of Zionism and the evolution of the modern state and society of Israel. (**David Mendelsson** will be at MSU in January to teach a short course in James Madison.)

Students will live in the dorms in the student village on Mt. Scopus, and the program will include extended visits to other parts of Israel and chances to meet Israelis, up close and personal. To get more of a flavor for the MSU at Hebrew University summer experience, including past student projects and field reports, see our blog at <http://msuisrael.blogspot.com/> to see what students say about their experience in 2013.

Participation in the program (two courses) earns 8 credits, and requires a 2.5 cumulative grade point average. There are \$2,500 Levy scholarship stipends available for those who meet the eligibility criteria, which include a 3.0 minimum cumulative GPA. Applications can be downloaded from <http://jsp.msu.edu/>.

For more information, contact **Marc Bernstein** at [msb@msu.edu](mailto:msb@msu.edu); come to the Jewish Studies booth at the Study Abroad Fair on September 26 in the Breslin Center; or contact **Ken Waltzer**, director of Jewish Studies, at [waltzer@msu.edu](mailto:waltzer@msu.edu).

“Lehitra-ot!” (See you soon!) in Jerusalem.

~Marc Bernstein, Associate Professor, Hebrew



## Chem Bram Schusterman Visiting Israeli Scholar



**Chem Bram** is our **Schusterman Visiting Israeli Scholar** at MSU this year. Last year he was at the University of Florida. He will teach courses here in James Madison College 2013-14. These courses will be MC 390: Israeli Society and Cultures, and MC 385: Comparative Ethnic Relations, Focus on Jewish Muslim Relations during the fall, and two sections of MC 290: Experiencing Field Research, in spring.

Bram earned his Ph.D. from Hebrew University, writing on “**Caucasus Jews Between Europe and Asia**,” and has been associated with the Van Leer Institute and the Truman Institute in Jerusalem. His research focuses on issues of multiculturalism and ethnic relations in Israeli society and other societies. He has done field work in Israel, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Bram is interested in immigration, Islam and ethnicity in the Caucasus, Diaspora peoples, and the anthropology of the Jews, and has been an advisor to the Ministry for Immigrant Absorption.

At the Van Leer Institute, Bram was facilitator of projects on “Human Dignity in Israeli Society,” “Identity and Sovereignty” (with Prof. Hanan Alexander and Prof. Naftali Rothenberg), and Jerusalem Mosaic. He is academic director of the group on Anthropological Knowledge on Israel (with Harvey E. Goldberg).

## David Mendelsson MSU Jewish Studies Program Guest



**David Mendelsson**, historian from Hebrew University’s Rothberg School, will be teaching a one-credit course titled “New Jews, New Israelis” in James Madison College early in winter term. The course will run seven evening meetings spread over two weeks in late January, and will include a take-home final. The course will explore the multiple voices of Israeli society today and the issues that arise from this diversity. No background on Israel will be required. More information about the course is to come in the fall.

### (A Fruitful Partnership, continued from page 3)

lectures on *Yiddishkeit*, modern Israel, Jewish music and art, Jewish film, and the Holocaust. There is also an Israeli Film Festival. Finally, MSU has relations with four universities in Israel and sponsors two summer study abroad programs and a spring MSU semester at Hebrew University. A scholarship endowed by Michigan industrialist Ed Levy, Jr. helps scores of students study in Israel. Unthinkable years ago, today MSU even sponsors kosher food in specific dorms.

When Lou Anna Simon became president, she continued the earlier initiatives, even addressing the Board of Advisors of the Detroit Jewish Federation on her plans for the university and MSU’s key role in helping redevelop the state. Members of a now shrinking and aging Michigan Jewish community, no longer replenished by new waves of immigrants, desire that more of their children and grandchildren attending MSU remain in the state and benefit in a revitalized Michigan. Today, MSU is no longer simply where youths come of age and experience a larger America, it is also a critical engine of economic growth and a global land grant important in bolstering the community. On September 8, as guests of President Simon, we will celebrate these many decades of partnership at a special brunch at Cowles’ House and tour the Broad Art Museum.

We look forward to continuing the partnership into the future.

~Ken Waltzer, Director



College of Arts & Letters  
C-730 Wells Hall  
619 Red Cedar Road  
East Lansing, MI 48824

Phone: 517-432-3493  
Fax: 517-355-4507  
Email: jewishst@msu.edu  
Website: 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** participated in an International Workshop on “Contemporary Challenges to the Law of Armed Conflict” at the IDC Herzliya in June in Herzliya, Israel. She presented a paper “*Israeli Leaders, the Arab Spring, and the Palestinian Peace*,” and was a discussant on a panel on Leadership Personality in Authoritarian Regimes at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology in July in Herzliya, Israel. Professor Aronoff led the MSU Jewish Studies summer program at Hebrew University June 26 to July 29, 2013. During May, Professor Aronoff served as an outside reviewer of the Jewish Studies Program at Dartmouth College.

**Marc Bernstein** led the recent Symposium on Modern Hebrew and Israeli Literature in April 2013 at MSU, and will lead the MSU Jewish Studies summer program at Hebrew University in summer 2014.

**Ilana Blumberg** published “*Reading George Eliot in Jerusalem*” in *Lilith* (spring 2013). Professor Blumberg was on sabbatical in Israel during 2012-13 where she completed a year of study on Zionism and Tractate Peah at the Elul Institute in Jerusalem.

**Kirsten Fermaglich** has been awarded a HARP research grant for spring 2014. She spoke on her work on name-changing for the NY Jewish Genealogical Society at the Center for Jewish History in May in NYC. Chicago’s Newberry Library will feature her co-edited volume, the 50th anniversary edition of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, at a seminar on November 8. Professor Fermaglich and co-editor Lisa Fine also published a piece on Friedan and Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean In* on the Ms. Magazine website blog. Fermaglich’s lecture in March on Friedan’s *Feminine Mystique* for Women’s History Month at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ, was televised on C-SPAN April 28.

**Steve Gold** published the article “*Enhanced Agency for Recent Jewish Migrants to the U.S.*” in *Contemporary Jewry*, 33:1-2 (April-July, 2013). In June 2013, Gold presented “*Russian-Speaking Jews in the U.S.*” at the NEH

Summer Institute’s “America’s Russian-Speaking Immigrants and Refugees: 20th Century Migration and Memory” at Columbia University in NYC.

**Deborah Margolis** co-presented “Non-Roman and Ideographic Language Materials in the Catalog: Problems and Solutions” in April at the 2013 Innovative Users Group in San Francisco, and curated an exhibit “Israeli Literature from the Holtzman Collection” for MSU Libraries Special Collections in 2013. She participated in the Teaching and Researching with Holocaust Testimonies workshop at UM-Flint in July.

**Benjamin Pollock’s** “*Metalogic and Systematicity: Rosenzweig’s Philosophical Debt to Hans Ehrenberg*” appears in *Die Denkfigur des Systems im Ausgang von Franz Rosenzweigs »Stern der Erlösung«* (Berlin: 2013). In October, Benjamin will participate in a conference at Yale on “Textual Unities.” Benjamin’s new book, *Franz Rosenzweig’s Conversions: World Denial and World Redemption*, will appear in summer 2014 (Indiana University Press). Professor Pollock is also the winner of a HARP for spring 2014.

**Ellen Rothfeld** taught MSU’s first Hebrew Language and Culture summer camp through the College of Arts and Letters’ Community Language School in June. Rothfeld is coordinating the Israeli Film Series and Festival for the coming academic year.

**Kenneth Waltzer** co-directed the Teaching and Researching with Holocaust Testimony workshop at UM-Flint July 15-19, 2013. He also published “*The Uneasy Years*” in *Michigan Jewish History* (fall 2013). Waltzer will speak on “The Rescue of Children and Youths at Buchenwald” at the Touro Law College in October in New York, and will publish “*The Boys of Buchenwald: Underground Rescue of Children and Youths in a Nazi Concentration Camp*” in Simone Gigliotti, ed., *Young Victims of the Nazi Regime*, in 2014.