



AJS PERSPECTIVES

The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies

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SPRING 2006

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Colleagues,

Over the last several years *Perspectives* has focused on emergent fields within Jewish studies in order to chart the ongoing development of our scholarly enterprise. This issue offers a different and frankly experimental approach to this concern. We have taken a two-stage process to bring to these pages a broad reflection on the field of Jewish studies today. We invited five institutions to tell us about their undergraduate major in Jewish studies, and then we invited colleagues from different institutions to “read” these majors for what they might tell us about how Jewish studies scholarship looks today as it is reflected in undergraduate teaching. Our nine writers shaped their assignments to their perspectives in ways we hope offer some very interesting observations and will create further conversations on these topics.

The problem of how to represent Jewish studies visually in this issue gave rise to a great deal of discussion. It is both predictable and surprising that the most common images of learning and study from medieval Jewish texts to Yiddish film were of children. Although the transmission of knowledge and culture occurs for the entire life of a Jew, it is overwhelmingly signified as an act between a teacher (or a parent) and a child.

It was equally challenging to find suitable images of women or even girls as learners. It is useful to be reminded that the inclusion of women into any form of Judaic

learning, secular or “sacred,” is still profoundly underrepresented in Jewish cultures. Also challenging was what to depict other than the plentiful images of learning in a religious setting. The diversity of the field of Jewish studies that is discussed in these pages is not readily captured visually. We have selected a variety of images for our special section that is a direct outcome of this debate.

In the reflexive spirit of this issue of *Perspectives* we invited Steven Zipperstein, vice president of publications for the Association for Jewish Studies, to comment on the state of the Association’s journal and newsletter. He notes the new subtitle in the name *Perspectives*, now a magazine, as part of marking the ways in which these publications have changed since the founding of AJS.

We once again address new media and new technology in this issue. Heidi Lerner’s column surveys search engines and open content repositories, among other technologies that aim to open up new channels of distribution of scholarly content. Lerner asks what impact this is having on Jewish studies scholars and how to become more involved in these partnerships that are opening scholarly work to unprecedented numbers of us.

Jeffrey Shandler offers a review of Sala-Manca, an Israeli performance group that combines live performers, digital slides, and other state-of-the-art technologies. Sala-Manca’s performance is a meditation on language and territory in Israel and incorporates some of the central issues explored by Jewish studies scholars.

We are indebted to many colleagues and libraries who helped us find suitable images for this issue. Shalom Sabar of Hebrew University once again offered us wonderful images. Jeffrey Shandler of Rutgers

University and Norman Stillman of the University of Oklahoma kindly offered excellent illustrations from their personal collections. Lyn Slome of the American Jewish Historical Society and Michael Grunberger of the Library of Congress generously navigated us through their collections. Kevin Proffitt and Camille Servizzi of the American Jewish Archives kindly helped us find a striking image and its context from an early issue of the *American Hebrew*.

This issue of *Perspectives* will be the last under my editorship. I want therefore to thank many colleagues who have created our AJS magazine. The editorial board, whose members’ names appear on the inside cover, have been partners in this endeavor for the past three years. Jane Rothstein also served as the student member of the board until this year. Their ideas, opinions, and good judgment have made *Perspectives* not only a far more interesting publication, but one that reflects considerable diversity among our colleagues.

Thanks to Steven Zipperstein who has served on the editorial board in his capacity as vice president of publications. I appreciated his invitation to me, a scholar from one of the newer fields of Jewish studies, the anthropology of contemporary Jews and Judaism, to be editor of this magazine. He has consistently offered me a sounding board on a whole series of issues, and I have particularly valued our collegiality. Thanks also to Lawrence Schiffman and Judith Baskin, past and current presidents of AJS, who value this publication and have supported its expansion. Larry asked Steve Fine to bring *Perspectives* back to life, and they have done AJS a great service.

Two staffs and directors have worked on *Perspectives* over the last three years—first Aaron Katchen

and Miranda Winer at Brandeis, and now Rona Sheramy and Karin Kugel. I appreciate all of their efforts. Karin Kugel, over the last two years, has taken ever-increasing responsibility in soliciting advertising, working effectively on the visuals for the magazine, and managing many other responsibilities. Lisa Meyerowitz has served as copy editor for most of our issues, and has helped us to achieve consistency in our style. Finally, Matt Biscotti of Wild 1 Graphics has been truly a pleasure

to work with. His sense of design has made *Perspectives* a more interesting publication to look at. I include this list of thank-yous to indicate the extent to which *Perspectives* is a collective enterprise, made all the better because of the debates and multiple ideas that create every issue. Many people, our writers above all, bring energy and commitment to this publication.

I am pleased to inform our readers that Allan Arkush has assumed the editorship of *Perspectives* and will

officially begin his term with the Fall 2006 issue. Allan is director of Judaic studies at Binghamton University where he serves on the faculty. Among his many publications and translations is his well-known book, *Moses Mendelssohn and the Enlightenment*. It is a pleasure to leave *Perspectives* in such good hands.

Riv-Ellen Prell
University of Minnesota

38th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies

**December 17 – 19, 2006
Manchester Grand Hyatt
San Diego, California**

Conference Information Now Online at www.ajsnet.org

**Join the AJS for more than 140 sessions devoted
to the latest research in all fields of Jewish studies.**

- Major exhibit of leading publishers of Jewish studies scholarship
- Film screenings and performances free and open to the public
- AJS Gala Banquet, Sunday, December 17, 2006 (stay-tuned for information on subsidized banquet tickets)
- Evening receptions sponsored by Jewish studies programs and research institutions
- Gourmet kosher meals catered by the Hyatt hotel: See AJS website for menus

Special reduced room rates at the 4-star Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel (\$119.00 single and double occupancy; \$99.00 student rate) available through November 15, 2006. The Manchester Hyatt sits on the San Diego Bay next to the Seaport Village retail complex and two blocks from the historic Gaslamp Quarter. Contact 1-800-233-1234 for reservations.

Deadline for reduced advance conference registration rates (\$90.00 regular/associate members; \$50 student members; \$125 non-members) is November 15, 2006. See AJS website for registration information.

Announcing the launch of the AJS's new website:

www.ajsnet.org

**Look forward to announcements in the coming months
about new website features.**

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Colleagues,

It was inspiring to speak with so many of you at our thirty-seventh annual conference in Washington, D.C. I heard virtually unanimous enthusiasm for the high quality of this year's program and presentations, the expansiveness of the hotel's spaces that encouraged congregation and conversation, the wonderful feeling of collegiality at the banquet where more than four hundred of us sat down together, and the refreshing coffee and cookie break at the book display on Monday afternoon. On behalf of AJS, I would like to thank our vice president for program, Sara R. Horowitz, our executive director, Rona Sheramy, and all who assisted them so ably, for planning and executing such a complicated event so smoothly. We all look forward to a comparable experience next December 17–19 in San Diego, California.

During our annual conference, the AJS Board of Directors meets twice to hear reports from the president, executive director, and vice presidents, and to discuss and advance aspects of AJS policy. Each officer of the organization, together with the president and executive director, also presents a public report to the membership at the AJS Business Meeting, held on the Sunday morning of the conference, to which all AJS members are invited. Many members, however, are unclear as to what these officers do.

AJS has an executive committee consisting of the president and four officers who work throughout the year with our executive director and

her staff, as well as with several committees, to ensure the smooth operation of our organization. The four officers include three vice presidents and a secretary-treasurer; they, and the president, are now completing their three-year terms. In fall 2006, the nomination committee will present a new slate of officers, as well as six nominees to the board of directors, at the business meeting. AJS officers, like the editors of AJS publications, are volunteers who contribute their time and energy, in addition to fulfilling the demands of their full-time academic positions and scholarly endeavors.

Sara R. Horowitz, vice president for program, oversees the annual meeting. This demanding position requires year-round attention; her duties include working with the executive director to investigate sites for future conferences and negotiating with hotels for the best possible rates for rooms, meals, and other expenses. In addition, Sara works with an appointed program committee and section chairs to produce an annual Call for Papers, to oversee the vetting process for submitted papers, to make final decisions as to which papers and panels will appear on the program, and to actually put together the program in every detail.

The vice president for publications is responsible for the smooth production and internal quality of *AJS Review* and *AJS Perspectives*; these periodicals, which have grown in substance, moment, and attractiveness in recent years, constitute the scholarly voice and literary heritage of our organization. Steven J. Zipperstein has been generous enough to serve two terms in this important role. He works closely with Hillel J. Kieval and Martin S. Jaffe, editors of *AJS Review*; with Cambridge University Press, the publisher of *AJS Review*; and with Riv-Ellen

Prell and Allan Arkush, outgoing and incoming editors of *AJS Perspectives*.

Ephraim Kanarfogel, as vice president for membership, is the public face of AJS, representing our organization at international meetings, such as the recent World Congress for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. He also serves with our executive director as a delegate to meetings of the American Council of Learned Societies, of which AJS is a constituent member, where issues of concern to the wide range of academic organizations, large and small, are discussed.

Our secretary-treasurer Arnold Dashefsky works with the president, executive director and staff, and our accountant and lawyer, on all financial matters. During his term, AJS has turned a crucial corner following our move to offices in New York City. We are now in a situation of comfortable solvency as we mount new efforts to raise foundation and endowment funds that will permit us to enhance our present activities and to support new initiatives.

I acknowledge with gratitude the outstanding efforts of all of these individuals who contribute so much to the success of AJS. I would also like to offer special appreciation to Riv-Ellen Prell who is stepping down as editor of *AJS Perspectives* with this issue. She and her editorial board and staff have transformed a modest newsletter into an intellectually exciting “must-read” magazine for everyone interested in Jewish studies.

Judith R. Baskin
University of Oregon

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

With the thirty-seventh annual conference just a few months behind us, AJS looks forward to continuing to improve and expand the programming it provides conference registrants. This year, the conference drew more than a thousand registrants, clearly indicative of the health of the field and the importance of the gathering to Jewish studies scholarship. A high priority of the AJS Program Committee is to ensure that the conference sees sustained growth not only in size, but also in its innovativeness and responsiveness to scholarly needs. To this end, in an effort to accommodate as many outstanding proposals as possible and diversify the presentation format, the program committee will be implementing a new type of session at the 2006 meeting: the poster session. This format, common in the social and hard sciences, has been employed by several other ACLS (American Council of Learned Societies) organizations in recent years, with much success. This year, three AJS conference divisions—Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore; Talmud; and Bible—will

each hold a poster session. The poster session consists of ten to fifteen presentations from a given division on display in a large meeting room during a session time slot. (As a hypothetical example, the Bible poster session could take place on Sunday, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.) In contrast to the traditional panel format, in which three to four presenters share their research in twenty-minute papers, the poster session allows for numerous presenters to exhibit their research through a visual poster summary of their main questions and findings, and with select supporting documents on-hand. The audience circulates through the room, much as one would through the book exhibit, stopping to view poster presentations and discuss research with the presenter. This format allows for greater one-on-one interaction between presenter and audience, as well as provides scholars whose work might not fit in a traditional panel structure with the opportunity to present. (Indeed, the program committee may recommend that a proposal submitted individually or as part of a traditional panel be presented instead in a poster session.) The program committee hopes that applicants to the Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore Division; Talmud Division; and Bible Division take advantage of this new format, and that conference attendees will value this new medium for sharing knowledge and engaging with researchers. The program committee also welcomes other suggestions for new and effective means of sharing

scholarship at the conference. Please forward your suggestions to vice president for program Sara Horowitz through the AJS office.

AJS also plans to continue a very successful tradition inaugurated at the 2005 annual meeting: the subsidization of the Gala Banquet. The 2005 Gala Banquet in Washington, D.C. welcomed more than four hundred AJS members and their guests. It was an extraordinary event, allowing attendees to reconnect with colleagues and network with scholars across the disciplines and from around the world, and culminating in the plenary address, delivered by Ambassador Dennis Ross. The Association will fundraise for the Gala Banquet throughout the spring and summer of 2006, turning to Jewish studies programs, departments, centers, and foundations on the West Coast to support the dinner at the same level of generosity as did institutions from the mid-Atlantic states. This year's banquet will be held on Sunday, December 17, 2006, at the Manchester Grand Hyatt. AJS will notify members of the subsidized price in the early fall. If your program or department would like to play an active role in the conference and enrich the experience of participants by contributing to the Gala Banquet fund, please contact the AJS office at ajs@ajs.cjh.org. We look forward to seeing you in San Diego.

Rona Sheramy
Association for Jewish Studies

The Association for Jewish Studies wishes to thank the Center for Jewish History and its constituent organizations—the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research—for providing the AJS with office space at the Center for Jewish History.

AJS AND ITS PUBLICATIONS

Steven J. Zipperstein

For many years, the *AJS Review*, the academic journal of this organization, was published as a maroon hardcover and distributed by KTAV Publishing House, a family shop and an altogether familiar, blustery, second-generation American Jewish business. This longstanding relationship with AJS was indicative of how, at the time the organization first emerged, Jewish academic publishing was still a new, mostly untested enterprise. The move a few years ago to Cambridge University Press was a happy, eminently sensible choice, much akin to someone well beyond the bloom of adolescence compelled, finally, to move out of the house.

Here, as is so often the case, the first definite steps taken by Jewish studies as a field in the direction of academic institutionalization are, essentially, within memory. So much of what we tend to take for granted was so recently stitched together—the expansion of the field beyond the classic arenas of religion and history and language, the impact of interdisciplinary studies, the influence of anthropology on history, the intrusion of history into literature and, in general, the passage of Jewish studies beyond expressly Jewish scholarly and rabbinic institutions and into the contemporary American university.

In a field like ours that has altered so rapidly and so dramatically in such a relatively brief period, its publications might respond to such changes in one of a variety of ways. I'll propose just two: They might seek to act as a dike against (what some might feel) unnecessary, excessive, or diversionary

misdirection, as an arbiter in determining what it is that remains central and what does not. Or—as I think our organization's two splendid publications have managed to do so well—they can seek to walk a rather more subtle, complicated line, striving to serve as signposts for the fullest range of offerings in Jewish studies, while also providing self-critical guidance as to where things might best, most intelligibly move. Such balance is difficult to maintain. But the prospect that our “house organs” can function as wry but active participants in the field, as periodicals that maintain sufficient distance so as to remain critical—but with sufficient engagement as to care deeply and think seriously about all salient aspects of Jewish studies—remain, as I see, exemplary goals.

Perhaps the most acute challenge likely to confront both of our publications in the coming years, in rather different ways—arguably, the most central one facing the field of Jewish studies, as a whole—is the extent to which Jewish studies still constitutes a field in any but the most schematic of ways. Across the academic map comparable questions have been asked about once seemingly coherent fields that are now, in some cases, being pulled in so many different directions, inundated by so many disparate, often mutually contradictory voices. In Jewish studies, as elsewhere, this is a sign of vitality. It remains, at the same time, a cause for concern for anyone committed to the belief that one can truly master Jewish knowledge in ways that promise that one might speak to a wide range of scholars with interests and predilections not identical to one's own. To be sure, long gone are the days when Jewish studies was a cozy (albeit, often cozily antagonistic) cousinhood, a cluster of mostly East Coast schools bound by a

reasonably clear, if rarely articulated, set of common presumptions, hierarchies, and, of course, a rich but more or less consensual medley of dislikes. Such clarity will not likely again recur, nor should it, but to the extent to which we can and should rely on our academic organs to clarify what can now be clarified, we should be able to turn to this periodical and to the *AJS Review*.

For some seven years, I've served as AJS vice president of publications, which provided me with the opportunity to do what I could to oversee and, perhaps, also to improve the organization's periodicals, which are, as I see it, in as good hands as anyone might hope for. (This publication has now been renamed “Perspectives: The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies” consistent with its expanding goals.) Much has changed in this organization in recent years, and to a large extent for the better. A cousinhood AJS is no longer; a merely convenient magnet for job replacement or professional enhancement it should never acquiesce to become. How to chart the middle ground between a mechanical professionalism and a warm, but inevitably exclusionary *landsmanschaft*-like existence will figure presumably among the tasks of its future leadership, and to the extent to which there will be public voice given to these struggles—and, if confronted directly, struggles they almost certainly must be—one would like to believe that they will be found, in ample supply, in the pages of its periodicals.

Steven J. Zipperstein is the Daniel E. Koshland Professor in Jewish History and Culture at Stanford University and AJS Vice President for Publications.

What Do We Learn about the Field from How We Educate Our Undergraduates?

Riv-Ellen Prell

The *AJS Perspectives* editorial board invited a number of our colleagues to write about their institutions' Jewish studies major. We asked our colleagues not simply to report to us about what courses their department or program required for an undergraduate degree in Jewish studies, but what the faculty believed constituted competency in Jewish studies for their undergraduate majors. We also queried our authors to comment on any interesting debates among their colleagues as they envisioned and implemented the Jewish studies major.

We selected colleagues to write about their majors from as broad a range of departments as possible given the limitations of the length of *Perspectives*. We invited large and small departments, relatively new ones as well as ones with long-standing traditions, and institutions from a few different regions in the United States to participate. We were disappointed that we lacked the space to include departments from religious colleges or seminaries as well.

We then turned to four colleagues from another set of universities and asked them to respond to the five essays. They were asked to comment

on what we can learn about the field of Jewish studies from the ways we train our undergraduates. Our respondents answered these questions in a variety of ways, from a focus on language requirements to discussions of interdisciplinarity, and the needs and challenges of what in other parts of academic life is called "heritage learners."

We hope that this forum will begin a series of fruitful conversations about the field of Jewish studies. How do

we train our students to be interdisciplinary thinkers and what are the implications for our scholarship? Does our approach to educating students, which frequently offers many paths to the major, suggest ambiguity about our enterprise or bold flexibility? What are the interesting questions to be asking of ourselves and our students about the enterprise of Jewish studies over the next decade?



Students in The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary, n.d. American Jewish Historical Society, Newton Centre, Massachusetts and New York, New York.

JEWISH STUDIES AT BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

Jonathan Decter

Jewish studies at Brandeis University cannot be reduced to a single identity or ideology but reflects the dynamic interplay among several academic trends. The program owes its particular structure to its placement within the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies (NEJS), which was founded in 1953, five years after Brandeis was established as a non-sectarian university by members of the American Jewish community. NEJS was viewed as a cornerstone of the university for Jewish and non-Jewish students alike (approximately 50 percent of the current Brandeis student body is Jewish).

NEJS has undergone many changes that reflect the growth of the department, the growth of the institution, and the changing fields of interest of its faculty members. Whereas younger Jewish studies departments have created programs out of whole cloth, traditional commitments—such as offering courses in original languages and presenting Judaism within a textual, diachronic framework—have had a lasting impact at Brandeis. In order to understand the major and its relation to other departments and programs properly, some history is in order. At the time of the department's founding, courses were mainly offered in Jewish thought, history, and literature, including several courses in Hebrew Bible. Hebrew language was an early requirement for the major and has never been abandoned. By

1960, the department offered several Ancient Near Eastern languages and courses in Islamic studies. In 1965, the department set specific distribution requirements for the major including two courses in Bible, one course in Jewish history, one in Jewish philosophy, and one in Modern Hebrew literature. In 1981, the department's growing size and the interests of students led to the establishment of three distinct tracks within the department: Jewish Studies, Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, each with its own set of requirements. Subsequently, the department added separate majors in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (IMES) in 1983, and Hebrew Language and Literature (HLL) in 2001.

THE JEWISH STUDIES TRACK AIMS TO PROVIDE A DIACHRONIC OVERVIEW AND TO RELATE THE FIELD TO OTHER ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES SUCH AS HISTORY, LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY, SOCIOLOGY, AND RELIGION.

Today, NEJS supports two tracks: Jewish Studies, and Bible and Ancient Near East (graduates of either track receive a B.A. in NEJS, not their subspecialties). The Jewish Studies track aims to provide a diachronic overview and to relate the field to other academic disciplines such as history, literature, philosophy, sociology, and religion. Many students major in NEJS out of general interest while others see NEJS as preparatory for specific career paths (common ones include graduate level studies, religious vocations, religious education, work in NGOs, and professions related to language skills). That track requires a foundational course in Jewish studies and a tripartite chronological requirement: 1) Bible

and Ancient Near East, 2) Early Post-Biblical Judaism, Early Christianity, Rabbinics, Medieval Judaism, and Classical Islam, and 3) Modern and Contemporary Judaism. There is also a three-part Hebrew requirement: 1) Fourth Semester Hebrew, 2) Classical Hebrew (biblical, rabbinic, or medieval), and 3) Modern Hebrew Literature. The diversity of NEJS majors (including students with no background in Jewish studies and others with significant knowledge of some aspects) makes offering a curriculum that is simultaneously accessible and advanced a priority.

The foundational course, the chronological requirements, and the Hebrew requirements aim to impart a base level of knowledge while advanced courses allow students to develop in specialty areas (writing an honors thesis is also popular).

Several courses emphasize gaining textual skills in original languages while others offer skills for analyzing the American Jewish community. Some courses assist students contemplating careers in Jewish education to approach issues in pedagogy and the philosophy of Jewish education. One interesting aspect of the placement of Jewish studies within the NEJS structure is that courses in Christianity, Islam, and non-biblical religions of the Ancient Near East fulfill distribution requirements. Apart from minimal required courses, two student transcripts seldom look alike. This curricular heterogeneity reflects the department's depth and interdisciplinary approach to the ever-evolving field of Jewish studies.

Jonathan Decter is Assistant Professor on the Edmond J. Safra Chair in Sephardic Studies at Brandeis University.

JEWISH STUDIES AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Steven Weitzman

The Borns Jewish Studies Program at Indiana University established an undergraduate major in 1992 with the original objective to study Jewish civilization from antiquity to the present and its interaction with and impact on world civilization. At the time that I write this, seventy-five IU students are majoring in Jewish studies; forty-three students are seeking a Jewish studies certificate (slightly more demanding than a minor); and forty-four students are pursuing a Hebrew minor.

Our undergraduate program is organic and evolving as the faculty, student culture, and the field of Jewish studies itself evolves. In earlier years, it was shaped by the need to establish Jewish studies as a legitimate focus of study. In more recent years, as that legitimacy has been accepted and as our faculty has grown and become more specialized, we have ventured to deepen the quality and rigor of the program. Thanks in large part to the fund-raising prowess of my predecessor Alvin Rosenfeld, we have secured a large number of faculty positions—and, no less importantly, it is our own faculty, and not other departments, who determine how those positions are filled, control that has been essential in building a coherent curriculum. Still, there remain gaps in our curriculum—medieval Jewish thought, Israel studies, German Jewish history—and our effort to

fill them is what provokes debate about our future direction. Should we develop the social science part of our program or strengthen humanistic areas like literature or other arts? Should we seek to cover the breadth of Jewish experience or deepen areas of existing strength? Should hiring be dictated by our undergraduate program or by our graduate program?

As individuals, we answer these questions differently, and our curriculum represents a balancing act between depth and breadth, accessibility and specialization, disciplinary focus and the open-endedness of interdisciplinary inquiry. What makes compromise possible, I think, is a shared recognition of several overarching

...WE ALSO WANT TO GIVE STUDENTS SOMETHING BEYOND MERE LITERACY, TO COMPLICATE THEIR SENSE OF JEWISH HISTORY, TO EMPOWER THEM TO DRAW INSIGHTFUL CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE MEANING OF A TEXT OR THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF AN IDEA, TO BROADEN THEIR SENSE OF JEWISH CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION.

commitments and aspirations. Many of our students come to us with little or no background in Jewish studies, and so one of our basic obligations is to instill in students a rudimentary understanding of Jewish history, culture, language, and thought. But we also want to give students something beyond mere literacy, to complicate their sense of Jewish history, to empower them to draw insightful conclusions about the meaning of a text or the strengths and weaknesses of an idea, to broaden their sense of Jewish cultural and religious expression. Many of our students are motivated

by a desire to develop their own sense of identity. It would be disingenuous not to acknowledge the role that we play for that kind of student, though we would certainly differ if asked individually to define that role. But we all embrace our responsibilities as part of a public research university, committed to a student constituency that includes both Jews and non-Jews and a core mission to teach those students how to think critically, comparatively, and contextually about Jews.

What is the goal of a Jewish studies major, and what constitutes a good or successful major? Here, too, I would not impute to my colleagues any single view, but I can describe the assumptions that inform my own efforts as a Jewish studies program director to shape the undergraduate education we offer.

1) *A good Jewish studies major should also be a good liberal arts major.* In its ideal form, our major will teach students how to read critically and carefully, write clearly and persuasively, and take ideas seriously. It will promote self-

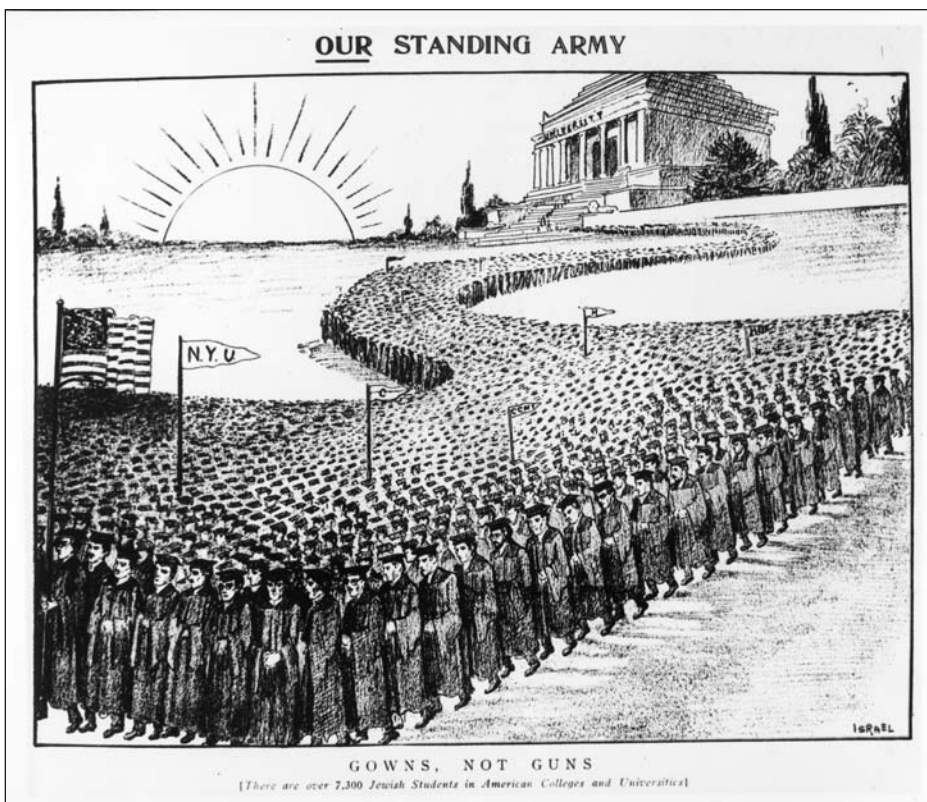
awareness and self-examination while also encouraging respect for the Other and his/her perspective. It will strengthen the ability to ask good questions, and, by exposing students to a range of humanistic and/or social scientific modes of inquiry, give them some of the intellectual skills they need to settle on their own answers.

2) *A good Jewish studies major should have multiple points of access.* Historical and textual study are the cornerstones of our major, and we recognize the need to strengthen those modes of intellectual

engagement. But the disciplinary borders of Jewish studies are shifting and broadening, and we are trying to adapt accordingly, making more room for the arts and other aspects of Jewish life not necessarily recorded in canonical texts. This is one of the reasons we created an Institute for Jewish Culture and the Arts whose goal, along with related courses, is to promote understanding of Jewish artistic creativity.

3) *A good Jewish studies major provides not just a structure but a structured relationship with teachers and mentors.* To launch our students properly, it is not enough to impose requirements or define goals; we also need to provide students with good advising, model intellectual and cultural engagement, alert them to the opportunities found outside the classroom, and help them connect what they learn to their intellectual or professional aspirations. We do what we can to provide scholarship opportunities and career guidance for our students and encourage them to take an active role in shaping their own educations.

All this might make for a respectable major but is there anything to distinguish a Jewish studies major from any other interdisciplinary pursuit in the liberal arts? The most obvious answer is to define the difference in terms of content—the texts and languages are different, the history and sociology, distinctive. But beyond subject matter, I also believe that what distinguishes Jewish studies is the creative tension it generates with the rest of a student’s education. It allows students to view Western civilization from the perspective of a people both inside and outside of that civilization. It cultivates the critical reasoning skills of modern secular scholarship even as it introduces other ways of thinking. It explores



Reprinted from the *American Hebrew*, July 16, 1915. This cartoon accompanied an article announcing the latest study by the Department of Synagogue and School Extension of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The article noted that there were 7,300 Jewish men and women attending colleges and universities in the United States—demonstrating that 3.6 per thousand Jews, as against 1.9 per thousand for the rest of the population, were enrolled in higher education. They declared this achievement “a remarkably good showing.” Courtesy of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

what it means to be on the margins, in the minority, or in an intermediate space between perspectives. It complicates the very idea of difference itself, challenging any neat or stable distinction between the self and the Other. In

short, a good Jewish studies major is a good liberal arts major in a self-consciously different mode.

Steven Weitzman is the Irving M. Glazer Chair of Jewish Studies at Indiana University.

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Dorot Travel Grants are generously funded by the Dorot Foundation.

JEWISH STUDIES AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Nancy Sinkoff

Since its founding in 2000, the Department of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University has required its majors to take twelve courses: a two-semester survey in Jewish history; a majors seminar; one year of either Hebrew or Yiddish; and seven additional courses. The first three of these items have remained constant during the last six years; the fourth of these was recently reconstituted (see below).

The rationale behind requiring students to take the surveys “Jewish Society and Culture 1: The Ancient and Medieval Experience” and “Jewish Society and Culture 2: The Early Modern and Modern Experience” is that all of the disciplines in our interdisciplinary department (literature, folklore, rabbinics, Bible, political science, women and gender studies, sociology, etc.) assume a modern historical consciousness. Without a foundation in the historical development and change implicit in the Jewish past, students cannot begin to delve into the complexities of the study of the Jews.

The survey is periodized to break at 1500, the year denoting the end of professing Jewish communal life in Western Europe. Context is the watchword of the survey. In the first semester this means great attention to the ancient Near East, Hellenistic antiquity, Sassanian Persia, and the diverse environments of the medieval Muslim and Christian

spheres. The second semester begins in the sixteenth century with the effects of the *converso* migration to Europe, moves on to discuss Ashkenazic Jewish culture in early modern Poland-Lithuania, and continues with what is standard fare in courses on modern Jewish history (Enlightenment, Emancipation, religious change, modern Jewish politics, nationalism, and modern anti-Semitism). Unusually, perhaps, our survey concludes with Jewish life in interwar Europe. We quite consciously chose the interwar period as the survey’s endpoint because experience has shown that most of our students take separate

IDEALLY, THROUGH A JEWISH STUDIES MAJOR AT RUTGERS, STUDENTS WILL GAIN THE SKILLS THAT A LIBERAL EDUCATION SEEKS TO IMPART WHILE BEING EXPOSED TO THE VAST AND DIVERSE TEXTS, TRADITIONS, AND EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE CHARACTERIZED JEWISH CIVILIZATION.

courses on the Holocaust and on Israeli culture and society. Our required survey strives to challenge students’ teleological assumptions about the linearity of the Jewish past.

This raises another, but related issue: the nature of our student body. Situated in the Northeast, a large number of our students come to Rutgers with Jewish day school backgrounds. Many of them are drawn to Jewish studies because it is familiar cultural territory. What they encounter in our courses, however, are unexpected intellectual approaches. The faculty strives to introduce them to the diversity and complexity of the field and to situate the study of the Jews in the context of the humanities and social sciences. We do this by emphasizing

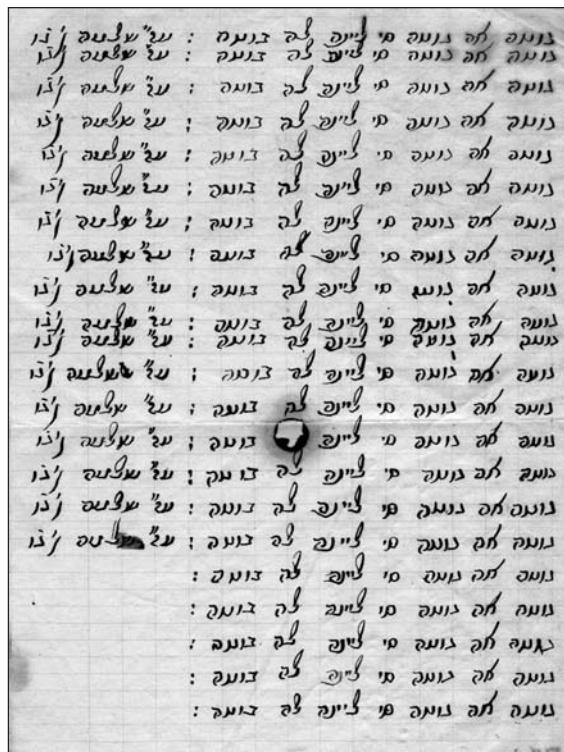
the analysis of primary sources and research methods, so that while exposing students to the content of Jewish studies we are simultaneously making them better readers, writers, and thinkers.

The majors seminar is designed to give juniors in Jewish studies the requisite skills (bibliographic, analytic, research, and writing) to pursue independent research in their senior year. Professors determine the seminar’s broad topics, which have included “Jewish Memory,” “Jewish Places, Jewish Spaces,” and “The Bible and Modernity.” Students are required to participate actively in class through individual oral and written presentations and to pursue independent research resulting in a well-argued seminar paper. Writing at all stages—from proposal to final paper—is a key element of the majors seminar. Our more talented and motivated students take the skills acquired in the majors seminar and complete year-long honors theses in their senior year.

We recognize that our one-year language requirement is not ideal, but the culture at Rutgers does not currently support foreign language acquisition to the extent that we would like (however, the university is presently engaged in an effort to transform undergraduate education, with foreign language as one of the issues under discussion). We would much prefer that our students take two years of either Hebrew or Yiddish, but logistical problems prevent us from offering the latter language beyond the elementary year. On the other hand, most of our majors take more than one year of Hebrew. Moreover, many students place out of elementary Hebrew or study at *ulpanim* in Israel and fulfill their requirement

with upper-level courses.

As noted at the outset, we recently changed the requirements for the seven elective courses. In the past, students took at least four courses in one of five areas of concentration, and at least two courses outside the area of concentration. The areas of concentration were: Jewish History and Society; Jewish Literature; Jewish Culture; Religion and Thought; and Israel Studies. Currently, the focus of the additional courses has shifted from a content- to a discipline-orientation. We now require two courses in literature (one in modern literature and one in classical texts, in either the original or in translation) and one course in the social sciences. We reconstituted the elective requirements to emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the field of Jewish studies and to help students understand the importance of close textual study,



A student's handwriting exercise in Haketia (North Moroccan Ladino) written in Sephardi script. Each line reads, "Gota a gota se lena la bota [Drop by drop, the wineskin fills up]." The exercise is signed by Shelomo Ben Jo. From Tangier or Tetuan, late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Courtesy of Norman Stillman.

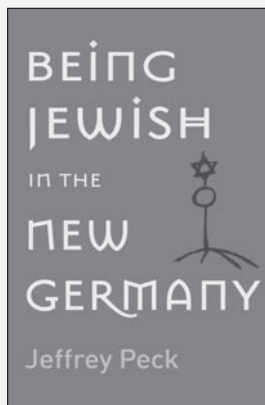
whether classical or modern. The remaining four courses may be of the student's choosing. Our location

in the Northeast also offers Jewish studies majors and minors the possibility of taking internships at local museums and communal organizations to fulfill an elective, provided they produce a semester-length research paper related to their work.

Ideally, through a Jewish studies major at Rutgers, students will gain the skills that a liberal education seeks to impart while being exposed to the vast and diverse texts, traditions, and experiences that have characterized Jewish civilization. We hope that by majoring in Jewish studies they will be better humanists and more informed citizens. As in all university departments, we struggle to balance our intellectual commitments with student interests.

Nancy Sinkoff is Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and History at Rutgers University.

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JEWISH STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Beth Wenger

The University of Pennsylvania has been home to scholars in Jewish studies since the nineteenth century. Yet the establishment of a formal program occurred only in 1982, at a time when Jewish studies programs were being created at universities across the country. From its inception, Penn's program reflected both the faculty's desire to create a shared discourse among students and faculty working in Jewish studies, as well as a strong belief that Jewish studies should not be defined as a single field or discipline. When the program was established, Penn faculty decided to build an interdisciplinary program that would encompass a variety of approaches to the Jewish experience. From the outset, Penn's program constructed Jewish studies as an integral part of the liberal arts curriculum with a presence in departments throughout the university.

As the program has evolved and the faculty has increased, Jewish studies at Penn reflects the initial mission to locate the teaching of Jewish subjects within multiple disciplines. The result is a program that, in practice, supports not one but four distinct majors that address different areas within Jewish studies. The major that carries the official designation of "Jewish Studies" is our interdisciplinary major, overseen by the Jewish Studies Program, where students take courses in Jewish history, literature, culture, and religion. At the same time,

three other Penn departments offer majors that include a Jewish specialty: Within the history major, students may elect a concentration

in Jewish history that focuses on the evolution of Jewish life in the various societies in which Jews have lived. The Religious Studies Department's concentration in Judaism provides students the opportunity to explore Jewish religion within the context of other world religions.

Finally, the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations sponsors a Hebrew and Judaica concentration that contains a specific focus on Hebrew language, literature, texts, and artifacts. Penn students thus encounter multiple options in Jewish studies when they choose a major.

Penn's model for Jewish studies is likely more decentralized and varied than programs at most universities, suggesting to students quite emphatically that no single discipline or approach defines "Jewish Studies." Only the interdisciplinary major is directly controlled by the Jewish Studies Program, which determines the requirements and policies of the major. The individual departments that sponsor the other three majors set the standards for their students, who must fulfill the general requirements of their majors in addition to taking courses in their area of Jewish specialty. In practice,



Detail from the *Rothschild Mahzor*, Italy, 1490.
Courtesy of The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary.

however, a degree of consensus applies across the various Jewish studies majors. Because the faculty who supervise the Judaica concentrations in each department are also members of the Jewish Studies Program, there is room for dialogue, if not complete unanimity, about general expectations.

A consensus about the importance of proficiency in a Jewish language (either Hebrew or Yiddish) prevails throughout Penn's programs. Language proficiency is required in the interdisciplinary major as well as in the Jewish History major and the Hebrew and Judaica concentration in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC); proficiency is strongly encouraged but not required in the Judaism concentration in religious studies. The most rigorous application of Hebrew language exists in NELC's Hebrew and Judaica concentration, with its focus on textual study, where in addition to language

proficiency students must take at least three courses that require reading Hebrew texts in the original.

The four different tracks in Jewish studies reflect the different methodologies and intellectual goals of each major, but despite their distinct designs, many common courses are either required or counted in all four. The three Jewish history surveys (covering a broad chronological sweep) fulfill requirements in all tracks. To some extent, all the majors require chronological breadth, covering the history, literature, and religious practices of Jews across time. Jewish studies courses from several departments count as requirements or electives in all four majors. This means that students majoring in the various Jewish studies tracks find themselves

in many common courses, creating the foundation for an intellectual community. Three of the four tracks contain a significant research requirement, and all offer the option of an honors thesis. The

PENN'S MULTIFACETED JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM OFFERS STUDENTS THE OPTION TO EXAMINE JEWISH EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE THAT INTERESTS THEM MOST, OR TO CHOOSE THE INTERDISCIPLINARY JEWISH STUDIES MAJOR.

interdisciplinary major requires a senior seminar and encourages students from all four Jewish studies majors to enroll.

Penn's multifaceted Jewish studies program offers students the option to examine Jewish experience within the discipline that interests them most, or to choose the interdisciplinary Jewish studies major. In many respects, this

construction of multiple majors reflects a normalization of Jewish studies within the academy, situating the study of Jewish life integrally and organically within the liberal arts curriculum. Prospective history or religious studies majors encounter a menu of concentrations that includes Jewish history and Judaism as standard fare. The culture of Jewish studies at Penn remains diverse, multidisciplinary, and located in distinct but interconnected arenas across the university. The construction is inherently complex, but this is the lesson that we teach our students about the nature of Jewish studies.

Beth Wenger is the Katz Family Term Chair in American Jewish History and Associate Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania.



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UNIVERSITY OF **PENNSYLVANIA**
PRESS

JEWISH STUDIES AT VASSAR COLLEGE

Andrew Bush

The invitation to consider the state of affairs in Jewish studies at Vassar College coincides with a moment when the faculty of our program is engaged in the first comprehensive effort to restructure our curriculum since its inauguration in 2000. At an undergraduate college with an emphasis on teaching, a discussion of course offerings—points of access, the place of Jewish studies in the larger college curriculum and, above all, the shape of the major—is an active arena for debate about the conceptualization of Jewish studies as an intellectual field. The debate is very much in progress here.

To provide an institutional context, I recall that our program was established when a diverse faculty group made the case that 1) there was deep, well-founded and sustainable interest among teachers and students in the particularities of Jewish experience; 2) the prior limitation to the study of Judaism within the framework of religious studies did not suffice to address that interest; and 3) the model of cultural studies as it had emerged in various fields provided an alternative intellectual basis consonant with faculty strengths and other, concurrent curricular developments at Vassar. Let me state the obvious: courses on Judaism continue to be taught in the Department of Religion, which has maintained a strong alliance with the new Jewish Studies Program.

The other salient point is that faculty lines at Vassar are located *in departments*; multidisciplinary *programs* are staffed by drawing on the existing departmental faculties. At Vassar, therefore, program faculty may be categorized as

follows: a very few faculty members with professional training and well-developed research interests in some area of Jewish studies prior to their participation in the program; a larger group with limited training and lesser or no prior research projects in the field; and faculty who, by their own initiative or through outreach efforts on the part of the program, take the presence of Jewish studies at Vassar as the welcome opportunity to begin work as teachers and

SO, PICTURE US: A GROUP WITH A COMMON COMMITMENT TO THE VITALITY OF A JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM AT VASSAR, BUT OTHERWISE DIVERSE IN EVERY WAY—PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND PERSONAL BACKGROUND, GENERAL INTELLECTUAL OUTLOOK AND PARTICULAR UNDERSTANDINGS OF JEWISH STUDIES.

researchers in the field. An important series of ongoing faculty development seminars, which has brought leading scholars from other institutions to Vassar, has reinforced the work of all of those constituencies. So, picture us: a group with a common commitment to the vitality of a Jewish studies program at Vassar, but otherwise diverse in every way—professional training and personal background, general intellectual outlook, and particular understandings of Jewish studies.

The curricular offerings of the first years of the program have been anchored by a set of core courses, one each at Vassar's three levels of

instruction: an introductory course on the question of Jewish identity; an intermediate course on textuality; and a senior seminar focusing on methodological issues. In addition, we offer a small but robust program of Hebrew language study. Other offerings have been contingent on faculty availability, but, for the same reason, heavily weighted toward twentieth-century topics.

The crux of current discussion is the question of distribution requirements within the major. The matter was first addressed in relation to our points of entry. Some argued for a comprehensive survey that would in itself provide an introduction to the areas that constitute the field, defined both by disciplinary approach and historical

period. The faculty chose, however, to provide instead a variety of introductory-level courses. The prevailing argument cited the impossibility of being truly comprehensive; the capacity of instructors to

address gaps in training ad hoc as they impinged upon other courses; and, above all, the strategic value of acquainting as large a group of students as possible with the field, rather than to undercut the number of potential majors by creating a bottleneck at the outset. At the other end, we have agreed to retain the senior seminar, both for its emphasis on methodology as a valuable preparation for the optional senior thesis, and for the importance of bringing the cohort together, at the culmination of their disparate paths through the program, in a setting where their varied studies can be mutually reinforcing.

Distribution requirements have now been accepted in principle, though their definition is in debate. I decline to predict an outcome. Instead, I would return to a theoretical issue that formed part of the initial argument for the establishment of Jewish studies at Vassar, namely, the conception of Jewish studies as an area of cultural studies. Recalling the political climate that engendered—not an idle term in this context—cultural studies more generally, that orientation has led to an emphasis on the varieties of Jewish experience, rather than, say, the investigation of a canon. Some faculty are concerned that this emphasis does not provide adequate preparation for graduate study in the field—due to the contingencies of staffing, we offer no seminars on Talmud, for instance—and approach the curriculum from the point of view of content: what should our majors know upon graduation? Others counter that the question of expected content is but another form of the canon, to which they

object on theoretical and pedagogical grounds. From this perspective, the concerns for preparation for graduate studies may be reversed; one may argue that our emphasis is representative of the evolution of the field—that Gershon Scholem, for example, already revised the scholarly tradition of his *Wissenschaft* forebears, and, moreover, at present, a familiarity with the theoretical writings of his friend Walter Benjamin are as vital to Jewish studies as the work of Scholem himself.

Though we are far from consensus, the general result of our cultural studies orientation, I believe, is that we tend to offer courses that emphasize multiplicity and the formation of Jewish cultural expressions that have grown up in conversation with other cultures from Middle Eastern antiquity to post-Enlightenment Europe to the heterogeneity of American Jewish life. In short, rather like Vassar’s multidisciplinary American Culture

or Women’s Studies Programs (or perhaps even Physics), our courses tend to treat the Jewishness of Jewish culture as an open question to investigate, rather than an a priori category or a foregone conclusion.

Andrew Bush is Professor of Hispanic Studies and Jewish Studies at Vassar College.

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FORUM RESPONSE

Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert

Although the academic study of Jewish culture in its various forms established itself before World War II—concretely with the appointment of Salo Baron as Professor of Jewish History, Literature, and Institutions at Columbia University—the establishment of undergraduate majors in Jewish studies is a relatively recent phenomenon. Among the five contributions to this issue, Brandeis University’s major in Jewish studies (since 1953) is clearly the exception, due mostly to its founding mission. At this point in time, I think that we can assess this story of the Jewish studies major in American liberal arts colleges as a success story, even if there is no unambiguous way to measure success in this case. But the Jewish studies major can be found in a great variety of institutions, from the smaller colleges to the American elite universities with and without divinity schools. Some of the Jewish studies programs have significant numbers of students enrolled as majors. Such success prods one to reflect on the nature of the beast, so to speak.

There are two important points that emerge from the reports on the Jewish studies major that I would like to raise here in however brief a form, the first one being the interdisciplinarity of Jewish studies extolled by most of the reports, and the second one the question of the clientele or student body for whom Jewish studies programs are designed. Both points will allow us to reflect briefly on the future of the field.

As to the first point, all of the authors describe and praise the inter- or multidisciplinary of their

respective programs and all of them consider this to be a strength. Depending on the size and culture of the institutional contexts, undergraduate students in Jewish studies major in their respective departments (history, religion, Near Eastern studies, etc.) or construct their own interdisciplinary majors supervised by the Jewish studies program, which is also the situation here at Stanford University. While interdisciplinarity often derives from

contemporary literature to ritual performances. The more the focus of Jewish academic scholarship on the textual and intellectual traditions of Judaism has been demoted from its traditionally central place, the more interdisciplinary Jewish studies has become. This does not remain without problems, as pointed out by several of the contributors, namely the question of what a student who majors in Jewish studies should be made to study and know in order to identify herself respectably as having majored in Jewish studies. This difficult question notwithstanding, the interdisciplinarity of Jewish studies also underwrites its own future, since much in the humanities nowadays rides on being reoriented towards interdisciplinarity as well as the ability to construct conversations which as many people as possible can join. The future of Jewish studies, I would surmise, hinges on the ability of the various programs to overcome insularity and to be part of larger conversations in the humanities. This cannot and should not merely be dismissed as bowing to the most recent fads, rather than as the ongoing challenge of critical self-reflection on what it is that defines one’s place in the humanities and in the liberal arts curricula, especially if most of us believe in the importance of providing a space for critical reflection and education about Jewish culture.

This leads me to the second and perhaps most important, if difficult topic, namely the question of the clientele of Jewish studies. Who are the students who are and might be interested in Jewish studies? Again, like most fields in the humanities, Jewish studies is subject to the laws of the market, and the viability of Jewish studies programs is dependent on the interest they can generate amongst American undergraduate students. Students in the U.S. (as opposed to some countries in Europe for instance) who take Jewish studies courses and who



A student’s handwriting exercise in Haketia (North Moroccan Ladino) written in Sephardi script. Each line reads, “Ama a tu prohimo como a ti mismo [Love your neighbor as yourself].” The exercise is signed by Avraham Ben Shimol. From Tangier or Tetuan, late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Courtesy of Norman Stillman.

pragmatic concerns—after all, the case of Rutgers which has a department is rare—and interdepartmental “programs” of Jewish studies is the more prevalent situation. But whether pragmatic or not, clearly Jewish studies as a field cannot be reduced and subjected to any one discipline, as Jewish culture has found a huge variety of expressions, ranging from art in its various forms via ancient and

major in Jewish studies tend to be Jewish themselves, as pointed out by some of the authors. Such is the case not just at Brandeis with its particular history as a Jewish institution. It is true in many, if not most other institutions. As Steve Weitzman points out, “many of our students are motivated by a desire to develop their own sense of identity.” One is tempted to ask whether or not this observed and projected market does not only influence what is taught, but what is thought as well, reflected in the predominance of American scholarship touching upon questions of Jewish identity, including the ascertainment of the impossibility of articulating a coherent, non-sectarian, non-normative definition of Jewish identity. The critical question in my view is how much the field is

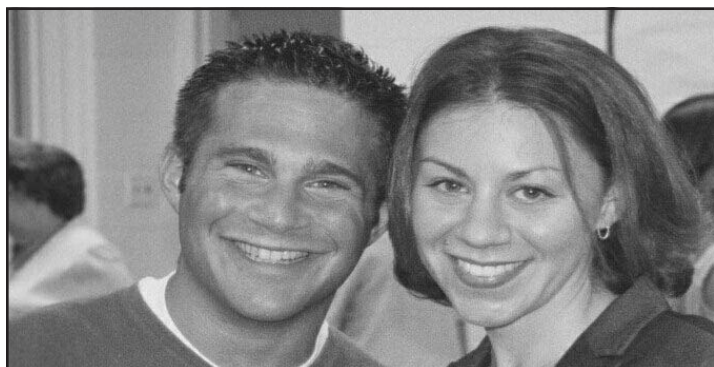
dependent on the fact that our student body, and therefore our readers, are Jewish. Obviously, we are all quick to reassure one another that we are committed to the fact that our programs are located in the context of larger universities and colleges, and that we are not intent

...WHETHER PRAGMATIC OR NOT, CLEARLY JEWISH STUDIES AS A FIELD CANNOT BE REDUCED AND SUBJECTED TO ANY ONE DISCIPLINE, AS JEWISH CULTURE HAS FOUND A HUGE VARIETY OF EXPRESSIONS, RANGING FROM ART IN ITS VARIOUS FORMS VIA ANCIENT AND CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE TO RITUAL PERFORMANCES.

on merely designing college-level Jewish education, rather than programs of academic and intellectual rigor that are open to all. But it seems to me that the field can only benefit from a serious conversation about what is entailed in thinking about Jewish studies as a field that targets not only students

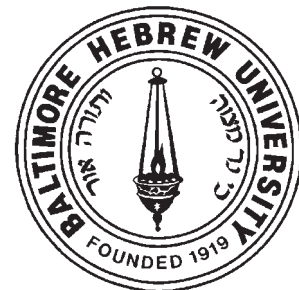
for whom Jewish studies is “familiar cultural territory,” or who want to deepen their understanding of their own culture. This is not to say that such endeavors should be thwarted. Not at all! Nor should such a conversation derive from an anxiety about relevance. Rather, for Jewish studies the challenge of its location in American universities should only be considered as an opportunity to engage in creative answers to the question of why non-Jewish students should also major (or at least minor) in Jewish studies. This surely will strengthen the position of our field in American undergraduate education.

Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Stanford University.



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FORUM RESPONSE

Paula E. Hyman

Last summer the American Association for Jewish Research's graduate student seminar framed its seminar as the interplay of the global and the local in Jewish studies. As I read these discussions of Jewish studies undergraduate majors in a variety of American settings, I was struck by that very tension. There is both commonality (the global) and diversity (the local). All, however, reflect general developments in American higher education.

It is striking that even the veteran Jewish studies major, at Brandeis University, is of postwar vintage. It was virtually impossible as late as the 1960s and 1970s for college students to put together a coherent program in Jewish studies, including at American institutions that boasted the presence of a renowned scholar. The current older generation of professors in the various fields of Jewish studies acquired at least part of their education under Jewish auspices, either at rabbinical schools or in Jewish-sponsored educational settings such as the Hebrew colleges. That is no longer the case. Large public universities and large and small private universities and colleges located throughout the country offer students a wide range of courses that are shaped by the standards of the American academy. American programs in Jewish studies rightly define themselves as embracing the goals of the American liberal arts curriculum, which endorses a critical perspective

and a pluralistic approach to learning not shared by all Jewish communal educational institutions.

All of the programs profiled here were described as interdisciplinary. This choice of terminology follows the trend in American universities to privilege the interdisciplinary (or the multidisciplinary), perhaps because of the recognition that the division



Reprinted from *Ivrit min ha-Hatla'cha [Hebrew from Scratch]* by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Shlomit Chayat, Sara Israeli, and Hilla Kobliner. Jerusalem: Academ, 1990, cover. Courtesy of Academ Publishing House, www.academon.co.il, www.isrconn.com.

of humanistic learning into discrete disciplines does not reflect the ways we learn or think. It also suggests that the study of Jewish historical, cultural, and spiritual experience requires diverse approaches. Jewish studies is a form of cultural or area studies, more akin to American studies or religious studies, which presume that multiple methodologies are necessary for their study, than to traditional fields like history or sociology. The recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of Jewish studies is quite appropriate and promotes further research, but it also raises the question of what enables students in Jewish studies programs or departments, with their diversified

courses, to feel that they participate in a common field.

Jewish studies undergraduate programs use one or two methods to provide a sense of a common field and to lay the foundation for further exploration of Jewish culture. Most offer historical survey courses that are required for majors. History has thus become the tie

that binds students with widely different interests together in the field of Jewish studies. Hebrew would seem likely to perform the same function, but not all programs include a required, rigorous study of Hebrew. Yiddish, which is not readily available on most American campuses in any case, does not link Jewish culture from different periods or places.

The local context plays a major role in the impressively different ways that faculty shape a Jewish studies major. Size of the institution and the demography of the student population seem to be the most salient characteristics that differentiate programs.

Larger universities have multiple options in devising ways to study Jewish culture, in creating several tracks within one major and in integrating Jewish studies as a track in other departments. They have the luxury of deciding among many possibilities in expanding their offerings. The presence of Jewish day school graduates in significant numbers along with students with little prior preparation requires innovation in designing courses and curricula. That our students include the "simply curious," Jews as well as non-Jews, is part of the normalization of Jewish studies that has taken place in the American academy.

The proliferation of Jewish studies

THE PROLIFERATION OF JEWISH STUDIES IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE PAST TWENTY-FIVE YEARS HAS BEEN PART OF A BROADER RECOGNITION IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE NEED TO EXPAND OUR CONCEPT OF THE LIBERAL ARTS CURRICULUM TO INCLUDE CULTURES ONCE DEEMED MARGINAL TO THE AMERICAN (OR MORE BROADLY, WESTERN) EXPERIENCE.

in American universities in the past twenty-five years has been part of a broader recognition in American higher education of the need to expand our concept of the liberal arts curriculum to include cultures once deemed marginal to the

American (or more broadly, Western) experience. One phenomenon that these articles surprisingly did not mention is the emergence of large numbers of female scholars in the field and the adoption of gender as both an

analytic tool and a subject of study, again a reflection of broad changes in the American academy. I am happy that the discussion of what constitutes a Jewish studies curriculum appropriate for American college students has begun in these pages. I hope that we can extend the discussion to AJS meetings.

Paula E. Hyman is the Lucy G. Moses Professor of Modern Jewish History at Yale University.

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FORUM RESPONSE

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein

These five fascinating descriptions of Jewish studies programs provide a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the nature of our enterprise. What strikes me most profoundly is that a number of factors constrain the way that a department “envisions its major” and the “competence” that it hopes that a “student would have when granting a degree” such that the ideal is somewhat removed from that which can be achieved in practice. Where Jewish studies has been constituted as a program that draws on faculty located in other departments, and presumably hired by those departments for their own needs and purposes, the possibilities of the program

will be a product of forces beyond the control of the program’s architects. At

Vassar, for example, Andrew

Bush observes that “due to contingencies of staffing, we offer no seminar on Talmud,” and that the “offerings of the Jewish Studies Program” are “heavily weighted toward twentieth-century topics” because they are “contingent on faculty availability.” The same is true of numerous small departments with limited faculty in colleges throughout the country: the courses that the department offers, hence the content of the major, will tend to depend on the expertise and competence of the one or two faculty members there. Larger departments too will be limited in these ways, albeit to a lesser extent. At Indiana, Steven Weitzman concedes, “there remain gaps in our curriculum—medieval Jewish thought, Israel studies,

German Jewish history.”

Other constraints may be a function of university policies. Nancy Sinkoff notes that “our one-year language requirement is not ideal, but the culture at Rutgers does not currently support foreign language acquisition to the extent that we would like.” At the University of Pennsylvania, where the depth and interest of faculty allows for multiple tracks, three of the four tracks are housed within other departments—history, religious studies, and Near Eastern languages and civilizations. Because requirements for the major are determined by those departments, and not by the Jewish studies program, some anomalies result. Thus proficiency in Hebrew is demanded of three tracks, which indicates that such training is a desideratum, but not by the track within the religious studies

THE BOUNDARIES OF JEWISH STUDIES MAJORS THAT COUNT COURSES IN CHRISTIANITY, ISLAM, AND SUCHLIKE HAVE LIKEWISE BECOME MORE POROUS.

department, due to the policies of that department. And financial constraints probably impact even the largest departments with the broadest spectrum of faculty.

Requirements for the major appear to be partly a function of such constraints, though partly determined by ideology. All five of these accounts exhibit tensions between breadth and depth; between introductory surveys designed to cover all of Jewish history vs. higher level, more specialized courses emphasizing political and methodological issues; between the classical tradition and aspects of Jewish culture. Yet Bush employs the “conception of Jewish studies as an area of cultural studies” as a type of justification for

the lack of requirements that teach students the “canon,” and that it might better prepare them for graduate study—a judgment not shared by all. Now one could argue that we have here a parallel between trends in scholarship that emphasize Judaism as a cultural phenomena and this construction of the major in Jewish studies. Nevertheless, this rationale for abandoning parts of the “canon” are surely influenced by the lack of sufficient faculty. Another important question is whether one goal of a Jewish studies major is to strengthen Jewish identity, and in this respect whether it differs from other majors in the university. Weitzman writes, “Many of our students are motivated by a desire to develop their own sense of identity. It would be disingenuous not to acknowledge the role that we play for that kind of student.” Thus there is something more at stake than providing students with a body

of knowledge, training them to think, or preparing them for a profession, as might be the case of other majors. At the same time, all

would want to steer clear of any outright confessionalism. Sinkoff notes that at Rutgers many students arrive with strong “Jewish day school backgrounds.” The faculty, however, “strives to introduce them to the diversity and complexity of the field.”

Finally, it appears that, though largely unstated, certain political issues still leave their marks on the nature of Jewish studies programs. I have in mind the efforts to divorce Jewish studies from departments of religion/theology with a heavy Christian slant and the desire to separate Israel studies from departments of Near Eastern or Middle Eastern studies with an Arabist bias. In this respect there is great historical irony in Jonathan

Decter's note that courses in both Christianity and Islam at Brandeis fulfill distribution requirements for the Jewish studies major. Here too we find a significant connection between scholarship and the major. Scholars now understand Christianity as a development within the matrix of early Judaism, essentially as a form of Judaism, until it gradually separated as a distinct religion. And even that process of separation, the so-called parting of the ways, is now considered a messy and protracted process as both Judaism and Christianity struggled for centuries to clarify their porous boundaries. The boundaries of Jewish studies majors that count courses in Christianity, Islam, and suchlike have likewise become more porous.

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein is Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University.

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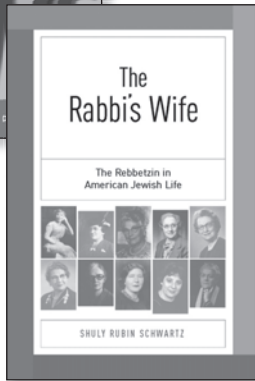
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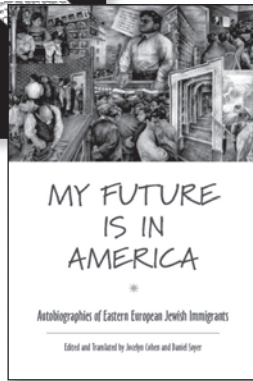
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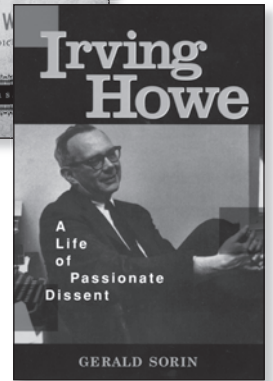
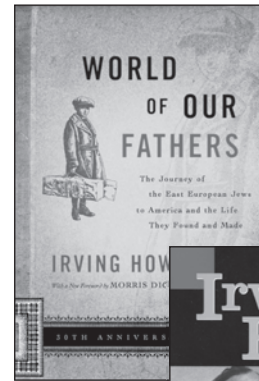
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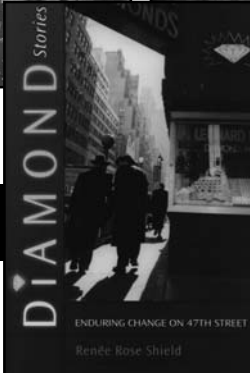
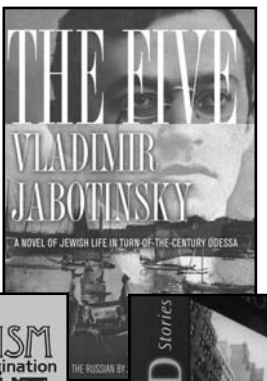
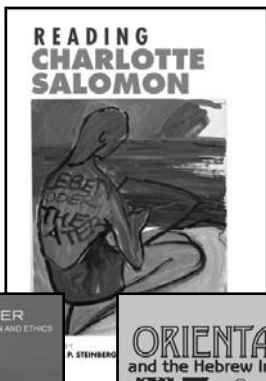
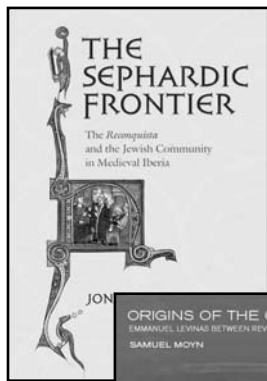
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FORUM RESPONSE

Benjamin D. Sommer

I am struck by an interesting difference regarding a language requirement in these majors. Three of these majors (including Indiana and Vassar) require Hebrew; two require either Hebrew or Yiddish. The question of language requirements implicates both how we construct the field of Jewish studies and how undergraduate majors should relate to that academic construction, so I will devote my brief response to some thoughts on this issue.

Should a major in Jewish studies have a language requirement at all? If so, what languages should fulfill that requirement? If one answers the first question in the negative, then one constructs Jewish studies in a particular fashion. For such a construction, direct access to classics of Jewish literature and thought not written in English is not a major desideratum. Further, this construction is especially useful if one seeks to reject the notion of a canon: after all, the judgment that, say, Amos Oz is somehow more important as a Jewish writer than Philip Roth, or S.Y. Agnon than Nelly Sachs, may be nothing more than a hegemonic assertion of one's own values. An insistence on a language requirement may thus function to reinforce some sort of canon.

Alternatively, one may view a language requirement as a hermetic attempt to keep Jewish studies an elite field, inaccessible to the masses of American undergraduates. Hence

a repudiation of such a requirement might be seen as an exercise in demystification. In an era that celebrates transgressing disciplinary boundaries, some may welcome such a repudiation. Of course, scholars who believe that discipline is a good thing will demur. I for one am pleased to note that all five of these programs fit into the latter category.

If a program does institute a requirement, should Yiddish fulfill it? There is no question that Yiddish is an important Jewish language. On the other hand, so is Arabic, and thus if one can use Yiddish to fulfill this requirement, I cannot see why one would not be allowed to use

documents of several Jewish cultures is already ensured for anyone who knows Arabic, German, or English as much as is the case for someone who knows Yiddish.

Could one, on the other hand, construct an argument that Hebrew is *sui generis*, that it is central to Jewish studies in a way that Yiddish, Arabic, German, and English are not? A religious argument would of course be invalid in an academic context; there is no academic argument that makes the Bible more important than Martin Buber, or Mishna more important than Mendelssohn. But there are two reasons that Hebrew is uniquely



Reprinted from *Foygl kanarik* by Moyshe Shifris. New York, 1950, p. 13. Courtesy of Jeffrey Shandler.

Arabic (perhaps with the caveat that one semester has to be devoted to the study of a Jewish text in Arabic). German is also a tremendously important Jewish language: literature, philosophy, religious thought, and of course an enormous amount of archival material of interest to Jewish historians is written in German. The same can be said of English: it too is a vital Jewish language. Thus an argument that Yiddish can fulfill this requirement could put one on a slippery slope that leads to an argument that there should not be a language requirement for native English speakers. Direct access to an enormous number crucial

pivotal for Jewish studies as an academic field. First, Hebrew is the one language that all Jewish communities have utilized. Yiddish speakers rarely read texts in Arabic. Few contemporary American Jews record their thoughts in Ladino. No French synagogues or communal organizations keep their records in Judeo-Persian. But at least some Jews in almost every period and region viewed Hebrew texts as central to their identity, even if (think, for example, of a Hebrew poet such as Tchernikhovsky) they deliberately set out to reject the religious authority of those texts or (think of Yehuda Amichai) to deflate those texts' pretensions. Second,

Hebrew is the central language of modern Jewish scholarship; a scholar who cannot read Tarbiz or Zion cannot be fully or responsibly in dialogue with the field.

The issue I raise is a delicate one. Lurking behind arguments as to whether Yiddish should or should not join Hebrew as a required language are religious and antireligious polemics. Complex sensibilities regarding the relationship of diaspora to the State of Israel and mixed feelings regarding Zionist projects impinge on this issue as well. Moreover, a great many faculty members affiliated with Jewish studies programs in North America do not themselves know Hebrew, which complicates any discussion of this issue in tense and very personal ways. Both sorts of concerns—commitments regarding religion or Zionism, and anxieties about one's own place or legitimacy within the field—should be set aside in a discussion of fitting requirements of an academic field. As Americans increasingly come to realize the

problematic nature of their monoglot culture, it is heartening to know that all the programs in this forum require the study of languages: part of coming to know something foreign (and most Jewish cultures are foreign to any sort of American student, whether Jewish or non-Jewish) is grappling with a foreign language. Scholars and teachers in the field may want to engage in a discussion of the proposition that for students of Jewish cultures generally (as opposed to, say, history majors concentrating on eastern European Jewish history or philosophy majors concentrating on medieval Jewish thinkers, who are in different

situations altogether) no other language is as important as Hebrew.

Benjamin D. Sommer is Associate Professor of Religion at Northwestern University.

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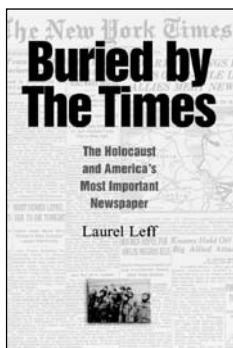
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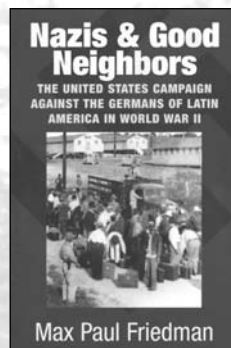
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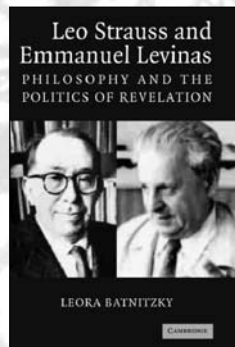


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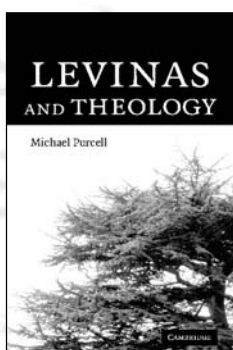
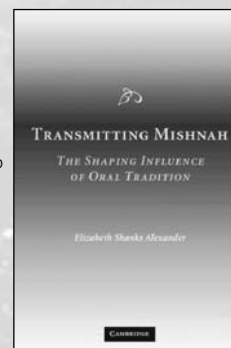
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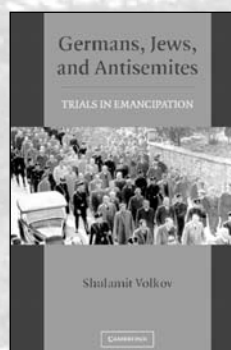
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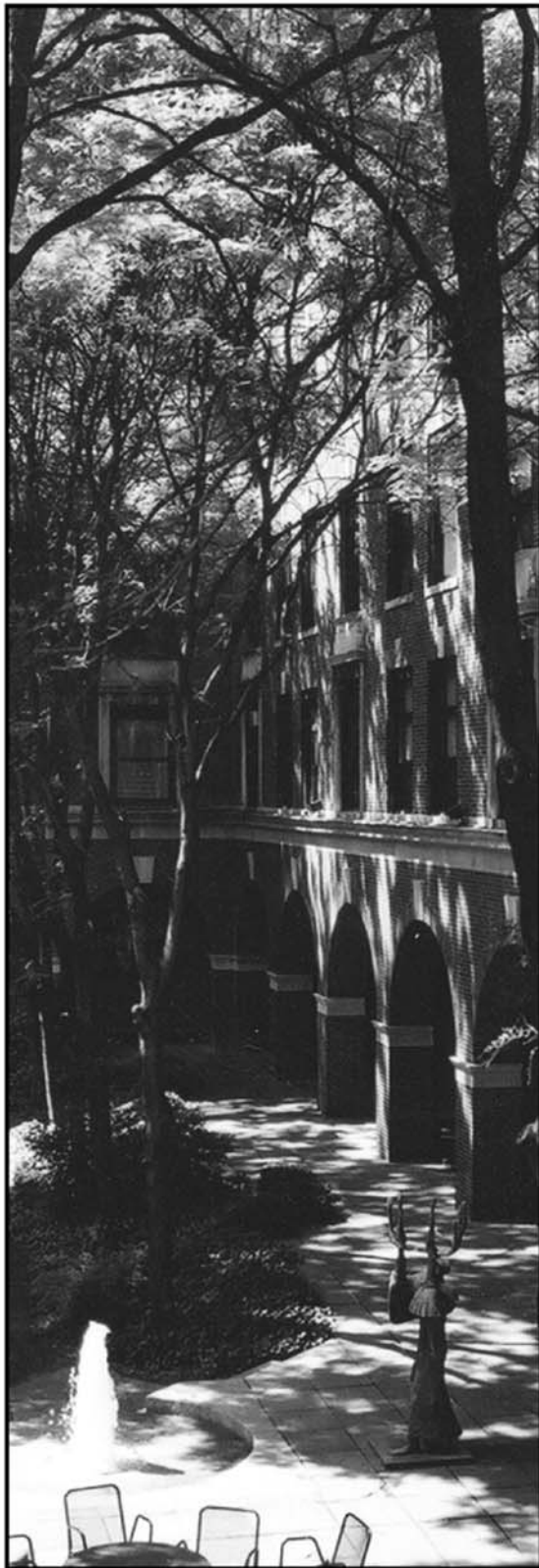
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SHARING KNOWLEDGE: RECENT TRENDS IN SEARCH AND DELIVERY TOOLS FOR SCHOLARLY CONTENT

Heidi Lerner

The current buzzwords in electronic information delivery begin with the word “open”: open source, open content, open standards, open access, open archives. The trend towards making content and resources available on the Internet is spreading quickly throughout the academic world. The issues surrounding free and open access are complex and deserve to be studied. But learning about these issues and familiarizing themselves with new Web technologies can involve scholars and researchers in making their intellectual and creative output available to a wider audience. New and mostly free Web-based searching tools and services are providing access to and delivery of scholarly and research materials. These include open content repositories, search engines, weblogs and news services, and RSS (“rich simple syndication” or “rich site summary”) technology. Partnerships to open up new channels of distribution of scholarly content are forming among the major software engine developers, publishers, universities and other research institutions, and among scholars. Although the impact of these developments on the Jewish

studies community may be minimal, it is growing every day.

The movement to put peer-reviewed and scholarly materials on the Internet and make them available free of charge has existed since the early 1990s and is gaining momentum in the humanities and social sciences. Institutions create digital repositories to archive and

AS MEMBERS OF THE JEWISH STUDIES SCHOLARLY
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THE VALUE AND USEFULNESS OF THESE TOOLS. WE MUST
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disseminate scholarly output from across many fields. Open access e-archives are usually community-driven and contain output from one or many scholarly disciplines. American scholars experience difficulties in accessing Israeli dissertations in Jewish studies. Israeli doctoral students do not routinely submit dissertations to ProQuest/UMI, nor do Israeli universities provide a central depository for electronic copies of these works.¹ Jewish studies scholars internationally would benefit from the creation of an electronic repository into which authors can self-archive and make available their output. Israel Scholar Works is a

new initiative that seeks to serve as a “digital archive for creative work by the faculty and staff of Israel Academic Institutions and Jewish scholars all around the world.”²

Google Scholar is a free Web service that lets users search the content and citations in proprietary electronic journals and online repositories of scholarly papers via the popular Google search engine technology.³ Through it one can search for and link to the full text of articles, identify books, and locate a nearby library containing a copy. An important feature of Google Scholar is that if the item being looked at is freely available on the Web, the user can directly access it. Otherwise, one is taken to the vendor’s Web site in which case access must either be purchased or made via proxy. Google does not explain how it decides what to include in Google Scholar nor does it provide date ranges covered. There is no list of commercial or open access publishers, preprint and reprint servers, or abstracting/indexing databases. As a result, it is hard

to gauge Google Scholar’s current usefulness to the Jewish studies research community. Even the most experienced searchers have difficulty trying to determine the depth of coverage for a particular discipline. Google Scholar is very rich in content for the sciences which produce many nontraditional forms of scholarly output, and it includes citations from IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) and ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) publications, HighWire Press, and PubMed.⁴ Google Scholar searches collections of academic and research articles and citation data that serve Jewish studies such as



Screenshot of www.israelscholar.org. Courtesy of Israel Scholar Works.

IngentaConnect and Project Muse, but many archives and subject-specific indexes appear to be excluded. A recent Google Scholar search by publication for articles appearing in *Shofar* between 2000 and 2005 yielded 711 citations; a similar search for *Jewish Social Studies* for the same period yielded 123 citations; and for *Prooftexts* only 11 citations. Journals that are included in Project Muse clearly are not cited equally in Google Scholar.⁵

In 2004 Google announced that it was going to digitize millions of books from five major research libraries via Google Book Search (formerly Google Print). This program also enables users to search full texts of public domain and copyright protected books online.⁶ Full-text access is provided to the rapidly increasing number of public domain books, while only excerpts and snippets of books under copyright are offered through Google Book Search. Most of these books are in English, but Google is scanning and accepting books for this service in other languages.⁷ Google wants to expand its book offerings to include non-roman script materials and with Stanford University is initiating an international collaborative project to digitize Arabic books.⁸ The Open Content Alliance (OCA) is a consortium of libraries, archives, and publishers that aims to create a

“permanent archive of multilingual digitized text and multimedia content.” This project differs from the Google initiatives in that content will be available for anyone to use free of charge, and the full text will be searchable by many search engines. Internet Archive and Yahoo started this project, and

Microsoft, the University of California, and the California Digital Library joined very soon thereafter. More than forty “cultural, technology, nonprofit and governmental organizations” have now committed to participation in the OCA. Participants must obtain permission of all the relevant copyright holders prior to contributing materials to the project.⁹

A relatively new phenomenon in electronic delivery of information is self-publishing or “social publishing” in which individuals or small groups create the content and make it available. The weblog (blog) is the most popular format. Journalists, politicians, and hi-tech professionals have used blogs for several years to publish their personal thoughts and observations. Generally, blogs consist of brief entries arranged in reverse chronological order. The most recent entry appears first. These postings are updated frequently and regularly. People who peruse blogs are usually able to post comments as well. The writing style is mostly informal. A blog that is known to be reliable may have a

large audience and can be a very effective tool for spreading and disseminating ideas and information.

Scholars in Jewish studies have been slow to blog but activity is growing. Dr. Deborah Lipstadt (Emory University) maintains a blog that includes links to her articles, along with Web sites and postings that are relevant to her recent book, *History on Trial*. Although Dr. Lipstadt started her blog “as a lark,” she now believes that it is a “useful tool” and is “very efficacious for commenting on contemporary events which pertain to my scholarly and intellectual interests [most particularly current anti-Semitism and especially Holocaust denial].” By the beginning of January 2006, Dr. Lipstadt’s weblog had received more than 31,000 visitors since its inception nearly a year earlier.¹⁰ Blogs have entered biblical studies where they have become popular forums for discussing the latest developments,



Screenshot of scholar.google.com. Courtesy of Google.

and interacting about controversial topics. PaleoJudaica.com, maintained by Dr. James Davila, is a weblog “that aims to chronicle and comment on current developments ... in the academic field of ancient Judaism and its historical and literary context.”¹¹ Scholars often discover that blogs are an excellent way to share research and other information with their colleagues and other communities.

RSS is a technology that lets users access blogs, electronic news sources, and Web sites without having to wade through multiple sites one at a time. An RSS feed can provide updated lists of headlines and articles that users subscribe to and read, using a “feed reader” or “aggregator.” There are too many kinds of Web sites that have RSS feeds to generalize about the types of sites that offer this service, but they range from the personal to the scholarly. At some academic libraries, faculty, staff, and students can subscribe to RSS feeds of new library book acquisitions as they enter their library catalogs. These feeds are available for books in a variety of subject areas, which are very often based on the Library of Congress classification system. The University of Alabama Library offers 325 subject feeds including BM (Judaism), DS (History; Asia [including Israel]), KB (Religious law [including Jewish law]), and PJ (Oriental languages and literatures [including Hebrew and Yiddish])¹² University presses offer RSS as a tool for informing scholars when new books are published. Journal publishers use RSS to keep

readers up-to-date with their latest journal content.

As members of the Jewish studies scholarly community, we are in the best position to determine the value and usefulness of these tools. We must take the initiative and familiarize ourselves with new Web-based technologies and services. This will enable us, individually and collaboratively, to expand the presence of easily accessible primary and secondary scholarly and research materials in the digital world.

Heidi Lerner is the Hebraica/Judaica Cataloger at Stanford University Libraries.

¹ Although there is no central service for obtaining print or electronic copies, bibliographical records for Israeli theses and dissertations are available as a subset of the Israel Union Catalog, http://aleph1.libnet.ac.il/E/?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=uli02&con_lng=eng (accessed January 21, 2006).

² Israel Scholar Works Web site, <http://israelscholar.org> (accessed January 21, 2006).

³ Google Scholar Web site, <http://scholar.google.com> (accessed January 21, 2006).

⁴ Engineering Library News [Stanford University Library], Fall Quarter, 2005, <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/eng/highlights/englibnewsfall05.pdf> (accessed January 21, 2006).

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⁷ Google Book Search, Common questions Web site, <http://books.google.com/googlebooks/common.html#9> (accessed January 21, 2006); Google Book Search Frequently Asked Questions, http://books.google.com/support/partner/bin/index.py?fulldump=1&hl=en_US#17861 (accessed January 21, 2006).

⁸ Bibliotheca Alexandrina, International School of Information Science (ISIS) Web site, <http://www.bibalex.org/isis/Home.aspx> (accessed January 21, 2006).

⁹ Open Content Alliance Web site, <http://www.opencontentalliance.org> (accessed January 21, 2006).

¹⁰ Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, “Blogs and Jewish Studies,” December 22, 2005; January 21, 2006, personal e-mail (January 21, 2006).

¹¹ PaleoJudaica.com Web site, <http://paleojudaica.blogspot.com> (accessed January 21, 2006).

¹² University of Alabama, University Libraries, RSS Feeds for Recently Cataloged Titles Web site, <http://library.ua.edu/rss> (accessed January 21, 2006).

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The AJS Womens Caucus awards travel grants to graduate students and independent scholars whose papers have been accepted at the 2006 conference, and which contribute to the study of women, feminism, and gender in Jewish studies. Paper topics in all areas of Jewish studies are welcome. The application consists of: the paper title and the AJS abstract/paper proposal; a copy of the letter of acceptance from the AJS; your c.v.; and a proposed budget that includes other sources of financial support. Applications should be postmarked by September 16, 2006. Two copies of all materials should be sent to: Professor Gail Laibovitz, The University of Judaism, 15600 Mulholland Drive, Bel-Air, Ca. 90077.

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About Mort Ruderman

Mort Ruderman is a 1959 electrical engineering graduate of Northeastern's College of Engineering. He is principal partner and CEO of CRES Realty Development, which he co-founded in 1974. He is also the co-founder and president of MEDITECH and worked earlier in his career at Digital Equipment Corp. (1963-69) and Sylvania (1959-63).

The Ruderman Professorship is made possible by the Ruderman Family Charitable Foundation. Trustees of the Foundation include Steve Rosenthal, Jay Seth Ruderman, Shira Ruderman, Marcia Ruderman, Morton E. Ruderman, Todd Adam Ruderman (NU alumnus, '91, Civil Engineering), and Sharon Ellen Shapiro.

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SALA-MANCA: MEDIATING THE POETICS OF TRANSLATION

Jeffrey Shandler

Jewish artists working in new media frequently use the vantage provided by innovative technologies to look back as well as forward, making their work of special interest to Jewish studies scholars. Such is the case with *Pilim beleylot Metula* (*Elephants in the Nights of Metula*), performed by the group Sala-Manca at the Upgrade International, a festival of new media held at the Eyebeam Art and Technology Center, New York City, in September 2005. This remarkable piece, which combines live performers with digital slides, video, film, and animation, uses state-of-the-art technologies to explore the power of that oldest of communications media—speech—in a provocative meditation on language, territory, and the imaginary in Israel.

Sala-Manca (<http://sala-manca.net>) consists of two media artists, Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman, both natives of Buenos Aires, who have been living and working in Jerusalem since 2000. They have created a series of performance pieces, installations, and print publications, notably the journal (*H*)*Earat Shulaym*—(*Note in the Margin*), that engage an array of social and political issues of special relevance to life in contemporary Israel. In addition, their work investigates issues of art and communication generally, such as the interrelation of art and memory, the role of the artist in the community, the interrelation of low-tech and high-tech aesthetics, and

the poetics of translation—not only from one language to another, but also across cultures and media.

Such is the case with *Pilim beleylot Metula*, which is based on texts by the Israeli Yiddish poet Avraham Sutzkever. The piece, originally created for the

Metula Poetry Festival in 2005, consists of a richly textured montage of sounds and images that, to use Sala-Manca's own language, "recontextualizes" the poet within Israeli culture through a "postrealistic" approach. Most provocative is the piece's layering of languages through both live speech (performed by Mauas and Rotman) and graphic display on a large screen that dominates the performance space.

Yiddish and Hebrew texts are sometimes projected on the screen in peculiar romanization generated by Truespel, a "pronunciation guide spelling system" that renders any spoken language in an orthography based on a phonetic transcription of English. The effect is complex, calling one's attention not only to the poetics of translation but also to the slippage between spoken and written language, providing a sense of access to and, at the same time, estrangement from languages usually written in the Jewish alphabet. (Sala-Manca makes other deft uses of the poetics of translation in another version of *Pilim beleylot Metula*, in which Hebrew is written in Soviet Yiddish orthography). This strategy also reinforces the piece's interrogation of the place of Yiddish in Israel and

the implications of rethinking the possibilities of Jewish language(s) in relation to Jewish notions of place.

Yiddish figures as a provocative element in other media works created by Sala-Manca, including the group's participation in Kaleydoskop/Yiddish Avant-Garde, presented in Jerusalem in 2002. *Variations on Cultural Icons I*, which was originally staged in the city's streets during national elections, proposed Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem as an "alternative candidate," deploying the author's name as a "political propaganda" message that, as the artists explain, has "several meanings ('Peace on you,' 'Goodbye to you'). . . . Objects that are neglected in day-to-day life were disconnected from their natural context in order to find

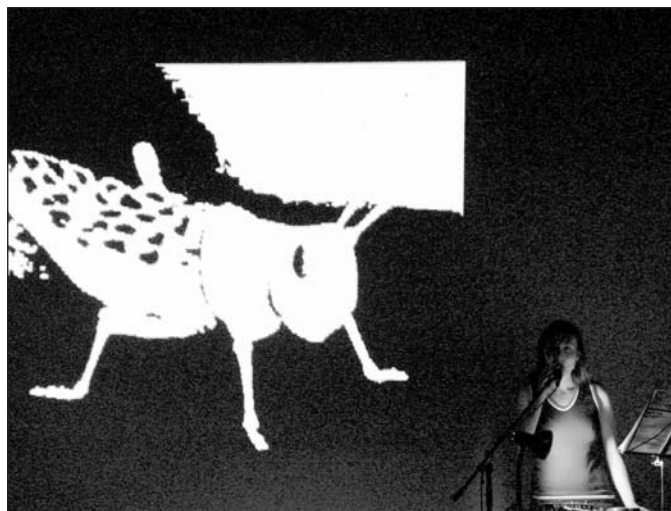


Photo credit: Sasha Alechov, *Metula*, 2005.

their new place at the side of the Yiddish writer. . . . The exhibition reconstructs these very objects and the cultural icon [of Sholem Aleichem] and sets them back in the center of the actual dialogue." *Tel Aviv 2002*, another work presented on this occasion, was a "performance for overhead projector and Yiddish texts" that dealt with "contemporary creation in Yiddish and the Israeli policy toward Yiddish Culture."

More recently, Sala-Manca has performed *Albatros 200X oder 200X*

Albatros (including a performance at Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in September 2005). This piece presents Yiddish texts by leading poets of the past century, including

approach to Yiddish using high-technology media is, in our eyes, a natural connection, a result of our way of reading the reality. This approach allows us also to break

culture of cutting-edge technology. Perhaps this is why they have dubbed their “new media study room,” which is designed to enable “active artists to share and achieve knowledge in an intimate and non-institutional frame,” the “New Media Cheyder.”

AT THE SAME TIME THAT ENGAGING WITH YIDDISH HAS A SUBVERSIVE ATTRACTION FOR SALA-MANCA, IT ALSO SEEMS TO BE APPEALINGLY ANACHRONISTIC, COMPLICATING AND ENRICHING THEIR COMMITMENT AS ARTISTS LIVING AND WORKING IN TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY ISRAEL, TO THE WORLDWIDE CULTURE OF CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY.

Jeffrey Shandler is Associate Professor in the Department of Jewish Studies, Rutgers University.

Peretz Markish, A. Leyeles, Avraham Sutzkever, Uri-Zvi Grinberg, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, and Yankev Glatshteyn, as well as the performers’ original writing in Yiddish. *Albatros* honors these poets’ “revolutionary spirit by using cutting edge and experimental technology to process and re-use them as audio-visual material.”

Sala-Manca is attracted to Yiddish as a language of powerful symbolic value, emblematic of what I have termed elsewhere a “postvernacular” engagement with language.¹ As young Israeli Jews who grew up in Argentina (their first language is Spanish), Mauas and Rotman, like others of their generation, encounter Yiddish as a recovered cultural resource. Thus, the artists explain, *Albatros* deals with the efforts of “a young Hebrew poet named A. K. and his young friends, all of them new students of Yiddish language, who opened an Alternative Center for Yiddish Culture, Language and Literature.”

The alterity that Yiddish signifies opens up opportunities for Sala-Manca to interrogate prevailing assumptions about Jewish language, culture, and national identity. In an e-mail interview, they explain: “The

with the common grasp on Yiddish culture, showing that new ways of approaching Yiddish are possible and also necessary.” Essentially, they argue, this “is just a connection between two languages we deal with (Yiddish culture and ‘low/high technology’). In a lot of our work we . . . try to break the dichotomy and hierarchy between old and new, low technology and high technology, Yiddish and Hebrew, and so on.”²

At the same time that engaging with Yiddish has a subversive attraction for Sala-Manca, it also seems to be appealingly anachronistic, complicating and enriching their commitment as artists living and working in twenty-first-century Israel, to the worldwide

¹ Shandler, Jeffrey, *Adventures in Yiddishland: Postvernacular Language and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

² Interview with the author, January 7, 2006.

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Papers are sought for an exciting new book series, **JEWISH CULTURAL STUDIES**, published by Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (see <http://www.littman.co.uk>). The inaugural volume will be on “Jewish Cultural Studies: Past, Present, and Future.” The editorial board seeks contributions that explore Jewish culture as a subject of inquiry. Topics of interest for the volume include, but are not limited to, historiography of Jewish cultural studies with social psychological interpretations of figures and movements such as Yiddish nationalism, identity politics, and Jewish cultural revitalization; uses of folklore and ethnology in the intellectual construction of Jewish culture in different countries and historic periods; models for interpreting emergent Jewish cultural movements in the twenty-first century; ideas of race, gender, and class in the perception and iconography of Jewish culture; relations between folk and popular culture, textual and visual culture, and domestic and public culture in conceptualization of Jewish culture.

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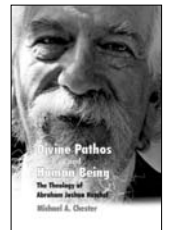
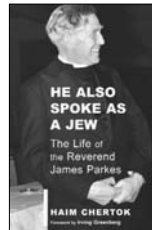
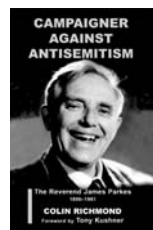
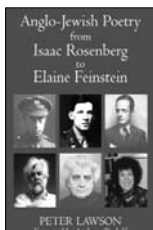
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www.cajs.upenn.edu
Conference advertisement on p. 29.

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Please e-mail msydeu@mscc.huji.ac.il.

Annual Conference of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies
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www.csjs.ca
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June 2006

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June 4–6, 2006
www.jesna.org/j/networks_research.asp

Biennial Scholars' Conference on American Jewish History
Charleston, South Carolina
June 5–7, 2006
www.cofc.edu/~jwst/pages/biennial_scholars.htm

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www.mucjs.org/JLAS/conferences.htm

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June 18–21, 2006
www.jewishlibraries.org

International Conference on Yiddish Language and Culture in the Soviet Union
Russian State University for Humanities
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Please e-mail judaica_mark@mtu-net.ru or kaspina@mail.ru.

July 2006

European Association for Jewish Studies VIIIth EAJIS Congress: Past and Present Perspectives in Jewish Studies
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July 23–27, 2006
www.jewishstudies.ru/cajs2006

August 2006

16th Annual Conference of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies
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For further information, please contact Professor Stanley M. Hordes at smhordes@aol.com.

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Conference advertisement on p. 4.

calls 2006 For Papers

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*The Medici State and the Ghetto of Florence: The Construction of an
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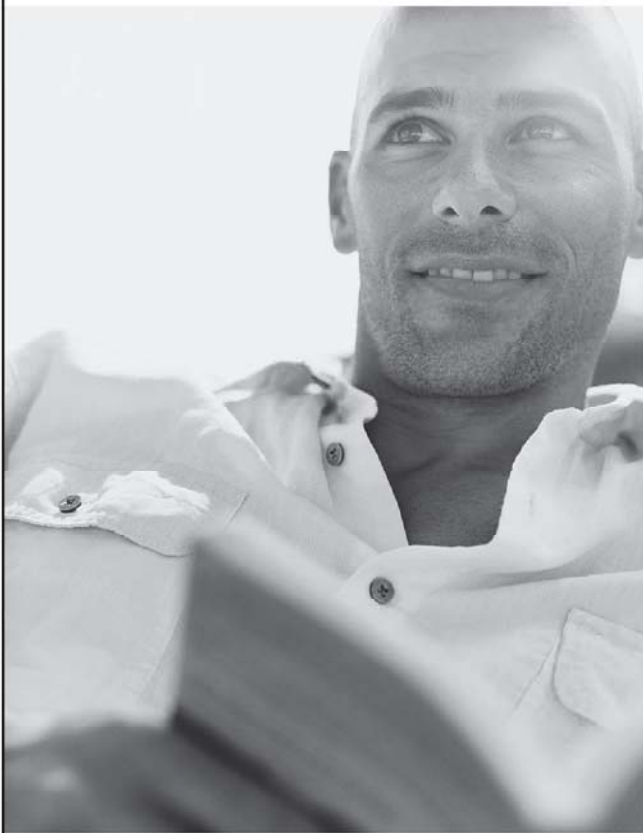
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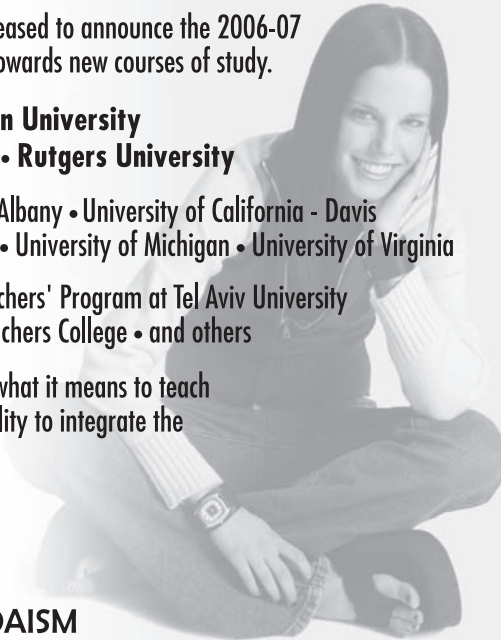
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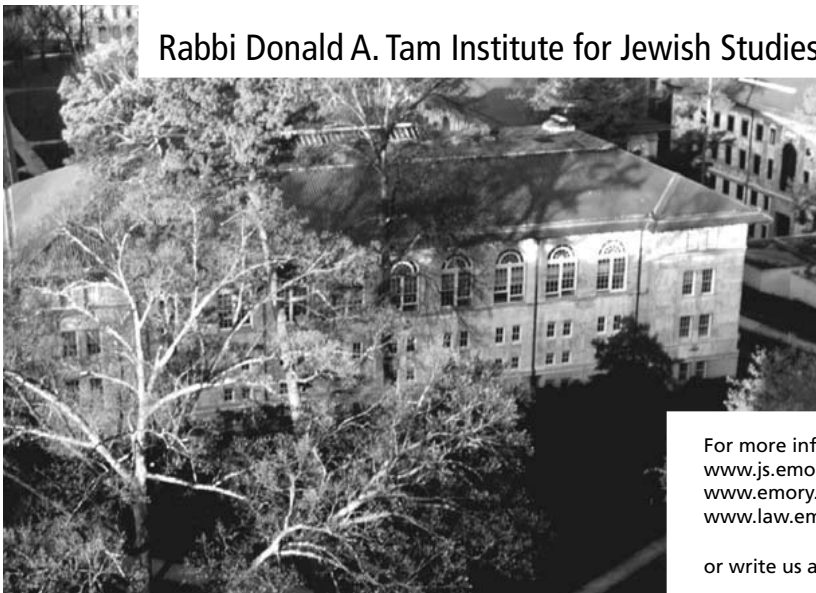
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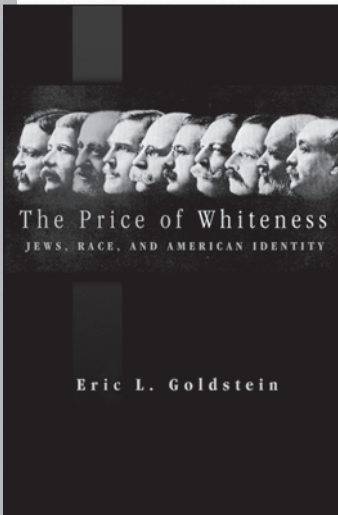
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