

Judaic Studies at GW

In This Issue:

- Faculty Updates
- Department News
- Teaching at GW, by Dr. Lauren B. Strauss
- Judaic Studies Events
- Scholarships and Awards
- Student Essay, by Harry Baumgarten
- Donors to the Judaic Studies Program

Greetings From Our Director



After taking sabbatical leave in 2007-08, I resumed duties as Director of Judaic Studies once again this past academic year, and I very much enjoyed getting back into the thick of things. Our program experienced a number of successes. First and foremost, we filled the Smith Chair that Marc Saperstein vacated when he became President of the Leo Baeck College in London. Our new Smith Professor is Dr. Jenna Weissman Joselit, a specialist in American Jewish history who comes to us from Princeton. Professor Weissman Joselit has a long and distinguished record in her field both as a scholar and a teacher, and she therefore has a great deal to offer our program.

The university has also upgraded Lauren Strauss's position with our program. She will now be teaching two courses a semester and will be assisting with the administration of the program. Moreover, Lauren is a specialist in American Jewish history, which means that we now have three Jewish historians teaching a full course-load—the others being Jenna Weissman Joselit and Dan Schwartz, whose specialty is European Jewish history. Jewish history has therefore become the strongest component of our program.

One of the greatest challenges facing the Jewish community in the US this past year was dealing with fallout from the war in Gaza. Our Judaic Studies program was proud to co-sponsor an event at GW in which Sallai Meridor, the Israeli Ambassador to the US, addressed this issue. A large crowd packed the Jack Morton Auditorium and heard Meridor eloquently articulate the Israeli position on the crisis.

We also hosted a number of superb lectures on such diverse topics as the Jewish origins of the Israeli army, the intellectual culture of New York Jews in the early twentieth century, and interfaith marriage between Jews and non-Jews. Support for the first lecture came from Ari and Phyllis Kiev who, for several years, have sponsored a talk in memory of Ari's father, I. Edward Kiev. The second lecture was supported by an endowment established by Julius Fleischman in memory of his mother, Frieda Kobernick Fleischman. We are grateful for such support and the enrichment that it provides our program.

One of the highlights of the year was a competition we conducted to provide a number of students and faculty with funds to pursue original research in Israel. The awards were made possible by a grant from the Isadore and Bertha Gudelsky Foundation. Two of the students have already completed their projects and submitted reports about their experiences in Israel. It is clear from these reports that both students got a great deal out of this opportunity.

Another highlight of the past year is a dialogue that took place in the winter between a group of non-Jewish educators from Poland who specialize in teaching the Holocaust, and a number of faculty from the Judaic Studies program. The dialogue was arranged by the State Department and was highly stimulating for both groups.

All these developments and more are discussed in detail in this newsletter. Please contact us if you have any questions or comments. It means a great deal to us to be in touch with our alumni, donors, and those who are simply interested in what we are doing.

Also, please consider supporting us as we build our program. We are seeking funds for new professorships in such fields as Israel Studies, Rabbinic Judaism, and medieval Jewish history. We would eventually like to see an endowed Center for Judaic Studies at GW. A center of this kind would be important not only for GWU. Located as we are just blocks from Capitol Hill, it would serve the interests of the American Jewish community as a whole.

Robert Eisen
Professor of Religion
Director of Judaic Studies

Faculty Updates

Eric Cline

Professor Cline's 1994 volume, *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean*, was reissued by Oxford University Press. Two other books of his are currently in press at Oxford as well, including *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. Professor Cline was appointed to the editorial boards of the *Journal of Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*, and the journal *Near Eastern Archaeology*. This summer he took 27 GW students and alumni with him to a dig at Tel Kabri in Israel.

Robert Eisen

This past year, the University of Maryland Press published *Philosophers and the Jewish Bible* co-edited by Professor Eisen and Charles Manekin of the University of Maryland. Professor Eisen was also appointed to the executive board of the C-1 World, an organization originally affiliated with the World Economic Forum that is devoted to improving the relationship between the West and the Islamic world.

Yaron Peleg

Professor Peleg published his book, *Israeli Culture Between Two Intifadas: A Brief Romance*, with the University of Texas Press. He was also appointed associate editor of *Prooftexts*, a major journal of Jewish literary history. He was on sabbatical leave in the spring in Israel where he conducted research on romance in Jewish culture and worked on editing two anthologies, one on Israeli cinema, and another on American Hebrew literature.

Bernard Reich

The second edition of Professor's Reich's book, *A Brief History of Israel*, appeared this past year with Facts on File Press, along

with the second edition of his *Historical Dictionary of Israel*, co-authored with David Goldberg and published by Scarecrow Press. He was appointed to the advisory board on economics and business administration for the Blekinge Institute of Technology in Sweden, the board of advisory editors for the *Middle East Journal*, and the international editorial board of *Israel Affairs*.

Walter Reich

Professor Reich published six articles on topics related to Judaic studies, the Holocaust and genocide in a number of places, including the *Washington Post*, the *Jerusalem Post*, and the *Baltimore Sun*. He also contributed six essays to *Middle East Strategy at Harvard*, an online publication of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard.

Lauren B. Strauss

In June 2008, Professor Strauss published a collection of essays, co-edited with Michael Brenner, entitled *Mediating Modernity: Challenges and Trends in the Jewish Encounter with the Modern World: Essays in Honor of Michael A. Meyer* (Wayne State University Press, 2008). She also lectured and led book discussions for a year-long series on modern Jewish Literature at American University, which was sponsored by Nextbook, Inc.

Daniel Schwartz

Professor Schwartz's book on the rehabilitation of Spinoza in modern Jewish culture is under contract with Princeton University Press. It is tentatively titled, *The First Modern Jew: Spinoza and the History of an Image*. Professor Schwartz will be taking leave in the fall. He was selected as a fellow for a research group studying the phenomenon of Jewish secularization at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Departmental News



Professor Jenna Weissman Joselit

JENNA WEISSMAN JOSELIT TO BECOME THE NEW SMITH CHAIR

The Judaic Studies program is delighted to announce that Jenna Weissman Joselit has been selected as the new Charles E. Smith Chair in Judaic Studies after a national search this past academic year. Weissman Joselit comes to GW from Princeton University where she taught modern Jewish studies and American studies. The Smith Chair was last held by Marc Saperstein who resigned in 2008 in order to become President of the Leo Baeck College in London.

A celebrated historian of daily life, Weissman Joselit specializes in the history and culture of America's Jews and in US cultural history from the late nineteenth century through the 1950s. Her work pays

especially close attention to the relationship between material culture and identity. Her many books include *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880-1950*, which received the National Jewish Book Award in History, and *A Perfect Fit: Clothes, Character, and the Promise of America*. Weissman Joselit is currently at work on a book about America's embrace of the Ten Commandments, which explores the varied ways, from the rhetorical to the visual, that the US lays claim to this ancient biblical text.

Weissman Joselit is a founding member of NYU's Working Group on Jews, Media and Religion. She has also served as a fellow at various institutions, including Princeton University's Center for the Study of American Religion, Yale University's Center for Art and Material Culture, and the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Judaic Studies. Most recently, she was a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the John W. Kluge Center at the Library of Congress.

In addition to her academic pursuits, Weissman Joselit writes a monthly column for *The Forward* on American Jewish culture and is a frequent contributor to *The New Republic*, *TNR Online*, and *Gastronomica*.

Weissman Joselit's addition to the Judaic Studies program will make modern Jewish history one of its strongest subfields. She joins Dan Schwartz (modern European Jewish history) and Lauren Strauss (American Jewish history) in the History Department. Her interests in American Jewish cultural history are ideal for GW in general, given its strengths in the research of contemporary issues in the US and its location in the heart of Washington, D.C.

YARON PELEG PUBLISHES NEW BOOK

This past year, Yaron Peleg, Associate Professor of Hebrew and Director of the Hebrew Program, published a book dealing with critical issues in contemporary Israeli culture entitled *Israeli Culture Between the Two Intifadas: A Brief Romance* (University of Texas Press, 2008). The book focuses on the 1990s, the period between the two *intifadas* which took place in 1987 and 2000. It examines important changes in Israeli culture in this decade and explores how those changes were expressed in Israeli media and literature.

The 1990s saw the arrival in Israel of postmodernism, an intellectual movement that had already begun reshaping Western intellectual culture as a whole. Postmodernism, among other things, was a critique of ideologies throughout the world, and it was adopted by a number of Israeli academics, journalists, and writers as a means of re-examining Zionism, in particular. Postmodernism inspired these thinkers to question many of the country's hallowed truths about its heroic establishment, the relations between its various immigrant communities, and the relations between Jews and Arabs. These thinkers argued that Israel's history, like that of any other country, was a checkered one filled with unflattering chapters, and that Israelis had not come to terms with these negative elements in their past. Undergirding this critical attitude toward Israel's history was a pessimism in Israeli society as a result of the failure of the Oslo Accords, a failure epitomized by the first *intifada*.

Peleg's book examines one consequence of these developments. Because of the growing sense of disillusionment in Israel, a number of young Israeli intellectuals began to disengage from direct political involvement and adopt a passive attitude. They resented Israel's predicament but were too dispirited to get politically engaged in order to change it. As a consequence, some of them, including several leading writers, abandoned writing about issues that concerned Israel as a nation, and chose instead to compose literature about romantic relationships. According to Peleg, the writing of this literature served as an escape from the troubles plaguing Israeli society.

Globalization also played a role in these developments. The opening up of Israeli markets to goods and ideas from outside helped change the way Israelis looked at their own society, history, and politics. The freer market that gradually grew in Israel in the 1980s and 1990s caused Israelis to subject many of the old truths of their culture to a new examination in a manner similar to the way in which postmodernism inspired them to challenge Zionist ideology. Moreover, as the Israeli economy soared, the standard of living rose, the media was deregulated, and Israelis did a great deal of international travel. Israelis therefore became more exposed to popular global culture than ever before, an exposure that introduced them to the genre of romance, the central idiom of Western popular culture. The Israelis who adopted romance as a new form of expression therefore took full advantage of their familiarity with this culture.

While Peleg's book examines a highly pessimistic phase in Israeli culture, his study is not without hope. Certainly, the great window of opportunity for a grand and lasting peace between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East has largely been closed since the second Palestinian *intifada* in 2000. That event plunged the Middle East back again into a tribal war which seems fiercer and more entrenched than ever before. Yet, in light of the great optimism of the Oslo years in the early 1990s, Peleg expresses hope that the same optimism may once again be rekindled in the future as Israelis continue to grapple with their complex situation.

LAUREN STRAUSS REFLECTS ON TEACHING AT GW

Dr. Lauren B. Strauss has been teaching courses in American Jewish history in our program for several years and is one of our most popular professors. Her position was recently upgraded to allow her to teach a full teaching load of two courses per semester and to assist with administrative duties in the program. Below she reflects on her experiences teaching at GW.

A 'CAPITAL ADVENTURE': TEACHING THE STORY OF AMERICA'S JEWS IN THE HEART OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL



By Lauren B. Strauss

"What kinds of students take your courses on American Jewry? Are they mostly Jews? Are they on some sort of personal journey?" These are questions I am frequently asked when I explain to people that I teach Modern Jewish Studies, specializing in the history and culture of America's Jews, at The

George Washington University. To a great degree, there are indeed students and faculty who view my presence as an opportunity to ask questions and relate stories that reflect their own personal experiences or those of their family. But in more than four years at GW, I have taught an impressive variety of people, who continually redefine my expectations of what a "typical" student in my class would be like. Among other examples, I have met a fair number of "Birthright Israel" returnees who view the academic study of modern Jewry as an extension of their own search for information and identification. I have also had a number of African-American students who occasionally talk about the parallels between our two communities. One of these students is a minister in his Baptist church and was eager to learn more about "the People of the Book" and its journey through the American landscape. Students of diverse ethnic backgrounds respond eagerly to the chance to trace different immigrant experiences in this country, often hearing in the trials of Jewish immigrants a familiar note. Students of Italian heritage, for instance, will sometimes linger over the shared tragedy of young Jewish and Italian garment workers who met their fate in the Triangle Factory Fire of 1911. Those whose families have roots in Ireland will often respond to stories of women in the American labor movement, seeing a kinship between the aspirations of Jewish women and those of their own ethnicity. And one extremely vibrant student last year relayed her parents' experiences as immigrants from the Soviet Union in the 1980s, thus adding a personal note to our study of the American movement to save Soviet Jewry.

But those who enroll in these classes soon learn that they have embarked on an academic course of study, not a genealogical dig. Even in a recent course on "Jews in American Popular Culture," we went beyond the temptation to merely "claim"

Jewish actors, singers, composers, playwrights, comedians, and filmmakers. In a colorful yet rigorous adventure, the students and I plumbed the depths of Jewish self-representation in the performing arts and other areas, asking related questions about race, gender, sexuality, and changes in the degree to which people in the public eye identify themselves as Jews. One highlight of this course was the opportunity for students to make a presentation on a subject of their choosing, often using multimedia. In fact, GW's many technologically-enhanced classrooms have often provided me with the chance to augment traditional materials with slides, video, and audio. A thousand words on the immigrant experience in Ellis Island or on New York's Lower East Side do not equal a Lewis Hine or Jacob Riis photo that demonstrates, from a contemporaneous perspective, the often grim realities that newcomers faced.

This year, a new course on "The Jewish Woman in America" will not only put the experiences and accomplishments of Jewish women into historical context, but will also require students to compile biographies of individual Jewish women throughout American history. The disciplines of literature, fine arts, and music, meanwhile, figure prominently in my course on Yiddish culture in America. This course begins by teaching students about shtetl life in Eastern Europe, so that they can appreciate the richness of a Jewish culture that was transplanted and transformed as it moved across the seas to America. In this course, participants – even if they have no relevant language skills – will benefit from an introduction to the priceless Kiev Collection, housed in GW's Gelman Library, which counts valuable Yiddish works among its holdings.

Then, of course, there is a facet of life at GW that cannot be duplicated almost anywhere else – the opportunity to study in the shadow of the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol. This provides a dramatic relief against which our studies take place. In every class, I explore the conundrums that Jewish people in America face as they engage with modern society. This is pertinent for anyone interested in the construction of the American mosaic and the constant self-evaluation of the Jewish community. The opportunity to teach the story of America's Jews in the heart of the American capital sets this experience in a unique physical context; the constant interplay between the theory and practice of American citizenship as it plays out so close to the GWU campus is often strikingly similar to the balance between Jewish and modern life. This year, in addition to a survey of American Jewish history and the aforementioned women's history and Yiddish culture courses, I will introduce a

new course on “Jews and the American Political Tradition” that explores many types of political participation and a host of different characters. These include, among others, the Colonial and nineteenth-century Jews who held the country to its promise of religious equality, union organizers at the turn of the twentieth century and civil rights activists fifty years later, and the growing number of American Jews who hold elected office today. In addition to the written and multimedia materials that we will encounter, students will benefit from select presentations by some prominent political analysts and consultants, coming— as they say in D.C. – “from both sides of the aisle” to discuss the ever-changing and increasing role of Jews in the American

political process. Truly, the resources here are unique and almost endless.

Through all of this activity, I perceive in most of my students a yearning to relate their studies to their lives and to what they see around them, and to actively debate and challenge many of their own previously-held assumptions. I look forward to continuing my encounters with the resources available at GW and in the District of Columbia, to address the legacy, complexity, and future of this important minority group in American society – and this unparalleled group in Jewish history as well.



DEREK PENSLAR DELIVERS THE ANNUAL I. EDWARD KIEV LECTURE

The annual I. Edward Kiev Lecture was given in November by Professor Derek Penslar on “The Jewish Origins of the Israeli Army.” Penslar is the Samuel Zacks Professor of Jewish History at the University of Toronto and is one of the most distinguished scholars in the world today on the subject of Zionism and the history of the state of Israel.

Penslar began his talk by noting that from its very beginnings Zionism was defined by inner tensions. It presented itself as saving the Jewish people by radically transforming it, but at the same time every aspect of Zionist culture and Israeli society had roots in the Jewish Diaspora. Penslar then discussed how these tensions have been evident in the history and evolution of the Israeli army. In attempting to create a national Jewish fighting force, the founders of the Israeli Army were doing something revolutionary. Not since biblical times had Jews had their own army. Yet, the same people were drawing from their experience in having served in armies throughout the world or in Jewish self-defense bands that were active in Russia before the creation of the state of Israel. Penslar examined this complex dynamic with fascinating descriptions of a number of these individuals who were instrumental in the founding of the Israeli army.



Derek Penslar lecturing on the origins of the Israeli army



Tony Michels answering audience questions

TONY MICHELS DELIVERS THE ANNUAL FRIEDA KOBERNICK FLEISCHMAN LECTURE

The annual Frieda Koberman Fleischman lecture was given in the spring by Professor Tony Michels. Michels is the George L. Mosse Associate Professor of American Jewish History at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. His research interests include American Jewish history, Yiddish culture, and Russian Jewish history. His topic was “The Jewish Ghetto Encounters New York and the World.”

Michels argued that more than a half a million Jews lived in New York’s Lower East Side in the first decades of the twentieth century, but they did not inhabit a self-contained “ghetto.” Immigrant Jews created a cosmopolitan intellectual culture that brought them into contact with people of various backgrounds. This lecture explored the ways in which the Lower East Side’s Jewish intellectuals created a

number of subcultures by interacting with the socialists of "Little Germany," the bohemians of Greenwich Village, and European revolutionaries abroad.

PLAYWRIGHT MOTTI LERNER DISCUSSES HIS WORK WITH GW STUDENTS

In November, the Judaic Studies Program, together with several other departments, hosted Israeli playwright Motti Lerner for a lecture on his work. Lerner is a prolific playwright and a political intellectual who writes plays about contemporary issues central to Israeli society. Some of the topics he has written about include the Holocaust, Israeli settlers, religiosity, gay rights, and the legacy of Zionism. His plays are popular in Israel, and several of them have also been staged in the US.

Lerner's lecture was well-attended, and students were very engaged by it. They were particularly responsive to his call for artists to deal with contemporary political and moral issues. Students were also especially fascinated by his commitment to Jewish ethics despite the fact that he does not believe in God or live a traditional Jewish life. At his own invitation, Lerner allowed his lecture to be interrupted frequently by questions from students who entered into a lively discussion with him about his role as a "secular Jewish rabbi."

JUDAIC STUDIES HOSTS ARNOLD DASHEFSKY AS VISITING SCHOLAR

The Judaic Studies Program at GW was pleased to have Professor Arnold Dashefsky as a Visiting Scholar in the spring semester of this past academic year. Dashefsky is Professor of Sociology and the inaugural holder of the Doris and Simon Konover Chair of Judaic Studies at the University of Connecticut in Storrs. He is a leading scholar of the sociology of the Jewish community in America and has written numerous studies in this area.



Arnold Dashefsky referring to a powerpoint slide during his talk on intermarriage

In April, the Judaic Studies Program sponsored a talk by Dashefsky entitled "Crossing Boundaries and Jewish Journeys: Interfaith Marriage in the US." Dashefsky examined the relationship between the Jewish community and married couples consisting of Jewish and non-Jewish partners, by presenting the results of a longitudinal study he had conducted that relied on quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Dashefsky discovered that intermarried couples had surprisingly strong commitments to Judaism and many were raising their children as Jews, but that these couples often did not feel welcome in the Jewish community. Dashefsky concluded that the Jewish community should be more open to reaching out to these couples. Dashefsky's talk was followed by a lively discussion in which several students and faculty challenged his conclusions.

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR SPEAKS ABOUT THE GAZA WAR

In February, the Israeli Ambassador, Sallai Meridor, spoke to a packed auditorium about the war in Gaza. His talk was entitled, "Beyond Gaza: Why Israel Deserves to be Heard." The event was co-sponsored by Judaic Studies, Chabad of GW, and Hillel of GW.

Meridor defended Israel's incursion into Gaza by claiming that Israel wants nothing more than peace, and that the blame for the violence lies with Hamas which is determined to wage war. Israel left Gaza in 2005, but instead of Hamas using the withdrawal as an opportunity for building a thriving Palestinian society, Meridor claimed it has used it to attack Israel. It has fired thousands of Kassam rockets at Israeli population centers, while using its own civilian population as human shields. Meridor also stated that Hamas has also made Gaza into a base for Iran, which has now become the greatest exporter of terror worldwide and the greatest threat to world peace. The ambassador concluded by saying that we should not be pessimistic. Countries like the US and Israel have achieved a great deal as free democracies and by emphasizing the sanctity of life, and there is every reason to believe that they will win out in the end if they continue to uphold these values.



Ambassador Sallai Meridor

JUDAIC STUDIES FACULTY MEET WITH HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS FROM POLAND



Judaic Studies faculty members with the Polish educators

In January, a number of faculty from the Judaic Studies program met with six educators from Poland who specialize in teaching the Holocaust. The meeting was arranged by the US State Department which sponsored the trip for the Polish educators as part of its International Visitor Leadership Program. The delegation met with representatives of a variety of institutions in Washington and New York City, including the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Their goal was to learn about the teaching of the Holocaust in American schools and museums. They were also interested in exploring Jewish cultural contributions in the US and Jewish-American history in general.

Our own discussion with the Polish educators was lively and interesting. Over a period of two hours, the discussion focused on the level of interest that American students had in the Holocaust and the different approaches used to present this subject. The discussion also had its moving moments as reflections were interwoven by both the Polish educators and the Judaic Studies faculty about how the Holocaust had personally affected them and their families.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

PRIZES AND SCHOLARSHIPS GO TO A NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND FACULTY

The Judaic Studies program gave out a number of annual prizes and scholarships to its most accomplished students. Arielle Gumer was awarded the Max Tickin Book Prize which is given annually to the top-performing student among graduating majors in Judaic Studies. Marc Friend was the recipient of the Daniel and Natalie Wasserman-Barkan Scholarship, while the Ann Borde Scholarship went to Ariel Scheer. These two scholarships are given to exceptional students who are currently majoring in Judaic Studies. The Yael Moses Book Prize was given jointly to Shira and Naama Wrightman. This prize is awarded to students who excel in the study of Hebrew language.



Marc Friend



Ariel Scheer

FIVE GUDELSKY AWARDS GIVEN TO STUDENTS OF FACULTY FOR RESEARCH IN ISRAEL

The Judaic Studies Program was awarded \$10,000 from the Isadore and Bertha Gudelsky Foundation, a local organization that supports Jewish causes, to fund three students and two faculty members to travel to Israel for research on specific projects. The following is a list of winners and their projects:

- Tal Schapira '12, "Post-Modern Dance in Israel: Origins, Influences, and Innovation"
- Ethan Helfand '09, "Mourning and Memorialization in Israel"
- Harry Baumgarten '09, "Kishinev and Tel Chai Remembered: An Examination of Two Events that Helped Form the Zionist Narrative and Their Changes Over Time"
- Professor Yaron Peleg, funding for an archival research trip to the Gnazim Institute in Tel Aviv in connection with a larger literary study of romance and romantic love in modern Jewish literature.
- Professor Daniel Schwartz, funding to conduct research for his current book project entitled *The First Secular Jew: Spinoza and the History of an Image*.

In the essay on the following page, Gudelsky Award winner Harry Baumgarten reflects on his experience in Israel.

STUDENT ESSAY

A JUDAIC STUDIES MAJOR REFLECTS ON DOING RESEARCH IN ISRAEL



By Harry Baumgarten

This past March, I traveled to Israel as the proud recipient of a research grant from the Isadore and Bertha Gudelsky Foundation and the Judaic Studies Program. This was not my first trip to Israel, but it marked my first trip with an academic purpose and the means to achieve it. For ten days, I traveled across

Israel researching the significance of the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 in Israeli collective memory. My research brought me to the offices of a former Member of Knesset, an historian who had won the Israel Prize, several museum presidents, and numerous tour guides—all in an effort to comprehend the modern significance of one seminal event in modern Jewish history.

My intellectual journey began almost a year earlier, when I came across an account of the first meeting between the Hebrew poet Haim Nahman Bialik and the Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky. Both later became key figures in Israeli history, but at that point they were simply two young writers who met by chance while reporting on the 1903 Kishinev pogrom. Following their meeting, Jabotinsky decided to focus his efforts on Zionism, and Bialik produced a moving poetic account of the pogrom, “The City of Slaughter.” This poem galvanized the attention of eastern European Jewry and later helped inspire the formation of one of the first groups willing to take up arms in the name of Zionism. Kishinev was, in a sense, the birthplace of modern Jewish self-defense.

I was fascinated by reactions to the Kishinev Pogrom, the myths that surrounded it, and the ways in which its memory was utilized as a rallying cry for members of the Second Aliyah. The Gudelsky Grant afforded me the opportunity to explore my interest and develop it into a greater understanding of the historiography of the Kishinev pogrom.

While in Israel, I focused my research on the pogrom’s relevance to Hashomer, Israel’s first pre-state militia. I spent several days at the Hashomer museum in Kfar Gileadi, and I interviewed its staff. The museum was founded by a survivor of the Kishinev pogrom, who, for forty years, helped preserve the memory of this event as a crucial turning-point in the history of Jewish self-defense. However, in 2007, the museum underwent comprehensive renovations, and it no longer recounts the European origins of Hashomer. The museum now presents Hashomer as an indigenous Israeli movement born of security

needs. The new design disregards the historical context of Hashomer and relies on the visitor to discern the need for self-defense based on his or her own knowledge of history and current political realities.

My interest in contemporary views of the Kishinev Pogrom was aided by tools from cognitive sociology, which explores how communities construct and transmit meaning. Reading about cognitive sociology helped me formulate a theoretical framework for interpreting my research and led me to a greater understanding of how Jews, Israelis, Americans, and other communities have understood themselves and the world around them. The skills in critical thinking I developed through my research are the true legacy of my experience, and I hope to continue to develop them in future studies.

The Gudelsky grant provided me with the opportunity to explore my interest in Israeli history beyond the confines of the classroom. It empowered me to direct my own research for the first time, and it helped me develop effective study habits which have impacted my general academic performance. The experience of conducting independent research also motivated me to pursue my interest in Jewish and Israeli history, and I will continue my research this summer through a grant from the Institute for Middle East Studies at the Elliott School for International Affairs at GW.

I am grateful to Professor Robert Eisen and the entire Judaic Studies Program for their support. I would also like to thank Professors Yaron Peleg and Max Ticktin for their guidance, and Professor Shira Robinson for her encouragement and reading suggestions during the early phases of my research. I am particularly indebted to Professor Daniel Schwartz for his gracious time and constant patience as I struggled to understand the complexities of historical research. Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to the Isadore and Bertha Gudelsky Foundation for their generous support and for providing me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge in modern Jewish history. This truly was a powerful experience for me and I look forward to continuing my research in the coming months.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2009 JUDAIC STUDIES GRADUATES!

- Harry Baumgarten
- Ethan Helfand
- Rebecca Sanfield

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS:

Ms. Donna Snyder, BA '82 and Mr. Martin J. Bolstein, BA '82, JD '87
 Mr. Ohad Ben-Yoseph, BA '97
 Mrs. Elisha K. Frumkin, BA '01
 Dr. Alan R. Gold, BA '70
 Mrs. Bonnie Green, MA '87
 The Isadore and Bertha Gudelsky Family Foundation
 Mr. Ethan F. Helfand, BA '09
 Ms. Lisa Dale Moore, BA '76
 Professor Yael Moses
 Mr. Jack Moskowitz and Mrs. Faye S. Moskowitz, BA '70 MA '79
 Ms. Nachama Skolnik Moskowitz, BA '74
 Mr. Alex Radin
 Ms. Rhoda Ritzenberg, BA '67
 Mrs. Pamela New Saltzburg, BA '89
 Ms. Rebecca R. Sanfield, BA '09
 Mr. Jeffrey David Smith, BA '89
 The Kiev Foundation
 Mr. Gideon Yechiel Zelermyer, BA '97

Help support Judaic Studies at GW!

Gifts to the Judaic Studies Program allow us to provide support for faculty and student research and academic travel, graduate student fellowships, and student enrichment activities including guest speakers, visiting faculty, and symposia. Each gift, no matter how large or small, makes a positive impact on our educational mission and furthers our standing as one of the nation's preeminent liberal arts colleges at one of the world's preeminent universities.

You can make your gift to the Program in a number of ways:

- Securely online at www.gwu.edu/give2gw. Just choose "other" under designation and type in "Judaic Studies Program".
- By mailing your check, made out to The George Washington University and with "Judaic Studies Program" in the memo line, to:

The George Washington University
 2100 M Street NW, Suite 310
 Washington, DC 20052

- By phone by calling the GW Annual Fund at 1-800-789-2611.

**Program in Judaic Studies
The George Washington
University**

2142 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20052

PHONE:
(202) 994-2190

FAX:
(202) 994-2176

E-MAIL:
judaic@gwu.edu

Judaic Studies at GWU...

The George Washington University Program in Judaic Studies endeavors:

- to enable students from diverse backgrounds to investigate one of the oldest continuous cultural traditions in world history, both in its internal dynamics and its interactions with other civilizations, using the best critical methods of various pertinent academic disciplines;
- to provide opportunities for interaction for GW faculty and graduate students in different departments with research and teaching interests in Judaic Studies;
- to attract visiting scholars and guest speakers to the campus, thereby enriching the intellectual and cultural life of the GW community;
- to serve as a resource of scholarship on aspects of Judaica for the greater Washington community.

Do you live in the Washington Metro Area?

Are you interested in attending events hosted by the Judaic Studies Program?

Send an email to judaic@gwu.edu if you would like to be notified of upcoming events by email. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Jenna Kush at (202) 994-2190.

PROGRAM IN JUDAIC STUDIES
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
2142 G STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20052