

yediAUt



Pamela Nadell,
Director, Jewish
Studies Program



Howard Wachtel,
Director, Center for
Israeli Studies

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From the Directors

Four years ago, when we conceived of this joint newsletter of American University's Center for Israeli Studies and Jewish Studies Program, we did not imagine how different the context would be—then and now. More than ever, this altered context has highlighted the importance of having these two programs at American University, not only for the campus but also for the wider Washington, D.C., community. As we remain committed to our core university missions, we have also responded to the challenges of a changed environment. The pages of this year's *YediAUt* testify to the enhanced importance of these two academic ventures today.

We thank you, our readers, for your past support and welcome your continuing financial contributions. There is a donation form on the next-to-last page of the newsletter. More than ever, your help is vital to meet the new demands placed on us and to ensure that we have sufficient resources to continue to mount our ambitious programming at American University. ■

Diaspora and Comparative Immigration

The Center for Israeli Studies held its fourth and most ambitious conference in May 2002, "Diaspora and Comparative Immigration: The Jewish Experience." Sixteen papers were presented by scholars, about half each from Israel and the United States. The keynote dinner speaker was syndicated *Washington Post* columnist **Charles Krauthammer**, whose address was entitled "Diaspora Jewry: The Challenge of Survival." Conference participants and attendees at lunch heard from **Frank Sharry**, executive director of the National Immigration Forum.

The theme of the conference was the exploration of Jewish migrations to Israel and the United States in a comparative perspective. Historians, sociologists, demographers, and cultural anthropologists from Israel and the United States explored the migration and incorporation experiences of Jews who left their homelands for the United States and Israel from the late nineteenth century to the present.

The conference panels were organized by Jewish migration flows from particular countries or regions: from eastern Europe, Russia, Ethiopia, and



Syndicated columnist and keynote speaker Charles Krauthammer, seated, discussing his remarks with AU literature professor Myra Sklarew, to his left, and other dinner guests

North Africa (Sephardic). Panelists were asked to address several thematic questions:

- How do gender differences affect migrants' experiences of national integration?

Diaspora from page 1

- How do specific employment occupations shape the integration experience in each society?
- How have these migrants affected the arts and culture in each society?
- How has the homogenizing influence of globalization imperiled Jewish identity and distinctiveness?
- How has each host society—Israel and the United States—integrated newcomers sharing a common Jewish heritage and different diasporic experiences into their own



Demographer Sergio DellaPergola speaking on Sephardic migration on a panel with Russell Stone, American University



Former commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service Doris Meissner



Zvi Gitelman, University of Michigan, speaking on the impact of Russian immigration on Israel's society and politics

national cultures that are themselves being homogenized by globalization?

- What has been the impact of Jewish migration from particular parts of the globe on the politics of their host country?
- How successful was the host country's educational system in the integration process? Experiences in the military?

We are now collecting conference papers to be published in a book. The complete conference program, with lists of participants and conference papers, is available on the Center for Israeli Studies Web site: <www.centerforisraelistudies.org>.

The conference was organized by the Center for Israeli Studies and cosponsored by American University's Jewish Studies Program, with additional support from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. ■



Uri Ben-Eliezer, University of Haifa, right, and Adriana Kemp, Tel Aviv University, left, reviewing their notes before their presentation



Judith Shuval, Hebrew University, speaking while panelists Sanford J. Ungar, president, Goucher College, right, and Calvin Goldscheider, Brown University, middle, await their turn to speak

AU President Benjamin Ladner's Letter after Hebrew University Bombing

The following is the text of a letter sent to the president of Hebrew University, Menachem Magidor, by presidents of universities throughout the world after the bombing on the campus of the university. It was signed by American University President Benjamin Ladner:

Institutions of higher learning, and in particular universities, reflect the core values of their respective societies. All great universities share certain characteristics that shape their academic and scientific directions: they are committed to pluralism, diversity, multiculturalism and uphold the tenets of democracy and mutual co-existence. For these reasons and many more, institutions of higher education in North America cannot remain silent.

We, the undersigned, denounce terrorism and, in particular, condemn the attack at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem on July 31st that claimed seven lives and injured scores of people. We express our solidarity with the academic pursuits of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Universities serve as intellectual meeting places that should ideally invite dialogues between people from all backgrounds. Throughout its history, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem has played a critical role in promoting co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians and amongst peoples of all nationalities, religions and cultures. The murderous act that took place on the Mount Scopus campus was intended to prevent the type of human interaction and discourse that can facilitate change and a more complex understanding of our challenging world.

We join The Hebrew University—and all universities—in a global quest to create productive avenues to peace and progress. We send our condolences to the families who mourn the loss of their loved ones and wish those who were injured a complete recovery. ■



Benjamin Ladner

Center for Israeli Studies and Jewish Studies Program Speakers

- **Yoram Peri**, Israeli scholar in residence, spoke at a dinner hosted by Rhea Schwartz and Paul Wolff at their home in Washington, D.C. President of the New Israel Fund and a distinguished Israeli public intellectual whose career straddles academic and public affairs, Dr. Peri spoke on the current state of the conflict in the region. ■



From left, dinner guests Harriet Kelman, Judith Walter, and Paul Wolff, with Yoram Peri in the rear

Yoram Peri

- Author and screen writer **Arnost Lustig**, professor, Department of Literature, spoke at a screening of the award-winning documentary film *Fighter*, in which he has a principal role. The winner of numerous literary awards for his score of novels, Lustig most recently published *The Bitter Smell of Almonds* and *Lovely Green Eyes*.



Arnost Lustig, right, and Jan Wiener, left, in a scene from the film *Fighter*

- **Frances W. Schwartz**, lecturer at Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in New York and coauthor of *The Jewish Moral Virtues*, delivered a lecture, “The Yetzer—Inclination to Good and Evil in the Jewish Ethical System,” cosponsored by the Jewish Studies Program and the Department of Philosophy and Religion.



- “The Beginnings of Jerusalem’s Sanctity in the Hebrew Bible” was the title of a lecture by **Yair Zakovitz**, professor and dean of Hebrew University’s Faculty of Humanities and a visiting professor at the University of California at Berkeley. His Center for Israeli Studies lecture was cosponsored by the American University Hillel, Jewish Studies Program, University Chaplain, and Embassy of Israel.

Yair Zakovitz



- The Center for Israeli Studies, the School of International Service, and the Embassy of Israel cosponsored a lecture by **Yossi Olmert**, professor, Bar-Ilan University, on Israel and the current international crisis in the Middle East.

Rhea Schwartz, deputy director of the Center for Israeli Studies, left, Yossi Olmert, middle, and Russell Stone, right, professor, Department of Sociology

Exhibit of Photography

In a second collaboration with the American University’s Watkins Art Gallery (the first was an original installation by the Israeli sculptor **Nahum Tevet** in 1998), the Center for Israeli Studies sponsored a photographic exhibition, “Conversations through Photography,” organized by the Israeli art curator **Nella Cassouto**. Consisting of photographs by Israeli and Palestinian photographers depicting each others’ lives in a conflicted land, the exhibit was created to initiate a dialogue through visual art when individuals find it difficult to meet to exchange words. ■



Nella Cassouto and Israeli scholar in residence Yoram Peri discuss the exhibit.



The Israeli photographer Rina Castelnuevo borrowed a studio from a Palestinian photographer in Ramallah and allowed her subjects to select a pose.

Photo by Rina Castelnuevo

News from the Jewish Studies Program

Jewish Studies Program Welcomes Joan S. Friedman

The Jewish Studies Program and the Department of History are delighted to welcome Joan S. Friedman to the faculty for 2002–03. Friedman is completing her PhD in Jewish history at Columbia University. Her dissertation, “Solomon B. Freehof, the Reform Responsa, and the Shaping of American Reform Judaism,” explores the life and legacy of Rabbi Freehof (1892–1990), the chief architect of Reform Judaism’s body of legal literature, the Reform Responsa. Her article “A Critique of Solomon B. Freehof’s Concept of *Minbag* and Reform Jewish Practice” has just been published in *Re-Examining Progressive Halakhab*.

Friedman was ordained at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York in 1980 and, for six years, was Jewish chaplain and instructor in religion at Colgate University. She was also rabbi of Congregation Beth Shalom in Bloomington, Indiana.

During 2002–03 Friedman will serve as interim director of the Jewish Studies Program, while Pamela Nadell enjoys a sabbatical year. Friedman will teach a wide range of courses in Jewish civilization, the Holocaust, and contemporary Jewish affairs; supervise the program’s senior theses and internships; and advise students. ■

Jewish Studies Majors Write Senior Theses

Since the founding of AU’s major in Jewish studies in the early 1970s, the senior thesis has stood as its capstone, required of all students. In May 2002, five seniors completed their theses and graduated as Jewish studies majors. Their subjects suggest the diversity and breadth of both their interests and of the range of Jewish studies as an interdisciplinary major: Jessica DeNino wrote “Judaism and Biomedical Ethics: Issues at the Beginning of Life”; Nicole

Gratch explored modern midrash of the biblical story of Joseph; Margaret Heidema traced the history of Reform Judaism’s commitment to social action; Jamie Levine wrote “Gender Regimes of the Israeli Defense Force”; and Cori Roth studied American Jewish communal agencies and their historic positions on church-state relations. Thanks to the generosity of the **Jane and Jerrold Goodman Fund** and the **Everett Gordon Fund**, each student received a \$1,000 award to defray research expenses.

The process of writing a thesis can at times be daunting. As Jamie Levine, who now works for B’nai B’rith Youth as a program specialist, reflected: “the finished product looked nothing like what I envisioned in August of last year.” But rigorous research and weekly meetings with thesis supervisor

Pamela Nadell, director of the Jewish Studies Program, and the other seniors during the fall semester led her first to narrow her topic and then to realize and write a strongly argued thesis. There she showed how gender inequalities are perpetuated in the Israeli military and how, as long as these remain in place, Israeli “women will

still find it difficult to advance in both military and civil societies.”

Jessica DeNino, who is now a graduate student in speech and hearing, commented that her topic, Judaism and biomedical ethics, allowed her to combine her interests in healthcare and Jewish studies: “The whole process of writing a senior thesis was one of the best learning experiences I had in college. Choosing a topic, countless hours of research, and the daunting task of writing a section each week made this project one of my greatest accomplishments at AU.”

At the spring Jewish studies luncheon, graduating seniors proudly present their theses. As they do, they remind the rising seniors sitting there that, just a short year ago, graduating seniors had sat in their places, excited and a bit nervous as they prepared to take on the capstone of their AU Jewish studies major. ■

“The whole process of writing a senior thesis was one of the best learning experiences I had in college. Choosing a topic, countless hours of research, and the daunting task of writing a section each week made this project one of my greatest accomplishments at AU.”
—JESSICA DENINO

Faculty Notes

Marvin Bash, Department of Philosophy and Religion, taught Jewish Ethics.

Richard Breitman, Department of History, continues his work at the National Archives and Records Administration on the declassification of World War II documents in conjunction with the Nazi War Criminal Interagency Working Group.

Erran Carmel, Kogod School of Business, has continued his research on Israeli high tech. His latest paper is “Issues Facing Israeli High-Tech Firms as They Internationalize,” Melbourne Business School working paper.

Rivka Degani, Department of Language and Foreign Studies, taught Hebrew.

Joan Friedman, Department of History and Jewish Studies Program, has just published “A Critique of Solomon B. Freehof’s Concept of *Minbag* and Reform Jewish Practice.”

Odette Goldberg, Department of Language and Foreign Studies, taught Hebrew.

Gershon Greenberg, Department of Philosophy and Religion, continues his work on theological responses to the Holocaust.

Alan Kraut, Department of History, continued to serve as president of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society and delivered numerous lectures, including: “The Rise and Demise of the Jewish Hospital: American Jewry’s Response to Nativism in Health Care Institutions” at the International Conference on Jews and Medicine (Wayne State University); “Dr. Joseph Goldberger and Human Experimentation: The Mississippi Prisoners” on the panel on medical experiments and ethical questions at the Fourth Annual Conference of the Southern Association of the History of Medicine and Science; and “Bias at the Bedside: The Jewish Hospital, An Institutional Response to Antisemitism in American Healthcare Institutions,” Third Annual John C. Livingston Memorial Lecture in American Jewish History at the University of Denver.

Robert I. Lerman, Department of Economics, taught Social Policy in Industrial Countries for the graduate public policy program at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, during the December 2001–January 2002 semester break. In addition, he presented seminars to the faculty—Retreat or Reform: Changing Social Policies in the U.S.—at the Department of Economics and Public Policy Program at Hebrew University. At the Association for Israel Studies conference in Denver in May 2002, he organized a panel on the impact of water issues on a Mideast peace settlement and served as a discussant on a panel dealing with social capital and the peace process.

Alan Levine, School of Public Affairs, has been appointed a permanent associate fellow, Institute of United States Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, and

during his sabbatical academic year of 2002–2003 will be at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Richard G. Linowes, Kogod School of Business, continues to teach entrepreneurship at the Israel School of Enterprise Management and Innovation (ISEMI) in Ramat Aviv, Israel (May–June 2002 and January 2003). He also delivered two public addresses in Israel to the business community: “Israeli Chutzpah and the Spirit of Enterprise” and “The New Economy: Myths and Reality.”

Arnost Lustig, Department of Literature, published *Lovely Green Eyes*, a “strong novel” that Lustig “seems to have . . . just right,” according to Kit Reid, who reviewed the book for the *Washington Post’s Book World*. He also has been in demand as a speaker in connection with the film *Fighter*.

Pamela S. Nadell, Department of History and Jewish Studies Program, has a new book, *American Jewish Women’s History: A Reader*, to be published by New York University Press in 2003. She continues to serve as chair of the Academic Council of the American Jewish Historical Society.

Saul Newman, School of Public Affairs, published three articles, including a chapter on Scotland in the *Encyclopedia of Ethnoregional Groups in Europe*, and continues his research on settling settler conflicts in Northern Ireland, South Africa, and Israel and theories of nationalism.

Naima Prevots, Department of Performing Arts, received the Pola Nirenska Lifetime Achievement Award in Dance and met in Israel with the chair of the Department of Theater and Dance at Tel Aviv University about developing a master’s degree in dance. A former student of dance at American University, Meisha Bosma, has joined Amir Kolben’s Kombina Dance Company in Israel, as a result of the Center for Israeli Studies sponsorship of his residency at American University. She has been there since March, performing extensively and teaching.

Linda Raphael, Jewish Studies Program, taught Jewish literature and has just published *Narrative Skepticism: Moral Agency and Representations of Consciousness in Fiction*.

David H. Rosenbloom, School of Public Affairs, received two of the highest awards in the field of public administration in 2001: the National Academy of Public Administration Louis Brownlow Award for Excellence in Public Administrative Literature for his book *Building a Legislative-Centered Public Administration: Congress and the Administrative State 1946–1999* and the American Political Science Association’s 2001 John Gaus Award for Exemplary Scholarship in the Joint Tradition of Political Science and

Public Administration. Among the seven articles he published last year are “Administrative Reform: Ten Major Questions” in the *Asian Journal of Comparative Development* and “Public Administrators’ Liability for Constitutional Torts” in *Public Personnel Management*.

Rita Simon, School of Public Affairs, coauthored two books, *A Comparative Analysis of Capital Punishment* with Danny Blaskovich (Lexington Books) and *Adoption, Race, and Identity* with Howard Alstein, revised edition (Transaction Publishers); edited *A Comparative Perspective on Major Social Problems* (Lexington Books); and wrote seven articles, including “The Defense of Insanity,” *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*.

Myra Sklarew, Department of Literature, completed preparation of a book manuscript, *Over the Rooftops of Time: Jewish Stories, Essays, Poems*, to be published by SUNY Press, and is continuing research on another book project, *Holocaust and the Construction of Memory*, which looks at Lithuanian Holocaust testimony of witnesses, rescuers, collaborators, and survivors in terms of current thinking in neuroscience about how memory is constructed.

Russell Stone, Department of Sociology, continues as administrative officer for the Association for Israel Studies, headquartered in American University’s Center for Israeli Studies. He organized the session “Current Findings in Public Opinion” at the Association’s 18th Annual Meeting in Vail, Colorado, hosted by the University of Denver. He is advising editor for the Israeli Studies series published by SUNY Press, which publishes four to six books each year on Israeli history and contemporary society and politics. He serves on the editorial boards of the journals *Israel Studies* and *Israel Studies Forum* and was a member of the program committee for the 2002 Middle East Studies Association meetings in Washington, D.C.

Howard M. Wachtel, Department of Economics, completed his book on the history of Wall Street, *Street of Dreams—Boulevard of Broken Hearts*, and has completed an article on water security in Israel and the surrounding region, “The Intersection of Food and Water Security: A Case Study of the Near East,” for an anthology on food security. He received the McKeever Institute of Economic Policy Analysis Prize for his article “Tax Distortion in the Global Economy.”

Robert Whitehill, Department of Language and Foreign Studies, taught Hebrew at AU, is the translator of Yitzhak Ben-Ner’s *Rustic Sunset and Other Stories*, and is the author of *Efes Makom: Shirim*. ■



Joan S. Friedman joins the Jewish Studies Program as interim director.



Smiling seniors at the College of Arts and Science graduation in May 2002: Cori Roth, Jessica DeNino, Margaret Heidema, joined by Alexis Bock, Jewish studies graduate, class of 2001. Not pictured: Nicole Gratch and Jamie Levine, who double-majored in Jewish studies and international service and who attended the AU School of International Service graduation ceremonies

Spotlight on Our Donors

(The Center for Israeli Studies and the Jewish Studies Program would not exist without our dedicated supporters, who are listed at the end of this newsletter. We focus this year on two special donors who played a critical role in launching the Center for Israeli Studies, Lillian Klein Abensohn and Stuart Bindeman.)

Lillian Klein Abensohn became involved with the Center for Israeli Studies almost from the moment it was a germ of an idea. In 1998 she hosted a very successful fund-raising women’s luncheon that produced one of the first significant clusters of donations to the center. More than simply a supporter, however, she has also been a prominent guest at many of the center’s programs.

She comes to this philanthropy in an unusual way. Born in Philadelphia, she attended Temple University, dropped out to start a family, then finished her undergraduate degree at California

State at Los Angeles and her PhD in literature at the University of California at Irvine. Her professional academic career began with an appointment in Munich, Germany, where she taught literature for 20 years for the University of Maryland’s Munich Campus of University College as a resident professor. “It was there,” she says, “that I began to identify more strongly as a Jew, not because of any problems with Germans, but because there were so few Jews in Germany.” She speaks with a great smile on her face when she talks about her Munich years and her travels to places like Turkey and Budapest and Prague. It was also in Munich that she became interested in studies of and research into the Bible from a critical literary perspective. This pursuit developed into a course in literary approaches to the Bible taught on site in Israel for many years and to her first book, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Almond Press, 1988). Writing this book was a “euphoric experience, because struggling with the biblical text,” she says, “taught her what Jacob’s struggle with God is about.” What became an enduring interest in the Bible has led to publication of many essays and her second book, *Deborah to Esther: Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible* (Fortress Press), which will appear in spring 2003.

American University was fortunate to discover Dr. Klein (she was not married to Seymour Abensohn at this time) in 1993 when

Kermit Moyer of the Department of Literature offered her an adjunct teaching position. Her interest in the Hebrew Bible brought her into contact with Pamela Nadell, professor, Jewish studies, and eventually to her introduction to the Center for Israeli Studies. Since her retirement from a successful teaching and publishing career, ever searching for new challenges, she has not been idle. She now devotes her time to another life-long interest, oil painting. She has had a successful exhibition at the Jewish Community Center in Rockville, Maryland, and participated in exhibitions at the Montgomery County Municipal Center and at the Yellow Barn, both in Maryland. Her works are currently displayed at the Moriah Gallery in Bethesda, Maryland, and the Thistle Gallery in Lewes, Delaware. She has donated all of the proceeds from recent sales of her paintings to the center.

Reflecting on her remarkable life’s journey, Lillian Klein Abensohn sees in the Center for Israeli Studies her vehicle for giving back to the community, a way to promote her commitment to art and learning and culture: “We think about French culture, German culture, but we know too little about Israeli culture. I envision the center as that place where the American University and Washington, D.C., communities come to know and appreciate the remarkable vitality of Israeli culture. Knowledge of Israel and experience in Israel will enrich America and Americans.”



Lillian Klein Abensohn with one of her paintings

The Cora and John H. Davis Foundation is one of the Washington area’s lovely secrets. A small, private foundation, it has provided seed money for worthwhile causes in the area since 1982, the legacy of a local painting contractor turned real estate developer and his wife. The foundation gives seed money to programs that it believes have the ability to grow and ultimately become self-sufficient. It was the “angel donor” which brought the Center for Israeli Studies into existence.

Since 1983 the foundation has given to universities in the Washington, D.C., area to support various projects. At American University it has provided financial aid for needy and deserving students, established the Cora and John H. Davis Scholarship Fund, and supported the sports and convocation center.

Two of the foundation’s three codirectors, Stuart Bindeman and Harold Zirkin, have

strong ties to AU. Mr. Bindeman was a 1970 graduate of the School of Government and Mr. Zirkin received his master’s in financial management here. In addition, at the time Mr. Bindeman was serving on the Board of Directors of the Jewish Community Center of Greater Washington, Pamela Nadell, chair of the Jewish Studies Program, was also on the board. So, when the foundation was approached with the idea of funding the new center, the codirectors were willing to listen.

The idea that a gift could be made to the university in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel began to take shape. Rather than the usual celebratory dinner, however, the notion of a more perma-

nent commemoration developed. Howard Wachtel and Pamela Nadell approached the foundation with the idea of creating a center to highlight the achievements of modern Israel. Jewish studies had become a well-established part of the university curricula in the United States, but a center focused on Israeli studies would be unique.

With the help of Mr. Bindeman and Mr. Zirkin, the Cora and John H. Davis Foundation made the university a gift to start the center. And through the generosity of the foundation, these funds have enabled us to establish the strong core of programs, in-residence Israeli scholars, conferences, and study abroad programs that have been built over the last five years. Mr. Bindeman says, “We are so pleased with what our funding has produced that we expect to continue the foundation’s support for this program in the future and our 20-year relationship with American University.” ■



Stuart Bindeman

Center Sponsors Teach-In on the Middle East

In a throwback to the 1960s, the Center for Israel Studies sponsored two teach-ins on the conflict in the Middle East.

Using an informal setting that allowed more time to explore complex issues, the teach-ins were organized in response to numerous requests for background information on the context of the conflict: the 1947 partition plan and War of Independence, the 1967 war, maps that showed who was where and when, the Camp David Agreement, the Oslo



Accords, and the second Camp David, in July 2000.

A panel of the center’s faculty affiliates led a discussion on these and other topics with an audience of more than 100 people, drawn from faculty, staff, students, and community members.



Panelists, from left, Russell Stone, sociology, Erran Carmel, Kogod School of Business, Renee Marlin-Bennett, School of International Service, and Robert Lerman, economics



Howard Wachtel, economics, and director, Center for Israeli Studies



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www.centerforisraelistudies.org

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For information about the Jewish Studies Program and its major and minor, please visit <http://www.american.edu/cas/departments/jewish.shtml>.



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