

Jewish Studies Program

Fall Semester 2006

Michigan State University

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Kenneth Waltzer, Director
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A Note From the Director

We begin a new year fully staffed and we are excited! This year, we have new faculty in Israel Studies (**Yael Aronoff**, James Madison College) and in Judaism and Jewish Thought (**Benjamin Pollock**, Religious Studies). Welcome! At our Jewish Studies faculty retreat, 14 faculty will discuss issues and new directions in Jewish Studies! Three books will appear by faculty in 2006, and at least two or three more will appear in each of 2007 and 2008. We are discussing adding a subject code in Jewish Studies this year, exploring a core course, strengthening Hebrew to an advanced level, undertaking new initiatives in study abroad, and hosting scholarly conferences.

We will continue to host visiting scholars to enrich our offerings, this year welcoming **Samuel G. Freedman** of Columbia University in fall to speak on "American Jews and Israel," and **Susan R. Suleiman** of Harvard University to deliver the Rabin Holocaust lecture in spring on memory and memoir. We'll follow up our inaugural Hollander lecture in the Arts and Music this year with a visit in winter (we hope) by **Henry Sapoznik** and the *Youngers of Zion*. We'll also run our second annual Israeli Film Festival in March. Our annual Yiddish Language and Culture lecturer this fall will be **Tony Michels**, author of *A Fire in their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists*. **Yael Aronoff**, our new **Serling and Friends Professor of Israel Studies**, will speak at our fall Jewish Studies-Hadassah brunch along with **Liza Wiemer**, author of *Waiting for Peace: Israelis and Terror*. We will also step up our efforts in fund-raising this year to help endow the program as a whole and to endow a position in Jewish Civilization or Jewish Thought at MSU.

The disappointment this summer involved the cancellation of our Jewish Studies program at Hebrew University's Rothberg School. After several years of suspension and seeking reinstatement, MSU approved a faculty-led program. We had nine students at Hebrew U. studying Middle Eastern politics and American and Israeli Jewry until the Israel-Hezbollah war erupted. **Provost Kim Wilcox**, acting prudently, called us home. Currently, the program remains suspended and hence we need again to petition MSU's Risk and Security Assessment Committee and the Provost to go. We hope to gain permission this fall for summer 2007. We also hope to shift the focus of the summer program toward Israel Studies to link with Hebrew U.'s new Israel Studies Institute. We have scholarship funds to support nearly all qualified students interested in studying in Israel.

Our Jewish Studies program continues its main focus on the modern transformation of Jewish life from Europe and Asia into two global centers, the U.S. and Israel. In one, American Jews live as a voluntary minority community in a liberal, multicultural society. In the other, Israeli Jews live as a majority and sovereign community in a Jewish state and deeply conflict-ridden region. The events in this transformation, the relationships between the centers, the nature of lives lived in divergent societies and cultures, the creative products of these peoples, and the impact of events in these linked places and in Europe which produced them continue to be what we study, teach, and think together about. Please join us for our events that explore these and other aspects of Jewish scholarship and culture!

Susan R. Suleiman To Speak in April

Susan Rubin Suleiman, the C. Douglas Dillon Professor of the Civilization of France and Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University, will deliver the 15th Annual **David and Sarah Rabin Holocaust Memorial Lecture** on **Thursday, April 19, 2007**, and will give the kickoff presentation at the **9th Michigan Teacher's Holocaust Workshop, Friday, April 20**. **Suleiman** was born in Budapest, Hungary, and, with her parents, emigrated as a child after the

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Stay Tuned for This . . .



Jewish Studies is teaming up with the School of Music to bring **Henry Sapoznik** and the *Youngers of Zion* to MSU in February. This lecture and performance will be made possible by the **Hollander Endowment for Jewish Arts and Music** and other funds. Listen to their CD, "The Protocols" and watch for details at www.jsp.msu.edu, select "Events."

Jewish Studies-Hadassah Fall Brunch

Sunday, November 5

10:00 am-12:00 pm

University Club Shibui Room, 3435 Forest Road, Lansing

"Israelis, War, and Terror"



OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Advance reservations are required for all.

Phone 517-432-3493 before October 25 to reserve your seats.

\$20 per person (\$15 for students)

Liza Wiemer, author of *Waiting for Peace: How Israelis Live With Terrorism* (2005), and **Yael Aronoff**, the new **Serling and Friends Assistant Professor of Israel Studies** at MSU, will each share their views on Israelis, war, and terror. Wiemer is an award-winning Jewish educator and former president of Hadassah in Milwaukee. Aronoff was educated at Princeton and Columbia and comes to MSU from Columbia's Institute of War and Peace Studies. She is completing a book on Israeli prime ministers. (*read more on p. 2*).

Israeli Film Presentations

In cooperation with the Dep't of Linguistics and Languages and the Consulate General of Israel in Chicago, Jewish Studies brings you two highly acclaimed Israeli films of 2005. These films are being shown at the 21st Israeli Film Festival in New York, Los Angeles, and Miami. See them at MSU, **free**.



The Schwartz Dynasty will be shown **Monday, October 9, at 7:00 pm in 108 Ernst Bessey Hall**. Directed by Shmuel Hasfari and Amir Hasfari, *The Schwartz Dynasty* is about two women, united by their common struggle to determine their own destiny. Miriam Schwartz's world falls apart after her husband commits suicide after a financial scandal. She wishes to be buried by his side, in the section outside the main cemetery, for those who have taken their own lives. Miriam meets Anna, a young Russian immigrant, determined to fulfill her father's wish to be buried in Israel. The film portrays the diversity of Israeli society—immigrant issues, secular vs. orthodox, and Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews living together. In the midst are a young Russian woman with a mission, and a young orthodox man with a beautiful voice, trying to make sense of their lives. *Comedy/drama. Hebrew and Russian, with English subtitles., 100 min.*

Film Director Daniel Syrkin to Appear!



Filmmaker **Daniel Syrkin** will appear on **Thursday, October 26 at 7:00 pm, 147 Communication Arts and Sciences Building**, to present his Israeli Academy award-winning film ***Out of Sight***, and participate in a post-screening discussion. ***Out of Sight*** is the story of Ya'Ara, a 24-year-old Ph.D. student in mathematics at Princeton who is blind, and who returns to Israel upon receiving news of her cousin Talia's suicide.

Syrkin was born in Russia in 1971. A graduate of the Tel Aviv University's Film School, he is a leading director with several films to his name, including *And Now Rachmaninoff*, *The National Coach*, *Shofar*, *Two Minutes from Paradise*, and others. *Out of Sight* won "Best Director" and was named "Best Film" at the 21st Israeli Film Festival in New York City (2006). *Hebrew w. Eng. subtitles. 86 min.*

Our New Faculty Members



Yael Aronoff is the first occupant of the **Michael and Elaine Serling and Friends Chair of Israel Studies**. The Serling chair is a core position in Jewish Studies sited in James Madison College. Yael taught at Hamilton College and has "a passionate concern for Israel and for peace in the Middle East." She is interested in Israeli politics and foreign policy, Israeli society and culture, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and modern Israel as a state and society in comparative perspective. She is completing a book on Israeli prime ministers and decision-making.



Benjamin Pollock is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and a core faculty member of Jewish Studies. Pollock recently completed his Ph.D. in modern Jewish thought at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He was a postdoctoral teaching fellow at the U. of Toronto in Jewish Studies and Philosophy and is an expert on modern Jewish thought, including the thought of Franz Rosenzweig. He will teach traditional and modern Judaism and modern Jewish thought at MSU

Yiddish Language and Culture

Tony Michels the George Mosse Associate Professor of American Jewish History at the U. of Wisconsin-Madison, will offer the annual Yiddish Language and Culture Lecture in Jewish Studies on "**Jewish Socialism**," **Tuesday, October 17 at 7:00 pm in Kellogg Center's Room 105AB**. Michels' book "***A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in America***" (Harvard U. Press, 2005) reemphasizes the importance of Jewish Socialism in the Jewish urban immigrant experience, its transforming impact, and long-lasting influence. Jewish socialism, Michels argues, was homegrown, not imported, helped create and support "*yidische kultur*," influenced generations through parties, unions, worker institutions, and housing coops, and was a seedbed of concern for social justice among American Jews in the early 20th century & the 1930s & 1960s as well.



Hebrew Cafe

Enrichment in Hebrew Language and Culture...MSU Hillel will be sponsoring a "Hebrew Cafe" this semester, where MSU Hebrew students have the opportunity to meet with one another and socialize in Hebrew with Avishai Nahshoni, a research assistant who will be doing research in Human Medicine at MSU. The first meeting will be held on **September 11 at 8:30 pm** at Starbucks Café, 401 E. Grand River, East

Photographic Documentary

A photographic documentary exhibit by **Ryan Spencer Reed**, "*Hands of a Displaced Sudan: The Costs of Silence*," will be on display at the MSU College of Law, third floor, opening October 19. Ryan Reed, a Calvin College graduate, has been documenting the genocide in Sudan for the past four years. The exhibit will run through November. Jewish Studies is co-sponsoring the exhibit and urges the MSU community to view it and to watch for other events and speakers on the ongoing genocide in Sudan.

Jewish Studies Faculty Reflect on the Current Middle East

Thursday, November 9, 2006

3:00 - 4:30 pm, place to be announced

Yael Aronoff, Marc Bernstein, and Ken Waltzer plus an invited guest, will discuss the "The Israeli-Hezbollah War in Lebanon," the difficult post-mortem discussion in Israel since the cease-fire, and the shape of the region.

All Jewish Studies Program events are FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, unless otherwise noted.

"Rabin Holocaust Lecture"—continued from p. 1

war in 1949 to the U.S. In 1993, she returned and wrote a memoir, *Budapest Diary: In Search of the Mother Book* (1996). Her most recent book is *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (2006) in which she explores issues of memory, memoir, testimony, forgetting, and forgiveness. She has won numerous awards and fellowships, was named a Walter Channing Cabot Fellow at Harvard in 2006, and has been a leader in the interdisciplinary study of memory, memoir, and testimony.



Our Study Abroad Experience

MSU Jewish Studies at Hebrew University's Rothberg School was scheduled June 27-July 27, 2006. We were halfway through the program when the war began. On July 16, MSU called the students home; they departed July 19.



Study Abroad in Israel was amazing. From being a student to traveling across Israel to eating falafel for almost every meal, I had the best time of my life. The friendships that I made with the students and Prof. Waltzer will stay with me for the rest of my life. Although the trip was cut short, I will always remember...

Stephanie Gould, Psychology

Spending time in Israel was an educational experience and time for personal growth. As American students, we were forced to abandon many preconceived notions and adopt new habits and behaviors to keep up with Israeli society. We began to learn Hebrew, we enjoyed Israeli cafes. Our classes drew from the making of the current Middle East while also focusing on comparisons between Am. Jewry and Israeli Jewry. Perhaps the most enriching experiences we had were seeing Israel—Masada, the Dead Sea, Caesaria, the new Yad Vashem, the Old City, Tel Aviv beach. Meeting Israeli friends from all across the world and talking about politics were great.

Yet it is Israel's future, filled with promise and also peril, which affected us most deeply. As we packed, called home for reasons of safety, our understanding of the fragile nature of the Israeli project became clear. Will we ever return? What will happen to our friends? Israel became very important to all of us, and the pieces fit together, and we began to understand.

Jennifer Bloom, MC-IR

My study abroad was an experience like no other. From the first day we arrived there was so much happening. Archeologist **Danny Herman** was an excellent tour guide who took us to the Old City, the Dead Sea and Masada, and Caesarea. Classes were very interesting on the "Modern Middle East" and "American and Israeli Jewry." They were also long and we worked hard. But the beauty of being in Israel was that classes and the whole trip felt like a vacation. That is, it felt like a vacation until the Israel-Hezbollah conflict started, and then people began to worry deeply about us... Some of us worried; others among us wanted to stay and didn't worry at all. On our journey home, some were complaining, others were laughing. But we all enjoyed studying and living together in Israel.

Avi Davidoff, MC-IR

Israel was nothing like I had expected; I thought that everything in Israel would be so different but it was like a big city. We resided at the dormitories and met many Israeli friends. The three girls I lived with taught me a lot about Jewish culture and religion. I learned that you

can not wash a dish that had a dairy product in it with the same sponge one would use with a meat product. This was very weird to me but I learned quickly to remember to always wash my dishes with the right sponge.

We visited many places in Israel. The most memorable place was Ein Gedi, a beautiful waterfall in the middle of the desert. Another was the Dead Sea. The sea has such a high content of salt in it, one always floats. I also got a chance to be more spiritually connected with my religion in the Old City. Seeing where Jesus walked and was crucified was important to me. We also traveled on our own, visiting Tel Aviv and swimming in the Mediterranean..

In Israel I got to do things I would normally never have the chance to do. I went to a modern Orthodox synagogue that was feminist in orientation. This first time experience was very exciting, I had never seen anything like it. The males and females were separated by a long curtain in the middle but they sang beautifully together. That night I also had the chance to eat dinner with an Orthodox family.

Overall, The trip to Israel was fantastic. The only thing I regret is a trip that was cut short due to war. If the chance were ever presented to me again I would more than willingly go again. Israel is a great place!

Dyshea Cartman, Political Science

It's a shame our study abroad program was canceled. When we were instructed to pull out, I thought that this would be the best time for a student to stay in Israel, since I really didn't believe we were in danger, and it added meaning to what we were learning. Indeed, there couldn't have been, in my opinion, a better time to be in Israel.

[We arrived] in Israel with different expectations, and were prepared for surprises. We quickly learned the ways of Israeli society the first day when we were "[mis]placed" in the dorms—we "weren't in Kansas anymore." But we...adjusted, fit in, and met many people while learning a great deal.

This experience was one of the most tremendous experiences I have had. Actually, I did not change, but rather my inner self came out more, and my views and opinions became stronger. I believed so strongly in the cause of being a student and an advocate for a country so misunderstood by the world. So I stayed, I didn't come home, I acted against MSU's wishes, I didn't mean to rebel but rather to make a statement.

I hope that MSU will re-open the program and send students to Israel. I cannot fully express the knowledge I gained in the classroom and outside. I thank MSU so much for the opportunity.

Lisa Buch, MC-IR

My experience in Israel I will never forget. I will never be the same afterward. To actually be in Israel seeing the sights and studying its history is unbelievable. I was also learning about the culture and the people there too. I learned more in three weeks of study in Israel than in a year in a classroom at MSU. My only wish was that I could have spent more time there, a whole semester, or even a year.

The one experience, though, that I will never forget (nor do I want to) was the war. All of a sudden all the Israeli friends I had made...were packing up their army gear and getting ready to be called into the IDF to fight a war. I didn't know what to do. The war was being fought a few hours away. It was tragic on both sides-for Israelis and for Lebanese. But it was a life changing experience to be there. Throughout the conflict there was solidarity in Israel like I have never felt. The Israeli citizens, my friends, were resilient. I asked them how they could be so calm, they told me, "this is our lives, we have to live it, we can't let them win." I have never felt a stronger bond to Israel.

I can't thank MSU Jewish Studies enough for putting this program together. When college is done and I move on, I will remember my time in Israel. Thank you so much.

Josh Kaplan, MC-IR



L to R: Dyshea Cartman, Leah Andrews, Lisa Buch, Jennifer Bloom, Leah Meerkov, Prof. Ken Waltzer, Jamie Schare, Stephanie Gould, Avi Davidoff, and Joshua Kaplan.



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Academic News

Yael Aronoff presented "All or Nothing: The Role of Ultimatums in Peace Negotiations," at the Assn. for Israel Studies in May in Banff and "From Warfare to Withdrawal: The Legacy of Ariel Sharon," at the International Society of Political Psychology Conference in Barcelona in July. Her "In Like a Lamb, Out Like a Lion: The Political Conversion of Jimmy Carter" appears in *Political Science Quarterly* this fall.

Marc Bernstein received a *Fintz Teaching Excellence Awards in Arts and Humanities* given by the Center for Integrative Studies in the Arts and Humanities in the spring. His book, *Stories of Joseph: Narrative Migrations in Judaism and Islam* (Wayne State U. Press) will appear in November. An essay, "Like a Woman Forsaken: On the Story 'Agunah,'" will be published in a book on *Gender, Judaism and Modernity* in the fall.

Ilana Blumberg's *Houses of Study: A Jewish Woman Among Books* will appear this year from the U. of Nebraska Press. A memoir that explores secular and sacred (modern Orthodox) cultures of learning, Blumberg asks what happens when the traditional Jewish ideal of learning asserts itself in a body that is female? Ultimately, it tests the limits of modern Orthodoxy.

Kirsten Fermaglich's book, *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965*, appeared in the spring. She recently began research on a new project—a study of Jews and name-changing in America—supported by the Sesquicentennial Fund Initiative in History. She will present a working paper from this project at the Cohn-Haddow Center at Wayne State Univ. in November.

Steve Gold presented "Terrorism, Economic Crisis and Israeli Transnationalism 2000 to 2005," at the American Sociological Assn. in Montreal in August. He reviewed *Sewing Women: Immigrants and the New York City Garment Industry* (2005), by Margaret Chin in *Contemporary Sociology*, 35:3, (2006) 179-180.

Mary M. Juzwik was supported by a Kussy Scholarship for Study of the Holocaust and has completed an essay "Teaching the Holocaust" A Guide

for Secondary English Teachers," which explores a rhetorical approach to teaching about the Holocaust in language arts classes (as distinct from historical and reader-response approaches). Mary is working to integrate Holocaust education into the M.A. program for practicing teachers in Education.

Michael Koppisch recently finished an essay on the French writer Jorge Semprun and is preparing to write on Charlotte Delbo in connection with his work on French writers and the Nazi Holocaust.

Anna Norris' edited book on French women and war will appear in September in France. Anna has been recognized with a Chavelaier des Palmes Academiques by the French Ministry of Education and Research.

Benjamin Pollock's essay on "Rosenzweig's Concept of Factuality," appeared in the summer as part of a two-volume collection on the Jewish thought of Franz Rosenzweig, *Franz Rosenzweig's Neues Denken*. This fall, he will present on Rosenzweig at the American Academy of Religion in Washington, DC.

Keely Stauter-Halsted gave an invited talk on "Ethnic Purity and the Jewish Subject: Prostitution and National Public Space in the Polish Borderlands, 1880-1910," at Brown U. in May. Her "'A Generation of Monsters: Jews, Prostitution, and Racial Purity in the 1892 L'viv White Slavery Trial" is forthcoming in the *Austrian History Yearbook*.

Ken Waltzer published "Spielberg's Munich, Ethics, and Israel," in *Israel Studies* 11:2 (2006), 168-171. He also presented "The Rescue of Children and Youth at Buchenwald" at the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors in August and will be an invited speaker on the same subject at the 9th Holocaust Education Series, in Montreal, in October.

Eli Yassif, the Zvi and Sara Berger Chair for Study of Jewish Folk Culture at Tel Aviv U., who participates in Jewish Studies at MSU, published "From Midrash to Romance: The Hebrew Traditions of Alexander the Great," in *Dimensions of Time and Designs of History* (2006), and also "Midrash as Literature," in the series *Masterpiece of Judaism* (2006).