

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

# The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER • NUMBER 11 • FALL 2007

## From the Director's Desk...

The academic year 2006-2007 marked the tenth anniversary of the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life. This milestone was celebrated throughout the year with a series of programs, including special conferences, symposia, and community-wide events. Governor Jon Corzine joined us for the opening gala dinner honoring Allen and Joan Bildner, whose vision and initial gift laid the foundation for the remarkable development of Jewish Studies at Rutgers.

The ten-year mark provided the occasion to take stock of, and celebrate, the achievements of this first decade. We have developed both a vibrant academic center that offers diverse educational programs to the public and the university community, and a dynamic and rapidly growing Department of Jewish Studies with six core faculty, additional affiliated members, international visiting professors, and increasing numbers of students.

Major programs last year featured the areas of expertise of our own Jewish Studies faculty. Two public programs in the fall highlighted biblical and rabbinic literature, and a three-day international conference in the spring brought a group of more than fifty scholars to Rutgers to examine the transnational character of Eastern European Jewish culture and the interplay among Eastern European and American Jewish and Israeli cultures. Also among last year's offerings were a symposium on genocide and human rights and lectures on Israeli society and culture.

The year's programming culminated with the closing event of our two-year Master Teacher Institute in Holocaust Education. This pilot program was supported by a grant from the Conference on Material Claims Against Germany. The highly positive response of participating

teachers and the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education has been most encouraging and we plan to pursue this program in the future.

Last year was extremely rewarding. It allowed us to reflect on past achievements and to redefine our future directions. Jewish Studies at Rutgers continues to evolve, and the Bildner Center is expanding its public offerings with educational initiatives in Holocaust education, Israel studies, and Jewish communal leadership development. Our faculty serve on the boards of international academic associations and journals and contribute to the university's stature and global involvement.

Last spring, I had the opportunity to participate in Rutgers' scholarly exchange with Kazan State University, the second oldest university in Russia, with my husband Eviatar Zerubavel, a sociologist. As part of my teaching responsibilities, I lectured to faculty and students on Israeli culture and society, Israelis' responses to the Holocaust, and on collective memory. I was struck by the eagerness of students and faculty to learn about these subjects, about which, as it became quickly apparent, many knew very little. Several faculty were particularly interested in learning about our experience in developing Jewish Studies at a state university, to determine what they might be able to emulate in their university.

The experience of reaching out to new constituencies, discovering new ideas and materials while pursuing our research, and the excitement of seeing our students develop their thinking and expand their knowledge, are part of what makes our work so rewarding. We hope to share this experience with you as we embark on a new decade.

We wish our colleagues and friends a happy New Year.

—Yael Zerubavel

Legacy of Learning  
10th Anniversary 1996-2006



# JEWISH STUDIES FACULTY

## From the Chair of the Department of Jewish Studies

Since its inception seven years ago, the Department of Jewish Studies has experienced continual growth, and the academic year 2006-2007 was no exception.

First and foremost, the School of Arts and Sciences approved a joint faculty position in the Departments of History and Jewish Studies for a specialist in medieval Jewish history, with an expertise in Iberia, resulting in the hiring of Paola Tartakoff. A recent Ph.D. from Columbia University, Dr. Tartakoff will hold a post-doctoral fellowship in both departments during the 2007-2008 academic year, and then will begin her tenure-track assistant professorship in fall 2008. We consider her to be a scholar of outstanding promise, and we look forward to having her in our midst.

Secondly, I am happy to report that in spring 2007 the Department of Jewish Studies had record enrollments, with 795 students registered in its courses. This figure includes not only the very high enrollments in two of our most popular courses, "History of the Holocaust" and "Arab-Israeli Conflict," but also reflects excellent enrollments in a host of other courses, including "Israeli Politics," "Israeli Culture," "History of Jewish Women," "Israeli Women," "Modern Jewish Philosophy," "Holocaust Literature in Translation," "New York Jewry," and "The Jewish Calendar." The range of these courses is a testimony to the ability of our faculty (core, associated, and adjunct) and to the interests of our students.

Thirdly, the Department of Jewish Studies was the beneficiary of a generous grant from the Posen Foundation Program for the Study of Secular Jewish History and Cultures during the 2006-2007 academic year. This grant allowed the department to develop several new courses, including "Community and Crisis" and "The Jewish Encounter with Secularism." The grant has been renewed for the 2007-2008 academic year, during which additional relevant courses will be offered.

In other news, we are especially proud of Jewish Studies faculty members who have received national recognition for their outstanding work. Nancy Sinkoff has been named the Workmen's Circle - Dr. Emanuel Patt Visiting Professor at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research for 2007-2008, which will enable her to conduct archival research for her current monograph project, a political biography of Lucy Dawidowicz. Azzan Yadin has two newsworthy items: his appointment as associate editor of the series Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism (published by Brill), one of the most prestigious in the field of Jewish Studies, and his position as a visiting fellow in Jewish law and interdisciplinary studies at Cardozo Law School in New York City during 2007-2008.

At the local level, we salute our colleague Maurice Elias (Psychology and Jewish Studies), who most deservedly received the annual Ernest McMahon Class of 1930 Award, given by Rutgers University in recognition of excellence in bringing the knowledge of the university to the people of the state of New Jersey.

Finally, we note the retirement of our colleague Myron (Mike) Aronoff (Political Science, Anthropology, and Jewish Studies), effective June 2007. Mike was instrumental in the creation, development, and growth of the Bildner Center and the Department of Jewish Studies. On the international scene, Mike served several terms as president of the Association for Israel Studies. We bid Mike well in his future endeavors, all the while knowing how much we will miss his presence on campus and his active participation in the department.

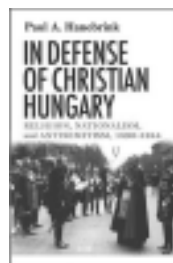
—Professor Gary A. Rendsburg

## Faculty Books



*Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*

Judith M. Gerson and  
Diane L. Wolf, Editors  
Duke University Press, 2007



*In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944*

Paul A. Hanebrink  
Cornell University Press, 2006

## JEWISH STUDIES FACULTY

### Core Faculty

Gary A. Rendsburg, Chair  
Jeffrey Shandler  
Nancy Sinkoff  
Paola Tartakoff  
Azzan Yadin  
Yael Zerubavel

### Associated Faculty

Maurice Elias  
Leslie Fishbein  
Ziva Galili  
Judith Gerson  
David Greenberg  
Paul Hanebrink  
Martha Helfer  
Michael Levine

Phyllis Mack  
Barbara Reed

### Visiting Scholars

Meir Buzaglo,  
The Schusterman  
Visiting Scholar in  
Israel Studies  
Roni Stauber,  
Aresty Visiting  
Scholar

### Language Instructors

Orly Moshenber,  
Hebrew Language  
Coordinator  
Edna Bryn-Noiman  
Chana Langman  
Lily Levy

## FACULTY PROFILE

### Michael Levine

Based in the Department of German, Slavic and Eastern European Studies, Professor Michael G. Levine looks forward to participating actively in Jewish Studies and to strengthening ties among the disciplines in which he works. This fall he will teach the undergraduate seminar “Germans and Jews: An Intercultural History,” the first of many interdisciplinary and cross-listed courses he plans to teach. Future offerings may focus on topics such as literature and psychoanalysis, Franz Kafka, Holocaust testimony, and legal responses to historical trauma. Professor Levine has published widely in these fields and describes his current study, *A Weak Messianic Power* (under contract with Fordham University Press), as a project that draws on religion, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and literary theory. In

this work he analyzes “traditional Jewish themes and topics such as circumcision, prayer, conversion, mysticism, golemic creation, messianic temporality, and the possibility of a ‘coming religion’.”

His two prior books also engage Jewish themes from an interdisciplinary perspective. *The Belated Witness: Literature, Testimony, and the Question of Holocaust Survival* (Stanford University Press, 2006) examines how the events of the Holocaust force us to alter traditional conceptions about human experience, as well as the way we can now talk and write about such experiences. Of particular concern to Professor Levine is the complex relationship between narration and survival, between a desire to survive in order to tell one’s story and the equally intense need to tell – and to have one’s story heard by others – in order to survive. Through analyses of works by such writers as Art Spiegelman, Cynthia Ozick, and Paul Celan, he examines how massive psychological trauma may be

silently transmitted from parent to child; and from one generation to the next.

In his earlier book, *Writing Through Repression: Literature, Censorship, Psychoanalysis* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Levine seeks to reconceptualize the traditionally skewed relationship between psychoanalytic theory and the literary text, a relationship in which psychoanalysis is usually thought to have all the answers

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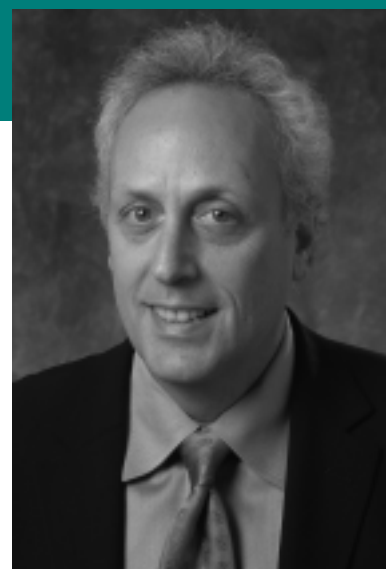


PHOTO: NICK ROMANENKO

### Paola Tartakoff Joins Jewish Studies Faculty

Paola Tartakoff joins the Rutgers faculty as a post-doctoral fellow in medieval Jewish history for the academic year 2007-2008. In fall 2008, she will begin a tenure-track assistant professorship shared by the Department of Jewish Studies and the Department of History.

Tartakoff’s research and teaching interests center on the religious and cultural history of medieval Europe. She is particularly interested in the

encounter between and among Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Iberian Peninsula, the social and intellectual history of the Jews in medieval Europe, the history of the Inquisition, and Christian heterodoxy in the Middle Ages.

Tartakoff earned her Ph.D. in medieval history from Columbia University in May 2007. Her dissertation was entitled “Baptism by Water, Trial by Fire: Jews, Converts and Inquisitors in the Crown of Aragon, 1243-1391.” She also holds a B.A. in history from Harvard University, and M.A. and M. Phil. degrees in history from Columbia University.

Tartakoff has several forthcoming publications, including French and English translations of *The Customary of St. Emmeram*, prepared in collaboration with Steven A. Schoening, S. J. and Alain Jachiet for the *Disciplina Monastica* series, edited by Susan Boynton and

Isabelle Cochelin; as well as two entries on “Conversos” and “Aljama” in the *Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*. She is the recipient of numerous fellowships and academic honors, including the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture Doctoral Scholarship and the Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship in Humanistic Studies. In addition, Tartakoff taught several courses as a graduate student at Columbia University, including “Introduction to European History from the French Revolution to the Present” and “Introduction to the Early Middle Ages.”

During the 2007-2008 academic year, Tartakoff will teach “Jewish Society and Culture I: The Ancient and Medieval Experience,” cross-listed in Jewish Studies and history. Her subsequent professorship will enable Jewish Studies to add new and important courses to the curriculum and will contribute to the broad range of innovative and diverse programs offered by the Bildner Center.





# JEWISH STUDIES FACULTY

## Jewish Cultures of the World

**Rutgers University Press** announces a new book series co-edited by Jeffrey Shandler (Rutgers University) and Matti Bunzl (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) called *Jewish Cultures of the World*. “Ethnographies and studies of contemporary culture have become vital to Jewish studies in recent decades,” the editors explain. “This series will offer books of vivid, strong writing that will be of interest to an array of scholars in the humanities and social sciences as well as to a general audience.” The advisory board for the series includes: Yoram Bilu (Hebrew University), Jonathan Boyarin (University of North Carolina), Virginia Dominguez (University of Illinois), Susannah Heschel (Dartmouth College), Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (New York University), Jack Kugelmass (University of Florida), Riv Ellen Prell (University of Minnesota), Aron Rodrigue (Stanford University), Mark Slobin (Wesleyan University), and Yael Zerubavel (Rutgers University). Inquiries regarding the series may be sent to Beth Kressel, the Jewish studies editor at Rutgers University Press, at [bkres@rutgers.edu](mailto:bkres@rutgers.edu).

## FACULTY SEMINARS 2006–2007

**Naomi Seidman**, Graduate Theological Union: “The Holocaust in Every Tongue: The Holocaust in (and as) Translation”

**Seth Schwartz**, Jewish Theological Seminary: “Rituals of Deference among the Rabbis”

**Carol Bakhos**, University of California, Los Angeles: “Ishmael and the Genealogy of Judaism and Islam”

**Adolfo Roitman**, curator, The Shrine of the Book, Jerusalem: “Temple and Sectarianism in Ancient Israel”

**Ted Merwin**, Dickinson College: “The Birth of American Jewish Popular Culture”

**SYMPOSIUM:** “Cultural Crossovers: The Bible and the Profane” — April 15, 2007. Co-sponsored by the Departments of Jewish Studies and History

## Aresty Visiting Scholars

**Cornelia Wilhelm**, the **Aresty Visiting Scholar** for 2006-2007, is a member of the faculty of arts and history at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. Her research focuses primarily on the many intersections among German, American, and Jewish cultures during the 19th and 20th centuries. The English translation (from German) of her 2007 monograph will be published under the title *Pathmaker of a New Jewish Identity in America: Mission and Self-Awareness of the Independent Order B’nai B’rith, 1843-1914* (Wayne State University Press, forthcoming 2008).

At Rutgers, Wilhelm taught two courses: “The German Jewish Experience from the Enlightenment to the Holocaust” and “New York Jewry: History, Culture, and Identity.” With support from the **Henry Taub Curriculum Enhancement Fund**, Wilhelm’s classes visited several sites in New York City, including the archives of the American Jewish Committee and the historically German-Jewish synagogues Temple Emanuel and Anshe Chesed. In addition, Wilhelm participated in the Master Teacher Institute in Holocaust Education, delivering a talk about the ways in which Germany has dealt with the Nazi legacy since the war.

Currently, Wilhelm is working on an archival guide to the history of German Jews in the United States for the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. She is also doing research on the experiences of German refugee rabbis who fled to the United States during the Nazi period. Wilhelm continues her affiliation with Rutgers during 2007-2008, as she assumes a new position as the liaison for her home institution’s exchange programs with American universities.

**Roni Stauber**, the **Aresty Visiting Scholar** for 2007-2008, is a professor of Jewish history at Tel Aviv University and a senior research fellow at the university’s Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Racism and Anti-Semitism. Stauber’s main research interests include anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, with a focus on the “Jewish response” during the Holocaust as reflected in Israeli public discourse in the 1950s. At Rutgers, Stauber will teach the course “The Holocaust and Israel,” as well as a special course for educators on the history of the Holocaust. (See page 20.)

## HENRY SCHWARTZMAN FACULTY SEMINAR

In fall 2006, **Sam Moyn**, associate professor in the Department of History at Columbia, came to Rutgers to present the **Henry Schwartzman Endowed Faculty Seminar**. The first of his two talks, delivered to a cross-section of Rutgers faculty members and Schwartzman family and friends, was “The Concept of the Concentration Camp in Postwar History,” a fascinating analysis of the different models used by historians and intellectuals to represent the extermination of the Jews under the Nazis. More specifically, the talk outlined a largely hidden struggle between two types of representation: one centered around the concept “concentration camp,” the other around “extermination camp.” Moyn’s second talk, “Leo Strauss and the Crisis of Theology Between the Wars,” was a sustained argument for the need to recognize Protestant theology as a formative influence on some leading Jewish thinkers of the early 20th century. In particular, Moyn outlined the ties between Karl Barth and his notion of radical difference between man and God, on the one hand, and Leo Strauss’s work on Maimonides and medieval Jewish philosophy more broadly.

# ISRAEL STUDIES

## Schusterman Visiting Scholars in Israel Studies

The **American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise** (AICE) has awarded the Bildner Center a second grant to bring a visiting scholar from Israel for the 2007-2008 academic year. This visiting professorship enables the Department of Jewish Studies to enhance its curriculum by adding four courses on Israel, which are cross-listed with other departments.



**Yaacov Yadgar**, the **Schusterman Visiting Scholar in Israel Studies** for 2006-2007, is a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Studies at Bar-Ilan University. His publications include *Our Story: The National Narratives in the Israeli Press* (Hebrew, Haifa University Press, 2004) as well as numerous articles on nationalism and ethnicity, Jewish identity in Israel, culture and

collective identity, and media and politics.

While at Rutgers, Yadgar taught four courses for the Department of Jewish Studies: "History of Zionism," "Israeli Media," "Israeli Politics," and "Israeli Culture," significantly increasing the number of courses in the field of Israel Studies offered at Rutgers. In addition, Yadgar developed a mini-course on the Israeli political system for the Bildner Center's Jewish Studies Online program. (See page 13.) He also delivered a public talk for the Bildner Center, funded in part by the **Sagner Family Foundation**, entitled "Israeli Traditionalists: Modernity without Secularization," in which he spoke about Mizrahim in Israel and their distinct approach to tradition, offering an alternative solution to the tension between modernity and religion. Yadgar also spoke at the Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival at the screening of *...More than 1000 Words*, addressing the role of images in the contemporary news media.

Yadgar remarked on his experience at Rutgers: "My wife Esther and I were given such a warm welcome by the department faculty and the Center's staff, as well as by the Jewish community in the New Brunswick area."

**Meir Buzaglo**, the **Schusterman Visiting Scholar in Israel Studies** for 2007-2008, is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His areas of interest include the works of the philosopher Solomon Maimon, Judaism and the philosophy of religion, and issues of tradition, religion, ethnicity, culture, and Mizrahim in Israeli society. At Rutgers, Buzaglo will teach the following courses: "History of Zionism," "Classical Jewish Philosophy," "Maimonides," and "Religion and Ethnicity in Israel."



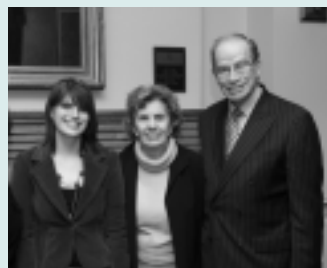
Benjamin Krasna, Mike Aronoff and Gary Rendsburg

## Myron Aronoff Retires

**Myron (Mike) Aronoff**, a leading proponent for the establishment of the Bildner Center and a pioneer in the field of Israel Studies, is retiring after teaching at Rutgers for thirty years. Aronoff offered annual courses on Israeli politics as well as advanced seminars in Israel Studies. In May 2007, Aronoff delivered a public talk for the Bildner Center entitled "Political Ethnography on Israel" in which he discussed the ethnological research he has conducted in Israel for the past forty years, focusing on community building and political conflict, the Labor Party, and the failure of the Oslo peace process. **Benjamin Krasna** (RU '86), deputy consul general of Israel in New York, introduced his former teacher, Professor Aronoff, on the occasion.

## Israeli Authors Forum – Michal Govrin

A crowd of Hebrew speakers gathered in November 2006 for readings in Hebrew by **Michal Govrin**, Israeli writer, poet and theater director. Govrin has published eight books of poetry and fiction, including the novel *The Name* (*HaShem*, 1995), which was the recipient of the Kugel Literary Prize in Israel, and, in its English translation (1998), was nominated for the Koret Jewish Book Award.



## Rutgers Students Study in Israel

Five students benefited from the **Herbert and Jacqueline Klein Fund for Study in Israel** in 2006-2007.

**Elana Akman**, Hebrew University  
**Rena Gutholc**, Hebrew University  
**Amanda Ross**, Tel Aviv University  
**Jillian Schlanger**, Hebrew University  
**Ron Zahavi**, Ben-Gurion University

Rutgers has study abroad programs at University of Haifa and Ben-Gurion Universities and has recently added the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to the list of official programs.

# 10TH ANNIVERSARY

## Bildner Center Celebrates 10th Anniversary

On September 17, 2006, the Bildner Center marked the occasion of its tenth anniversary with a celebration honoring its founders, **Allen and Joan Bildner**. **Leon and Toby Cooperman** served as co-chairs of this gala event held at the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum. Governor **Jon S. Corzine**, honorary event chair, and Rutgers University President **Richard L. McCormick** spoke at the celebration. **Robert Bildner** delivered an eloquent talk about his parents' involvement with Rutgers and with the Jewish community, as well as about the family's tradition of philanthropy. Guests included public officials, Rutgers dignitaries and faculty, and Bildner Center leadership, donors, and friends.



Left: Allen and Joen Bildner, Governor Jon S. Corzine, Yael Zerubavel, President Richard L. McCormick

Below: Lorraine and Jerome Aresty



Left: Yael Zerubavel with David and Liz Lowenstein

Right: Alvin Rockoff, Ralph Voorhees, and Leonard Littman



Sydney Weinstein, Karen Small, Sima Jelin, Norman Reitman, and Adelaide Zagoren

Below: Allen Bildner and President McCormick





# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## 10th Anniversary Gala Committee

Leon and Toby Cooperman, Co-Chairs	Liz and David C. Lowenstein
Marc E. Berson	Norman Reitman
Elisa Spungen Bildner and Robert Bildner	Ruth and Alvin Rockoff
Marjorie and Bruce Freeman	Alan Sagner
Dave Greene	Dorothy and Philip Schein
Adele and Gene Hoffman	Arline Schwartzman
Sima K. Jelin	Karen Small
Sharon Karmazin	Brenda and Roy Tanzman
Jackie and Herbert Klein	Ralph Voorhees
Ellen and Clifton Lacy	Adelaide Zagoren
Barbara and Leonard Littman	Yael Zerubavel
	George R. Zoffinger



## Joan Bildner Honored

Joan Bildner receives honorary degree from President Richard L. McCormick at Rutgers commencement, 2007

## Uncovering Ancient Jewish Literature: The Bible and the Talmud

The Bildner Center's tenth anniversary events continued with two panel discussions, held a week apart, on the two most widely read texts from the world of Jewish antiquity: the Bible and the Talmud.

The **Toby and Herbert Stolzer Endowed Program** entitled "Translating the Bible" was held in October 2006. This panel discussion examined the topic of Bible translation through the ages, as three prominent scholars presented their research to an enthusiastic public audience. **Naomi Seidman** (Graduate Theological Union) covered a wide array of Bible translations, from the Septuagint until today, with a special focus on early modern Bible translations in the wake of the production of dictionaries and an increased knowledge of Hebrew in Renaissance Europe. **Everett Fox** (Clark University), who paved a new path in rendering the Bible into English with his unique translation method in *The Five Books of Moses* (Schocken, 1995), spoke about the work of his spiritual mentors, Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig, translators of the monumental *Die Schrift* (1926-1938; 1954-1962). Finally, **Jack Sasson** (Vanderbilt University) presented a single text, the thrilling story of Ehud in Judges 3, and discussed the various judgments and choices that a Bible translator and commentator must make at every turn. In so doing, he provided the audience with an advance look at his forthcoming commentary on the Book of Judges for the *Anchor Bible Series* (Doubleday).

A week later, the Bildner Center introduced a new format to its public programs. "Three Scholars, Three Texts" was an engaging evening of study, in which **Beth A. Berkowitz** (Jewish Theological Seminary), **Jeffrey L. Rubenstein** (New York University), and **Azzan Yadin** (Rutgers) presented interpretations of their favorite texts from the vast corpus of rabbinic literature. Copies of the texts were made available to the public in advance – a practice that allowed the audience to become full participants in the discussion and encouraged a shared learning experience.

Together these two programs provided a window into the world of textual scholars and their quest to uncover the many intricacies of ancient Jewish literature.



## "Jews and the Media: A View from the Editor's Desk"

The September 17th gala dinner was followed by a public talk by J.J. Goldberg, editor-in-chief of *The Forward*, the national newsweekly published in association with the legendary *Jewish Daily Forward*, founded in 1897. An award-winning journalist, author, and lecturer, Goldberg has covered the politics and culture of the Middle East and the Jewish world for more than two decades.

# 10TH ANNIVERSARY

## Beyond Eastern Europe Jewish Cultures in Israel and the United States

An International Conference

*Presented by the Bildner Center with*

*the Leonid Nevzlin Research Center for Russian and East European Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

This three-day international conference explored how Jews in Israel and the United States have reimagined Jewish life and culture in Eastern Europe, and featured public lectures, academic sessions, and performances. The conference's theme highlighted the ways in which Eastern European Jewish culture, religion, foodways, languages, ideologies, and politics

continue to exert a powerful influence on the Jewish communities in the United States and Israel, far beyond the borders of the originating culture. The conference brought together more than fifty scholars from Israel, Europe, and the United States and included presentations by a number of faculty from the Department of Jewish Studies at Rutgers.

*The Ruth and Alvin Rockoff  
Annual Lecture*

### Russian Roots in Israeli Soil: From the Dnieper to the Jordan

**Anita Shapira**, the Ruben Merenfeld Professor in the Study of Zionism at Tel Aviv University, and chair of the Chaim Weitzman Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel, explored Russian influences on the shaping of modern Israeli culture from the early days of the 20th century to the more recent waves of immigration from the former Soviet Union.



*The Abram Matlofsky Memorial Program  
Funded by the Karma Foundation*

### Back to the Old World: Jewish Filmmakers' Journeys to Eastern Europe

Two Jewish filmmakers screened clips from their work and discussed the role that filmmaking has played in documenting their journeys from the United States to Eastern Europe in search of personal, familial, and communal pasts. **Marian Marzynski** (*Shtetl*) journeyed to Bransk, a small shtetl in Eastern Poland, where he grappled with Jewish-Polish relations both in the past and the present. **Pearl Gluck** (*Divan*) traveled from her Hasidic community in Brooklyn to her roots in Hungary where she encountered a colorful cast of characters and ultimately discovered the possibility of personal reinvention and cultural re-upholstery. Professor **Jeffrey Shandler** (Rutgers) served as moderator.



Alvin and Ruth Rockoff with Anita Shapira



Pearl Gluck, Marian Marzynski, Sylvia Matlofsky, Sharon Karmazin, and Yael Zerubavel





Conference planning committee: Yael Zerubavel, Nancy Sinkoff, Jeffrey Shandler, Jonathan Dekel-Chen, Israel Bartal

## OPENING LECTURE

**Nancy Sinkoff**, Rutgers University  
The Chickpea and the Jewish Question:  
On the Tenacity of Ashkenazic  
Jewish Culture

## HOMELANDS AND SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES

**Israel Bartal**, Hebrew University  
Farming the Land in Three Continents:  
Bilu, Am Oylom, and Yefe-Nahar

**Yael Zerubavel**, Rutgers University  
Europe, the Desert, and the Yishuv:  
Mental Geographies and Space Metaphors

## JEWISH EASTERN EUROPE ON DISPLAY

**Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**,  
New York University  
The Museum of the History of Polish Jews

**Jeffrey Shandler**, Rutgers University  
The Shtetl Subjunctive: Yaffa Eliach's  
Living History Museum

## MODERN JEWISH LITERARY IMAGINATION

**Olga Litvak**, Princeton University  
Sholem Aleichem and the Russian Origins  
of Modern Jewish Literature

**Alisa Solomon**, Columbia University  
'Fiddler on the Roof' and the Invention  
of Tradition

## TRANSNATIONAL PHILANTHROPY

**Jonathan Dekel-Chen**, Hebrew University  
Political and Ideological Currents of  
Organized Philanthropy: Europe, the  
Americas, and the Yishuv, 1880s-1948

**Rebecca Kobrin**, Columbia University  
Empire of Charity: American Jewry, Polish  
Jewry, and the Politics of Philanthropy

## MIGRATIONS OF JEWISH RADICALISM

**Tony Michels**, University of  
Wisconsin—Madison  
American Yiddish Socialists and  
the Rise of Trans-Atlantic Jewish Politics,  
1880s-1920s

**Gennady Estrakh**, New York University  
Between Moscow, Warsaw, and Jerusalem:  
American Yiddish Communists in the  
1960s and 1970s

*Discussant:* Elissa Bemporad,  
YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

## THE LANGUAGES OF CONTEMPORARY HASIDIM

**Miriam Isaacs**, University of Maryland  
Contemporary Hasidic Transmission of Oral  
Culture and Technology in Yiddish

**Ayala Fader**, Fordham University  
Redeeming Sacred Sparks: Hasidic Yiddish  
and Jewish English

*Discussant:* Jonathan Boyarin,  
University of Kansas

## JEWISH CITYSCAPES

**Anat Helman**, Hebrew University  
Odessa's Wide Boulevard or the Shtetl's  
Narrow Alley? The East European Facets of  
the First Hebrew City

**Anna Shternshis**, University of Toronto  
Between the Red and Yellow Stars:  
Ethnic and Religious Identity of  
Soviet World War II Veterans in  
New York and Berlin

*Discussant:* Suzanne Wasserman,  
Graduate Center, CUNY

## NEW WORLDS FOR EASTERN EUROPEAN POLITICS

**Ela Bauer**, University of Haifa  
Polish Roots of Israeli Democracy

**James Loeffler**, University of Virginia  
Approaching the Jewish Atlantic: The East  
European Legacy in American Jewish  
Political Thought

*Discussant:* Benjamin Nathans,  
University of Pennsylvania

## PERFORMING JEWISH IDENTITIES

**Leslie Fishbein**, Rutgers University  
Cultural Loss and the Crafting of New  
Identity in American Jewish Immigrant  
and Refugee Women's Memoirs

**Freddi Rokem**, Tel Aviv University  
Theater and Exile: The Gesher Theater  
and Its Traditions

**Olga Gershenson**, University of  
Massachusetts—Amherst  
Zionist Nostalgia: Russian Immigrants  
Screen Israeli History

*Discussant:* Alyssa Quint,  
Princeton University

## JOURNEYS: PERSONAL AND LEGENDARY

**Galit Hasan-Rokem**, Hebrew University  
The Wandering Jew: The Route out of  
Eastern Europe?

**Barbara Harshav**, Yale University  
Translating from Jewish Languages

**Michal Govrin**, author, Jerusalem  
The Transmitted Melody: A Family Saga  
Across the Twentieth Century

## ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The Meanings of Ashkenaz in New Worlds

*Moderator:* **Nancy Sinkoff**, Rutgers

**Benjamin Harshav**, Yale University

**Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett**, NYU

**Ezra Mendelsohn**, Hebrew University

*Support for the conference was  
provided by the Posen Foundation  
and the Rutgers School of Arts and  
Sciences*

# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## From the Associate Director

The Bildner Center's tenth anniversary was a wonderful opportunity to bring new scholarship and cultural experiences to the New Jersey community. Renowned scholars pursuing cutting edge research and educators teaching beyond traditional classroom settings, participated in many of our public forums.

The two-year Master Teacher Institute in Holocaust Education concluded this year with a special evening that brought together the participating teachers, their families, fellow educators, and school administrators, Rutgers faculty, and friends of the Bildner Center. Three teachers gave presentations at the event illustrating the diversity of their pedagogical approaches and implementation methods. Highlighting the evening were displays of teachers' projects created in the past year with their school communities, including new websites, memorial projects, a survivors

prom, and portraits of survivors, to name a few.

Many were touched by films presented at the Rutgers Jewish Film Festival. Whether remembering the heyday of Yiddish theatre and the great Cantors, the grand tale of an Ethiopian boy who emigrated to Israel, or the harrowing memory of the Holocaust, films have the power to illuminate and transform. The 2007 film festival will bring the diversity of Jewish life to the screen through family sagas; portrayals of Israeli society in its many forms; and basketball, the great American — and who knew — Jewish sport.

This year we take on a new project together with the twelve Jewish federations in New Jersey. The Jewish Leadership Forum will bring top level Federation volunteer leaders to Rutgers to study and discuss major issues facing the Jewish community.

I hope you will join us this year as we continue to explore Jewish history and culture.

—Karen Small

## The Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center

### Master Teacher Institute Concludes Second Year

The Master Teacher Institute in Holocaust Education (MTI), an innovative statewide initiative, began its pilot program at Rutgers in August 2005 under the auspices of the Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center. Thirty teachers from thirteen counties in New Jersey were enrolled in the institute. The MTI was subsidized by the **Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany – Rabbi Israel Miller Fund for Shoah Research, Documentation, and Education.**

Jeffrey Shandler, MTI faculty advisor, provided the following overview of the two-year program's scholarly offerings at its closing session in April 2007:

A key component of the MTI has been providing teachers access to leading scholars in the field of Holocaust studies. We are of the firm belief that training Holocaust educators not only entails discussing teaching methods or developing lesson plans so that they can provide effective instruction; it also calls for expanding teachers' knowledge of the topic. Teachers always need to know more about the subjects that they teach than what they actually impart to students; nowhere is this more the case than in teaching a subject that poses so many challenges as the Holocaust.

*"The teaching of tolerance must be made a priority if our learning community's cultural diversity is to remain one of our strengths."*  
—Zhanna Pikman Rilof

Over the course of the past two years we brought more than two dozen scholars of the Holocaust and related fields to meet with the MTI teachers. First, the teachers worked extensively with two visiting scholars at the Bildner Center, our Aresty scholars in 2005-2006, Hannah Yablonka (Ben-Gurion University of

the Negev), and in 2006-2007, Cornelia Wilhelm, (Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich). We began the program in the fall of 2005 with a presentation by David Engel (New York University), who gave an overview of the Holocaust in historical context. Guest speakers included other historians of the Holocaust, such as Samuel Kassow (Trinity College), who gave the teachers a preview of his forthcoming study of Emmanuel

Ringelblum and the documentation of the Warsaw Ghetto, and Marian Kaplan (New York University), who discussed her research on Jewish life in Germany in the years before World War II. We also heard from scholars associated with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., including Michael Berenbaum, now at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, and museum educators Timothy Kaiser, William Meinecke, and Daniel Napolitano.

During the course of the MTI, the Bildner Center convened two public programs, in which panels of distinguished scholars



discussed key issues of Holocaust remembrance. In spring 2005, a panel of three scholars—Raul Hilberg (University of Vermont), Harry Reicher (University of Pennsylvania Law School), and Hannah Yablonka (Aresty Visiting Scholar, Bildner Center)—examined the significance of the Nuremberg Trials on the sixtieth anniversary of these landmark war crimes trials. In spring 2006, a public program on ‘The Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights’ featured presentations by Manus Midlasky (Rutgers University), Eric Weitz (University of Minnesota), and Helen Fein (Institute for the Study of Genocide).

Over the past two years, our invited scholars spoke not only about the Holocaust, but also about its pre-history and especially its post-history, focusing on the many ways people engage in remembering and learning from the Holocaust. We heard about the distinctive character of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before World War II from Nancy Sinkoff (Rutgers University), the role of art in Nazi culture from Noam Elcott (Princeton University), the role of music during and after the Holocaust from Judah Cohen (Indiana University), and about the workings of Holocaust museums from Jeffrey Feldman (New York University). Works of popular culture that engage the Holocaust, from television programs to graphic novels, were discussed by Laurence Roth (Susquehanna University) and by me.

A series of scholars also addressed the different ways that the Holocaust is remembered in various countries, including Hasia Diner (New York University) on the United States, Olga Litvak (Princeton University) on the Soviet Union, Michael Steinlauf (Gratz College) on Poland, Cornelia Wilhelm (Aresty Visiting Scholar, Bildner Center) on Germany, and Yael Zerubavel (Rutgers University) on Israel.

We were especially fortunate to hear from the authors of major works recently published about the Holocaust and its aftermath: Jan Gross (Princeton University), author of *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (2001), which was a finalist for the National Book Award, and Alexandra Zapruder, author of *Salvaged Pages: Young Writers’ Diaries of the Holocaust* (2002), winner of a National Jewish Book Award. Henry Greenspan (University of Michigan)



**MTI participant Debra Bella and family contemplate an exhibit on the Rwandan genocide**

discussed his pioneering work on Holocaust survivor testimony, and we also heard from Holocaust survivors Maude Dahme and Jack Terry about their wartime experiences and the task of telling the story of their experiences to younger generations.

It has been a special opportunity to be able to bring this wide range of scholars to Rutgers to share their scholarly insights with the MTI teachers. Together we have not only learned much from these speakers, but have been reminded of how much more there is to learn about the Holocaust and what it has come to mean over the course of the past six decades here and around the world.

—Jeffrey Shandler

## MTI Teachers Respond

“The invited scholars who lectured in the Rutgers MTI have impacted me significantly by enhancing my knowledge of the history of the Holocaust and inspiring me to think more broadly about pedagogy and more deeply about student acquisition of knowledge.” —Christopher Gwin

“Having had the opportunity to meet and work with people who already have curricula and professional development programs in place has helped me immensely.” —Frances Flannery



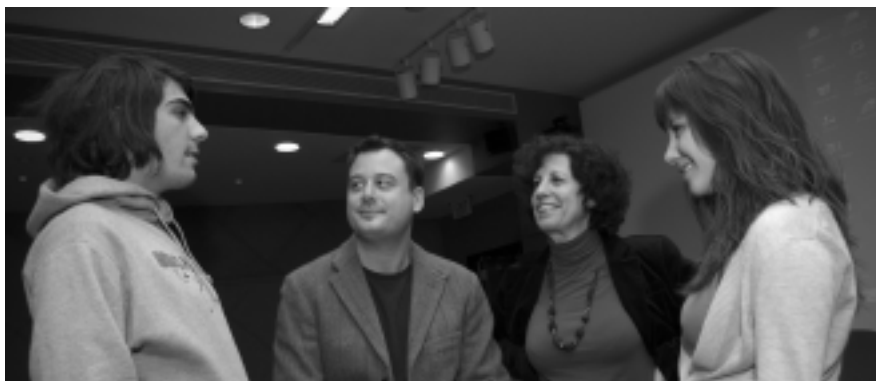
**Graduates and staff of the Master Teacher Institute gather with Paul Winkler, executive director, NJ Commission on Holocaust Education**



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH

## Center Addresses Genocide and Human Rights

In February 2007, a panel of scholars examined how the Holocaust informs current issues of genocide and human rights, with a focus on Rwanda, Armenia, and Darfur. The symposium, “**The Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights**,” was the **Raoul Wallenberg Annual Program** supported by the **Leon and Toby Cooperman Fund**. The speakers included **Manus I. Midlarsky**, the Moses and Annuta Back Professor of International Peace and Conflict Resolution at Rutgers University; **Eric Weitz**, professor of history and German and European studies at the University of Minnesota; and **Helen Fein**, the executive director of the Institute for the Study of Genocide. The program was sponsored by the Bildner Center in cooperation with the **Rutgers Center for Race and Ethnicity**.



Jonathan Kalafer (center) talks with Yael Zerubavel and students after film screening.

In January 2007, the Bildner Center and **Rutgers Hillel** co-sponsored a screening of the documentary film *The Diary of Immaculée*, a memoir of a woman's experience during the Rwandan genocide. Co-producer **Jonathan Kalafer** (Rutgers '98) led a post-screening discussion with students and faculty.

The Center was also a co-sponsor of the **Co-Existence Festival**, a three-week arts and music festival sponsored by the city of New Brunswick, Rutgers

University, and Johnson and Johnson. Intended to promote peaceful co-existence, diversity, and dialogue, the event featured an outdoor exhibit of billboard-size murals by artists from around the world, originally developed by the Museum on the Seam in Jerusalem. This exhibit has traveled to major cities around the globe, including London, Berlin, Paris, Cape Town, Sao Paulo, and Washington, D.C.

## JEWISH STUDIES ONLINE

Brings 3,000 years of Jewish history into your home!

The Bildner Center is pleased to announce that new courses will be added to the Center's online offerings. These interactive learning programs, taught by faculty from the Rutgers Department of Jewish Studies, are free and open to the public. For more information or to register, visit the Bildner Center website and follow the link: <http://jewishstudies.rutgers.edu/>

### “The Bible and History”

This course explores the Bible as a source of historical information about the Ancient Near East in relation to a wealth of archaeological data. Within the prose of the Bible is a historical account that time and again has been confirmed by the discoveries of archaeological research. Professor **Gary A. Rendsburg** brings together these two sources of information, considering the ways in which they inform each other and presenting a balanced view of the Bible and ancient history.

### NEW COURSES UNDER DEVELOPMENT

#### “The Emergence of Rabbinic Judaism”

This course will explore the historical and religious setting from which rabbinic Judaism emerged, and the historical shifts to which it responded – most prominently the destruction of the Second Temple. Professor **Azzan Yadin** traces the development of the new institutions that eventually became normative, and introduces the main literary works of early rabbinic Judaism: the Mishnah and Tosefta, and legal midrash.

#### “The Israeli Political System”

This course will explore the institutional and structural traits of the Israeli political system, with a preliminary analysis of historical and social issues. Professor **Yaacov Yadgar** guides course participants through a discussion of the Israeli political system utilizing a variety of visual and audio aids, including video and audio streams, graphs and charts, photographs, newspaper articles, and links to websites.

The development of the online study program was made possible by a generous gift from **Adele and Gene Hoffman**.



Sirak Sabahat (r), lead actor in *Live and Become*, was the guest speaker on opening night.

## Seventh Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival

The seventh annual **Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival**, sponsored by the Bildner Center, featured dramatic and documentary films from France, Israel, Germany, Hungary, the United States, Norway, and the United Kingdom. The festival remains a very popular cultural event in the area, with more than 4,000 tickets sold and many screenings sold-out or filled to capacity. Nearly half of the films shown were New Jersey premieres.

Ethiopian Jews assimilating into Israeli society, Israelis confronting their German peers, Jewish teens coming of age, personal experiences during the Holocaust, Yiddish theater, and cantorial music were among of the themes explored during the festival. Directors, actors, or guest speakers appeared at most screenings, which enabled audiences to engage in meaningful discussions.

Festival favorite *Live and Become* was viewed by 900 people in two sold-out screenings. This epic story follows an

Ethiopian boy who was airlifted from a Sudanese refugee camp to Israel in 1984 during Operation Moses. Lead actor **Sirak M. Sabahat**, who immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia, addressed the audience at the opening night screening. The directors of *A Cantor's Tale* and *One Day Crossing* made personal appearances to discuss their experiences making the films. **Anne-Marie Baron**, a film critic and scholar of French literature, led the audience in discussion after the screening of *Fateless*, a film based on Imre Kertesz's semi-autobiographical novel about a Hungarian Jewish boy's experiences during and after the Nazi occupation of Hungary. The screening was sponsored by **David and Sylvia Steiner**.

The Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival is made possible through the generous support of the **Karma Foundation**. The **Regal Entertainment Group** is also a partial sponsor of the festival.

## Fall 2006 Festival Films

### **Live and Become**

France/Israel, 2005  
Director: Radu Mihaileanu

### **The First Time I Was Twenty**

France, 2004  
Director: Lorraine Levy

### **Metallic Blues**

Canada/Germany/Israel, 2004  
Director: Dan Verete

### **Fateless**

Hungary, 2005  
Director: Lajos Koltai

### **Yiddish Theater: A Love Story**

Israel/United States, 2006  
Director: Dan Katzir

### **A Cantor's Tale**

United States, 2005  
Director: Erik Greenberg Anjou

### **KZ**

United Kingdom, 2005  
Director: Rex Bloomstein

### **The Man Who Loved Haugesund**

Norway, 2003  
Directors: Jon Haukeland and Tore Volla

### **One Day Crossing**

United States, 2000  
Director: Joan Stein

### **Keep Not Silent**

Israel, 2004  
Director: Ilil Alexander

### **...More Than 1000 Words**

Israel/Germany, 2006  
Director: Solo Avital

**SAVE THE DATES — NOVEMBER 4-11, 2007**  
**THE EIGHTH ANNUAL RUTGERS NEW JERSEY JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL**

## Berg Gift Supports Holocaust Education

We are grateful to **Egon and Marjorie Berg** for their support of Holocaust education at the Center. Egon attended several sessions of the MTI this year and was inspired to help the Center's efforts to educate schoolteachers about the Holocaust. Egon, whose family fled from Germany to Africa to escape the Nazis, believes that educating teachers about the Holocaust and genocide can have a major impact on the attitudes of the students in their classrooms. The Bergs strongly support the view that "Holocaust education speaks to the larger problem of intolerance and prejudice. A positive classroom experience can have a major impact on students' attitudes towards their fellow man." The **Marjorie and Egon Berg Endowed Holocaust Education Fund** will provide funding for ongoing educational programs that further awareness of the Holocaust and genocide.

## Outreach to Jewish High Schools

Principals and guidance counselors from thirteen Jewish high schools in New Jersey, New York, and Philadelphia gathered at the Bildner Center last spring to learn about Jewish Studies and Jewish life on campus. The event was co-sponsored by Rutgers University Undergraduate Admissions, the Department of Jewish Studies, and Rutgers Hillel.

## In Memoriam – Daniel Rockoff

The Bildner Center lost a dear friend this year with the passing of **Daniel Rockoff**. Dan and his wife Irma have been friends and supporters of the Center since its inception and attended many of its programs. A graduate of Rutgers (class of 1940), Dan continued his family's tradition of community involvement. He served on the Highland Park Board of Education, was president of the Highland Park Conservative Temple, chairman of Israel Bonds, and a great supporter of Rutgers University. He will be greatly missed.

## Charitable Gift Annuity Provides Student Scholarship

The Bildner Center received a new gift this year from the estate of **Alexander and Ruth Seaman** resulting from a charitable gift annuity. The **Alexander and Ruth Seaman Endowed Student Scholarship** provides annual funding for a Jewish Studies student.

Many donors desire to make a gift to Rutgers and secure a source of income in the process. A charitable gift annuity (CGA) allows you to take advantage of both opportunities. Your gift provides a guaranteed stream of fixed income for life, allows for a current tax deduction, and a portion of the income payments to you may be treated as tax-free. For more information, please contact **Paul Kuzneko**, director of development, at 732-932-2033.

## Michael Levine

*continued from page 3*

to the vexing questions posed by literature. Through readings of works by Freud, Heine, Benjamin, Baudelaire, Ovid, and Kafka, Levine seeks to open a different, more mutually unsettling, dialogue between these fields of human inquiry. Attentive to the central role literature plays *within* psychoanalysis and especially to the figurative language of Freud's own texts, the book develops new ways of thinking about authorial mastery, political authority, and the so-called "internalization" of power relationships.

In fall 2006 Levine was the Craig-Kade Scholar in Residence in the Department of Germanic, Russian, and Eastern European Languages and Literatures and taught a graduate seminar, "Crimes Against Humanity: Historical Trauma

and Legal Response," sponsored by Rutgers' Transliterations Project. He also gave a talk at the Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival following the screening of the film *Metallic Blues*. In spring 2007 he gave the keynote address, "Trauma and Ecstasy," at a graduate student conference sponsored by the Department of Germanic Literatures, participated in a symposium on teaching unimaginable images sponsored by the Center for Race and Ethnicity, and taught the course "Holocaust Literature in Translation," cross-listed by Jewish Studies and Germanic Studies. In 2007-2008, he will teach "Germans and Jews," a course designed to offer students an intellectual history of German-Jewish culture from the 18th century to 1935.

As an administrator, Levine has sought to bring the academy and institutions of public education closer together. In 2004-2005, serving as the director of

education at the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, he oversaw the Lipper Internship Program for college students, the high school apprenticeship program, and the gallery docent training program. This year, while teaching a course on Holocaust literature at Rutgers, Levine returned to the museum with his students, where they were given a special tour of the new exhibition "Daring to Resist: Jewish Defiance in the Holocaust" by its co-curator Bonnie Gurewitsch. Formerly, as a faculty member at Yale University (1987-1996), Levine worked closely with the staff of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Levine is enthusiastic about the possibility of working with colleagues at the Bildner Center to forge new and enduring links between classroom experience and community life.



# STUDENT AWARDS

## Award Recipients

### **Elana Akman '08**

The Baruch S. and Pearl W. Seidman  
Student Award  
The Herbert and Jacqueline Klein Fund

### **Samantha Ehrlich '09, Amanda Ross '08, and Jillian Schlanger '08**

The Herbert and Jacqueline Klein Fund

### **Rachelle Feldman '07 and Deborah Toplansky '07**

The Rudolph and Mary Solomon Klein  
Student Award

### **Rena Gutholz '07 and Bethany Murphy '08**

The Alexander and Ruth Seaman  
Student Award

### **Rachel Jussim '08, Yael Kornfeld '07, and Rachael Levin '07**

The Baruch S. and Pearl W. Seidman  
Student Award

### **Adina Kagedan '07**

The Louis Fishman Memorial  
Student Award

### **Yael Kahn '08**

The Ruth Feller Rosenberg Endowed  
Student Award Fund  
The Leonard and Adele Blumberg  
Student Award

### **Melanie Karger '07**

The Gertrude and Jacob Henoah  
Memorial Student Award

### **Sara Katz '08 and Emmy Stup '07**

The Harold and Betty Perl Student Award

### **Sara Lewis '08**

The Norma U. and David M. Levitt  
Student Award  
The Maurice Meyer III and Irma Meyer  
Student Award

### **Richard Shusteris '07**

The Betty and Julius Gillman  
Memorial Student Award

### **Avi Smolen '09**

The Reitman Family Student Award

### **Yonina Weiss '07**

The Betty and Julius Gillman Memorial  
Student Award  
The Sandra and Stephen M. Greenberg  
Student Award

### **Adina Zilberman '07**

The Bernice and Milton I. Luxemburg  
Student Award  
The Alexander and Ruth Seaman  
Student Award

## Awards Ceremony

Twenty-one Rutgers students, majoring or minoring in Jewish Studies, were recognized for their academic achievements at an awards ceremony at Winants Hall in April 2007. Four of the awards are designated for students who will study in Israel.



Left: Student award recipient Emmy Stup describes her independent research project on contemporary Jewish life in Prague to Professors Yael Zerubavel and Jeffrey Shandler.



Above: 2007 student award recipients gather with Jewish Studies faculty.

Right: Professors Gary Rendsburg and Nancy Sinkoff with award recipient Rachel Jussim



Left: Sara Lewis and Norma Levitt

# STUDENT NEWS

## Jewish Studies Alumni News

**Tahlia (Abel) Bliss ('00):** Tahlia Bliss is a program executive in the Jewish Communal Network Commission of UJA Federation of New York. She graduated in May 2006 from the dual degree master's program of Columbia University School of Social Work and the Jewish Theological Seminary. Tahlia was recently accepted as a fellow in the Muehlstein Institute for Jewish Professional Leadership – an 18-month program for emerging professional leaders in Jewish communal agencies in the New York metropolitan area.

**Jonathan Kobrinski ('05):** Jonathan attended Yale University Law School, working in the school's immigration clinic and serving as a teaching fellow for undergraduates. After two years of study, Jonathan was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study in Australia.

**Ayelet Margolin ('02):** After graduating from Rutgers, Ayelet received a master's in strategic public relations from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication. Since graduating from the Annenberg School in May 2005, she has moved to Washington, D.C., where she recently became the assistant director of Israel advocacy and international affairs at the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Greater Washington.

**Michael Schwab ('98):** Rabbi Michael Schwab currently serves as associate rabbi of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, Illinois. He graduated from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in May 2004, receiving both his ordination and an MA in Jewish Education from the William Davidson Graduate School of Education. During his studies at JTS, he also completed the Clinical Pastoral Education Program at Penn Foundation for Mental Health and served as the Jewish life director in the Goldsmith Student Dormitory.

### Courses 2007-2008

Elementary Modern Hebrew  
Intermediate Modern Hebrew  
Contemporary Hebrew Literature and Media (in Hebrew)  
Advanced Modern Hebrew  
Israeli Literature & Society (in Hebrew)  
Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature (in Hebrew)  
Elementary Modern Yiddish  
Jewish Society and Culture I: From Antiquity to the Middle Ages  
Jewish Society and Culture II: The Modern Experience  
Jewish Studies Seminar  
Classical Jewish Philosophy  
Modern Jewish Philosophy

Jewish Immigrant Experience  
American Jewish History  
American Jews & the Media  
Ethnography of Contemporary Jewish Life  
Blacks and Jews in America  
History of the Holocaust  
History of East European Jewry  
Introduction to the Modern Middle East  
Contemporary Politics in the Middle East  
Seminar in Middle Eastern Studies  
Modern Middle Eastern Literature in Translation  
Arab Israeli Conflict  
History of Zionism  
Israeli Politics

### Special Topics

Maimonides\*  
Religion and Ethnicity in Israel\*  
The Holocaust and Israel  
Jewish Medical Ethics\*  
The Bible Through Literary Eyes\*  
Sephardic History, Culture & Music  
Jewish and Christian Relations  
Germans and Jews: An Intercultural History\*  
Modern Jewish Culture: New Practices in a Secular Age\*  
Variety in Ancient Jewish Life\*

\* new courses

## 2007 Jewish Studies Graduates

### MAJORS

Aliza Geller  
Sara Kaplan  
Yael Kornfeld  
Rachael Levin  
Emmy Stup  
Deborah Toplansky

### MINORS

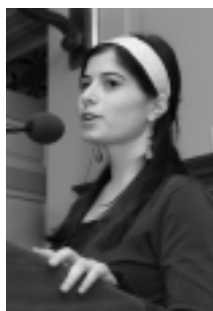
Caren Abschutz  
Jessica Botwinick  
Lisa Dmiszewicki  
Jessica Driscoll  
Aya Eliyahu  
Rachelle Feldman  
Sharon Glassman  
Elisheva Gluck  
Adina Gold  
David Goldman  
Rena Gutholc  
Adina Kagedan  
Daniel Kaiman  
Melanie Karger  
Janice Klein  
Eric Knapp  
Avraham Kravitz  
Ariele Kudowitz  
Eric Levy  
Rachel Levy  
Shira Meidav  
Steven Micklovic  
Daniel Rifkin  
Susan Sachs  
Ross Schwarzber  
Richard Shusteris  
Joseph Silvera  
Jessica Soria  
Gavriel Vigneri  
Adina Weintraub  
Yonina Weiss  
Adina Zilberman

**Alumni:** Please keep us informed of your activities at [csjl@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:csjl@rci.rutgers.edu)

## STUDENT PROFILES

### Yael Kornfeld

**Yael Kornfeld**, recipient of the **Baruch S. and Pearl W. Seidman Student Award**, used to think that the Bible was the only entry into Jewish Studies. Her first class at Rutgers showed her how wrong she was. She “fell in love” with a clip of Yiddish music in Professor **Jeffrey Shandler’s** course, “*American Jews and the Media*,” and was soon volunteering at the Eldridge Street Synagogue, reading Isaac Bashevis Singer, and seeking the roots of American Jewry.



In the summer of 2006 she traveled to Vilnius, Lithuania for a one month intensive Yiddish language program, where she was impressed by the diversity of her colleagues – seventeen and seventy year-olds, Jews and non-Jews, North American and European, all coming together to form a community based on language. Yael believes that it “put aside tensions between the secular Yiddish speakers and Hasidic communities.” A prior Jewish Studies award helped fund this remarkable adventure.

While in Lithuania, she became as interested in people’s motivations for learning the language, as she was eager to learn the language itself. This experience helped shape her senior thesis: “*Farvos Yiddish Un Farvos Harnt*” (Why Yiddish and Why Today?), supervised by Professor Shandler. Soon her notebooks contained not only nouns and verbs, but also interviews with fellow classmates. Professor Shandler noted: “It was a special pleasure for me to work with Yael on this topic. She has a knack for being an attentive interviewer and ethnographer, and I was especially impressed by her ability to spot insightful moments in the course of her field work. These moments, upon reflection, revealed much about the symbolic investments people make in Yiddish and their motives for studying the language.”

“I’ve benefited in so many ways from being part of a small and intimate department,” Yael said. “I appreciated help from **Arlene Goldstein** and Professor **Nancy Sinkoff** and especially Professor Shandler. By the end of our meetings, I felt energized and ready for the next set of challenges.” She offered him a “groysn, groysn dank.”

So why do people study Yiddish? According to Yael, they may be interested in a specific writer, text, or music. Those affected directly or indirectly by the Holocaust may also be motivated by a desire to keep the culture alive. Other reasons include wanting to be able to converse with family members and a sense of nostalgia.

As for the future, Yael wants to be a social worker for victims of domestic violence and has applied to AVODAH, a Jewish Service Corps program. “I plan on being an active lay member of my Jewish community,” she said. “I feel that Rutgers has given me the skills to do that with more perspective and a stronger and broader knowledge of Judaism.”

### Deborah Toplansky

**Debbie Toplansky**, a recipient of the **Rudolph and Mary Solomon Klein Student Award**, remembers a sign in her Hebrew school classroom that read “children need role models more than they need critics.” The



Jewish Studies faculty at Rutgers did not let her down. “They allowed us to grow and think, and to develop our own ideas,” she notes, “and [to] challenge them, when necessary.”

Debbie is grateful to Dr. **Gary Rendsburg** for providing a solid history of the Jewish people while encouraging his students to challenge traditional interpretations. Professor **Yael Zerubavel** encouraged her to delve into the role that memory plays in maintaining Jewish traditions and emphasized that studying Jewish history requires one to consider the dynamic tension generated by Jews’ attempts to assimilate while preserving their unique identity. Debbie also studied with **Na’ama Sheffi**, the Aresty Visiting Fellow in 2004, who provided her with firsthand, sabra (native Israeli) insights into Israeli culture and its relationship to the American Jewish community. Debbie applied some of these insights about Jewish history, memory, and culture in a research paper for her Jewish Studies seminar; she compared newspaper accounts of the Eichmann trial from around the world and analyzed how different groups remember the same event.

While at Rutgers, Debbie also served as vice-president and community service chair of Chabad House, where she organized a fundraiser for Magen David Adom (the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross) and planned holiday parties for special needs adults to allow them to experience Jewish activities. She was also one of the few non-music majors who became a member of the Rutgers Symphony Band and was a member of the Rutgers University Tap Troupe, which allowed her the opportunity to choreograph a dance performance. In keeping with her commitment to Jewish life, she also worked as a substitute teacher for Congregation Beth Israel in Scotch Plains, New Jersey.

Debbie was recently accepted into the Graduate Program in Labor and Employment Relations at Rutgers, where she intends to combine her majors of Jewish Studies and Labor Studies. She intends to organize Hebrew school teachers so that they can receive better salaries and gain the respect they deserve for their important task of teaching future generations of Jews. Her inspiration is both biblical and modern: “Elie Wiesel has written that Moses could be considered the first union organizer, having negotiated with Pharaoh in order to free the Israelite slaves from their cruel taskmasters.” She also hopes to attend law school in the future. Inspired by her studies of medieval and modern Jewish history she wants to study law in order to protect vulnerable groups of people that are often victims of its misuse.



# FACULTY UPDATES

## Myron Aronoff

**Myron Aronoff** published “Forty Years as a Political Ethnographer” in *Ab Imperio* (v. 4). An active participant in professional conferences, Aronoff has also delivered six papers in the last year, including “Conflicting Interpretations of Israeli/Palestinian Peace Negotiations (2000-2001): Conceptual, Cultural, and Ideological Framing of Historical Narratives and Contemporary Analysis” at the International Society for Political Psychology 29th Annual Conference (July 2006), “Contested Israeli Collective Identity” at the 23rd Annual Conference of the Association for Israel Studies (June 2007), and “Forty Years as a Political Ethnographer,” which he delivered as a keynote address at the Workshop on Political Ethnography: What Insider Perspectives Contribute to the Study of Power at the University of Toronto (October 2006).

## Maurice Elias

**Maurice Elias** received the Ernest McMahon-Class of 1930 Award from Rutgers University, given in recognition of excellence in bringing the knowledge of the University to the people of New Jersey. His most recent publications include “Beyond questioning: Inquiry strategies and cognitive and affective elements of Jewish education” (co-authored with I.E. Sigel and J.S. Kress) in the *Journal of Jewish Education* (vol. 73, 2007), and “Implementing school-based social and emotional learning programs: Navigating developmental crossroads” (with J.S. Kress) in the *Handbook of Child Psychology* (Rev. Ed.), edited by I. Sigel and A. Renninger (2006). Elias also co-edited several books in 2007, including the *Handbook of Victimization, Bullying, and Peer Harassment in the Schools: Research and Intervention* (with J. Zins and C.A. Maher), and *Educating People to be Emotionally Intelligent* (with R. Bar-On and J. Maree). Elias also presented papers at the annual meetings of the

Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapy; the Society for Research in Child Development; the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; the National Association of School Psychologists; and the National Association of Private Special Education Centers. He also delivered keynote addresses for the New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the New Jersey Association of School Psychologists. Outside of the academy, he was a featured presenter at a Parent Center series at the Jewish Community Center of the Greater Palm Beaches in West Palm Beach, Florida, speaking to parents and grandparents on “Striking the Right Balance: How Jewishly-Informed Parenting Improves Kids’ Chances for Success in School and Life.”

## Leslie Fishbein

**Leslie Fishbein** presented the paper “Cultural Loss and the Crafting of New Identity in American Jewish Immigrant and Refugee Women’s Memoirs” at Rutgers’ conference Beyond Eastern Europe: Jewish Cultures in Israel and the United States (March 2007). Fishbein also presented “Teaching Race, Culture, and Politics: Blacks and Jews in America in Transnational Perspective” in the Teaching American Studies in Transnational Perspective session (which she co-organized) at the Annual Meeting of the American Studies Association (October 2006) and “Anzia Yezierska: The Sweatshop Cinderella and Her Invented Life” as part of the Jewish Historical Society of Central Jersey’s series on The American Jewish Experience (March 2007).

## Judith Gerson

**Judith Gerson’s** co-edited volume (with Diane Wolf), *Sociology Confronts the Holocaust: Memories and Identities in Jewish Diasporas*, was released in June 2007 by Duke University Press. Gerson also presented a paper at the annual

meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies (December 2006) entitled “Comparison in the Memoirs of German Jewish Refugees,” and gave a number of lectures as part of the speakers bureau of the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, including “German Jewish Refugees and Holocaust Legacies.”

## Martha Helfer

**Martha Helfer** published two entries in *The Literary Encyclopedia*: “Die Judenbuche” [The Jews’ Beech Tree] (August 2006), and “Annette von Droste-Hülshoff” (July 2006). In addition, Helfer gave two invited talks: “What is Literary Anti-Semitism?” at Duke University and “On Nature and Ugliness in Stifter’s Brigitta and Abdias” at New York University.

## Michael Levine

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## Barbara Reed

**Barbara Reed** presented two papers this year on David Naar. The first, “A True American: David Naar and His New Jersey Newspaper,” which she presented at the Symposium on the 19th Century Press, the Civil War, and Free Expression (November 2006), profiled the Jewish editor and his editorials during the Civil War years. The second, which placed Naar’s views in the context of other N.J. newspapers at the time, was delivered at the Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication/American Journalism Historians Association (August 2006).

## Gary A. Rendsburg

**Gary A. Rendsburg** published three articles during the past year: “Moses as Equal to Pharaoh,” in *Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite*

*Religion* (edited by G. M. Beckman and T. J. Lewis); "Aramaic-like Features in the Pentateuch," in *Hebrew Studies* (vol. 47); and "The Biblical Flood Story in the Light of the *Gilgamesh Flood Account*," in *Gilgamesh and the World of Assyria* (edited by J. Azize and N. Weeks). In addition, his entry on "Ebla" appeared in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007). Rendsburg also delivered a series of three lectures on various aspects of biblical studies at Brigham Young University (March 2007) and gave a talk entitled "On Barley, Baskets, and Booths: The Agricultural Origins of the Jewish Holidays," at the Hazon Conference on Jews, Food, and Contemporary Life (December 2006).

## Jeffrey Shandler

**Jeffrey Shandler** was awarded the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee Notable Book for Older Readers (2007) and a place on the International Board of Books for Young People Biennial Honor List (2007-2008), both for his translation of *Emil and Karl* by Yankev Glatshteyn. He published "Queer Yiddishkeit: Practice and Theory" in *Shofar* (vol. 25) and "Chez soi sur le petit écran: les Juifs new-yorkais à la télévision" in *Les Cahiers de Judaïsme* (vol. 20). He also presented over 15 papers at professional meetings in the last year, including "Beyond the Image: Photography as a Jewish Social Practice" (with Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett) at a colloquium at New York University that he co-convened, *Looking Jewish: Photography, Memory, and the Sacred* (April 2007). Among the other papers he presented were "The Media and the Messenger: Transforming the Cantor's Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" at the Jewish Music Forum at the Center for Jewish History (March 2007), "Postvernacular Yiddish: Language as Performance Art" at the Conference on Jewish Languages, Identities, and Cultures at Georgetown University (February 2007), and "Turning on 'The Eternal Light': Performing Judaism on

the American Airwaves" at the Jews and Performance Seminar at the Jewish Theological Seminary (February 2007).

## Nancy Sinkoff

**Nancy Sinkoff** published the entry, "Women and Socialism," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2nd edition, vol. 18), edited by Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum (Thomson Gale, 2006). Sinkoff also presented the paper "The Pursuit of Secular Heresy: Neoconservatism's Campaign against Jewish Communism" at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Jewish Studies (December 2006), and delivered the opening lecture, "The Chickpea and the Jewish Question: On the Tenacity of Ashkenazic Jewish Culture," at Rutgers' conference Beyond Eastern Europe: Jewish Cultures in Israel and the United States (March 2007).

## Azzan Yadin

**Azzan Yadin** published "*Blorit* – Pagan Mohawk or Sabra Forelock" (co-authored with Ghil'ad Zuckermann), a study of the different ways the meanings of biblical and rabbinic words are ideologically altered in modern Hebrew, as well as a Hebrew translation of Miriam Frankel's *The Five Books of Miriam*, a feminist commentary on the Pentateuch. Yadin also presented a three-day faculty seminar at Dickinson College (January 2007) on the theme of "God in Modern Hebrew Poetry." He also presented "The Bible in Late Antique Paganism" at a conference organized by the Rutgers University History Department, an eight-session series (March-May 2007) on "The Literary Genius of the Bible" coordinated by the Basking Ridge Library, and a number of talks under the auspices of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities. In addition, Yadin has been asked to serve as chair of the Rabbinics Division of the Association for Jewish Studies, and invited to join the prestigious book series *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* as co-editor.

## Yael Zerubavel

**Yael Zerubavel** published an article on "Antiquity and the Renewal Paradigm: Strategies of Representation and Mnemonic Practices in Israeli culture" in *On Memory: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, edited by Doron Mendes, as well as an encyclopedia entry in Hebrew on "Myths and the Shaping of Israeli Collective Memory" in *New Jewish Time - Jewish Culture in a Secular Age - An Encyclopedic View* (Keter Publishing House, 2006). Zerubavel also presented papers at a number of international conferences: "The 'Desert' and the 'Island': Space Metaphors in Modern Israeli Culture" at the annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies (December 2006); "The 'New Jew' and the 'Hebrew Bedouin': Literary Images and National Metaphors" at a UCLA conference on History as Reflected in Israeli Literature (March 2007); "Europe, the Desert, and the *Yishuv*: Mental Geographies and Space Metaphors" at Rutgers' conference Beyond Eastern Europe: Jewish Cultures in Israel and the United States (March 2007); "The Settlement Ideology Revisited: Zionism and Its New Faces" at an international conference on The Future of Zionism: Looking at Israel in the 21st Century at George Washington University (April 2007); and "Memory, Identity, and the Politics of Representation: Desert Tourism in Israel," at The Association for Israel Studies Annual Meeting in Israel (June 2007). Zerubavel also lectured on "The Ideology of Redemption in Zionist Thought" at the Center for Judaic and Middle Eastern Studies at University of Connecticut in October 2006. In May 2007, Zerubavel traveled to Russia and gave a series of lectures on national memory and identity, the Holocaust, and Israeli history and culture at Kazan State University as part of Rutgers' faculty exchange program.

## 2007 – 2008 PROGRAMS

### **Secularism in Traditional Jewish Culture**

Funded by the Sagner Foundation  
Speaker: David Biale  
September 19

### **Nationalism, Tradition, and Jewish Revival in Israeli Society**

Speaker: Meir Buzaglo  
October 8

### **Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine**

The Raoul Wallenberg Annual Program supported by the Leon and Toby Cooperman Fund  
Speaker: Omer Bartov  
October 14

### **Israel's Constitution - Does it Exist?**

The Ruth and Alvin Rockoff Annual Lecture  
Speaker: Amnon Rubinstein  
October 25

### **Rutgers New Jersey Jewish Film Festival**

November 4-11

### **NJ Jewish Leadership Forum Kick-off**

November 28

### **Memory and Diplomacy: Israeli Diplomats in West Germany in the 1950s**

Speaker: Roni Stauber  
November 19

### **From Apt to Opatów: Past Shtetl, Present Poland**

November 29 • Panel Discussion

## **Special Course for Educators Spring 2008**

### **History of the Holocaust**

This eight-session course will cover the ideological roots of Nazi racial policy, the historical events of the Holocaust from various perspectives, and the fate of the survivors in the aftermath of World War II.

Professional development credit will be granted.

For registration information, contact [csjlrsvp@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:csjlrsvp@rci.rutgers.edu)

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*All programs subject to change.*

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