

# The Newsletter of the Judaic Studies Program

FALL 1994 • THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE, KNOXVILLE

## Dear Friends of the Judaic Studies Program at UTK,

**U**he red-and-white Egged bus came to an abrupt halt at the Shmaryahu Junction stop on the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway. There I stood, as so often during this summer in Israel, trying to orient myself. I was on my way to a visit with Judith Buber Agassi, Martin Buber's granddaughter, who lives in Herzlya Pituach with her philosopher husband. For four months of the year, they live in Toronto, Canada, where Judith is a professor of sociology. We were going to discuss the possibility of another

book on Buber's work in early Zionism. Since I intended to translate complete texts, not hitherto collected or available in English, I needed the permission of the estate which Judith administers. A kindly florist with a map pointed me in the right direction, and after a good while — distances mean nothing to Israelis! — I entered the gate to the Buber Agassi residence. Judith was expecting me

and despite the fact that her husband had just been released from the hospital, we spent several hours discussing my project and other matters of mutual interest.

After an interruption by a workman, I asked her how she was related

to Margarete Buber Neumann. "She was my mother," Judith replied. Married to Martin and Paula Buber's son Rafael, Margarete later divorced Rafael and married Heinrich Neumann. She is famous in her own right for several autobiographies

which she wrote on her life experiences. As Judith responded to me, I remembered a lunch in Chicago last October, when a delegation from The University of Tennessee joined Manny and Fern Steinfeld for a tribute to them by The Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. On that occasion, Manny shared with us the story of one day in post World War II Germany — he remembered the exact



date, May 10, 1945 — as an American officer. That day in Boisenberg an der Elbe, "I met Buber's sister," Manny told us at the lunch. And he continued the tale of a German woman in concentration camp clothes — she had survived Ravensbruck — who looked to the American officer for help. She needed permission to enter the American sector and she needed another favor — would he notify Martin Buber in Jerusalem that she was alive. Judith, who was being raised by her grandparents, remembers the day the postcard from Manny's brother in Palestine arrived with the news that her mother was alive. "But," she added, "we never knew his name." Together, we

searched for the passage in her mother's book. Manny had told me that she described the encounter in detail, but without mentioning names. "You see, she never knew my name." — I told Judith that I knew who the officer was — the very same man who had contributed in a major way to the Endowment for the Judaic Scholar of Religion at UTK. She looked up in surprise and asked, "Why didn't he ever try to find us?" Manny Steinfeld did try to contact Margarete Buber several times — unsuccessfully. Maybe some things just have to happen in a natural way, without intentional efforts. We have a term for things that are meant to be, we say, it is *beshtet*.



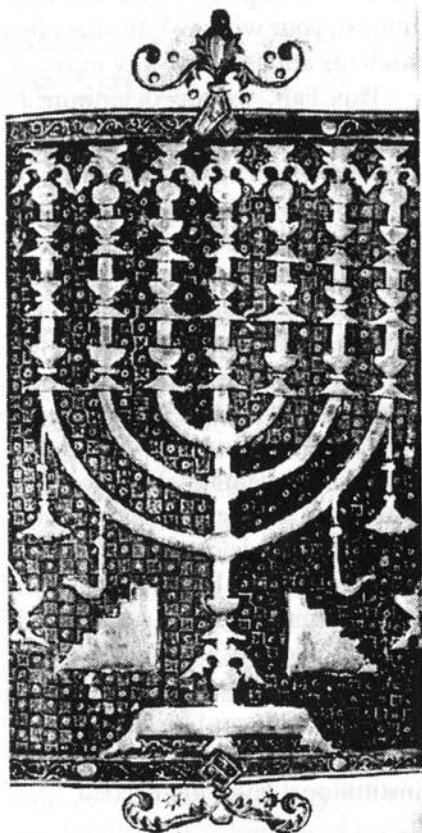
When the new Judaic Studies Program at The University of Tennessee was launched in August of last year, a great deal of planning and effort by many people at the University, in the community at large, and in the Jewish community came to fruition. Visionary colleagues such as Religious Studies Head Charles Reynolds and College of Arts and Sciences Dean Larry Ratner had spent years preparing the ground for such a program, supported by the Jewish community and especially the efforts of Bernie Bernstein and Arnold Cohen, who agreed to chair the

fundraising committee. With gratitude to all who labored on behalf of our Program, I would like to take this opportunity to share some of the highlights of this first year with you.

The Judaic Studies Program consists of three dimensions: teaching, research, and public service. In defining these, one could say that teaching is the most basic aspect, research the most specialized, and public service the most visible. All three are connected and strengthen each other and the program in a meaningful way.

## Teaching

Many people in the community and at professional meetings ask, who takes Judaic Studies courses? At UTK, the students come from a variety of disciplines. Reasons vary from fulfilling requirements to choosing an elective to "my grandmother was Jewish and I never understood why she salted the chicken." Student status ranges from freshman to senior. Some plan to go into the ministry, others to graduate school, and still others just like to learn about different religions. I teach two courses a term. Last year, I taught RS 331, "Judaism," and RS 102, "Comparative World Religions" Fall and Spring terms. Student activities included a visit to the Jewish Student Center's sukkah and Holocaust exhibit, visits to our two synagogues, lectures by Rabbi Simon and Rabbi Weiner, lectures by Holocaust



survivor Mira Kimmelman, an in-class model seder, and a Holocaust memorial service. Total enrollment was about 150 students, and the courses were very well received. One student who took two classes with me wrote, "I want to take a moment to thank you for being a part of my education here at UT. I am a hotel and restaurant major... I think it is important that I took this class [RS 331] as well as RS 102. I sincerely believe that will allow me to be more open-minded and understanding because as you can probably imagine in the service industry you meet many people with various back-

grounds. I hope that you will continue in your work to educate." Two students applied for study in Israel.

This Fall, we are beginning to implement the newly structured course of study: the restructured RS 331, "Introduction to Judaism" (now RS 381), and four new courses — RS 385, "Contemporary Jewish Thinkers," and alternate years, "The History of Zionism"; RS 386, "Voices of the Holocaust" and, alternate years, RS 405, "Modern Israel."

Future plans to further enrich faculty and students include working with other faculty in an effort to generate more Judaic Studies courses. In Israel, I also began discussions with a young academic who is interested in working with me on a joint faculty-student exchange between UTK and Hebrew University. Additional discussions, especially at the institutional level, are needed.

## **Faculty Development**

Not only students have to learn, teachers do as well. My stay in Israel this summer, from May to August, was made possible by a UT Faculty Development Grant for which I competed with many other colleagues. The primary purpose of my trip was participation in an intensive Hebrew language institute, Ulpan Akiva in Netanya. This ulpan is considered the best in Israel, and in 1986 received the Israel Prize for Education. In 1972, Mira Kimmelman's father studied at the ulpan. Shulamit Katznelson,

niece of former President Zalman Shazar, began this program in 1951. Her approach from the beginning focused on the multicultural dimension of the new State, and the need for all to know the language of the land — Jews and Arabs, Christians and Druze, Sabras and immigrants. For the past three years, including this year, Shulamit has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Last year, she "lost" to Nelson Mandela. I have written two articles about my Israel experience and am happy to share them upon request, or to speak to groups about any aspect of my trip. It is my hope that we can have a Hebrew table on campus for those who would like to keep up the link to modern Hebrew, as I do.

## **Public Service**

In what way is Judaic Studies different from other disciplines? There is probably no other academic discipline with the close ties that exist not only between the University and the citizens of Tennessee, but between the Judaic Studies Program, the academic community, the greater Knoxville area, and the Jewish community. Not only was it fostered, nurtured and realized with the active and enthusiastic support of the local Jewish community, but our ongoing lecture series has been cosponsored and warmly attended by many community friends. Here we are especially grateful to the Knoxville Jewish Federation for a generous fund in support of our lecture series and my research.



## **Presentations by Judaic Scholar of Religion**

Being "the new kid on the block" afforded me the opportunity to meet many interesting people and to make many new friends. I would again like to thank the entire community for the warm welcome I received. Among those who took an especially active role in including me into the community structure were Professor Marcia Katz, Lynne Sfat, Rabbi Arthur and Shira Weiner, Rabbi Howard and Rona Simon, Professor Jeffrey and Nancy Becker, Rabbi Victor and Avigail Rashkovski, Arnold and Mary Linda Schwarzbart, Cynthia Caplan, Mira Kimmelman, Ursula and Harry Marx, Conrad and Sue Koller, the Harold Leibowitz Family, Marion and Joe Goodstein, Budd and Judy Ratner, Mitchell and Natalie Robinson, and many other new friends.

On October 20, 1994, President Johnson, Dean Ratner and Professor Reynolds hosted a University reception at the Faculty Club, during which I had the opportunity to outline my plans and hopes for our Judaic Studies program and to meet many new colleagues and friends.

On October 24, The Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois honored Mr. Manfred Steinfeld, Chairman of the Board of Shelby Williams Industries, and his wife Fern for their services to mankind and their philanthropic contributions. A University delegation con-

sisting of Chancellor William T. Snyder, Vice President Jack Williams, College of Arts and Sciences Dean Larry Ratner, Religious Studies Department Head Charles H. Reynolds, and myself traveled to Chicago on October 24, to attend the Humanitarian Award Dinner honoring Mr. and Mrs. Steinfeld.

### **November 2**

Cynthia Caplan, director of the Jewish Student Center, arranged for me to meet with and address Campus Ministries' representatives.

### **November 3**

I was the special guest of the Federation's Professional Women group at the Faculty Club, where I again spoke about our plans for the Judaic Studies program and my personal research.

### **November 4**

Professor Jeffrey Becker organized a Jewish Faculty luncheon on November 4, which afforded me the opportunity to meet many of my new colleagues.

### **January 26**

The Knoxville Jewish Federation invited me to speak on the roots of modern Israel.

### **February 10**

Heska Amuna's Adult Education Committee invited me to speak on Martin Buber.

# University of Tennessee

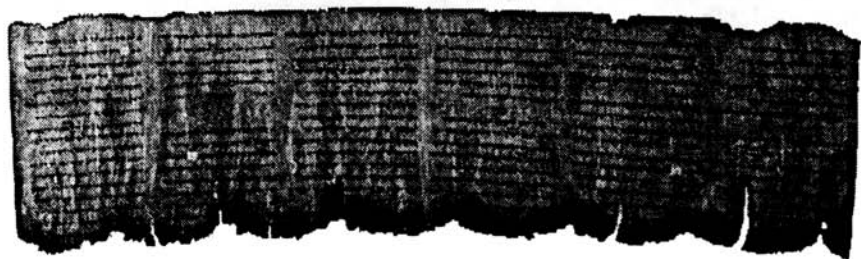
## Judaic Studies Lecture Series

Keeping in touch with Jewish academics worldwide is an important service for our colleagues, students, and community. For this purpose, we began a lecture series of distinguished scholars of Judaism. Our opening speaker was Professor Steven Katz from Cornell University. On November 9, 1993, Katz spoke before a capacity crowd of about 250 people on "The Holocaust and Comparative History." In this lecture, Prof. Katz stressed the uniqueness of the Holocaust and compared this horrific event to other national calamities, such as slavery, the persecution of Native Americans, the Gypsies, and homosexuals. This lecture was cosponsored by the Knoxville Jewish Federation, the Departments of Religious Studies, Germanic and Slavic Languages, and Philosophy at UTK.

For the Spring term, we were fortunate to cooperate with Heska Amuna Synagogue in bringing two distinguished scholars to Knoxville whom Arnold and Mary Linda Schwarzbart had met during a workshop in Jerusalem.

On February 3, Professor Bezalel Narkiss, Founder of the Center for Jewish Art at The Hebrew University, presented a slide lecture on "Jewish Identity Through Art," which drew comparisons between symbols that we consider Jewish and their appropriation by or adaptation from other religions and cultures. In addition to Heska Amuna, this lecture was cosponsored by the KJF, and Departments of Religious Studies and Art at UTK.

Dr. Jo Milgrom, a poet, artist, and theologian at the Center for Jewish Studies, Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, also presented a slide lecture on the connection between Biblical exegesis and art. Entitled, "The Binding of Isaac," Dr. Milgrom interwove the Jewish method of exegesis known as Midrash with the personal expression of human beings in making the Bible a meaningful personal experience. Cosponsors for this event included KJF, Heska Amuna Synagogue, and the Departments of Religious Studies and English at UTK.



## February 16

The Fountain City Presbyterian Church invited me to speak on Pass-over and other Jewish holidays.

## April 22

I once more spoke on Martin Buber and cultural Zionism to the Oak Ridge Congregation.

Colleagues were kind enough to invite me to their classrooms on three occasions, to speak on Women and Judaism, and twice on the Holocaust.

## HOLOCAUST EVENTS:

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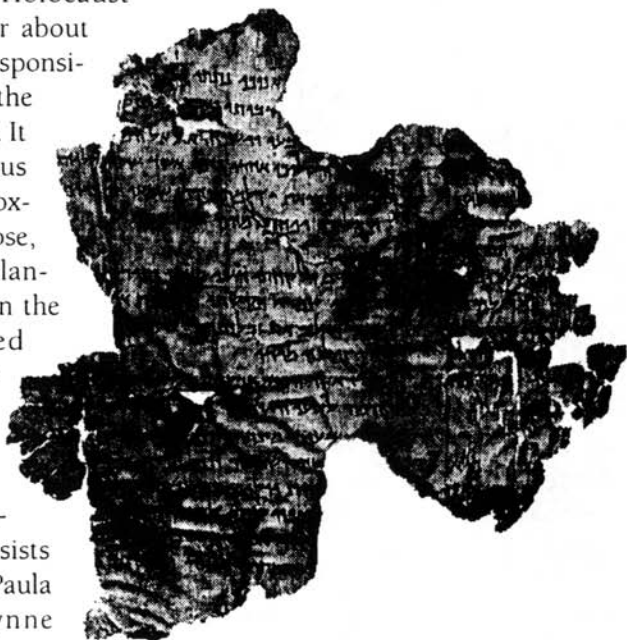
### Holocaust Conference

The Tennessee Holocaust Commission has for about 10 years taken the responsibility to educate on the Holocaust statewide. It is their intent to focus 1995 activities in Knoxville. For this purpose, we are currently planning a conference on the Holocaust, entitled "The Holocaust 1945-1995: Fifty Years Later — What Have We Learned?" The Steering Committee consists of Dean of Libraries Paula Kaufman; Dr. Lynne

Champion, College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office; Professor John Gaventa, Sociology Department, Bernie Bernstein, and myself. We have met several times and are currently finalizing plans for a community and public school-based advisory committee which will meet on September 29 to discuss the three-day event next Fall.

### Holocaust Meeting in Memphis

I plan to attend this year's Tennessee Holocaust Commission conference which will take place in Memphis, October 23-25.



## Research

My primary research is in the field of modern European Jewry, particularly German Jewry, but including Jewish mysticism, Zionism, and modern Israel.

### Buber book

Currently I am preparing an index and reading the final page proofs for my forthcoming book, *Martin Buber's Formative Years—From German Culture to Jewish Renewal 1897-1909*. The book, published by The University of Alabama Press *Judaica* Series, will be out early in 1995.

### Gypsy book

Before leaving for Israel, I completed the translation into English of a German book by Austrian scholar Erika Thurner on the fate of the Gypsies in the Holocaust. Over the summer, our department secretary, Mrs. Joan Riedl, kindly entered the entire manuscript into the computer. This book will receive a preface by Dr. Sybil Milton, resident historian of the U.S. Holocaust Museum, and pictures which the author has collected. The University of Alabama Press also expressed an interest in this project.

### Jehuda Halevi poems

Two years ago, I contributed a section to a book on Franz Rosenzweig's Yehuda Halevi poems, consisting of a translation of 95 poems from German and Hebrew into English. Progress on the actual volume has

been delayed due to the editor's extensive research leave.

### Article on devekut

I am currently finalizing an article on the historical development of the concept of *devekut* (cleaving to God) for publication by *Mystics Quarterly*.

### Buber and Romanticism

An article on two of Martin Buber's unpublished manuscripts dealing with German Romanticism and the Italian Renaissance is to be published in the journal *Athenaeum*.

### Conference on World Religions Proceedings

I am serving as editor of a volume of conference proceedings from an NEH-funded Conference on World Religions in Alabama.

### Book Review

A review of Steven Katz's book, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought*, will appear in the upcoming issue of *The Jewish Quarterly Review*.

### Continued Research

For some time, I have been giving preliminary talks and working in a preparatory way on two projects which will eventually become books, one deals with Martin Buber's Zionist writings, the other with Zionist art. Both major topics developed out of my previous research and are not currently being addressed in American scholarship.



## Papers Given

**December 13, 1993.** Boston. Association for Jewish Studies. Paper on significance of Fifth Zionist Congress for cultural Zionism.

**March 19, 1994.** Atlanta. AAR Regional meeting. Paper on Jewish art.

**May 5, 1994.** Kalamazoo. 29th International Medieval Congress, Western Michigan University. Paper on devekut.

**June 27, 1994.** Naples, Italy. International Conference on Romantic Dialectic and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Paper on Martin Buber and Romanticism.

## Planned Papers

**October 9.** Temple Beth El Outreach workshop, "Exploring the Spiritual Side of Judaism."

**October 16.** Midwest Association for Jewish Studies, at Vanderbilt, on grass-roots experience of the peace process in the Middle East.

**November 19.** Pre UT football game show on multiculturalism.

**December 18.** Association for Jewish Studies, Boston, on Martin Buber's Lemberg circle.

**March 1995.** Regional AAR, Gainesville, Florida, on relationship between Jewish spirituality and art.

**May.** 30th International Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, Michigan, on spirituality in Yehuda Halevi's poems.

**November.** AAR, on Buber and Nietzsche.

## Library Fund

Thanks to the generosity of many individuals in the community, our Library Fund at the end of April had reached over \$12,000. We are grateful to all who contribute to our resources in this meaningful way. We have begun to spruce up our library holdings in Judaica, especially in the area of German Jewry and Jewish art.

*Many thanks to Ian Blackburn for the layout and design of this newsletter.*



## **Please mark your calendar: Upcoming Lectures**

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### **October 11, 7:30 PM Hodges Library Auditorium**

Professor Alexander Orbach, Chairman, Department of Religious Studies, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, will speak on "Diversity within Community: The Jewish Cultures of Russian Jewry in the 19th Century," in the Hodges Library Auditorium. This lecture is cosponsored by the Knoxville Jewish Federation, the Departments of Religious Studies, History, and Germanic and Slavic Languages.

### **November 10, 7:30 PM Alumni Gym**

Simon Wiesenthal, brought to Knoxville by The University of Tennessee Issues Committee, with support from the Judaic Studies Program and other UT Departments, will speak on "The Courage to Remember", at the Alumni Gym, Alumni Memorial Building, next to Neyland Stadium.

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### **December 9, 8:00 PM: Temple Beth-El December 10, 9:30 AM: Heska Amuna December 10, 8:00 PM: Arnstein Jewish Community Center**

The Knoxville Jewish Federation has invited noted scholar and author Rabbi Joseph Telushkin for the Robinson Scholar-in-Residence Weekend. Rabbi Telushkin will present three programs: December 9, 8 PM, at Temple Beth El Friday night services, "Making the Case for Leading a Committed Jewish Life"; on December 10, during Heska Amuna's Shabbat services, starting at 9:30 AM, on "Jewish Wisdom: Ethical and Spiritual Lessons from the Great Works of Judaism"; and at 8 PM on Saturday evening, at the Arnstein Jewish Community Center, 6800 Deane Hill Drive, on "Jewish Humor: What the Best Jewish Jokes Say About the Jews." All three programs are free and open to the public.

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## Fundraising

Dear Friends of Judaic Studies:

I am sure that all of you join me in being excited about the beginning we have made in Judaic Studies at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Thanks to the large number of you who have made pledges and contributions to this program, we now have over \$235,000 in the Judaic Studies fund at UTK. Our total pledges exceed \$500,000. We have a two-year window of opportunity to make additional appointments in Judaic Studies in the Departments of History and English. One appointment would be in Judaic History and the other in Judaic Literature. Dean Larry Ratner of the College of Arts and Sciences, and the faculty in History and in English, have made these appointments a college and department priority. Each will require a \$250,000 endowment for a salary supplement to state funding before either appointment can be realized. Please let me know if you can assist with either of these appointments. I look forward to working with you as we continue to develop Judaic Studies at the University of Tennessee.

Cordially yours,

*Charles H. Reynolds*

Charles H. Reynolds, Department Head

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## Todah Rabah

To all our friends, many thanks for your support and your encouragement during this first year. We anticipate an exciting and productive second year, and look forward to greeting you at our events. With best wishes for a happy and healthy 5755. May the new year bring peace to Israel and to all humanity.

Shalom,

*Gilya Gerda Schmidt*

Gilya Gerda Schmidt, Ph.D.

Judaic Scholar of Religion, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

To receive future materials, please fill out this part and return to me at the Department of Religious Studies, University of Tennessee, 501 McClung Tower, Knoxville, TN 37996-0450.

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