



SCHUSTERMAN CENTER *for* JUDAIC *and* ISRAEL STUDIES *The* UNIVERSITY *of* OKLAHOMA

Volume 11

Fall 2014

GETTING CENTERED

The Program in Judaic and Israel Studies at the University of Oklahoma is now the Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies. This is not merely a change of name but of purpose and status – it is the fruit of 19 years of steady growth, educational service, and academic excellence. OU's new center joins the Schusterman Centers of Jewish and Israel Studies at Brandeis University and the University of Texas.

Judaic Studies (JUST) began at OU with the establishment of the Schusterman/Josey Chair of Judaic History and the coming of Noam and the late Yedida Stillman to OU in 1995. From that modest beginning, the program experienced sustained and robust growth. Professors Shmuel Shepkaru and Carsten Schapkow joined JUST in 1997 and 2005, respectively. JUST expanded to three endowed positions, including the Schusterman/Josey Professor of Jewish Intellectual &

Religious History, held by Alan Levenson. In January 2015, we will welcome Assistant Professor of American Jewish History, Ronnie Grinberg. Ori Kritz, our professor of Hebrew, and a visiting Israel Studies professor (currently Gershon Lewental), who divides his time between the Department of History and the College of International Studies, round out the core faculty. No fewer than 14 associated faculty devote part of their research and teaching to inquiries and courses incorporating Judaic Studies; our associated faculty participate actively in every aspect of our program.

Every year, between 650 and 750 students enroll in approximately two dozen course offerings. The Schusterman Center will promote exemplary teaching and scholarship about Jewish history, thought and culture as well as modern Israel. OU currently offers a wide variety of courses in Jewish history in all

[Continued on p. 10](#)



Top row: Luis Cortest, Janet Ward, Gershon Lewental, Rangar Cline, Ronnie Grinberg.

Middle row: Henry McDonald, Shmuel Shepkaru, Noam Stillman, Nina Livesey, Ben Alpers, Walker Robins,

Bottom row: Misha Klein, Alan Levenson, Valarie Harshaw, Carsten Schapkow, Ori Kritz, Karin Schutjer, Leah Reches, Dinah Stillman

Professor Ronnie Grinberg Joins Our Faculty

Starting in January 2015, Ronnie A. Grinberg will join the Schusterman Center of Judaic & Israel Studies and the Department of History at OU as an assistant professor of American Jewish history. Grinberg first joined the OU faculty as a lecturer in the 2013-14 school year. Prior to coming to OU, she was a Chancellor's Postdoctoral Fellow in the Program in Jewish Studies and the Department of History at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She earned her doctorate in American history from Northwestern University and an undergraduate degree in American Studies from Barnard College, Columbia University.

Grinberg's research and teaching interests are in 20th century America, American Jewish history, women's and gender history, social movements and intellectual history. Her current book project examines how Jewish identity and gender intersected to shape the New York intellectuals, a renowned group of largely male and predominately Jewish writers and critics. They included the literary critics Irving Howe, Lionel Trilling and Diana Trilling, the sociologists Daniel Bell and Nathan Glazer, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt and neo-conservatives like Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter. Her book project traces how these intellectuals conceived and performed American Jewish masculinity when they were young, aspiring writers and college students, and then analyzes how gender shaped their debates on a host of issues in postwar America. She argues that gender, particularly conceptions of Jewish masculinity, are central to understanding the various

political trajectories of these figures by the 1970s — and ultimately the American Jewish experience more broadly. A selection from this project appears in the July issue of *American Jewish History*, titled "Neither 'Sissy' Boy nor Patrician Man: New York Intellectuals and the Construction of American Jewish Masculinity." Grinberg has presented her work at numerous conferences, including: the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Society for U.S. Intellectual History, the American Jewish Studies Association and the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem.

Grinberg looks forward to contributing to the vibrant scholarly communities here at OU in Jewish Studies, American intellectual history, and Women's and Gender Studies. A native of Denver, Colorado, she moved to Oklahoma with her husband Marc N. Levine, an assistant curator of archaeology at the Sam Noble Oklahoma Museum of Natural History and assistant professor of anthropology at OU. Ronnie also is an avid yoga enthusiast and enjoys cooking vegetarian and pescitarian fare. They welcomed a beautiful baby girl, Paloma Yael Levin, to their family on July 28.



Ronnie Grinberg

Books Donated to OU Library



Rabbi Albert & Sarah Lewis

A priceless collection of 505 books were donated to OU's Bizzell Memorial Library from the library of the late Rabbi Albert Lewis, comprising older classics of scholarship in English, extensive holdings in Hebrew, including texts from the rabbinic and medieval periods and many reference works in

complete sets, including the Talmudic Encyclopedia and The Complete Torah, simply unavailable today for any price. The collection, at the family's request, is named "The Rabbi Albert and Sarah Lewis Collection." An appropriate book plate has been placed in each volume.

Rabbi Lewis was ordained in 1948 from The Jewish Theological Seminary as a Conservative rabbi. His entire career was spent in service to only one congregation, Temple Beth Sholom of Cherry Hill New Jersey. Until his death in 2008 at the age of 90, he attended religious services regularly and engaged lovingly with his community. Rabbi Lewis inspired three generations, bringing them closer to their faith. His was a life devoted to God and to the Jewish people. His family wrote Professor Stillman, "He will rest easier and happier knowing that his library has found a new home and that his books will bring joy and knowledge to many."

Stillman notes, "This is an invaluable gift to our library, which fills in many interstices in our research and teaching collection. We are deeply grateful to Rabbi Lewis's family in the U.S. and Israel for their generosity." This major library donation represents the second donation in recent years.

Professor Stephen Norwood on his new book *Antisemitism and the American Far Left*

I wrote *Antisemitism and the American Far Left* (Cambridge University Press, 2013) because of my deep concern about the spread and intensification of antisemitism over the past several decades. The Far Left has contributed significantly to this, largely recycling the shibboleths of the Far Right. I have been struck by how the Far Left's virulent anti-Zionism — laced with anti-semitism—has been given a platform and has been increasingly legitimized on contemporary American campuses, just as many American universities proved receptive to Nazi apologetics and antisemitic propaganda during the 1930s, which I examined in *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower*.

The Far Left and the Far Right have drawn on anti-Jewish concepts that were long taught and emphasized in Christian theology. The Far Left, with occasional exceptions, denied Jews' legitimacy as a people and characterized Jews as parasites devoted to materialism. It saw Jews as concentrated in a dying social class, which relied on illicit methods to squeeze out profits. In his 1844 essay *On the Jewish Question*, Karl Marx mocked Judaism and Jews in the manner of Christian theologians, declaring that "money is the jealous god of Israel, in the face of which no other god may exist." He claimed that "huckstering" was the Jews' "worldly religion." Christian theological antisemitism was so deeply embedded in Western culture that the secular Far Left never escaped its influence.

Antisemitism and the American Far Left is the first systematic study of the American Far Left's role in promoting antisemitism, and at times combating it. The book covers the Communist Party (CP) from 1920 onward, tracing all of its often sudden and dramatic shifts in approach and response to antisemitism and Israel; the New Left and its black nationalist allies; and the contemporary remnants of the New Left.

I analyze the deficiencies of the Far Left's explanations of Nazism and the Holocaust, marred by its commitment to a simplistic class analysis. The Far Left ignored antisemitism's deep roots in Christian theology and culture, claiming that the ruling class merely propagated it to deflect working-class anger and undermine unity among the masses.

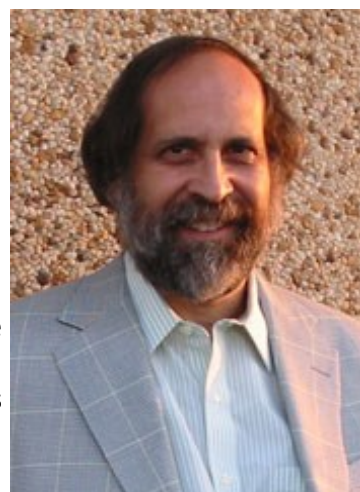
My book also explores Far Left attitudes toward militant Islam. I explain how the CP's support for the

Arab pogroms against the Jews across Palestine in 1929 set a precedent for the late 1960s New Left's endorsement of terrorism. During the 1930s and after World War II, the CP did at times condemn Arab antisemitism. The later New Leftists, however, were products of a school system that gave almost no attention to antisemitism, the Holocaust, or the Jewish experience, and showed no interest in the persecution of Jews in Arab lands.

I analyze the sudden shift in the CP after the Holocaust to a more positive view of Jewish culture. Several Jewish party members made significant contributions to the development of secular Jewish studies at a time when universities accorded the subject almost no attention. The CP established a School of Jewish Studies that taught a wide array of courses on Jewish history and literature, along with Yiddish and Hebrew.

My book documents CP support for Israel during the War of Independence in 1948. Some party members continued to back Israel even as the Soviet Union abruptly shifted to an anti-Israel position soon after the war ended. I show that the mass departures from the CP in 1956-57, generally attributed to Khrushchev's secret speech and the Soviet invasion of Hungary, also were influenced by dismay over revelations of Stalin's execution of Soviet Yiddish writers, and over Soviet support for Egypt during the Sinai campaign in 1956.

The Far Left, much reduced in size since the early 1970s, never expressed ambivalence about Israel. Instead, it has demonized Zionism and called for Israel's destruction. The Far Left fully accepts Palestinian claims that the Jews are merely a religious group, not a people. Its virulently anti-Zionist propaganda, replete with long-standing and barely disguised antisemitic accusations and images, has been embraced by many in the mainstream, especially on the campus and in the mass media.



Stephen Norwood

KUDOS and CONGRATULATIONS

Norman (Noam) Stillman published an essay, "How Mediterranean was Goitein's Mediterranean Society?" in *Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times*, eds. A. Franklin et al. (Brill, 2014). In July he delivered the keynote address titled "Islamici ne a me alienum puto: The Mindset of Jewish Scholars of Islamic Studies," at a conference on "Beyond the Myth of 'Golden Spain' – Patterns of Islamization in Modern Jewish Scholarship on Islam" in Frankfurt am Main. Stillman chaired and commented on the session on Challenging the Notion of Contacts between Jews and non-Jews at the Meeting of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Paris. He was appointed to the Academic Council of the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa and to the Academic Committee of the International Institute of Jewish Genealogy.

Alan Levenson published "In Search of Ahad Haam's Bible," *Journal of Israeli History* 32:2 (2013), and "Agents of Change: Congregation Brith Emeth and Rabbi Philip Horowitz," *Ohio History* (120) 2013. He wrote a new afterword for the paperback edition of *Between Philosemitism and Antisemitism* (University of Nebraska, 2004/2013). Levenson lectured at the 16th World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem), at the annual Association of Jewish Studies (Boston), and at Case Western Reserve University (Cleveland). Closer to home, he delivered the Neustadt Lectures at OCU and served during spring 2014 as Lubell Professor at the University of Tulsa, where he also delivered a public lecture on his 2011 book *The Making of the Modern Jewish Bible*. Levenson spoke in June on the Joseph narrative, his next project, at Ludwig Maximilians-Universität in München.

Congratulations to **Shmuel Shepkaru**, who won the OU General Education Teaching Award in 2014. He published two articles, "Christian Resurrection and Jewish Immortality on the First Crusade," *Speculum* 89/1

(January 2014), and "From Here to the Hereafter: The Ashkenazic Concept of the Afterlife in a Crusading Milieu," in *Death in Jewish Life: Burial and Mourning Customs in Medieval Ashkenaz and later Communities*, eds. Stefan C. Reif, Andreas Lehnardt and Avriel Bar-Levav (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014). He gave three invited guest lectures at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Germany, in May of 2013 and presented a paper at the 16th World Congress of Jewish Studies, in Jerusalem.

Carsten Schapkow coedited a volume on *Conversion In Spaces of Jewish History* with Martin Przybilski, *Konversionen in Räumen jüdischer Geschichte*. (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag 2014), which includes his essay "Conversion as a Topos and Jewish Counter-images During the Era of Emancipation of the Jews." The volume also contains contributions from Alan Levenson, "Anti-Apostasy Rhetoric in Imperial Germany: Three Case Studies," and graduate student Walker Robins, "A Meshummad in Dixie: Jacob Gartenhaus as a Convert Missionary in the 'Southern Baptist Convention, 1921-1949.'"

Congratulations to **Gershon Lewental**, whose article on Saddam Husayn's religious rhetoric will appear in the upcoming jubilee issue of *Middle Eastern Studies*. He also wrote an article on Islamic historiography for a forthcoming issue of *Iranian Studies* and contributed two entries to *Encyclopædia Iranica*. He presented papers at a number of conferences, including: the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (Sarajevo), the American Oriental Society (Phoenix), the International Society of Iranian Studies (Montréal), the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa (DC), the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Alliance Centre for Iranian Studies at Tel-Aviv University and a conference organized by the Iranian Studies Program at OU. He delivered several public lectures on the Middle East, the Baha'i faith, early

More Book Donations to Bizzell Memorial Library from Gumenick Professor Marc Raphael



Marc Lee Raphael

We are in the process of acquiring, box by box, the working library of Professor Raphael of the College of William and Mary. Raphael has donated more than 800 volumes of American Jewish history, modern Jewish history, Judaica and many other works, scholarly and fictional. Raphael, an ordained Reform rabbi who served congregations in Columbus, Ohio and Washington, D.C., directed the Melton Center of Jewish History at Ohio State University and the Religious Studies Department at the College of William & Mary. He is the author and editor of numerous books and essays and considered one of the leading scholars of American Jewry. Raphael's first doctoral student, Pamela Nadell, directs the Jewish Studies program at American University; his last doctoral student, Alan Levenson, is the Schusterman Professor of Jewish History at OU.

KUDOS and CONGRATULATIONS (continued)

Islamic history for various OU departments, the Jewish and Baha'i communities in Norman and Edmond, and the Norman Public Library.

Congratulations to **Ronnie Grinberg**, whose article "Neither Sissy Boy nor Patrician Man: New York Intellectuals and the Construction of American Jewish Masculinity," appeared in the July issue of *American Jewish History*. She also presented papers at the Biennial Scholars Conference on American Jewish History at Emory University, the Mid-America Conference at OU, and lectured at OU's 2013 Institute for the American Constitutional Heritage Freedom 101 summer series.



Congratulations to **Misha Klein**, whose chapter "Anthropology" was published as the lead piece in *The Routledge Handbook to Contemporary Jewish Cultures*, edited by Nadia Valman and Laurence Roth (July, 2014). The article examines anthropology's contributions to Judaic

Studies, taking a historical view of the study of Jews and Jewishness as it has emerged in anthropology, and analyzes how recent theoretical developments have set the stage for the new Jewish ethnography of the last decade. She presented a paper, "Singing in São Paulo: From "'Oseh Shalom' to 'It Ain't Necessarily So,'" at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago as part of a panel on "Music in Fieldwork" that she co-organized with Sean O'Neill (Anthropology, OU).



Congratulations to **Nina Livesey**, who was promoted to associate professor of religious studies and liberal studies. After her 2014-2015 sabbatical year, she will return to full-time faculty in the College of Liberal Studies and plans to stay involved with Judaic Studies and Religious Studies.

Congratulations to **Stephen Norwood** for his many accomplishments this past year. He was interviewed on Dennis Prager's nationally syndicated radio program about his book *Antisemitism and the American Left* (Cambridge University Press, 2013). The *Jewish Press* also published a full-page interview with him regarding the book in its Feb. 14 issue. Norwood's article "The Expulsion of Robert Burke: Suppressing Campus Anti-Nazi

Protest in the 1930s" was named a co-winner for Best Article in the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* for 2012. He delivered lectures at the following international conferences: the conference on Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and the Delegitimization of Israel, Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Deciphering the New Antisemitism, Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism, Indiana University; and the International Conference on Boycotts—Past and Present, Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism, University of London. Norwood also was featured in the documentary film "A Voice Among the Silent: The Legacy of James G. McDonald," which opened in April at the U.S. Capitol Visitors' Center in Washington, D.C. McDonald was League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the first U.S. Ambassador to Israel.



Congratulations to **Dinah Assouline Stillman**, whose article "All Things French. An Interview with Alexis Jenni," appeared in the November-December issue of *World Literature Today*. Stillman has been a contributing editor at WLT since 2013. She also published five online entries in the *Encyclopedia of the Jews in the Islamic World 2* and presented papers at numerous conferences, including:

the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, the 16th World Congress of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the American Jewish Studies Association. Finally, in the spring, she organized the very successful 9th annual French Film Festival at OU which featured two movies with Jewish content co-sponsored by Judaic Studies: *For A Woman* (Pour une femme, Diane Kurys, 2013) and *A Bottle in the Gaza Sea* (Une bouteille a la mer, Thierry Binisti, 2012).



Congratulations to **Janet Ward**, who was invited to attend a faculty research workshop in July-August 2014, "The Holocaust in Eastern Europe in the Records of the International Tracing Service Digital Archive," at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington, D.C. The workshop was conducted in partnership with the Wiener Library for the Study of Holocaust and Genocide.

NEW CHAIR FOR THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT

The OU Department of History welcomed a new chair in the fall of 2013, James S. Hart. The former chair, Robert L. Griswold, has returned to full-time teaching and working on his book project on grade inflation.

How long have you been at OU? What are your research and teaching interests?

I've been at OU since 1987. I came here after a two-year stint at The Ohio State University. I did my doctorate at Cambridge University, where I also stayed on for three years to teach as a Junior Research Fellow of Sidney Sussex College.

My own specialty is British history, with an emphasis on English legal and Constitutional History. I also teach courses in Irish history and Scottish history, and a variety of European history courses. I've published two books: one on the House of Lords and its evolution as a court, *Justice Upon Petition* (Routledge, 2000) and a broader study on the law in English culture, *The Rule of Law* (Routledge, 2003). My most recent publication was the article "Rhetoric and Reality: Images of Parliament as a Great Council" in a festschrift for J.S. Morrill (professor of Early Modern England at Cambridge) called *The Experience of Revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland*. I'm currently working on another book, a dual biography of a 17th century English scientist and diplomat named Sir John Finch and his partner Thomas Baines.



James S. Hart

You have been chair of the history department for one year. What were some of the biggest surprises and challenges you faced? What have you most enjoyed? What goals do you have for the department in the coming years?

Serving as department chair has been a revelation. The biggest surprise about the job was simply the amount of work it entails! This year has been especially difficult because we had a tenure case, a promotion case, two important faculty searches to manage and two faculty members resigned. We also undertook a major reform of the department's most important service responsibility — the U.S. history survey courses — and those changes had to be negotiated with participating faculty, who made substantial adjustments to their syllabi and their delivery

methods.

That process highlighted the most challenging aspect of the chair's job—the need to manage people. This is not something I've done before, but it is really important. This is a big department — 37 full-time tenure-track faculty—and all of them are variations on the Type A personality! Learning how to respond appropriately to their needs and demands — while keeping the peace — is easily the hardest part of the job. It is also the most enjoyable. I get great satisfaction from solving problems, giving encouragement, and providing faculty with what they need to succeed.

I inherited a well-oiled machine. The department is, generally, in very good shape. We offer courses in most areas of the world, from China to Latin America. I hope to soon expand our coverage to include Southeast Asia. Our strength is in American history, but I'd also like to see the graduate program expanded in a limited fashion beyond the four established core areas. I'd also like to create a new M.A. program for teachers of history in Oklahoma — in the hope that we can gradually help to improve the quality of secondary history education in the state.

What does the new Schusterman Center mean for OU's History Department?

The establishment of the Center for Judaic and Israel Studies presents an exciting opportunity for the department. Since the establishment of the Judaic Studies Program in 1994, we have seen the number of Judaic Studies faculty steadily increase. Thanks to the Schusterman grant, the total number of permanent faculty will increase to six. We also will have a permanent "visiting professor" from Israel each year. These faculty members will bring a wonderful variety of new courses to our program, allowing us not only to broaden the scope of historical topics for our undergraduate history majors, but to offer to those interested a special "field of concentration" in Judaic and Israel Studies for their history major. The center also will allow us to incorporate the field of Judaic and Israel Studies into our graduate curriculum, providing funding for new graduate lines.

Our aim is to continue to work very closely and cooperatively with the center and to integrate as much as possible its faculty and its curriculum into the fabric of the History department.

Our Core Faculty and a Few of Their Classes



Norman Stillman
Jews/Christians Under Islam
Spain Under Islam



Alan Levenson
Judaism: A Religious History
Genesis Through Jewish Eyes



Shmuel Shepkaru
History of Heaven and Hell
Evolution of Martyrdom



Carsten Schaphow
Jews and Other Germans
The Holocaust



Ronnie Grinberg
American Jewish History,
1654-Present



D. Gershon Lewental
Visiting Schusterman Prof.
Arab-Israeli Conflict



Ori Krutz
Hebrew 1 & 2
Jewish Literature From
Antiquity to the Present



Lea Reches
Advanced Hebrew

OU students participate in Tel Megiddo dig

The University of Oklahoma recently teamed up with the Jezreel Valley Regional Project (JVRP) and the Megiddo Expedition to form a consortium that allowed OU students to earn OU college credit while participating in a four-week program learning about archaeology in Israel and excavating at Tel Megiddo. OU students Kevin Tanner and Christina Della Femina were awarded Bezalel Foundation Study-in-Israel Scholarships to fund their participation in the program. Rangar Cline — professor of religious studies, affiliate faculty in Judaic Studies, and member of the JVRP research team — led the program this past summer. He and the OU students spent the first week of the program touring archaeological sites with other JVRP staff members and students visiting Tel Dan, Capernaum, Hazor, Caesarea Maritima, Nazareth and Beth Shean, among other sites.

Following the study tour, Cline and the students spent 3 weeks excavating at Tel Megiddo, along with other students and scholars working with the Megiddo Expedition, directed by Israel Finkelstein and Eric Cline.

Megiddo is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, famous as one of Solomon's fortified cities (1 Kings 9:15), near the place where King Josiah met an unfortunate end fighting against the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:29, 2 Chronicles 35:20-24), and as Armageddon, a name which comes from Har Megiddo, meaning Hill of Megiddo (Revelation 16:16). While working at Megiddo, the OU students stayed at the Givat Haviva guesthouse, along with students from Tel Aviv University and other U.S. and foreign schools participating in the excavation.

Cline will supply more details and photos at his JUST Lunch talk this December on the Megiddo excavations.

Associated Faculty

Benjamin L. Alpers, Honors College
Eve Bannet, English
David Chappell, History
Rangar Cline, Religious Studies
Sara Coodin, Classics & Letters
Luis Cortest, Modern Languages (Spanish)
Misha Klein, Anthropology
Nina Livesey, Religious Studies
William H. McDonald, English
Stephen H. Norwood, History
Karin L. Schutjer, Modern Languages (German)
Daniel C. Snell, History
Dinah Stillman, Modern Languages (French)
Janet Ward, History



Megiddo Excavation Site 2013

OUR GRADUATE STUDENTS



Morgan Creekmore

Morgan Creekmore is a second-year master's student in history and Judaic studies. She completed her undergraduate degree in religious studies at OU in 2013. As an undergraduate, she was awarded a Bezalel Family study abroad in Israel scholarship. It enabled her participation in an archaeological dig in Huqoq, where the excavation team discovered a mosaic of Samson in an ancient synagogue. She was awarded a Zarrow Family Scholarship to support graduate study in the history of Kabbalah at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in the summer of 2014.

Morgan's primary field of interest is in Jewish mysticism. Currently, she is researching the zodiac from the late antique through early medieval period.

Leah Pace is a first-year master's student in history and Judaic studies. She recently completed her undergraduate degree at OU, where she wrote a capstone paper in Alan Levenson's course, *The Bible Since Enlightenment*, titled "Lincoln's Providence." The paper examined the biblical language used in Lincoln's second inaugural address and was selected to appear in *OU Religious Studies Student Journal*. She also presented the paper at the Phi Alpha Theta conference this spring. Leah's research will focus on the role and participation of American Jews in the modern civil rights movement.



Leah Pace



Walker Robins

Walker Robins is a doctoral student in history and Judaic studies. His dissertation focuses on the relationship of Southern Baptists to Zionism and the State of Israel. In June he attended Brandeis University's Schusterman Center three-week Summer Institute for Israel Studies — the only graduate student selected for this highly competitive program. Walker published an article titled, "A Meshummad in Dixie. Jacob Gartenhaus as a Convert Missionary in the 'Southern Baptist Convention, 1921-1949'" in Carsten Schapkow's co-edited volume, *Conversion in Spaces of Jewish History*. He also penned an online entry on "Wine and Alcoholic Beverages" in the *Encyclopedia of the Jews in the Islamic World 2*. He will be teaching his own undergraduate lecture course at OU this fall on Jews and Hollywood and two courses for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute: "Christians and Israel" and "History of Jerusalem."

Jesse Weinberg is a doctoral student under the direction of Norman Stillman, exploring Middle Eastern antisemitism in the 19th and 20th centuries. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Hampshire College and a master's degree in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He comes to OU after having worked as an analyst on the Middle East for the American Jewish Committee, where he examined Arabic-language media and militancy. His projects included reports on antisemitism among Iran's leadership and the Palestinian territories. He has been a researcher for the Anti-Defamation League, where he focused on extremists in the Muslim- and Arab-American communities, an archivist for the Israel Defense Forces, and an intern at the Middle East Media Research Institute. He is the founder of PoliCu.com, a politics and culture website, where he writes on Middle East affairs. Jesse has been awarded one of two inaugural Schusterman Graduate Student Fellowships for 2014-15.



Jesse Weinberg

Jacob Lackner is a second-year doctoral student who returns to OU after having spent the 2013-14 academic year in Israel. Lackner's research focuses on medieval Jewish-Christian relations. He is one of two recipients of the inaugural Schusterman Graduate Student Fellowship for 2014-15. His thoughtful reflections on his year in Israel follow on page 9.

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For news and event reminders go to judaicstudies.ou.edu

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Jacob Lackner reflects on his year in Israel

In the 2013-2014 academic year, I received three consecutive Bezalel Foundation Study-In-Israel Scholarships. I used these scholarships to spend the year living and studying in Jerusalem at Hebrew University. I am a doctoral student in my second year in the OU History Department and Judaic Studies program. I study medieval Jewish-Christian relations, specifically the way that medieval Christians thought about medieval Jews. While I knew the Christian side of the story pretty well from training at my previous graduate program, I needed to expand my knowledge about medieval Judaism and medieval Jewish history relatively quickly, while also improving my Hebrew. Spending a year at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as a visiting graduate student served this purpose marvelously.

In August of 2013, I arrived in Jerusalem with some rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew, and I was placed in the “Advanced Beginners” level in the summer ulpan at Hebrew University. The summer program is the most intensive of all of the ulpan programs that Hebrew University offers, and it consisted of five hours of instruction five days a week for two months. The ulpan at Hebrew University is world-renowned, and I could see why fairly quickly. The class is taught completely in Hebrew, and the exercises in the classroom are excellent for mastering the various grammatical constructions and vocabulary in Hebrew. The program involved weekly lectures in Hebrew on various subjects such as the history of Jerusalem or the history of the Hebrew language. I also took ulpan during the fall and spring semesters. By the end of my time in Israel, I had moved from the “Advanced Beginners (Aleph)” level to the “Lower Advanced (Dalet)” level. When I first arrived in Israel, despite having some knowledge of Hebrew, I found it difficult to find the confidence to speak with Israelis. By

the end of my first month in ulpan, I had learned enough and gained enough confidence to speak Hebrew on a daily basis in the streets of Jerusalem.

While greatly improving my language skills, I also took a number of graduate seminars in the Jewish Studies department at the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University. One of the more impressive courses I took was over two semesters and was called quite simply “Trends in Jewish Studies.” There was a different lecturer every week for this course, and this enabled me to meet and engage with a number of professors at Hebrew University in various departments, also while getting a better



Jacob Lackner

understanding for the field of Jewish Studies. While I took the majority of my classes at the Rothberg International School, I had the opportunity to take a course on my exact area of research called “Medieval Jewish-Christian Relations.” This course enabled me to narrow my research. The seminar paper I wrote for this class, “The Conversion of Jewish Women in Medieval Sermon Exempla,” is among my work that I am most proud of, and I will be preparing it for publication in the coming year.

In addition to the wealth of knowledge I gained from the professors at Hebrew University,

living in Jerusalem enabled me easy access to the National Library of Israel. This library, which has almost every book ever published on the topic of Jews or Judaism, was an excellent resource for me, and I returned to the United States with several dozen pages of notes gleaned from their collections. I had the good fortune of being in Israel at a time when there was an international conference on the topic of religious conversion put on by the Center for the Study of Religious Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters at Ben-Gurion University. This conference gave me the opportunity to hear the most recent research in my field while affording me the opportunity to meet a number of scholars whose work I admire and talk to them about my own research.

In addition to considerable professional development, I also found time for leisure and travel. Before this year, I had never even visited Israel, but in one year, I had the time to visit most of the country. While I visited all of the major sites and cities in Israel, my favorite city remains Jerusalem, which I came to know extremely well. Early on, I regularly got lost in the labyrinthine streets as I explored the Old City, but I soon was able to navigate throughout the city without a map and was an able tour guide to family and friends who came to visit me. The diversity and historical significance of Jerusalem creates an unparalleled atmosphere that I know I will always miss. There is nowhere else in the world where you can visit some of the holiest places in all three Abrahamic religions within a few hours. On a daily basis, I could see the impressive Dome of the Rock and Church of the Holy Sepulcher as I walked to Hebrew University’s campus. Jerusalem is truly an incredible city, and after spending a year there becoming very familiar with it and falling in love with the atmosphere, I can understand why people thought of it

Continued on p. 10

Lackner's Reflections (continued)

as the center of the world.

I spent considerable time admiring the impressive natural landscapes of Israel. My favorite hikes were in the oasis of Ein Gedi, the desert canyon of Ein Ovdad, and the forests of Mount Carmel. I also found time to take trips to most of the major cities and historical sites in Israel. Another city that I really loved was Akko. This port city was extremely important in the Middle Ages, and was the place that Nahmanides first set foot in the Holy Land; it also was the last of the crusader cities to fall to Muslim conquest. It was amazing to be in such a beautiful and historic city, and the seafood was incredible!

Travelling throughout Israel enabled me to get a feel for what life was like in the country outside of Jerusalem, while also allowing me to understand how unique Jerusalem is. On one trip, I met some distant cousins of mine who live on Kibbutz HaOgen in northwest Israel. I not only got to experience and learn about kibbutz life – which is very different from life in the Israeli cities that I spent the majority of my time in – but I also made connections with a part of my family I only had vague knowledge of before my year in Israel; I am sure that I will now be in contact with them on a regular basis. Spending a year in Israel also enabled me to experience aspects of Jewish holidays and celebrations that are unique to Israel. I heard the Shofar at the Western Wall on Rosh Hashanah,

ate Israeli fried doughnuts (sufganiyot) at Chanukah, and watched a Shavuot festival at a kibbutz.

My time in Israel affected me greatly. Not only did I gain the ability to speak a new language and a new perspective on my research and the world in general, but it also changed me on a personal level by strengthening my own Jewish identity. While my father's side of the family is Jewish, and I have always thought of myself as Jewish, I had very little contact with Judaism other than the celebration of a few holidays every year. While I am still secular, my year in Israel made me want to take part in various aspects of Judaism that I did not have much experience with before my year abroad. Before my year there, I had never really experienced a Shabbat dinner or celebrated the holidays. Now, I would like to take part in these on a regular basis and pass these aspects of my culture on to my children, in the future.

In my year in Israel, I gained new skills, made professional contacts, expanded my knowledge, and experienced Judaism in a way I never had before, all while having an excellent time. I will never forget my life-changing experiences in Israel, and these never would have happened without the help of the Bezalel Foundation and the OU Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies. Thank you to everyone who made this incredible year possible.

Getting Centered (continued from page 1)

periods and places, Hebrew language and literature at all levels, Yiddish, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), Bible and Jewish literature in translation, as well as anthropological, sociological and political perspectives on the Jewish and Israeli experience. The Schusterman Center will expand undergraduate, graduate and doctoral study and help to train a new cadre of students and academics specializing in the research and teaching of Judaic and Israel Studies. Through public programming and outreach, the Schusterman Center will deepen awareness of Jewish studies and modern Israel on campus and continue to serve as an important resource in the region for those looking to learn more about these rich and varied fields.

The grant funds two graduate fellowships as well as generous scholarships for study in Israel – from which many of our students have already benefitted. Doctoral students Jacob Lackner and Jesse Weinberg are the first

Schusterman graduate fellows. Another doctoral student, Walker Robins, holds a History Department fellowship, and two M.A. students, Morgan Creekmore and Leah Pace, both studying at the Hebrew University this summer, hold Religious Studies fellowships.

In September, OU will launch several searches to fill the new chair in Israel Studies, established by a grant from the Schusterman Family Foundation in 2007 and fully endowed with the recent State Bond issue, to find a new visiting Israel studies professor, and to search for a replacement for Noam Stillman, who will be retiring at the end of the next academic year. Stillman, the architect of this program, writes, "The establishment of the Schusterman Center of Judaic and Israel Studies at OU will guarantee and enhance the strength, creativity and dynamism of this program – which already enjoys an international reputation – well into the future."

Congratulations to **Tryce Hyman** on becoming the first recipient of the Rosalyn W. Price Memorial Scholarship for Judaic Studies to be used in the upcoming 2014-15 school year. Tryce will be pursuing a master of arts degree in international studies with a focus in Middle Eastern studies.

14TH ANNUAL YEDIDA STILLMAN MEMORIAL LECTURE

Gary A. Rendsburg, the Blanche and Irving Laurie Professor of Jewish History and Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University, delivered the annual Yedida Kalfon Memorial Lecture on Feb. 27. His talk, titled “The Middle Ages Alive: With the Click of a Mouse,” examined the ways in which the digital revolution has made it possible for scholars, students and laypeople alike to explore the remarkable richness of medieval Jewish history. Taking the audience on a virtual tour that covered nearly every corner of the Jewish world — from the Jewish kingdom of Himyar in southern Arabia to medieval England in the wake of the Norman Conquest—Rendsburg revealed how thousands of Hebrew documents, chronicling everything from the mundane (what did Maimonides serve his guests?) to the magnificent (Maimonides’s signature approving a professional scribe’s copy of his Code of Jewish Law), are now available with the click of the mouse. This new ease of access, combined with evolving search technologies, have revolutionized scholars’ research capabilities and teaching by enabling them to bring these extraordinary primary sources to life in the classroom.

The well-attended lecture garnered many questions and comments from an audience composed of students, faculty and the wider community. Rendsburg previously lectured at OU in 2012 as part of Noam Stillman’s Presidential Dream Course, “Jerusalem: History of a Holy City/Contested City.”

Rendsburg holds positions in the Department of Jewish Studies and the Department of History at Rutgers University. His teaching and research focus on all things ancient Israel — primarily language and literature, though just as importantly, history and archaeology. His

academic pursuits also expand into the post-biblical and medieval periods, with special interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Cairo Geniza documents. The author of six books and approximately 120 scholarly articles (many available on his website), Rendsburg is perhaps best known for his general survey of the biblical world titled *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (1997), co-authored with his teacher, Cyrus H. Gordon. His most recent book is titled *Solomon’s Vineyard: Literary and Linguistic Studies in the Song of Songs* (2009), co-authored with his student, Scott B. Noegel. Rendsburg also has embraced multi-media instruction, developing “The Bible and History” for the Rutgers Jewish Studies online program, as well as two courses produced by the Teaching Company: “The Book of Genesis” (2006) and “The Dead Sea Scrolls” (2010). He earned a bachelor of arts degree in English from the University of North Carolina, and master of arts and doctoral degrees (1977, 1980) in Hebrew Studies from New York University.

The Stillman Memorial Lecture was established through the generosity of family, friends and colleagues to honor the memory of the late beloved teacher and world-renowned scholar Yedida Kalfon Stillman, who died in February 1998. The first Stillman Memorial Lecture was given in February 2001 by Paula Sanders of Rice University, who was introduced by OU President David



Gary Rendsburg

Judaic and Israel Studies students participated in Phi Alpha Theta Conference in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, March 3, 2014



Shelby Ranger, Thomas Parker Simpkins, Stacey Arnett, and Tryce Hyman. Leah Pace (not pictured)

Boren, who shared his personal reminiscences of Yedida Stillman. The Stillman Memorial Lecture has since become a major annual campus event. The lecturers all have been distinguished scholars in fields related to the late Professor Stillman’s wide-ranging interests in Middle Eastern and Sephardic history and culture. In his opening remarks, Noam Stillman expressed gratitude that every memorial lecturer not only worked in his late wife’s field, but also were colleagues and friends.

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save the dates

Professor Rachel Tzvia Back, head of the English Graduate Program at Oranim College, Kiryat Tivo in Israel will present an evening lecture on **Sept. 18, 2014** in the Associates Room in Oklahoma Memorial Union at OU. Back will be discussing her new book *In the Illuminated Dark: Selected Poems of Tuvia Reubner*.

Professor Ursula Mindler will present an evening lecture on **Sept. 22, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.** in the Associates Room in the Oklahoma Memorial Union at OU. The title of her talk is "'Forgotten' neighbors? 'Suppressed' Memories? Austria's Way of Dealing with her Jewish History". Mindler will explore the Jewish emigrants/re-emigrants to Austria and perceptions of the National-Socialist past in Austria.

Professor David Wasserstein will be the keynote speaker at the 15th Annual Yedida Kalfon Stillman Memorial Lecture on February 26, 2015. The title of his talk is "How Islam Saved the Jews." **Watch our website for updates!**

2014-2015 Brown-bag Lecture Series Continues Diverse Offerings

JuSt Lunch Brown-Bag Lecture Series, our monthly lecture series, captures the program's ethos: informal, diverse and high-quality. This event has been drawing students, scholars and OU community members since its inception. Please join us on the first Wednesday of the month at noon in Gittinger Hall, Room 109.

Sept. 3 "Nothing Islamic is Strange to Me: The Mindset of the Jewish Founding Fathers of Islamic Studies"
Norman (Noam) Stillman, OU Schusterman Center for Judaic and Israel Studies

Oct. 1 "Good to Think With: Jews and Anthropology"
Misha Klein, OU Department of Anthropology

Nov. 5 "The American Far Left, Israel and the Holocaust"
Stephen Norwood, OU Department of History

Dec. 3 "OU at Armageddon: Digging at Meggido"
Rangar Cline, OU Religious Studies

The October Lecture will be held in the OU Hillel located at the corner of Elm Avenue and Boyd Street. Parking will be available in the Elm Street Parking Garage.