

Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures NEWSLETTER

Vol. #3

The University of Texas at Austin

Spring 2000

Message from the Chairman

Our departmental mission is not only to teach the major languages and literatures of the Middle East, but also to transmit the rich cultural heritage of the peoples of the Middle East. To help fulfill this newly expanded focus, we have taken several steps: We have introduced many new courses dealing with the cultures of the Middle East and have sponsored programs designed to explore its heritage.

As a further objective, we seek to establish increasing contact with our sister departments across the College to cosponsor programs with them, and by inviting professors in those departments to offer courses with Middle East content.

However, beyond these efforts to provide first rate training to our undergraduates and reach out to faculty in other departments, we also wish to reach out to the community at large and share our excitement with the language, literature, and cultures of the Middle East. We no longer live in an age when we could or should isolate ourselves in the ivory tower of academia. The Austin public is sophisticated and well-educated. We wish to share what we know and engage in an enriching dialogue with this community.

Liberal Arts is after all life enhancing. Our imagination can soar as we engage in study of the art and architecture, music and dance, religious and secular literature of the areas. For the reasons given above, we have scheduled many activities for the Spring semester, which provide insight into the exhilarating world of the Middle East to which the broader community is welcome. We invite the general public to

participate in these events and share our excitement in learning with them.

The major program scheduled for this spring semester is a two-day Symposium examining the interplay of Judaism and Islam scheduled for March 8 and 9. In addition to the faculty from our department, Nina Berman (UT, Germanic Studies); Shifra Epstein (formerly with UT Folklore); Tamar Rudavsky (Ohio State University); John Willis (Princeton University); Reuven Firestone (Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, California); Joseph Ginat (University of Oklahoma); Carel Bertram (UT, Center for Middle Eastern Studies) and Pamela Sezgin (Georgia Mountains History Museum, Gainesville, Georgia).

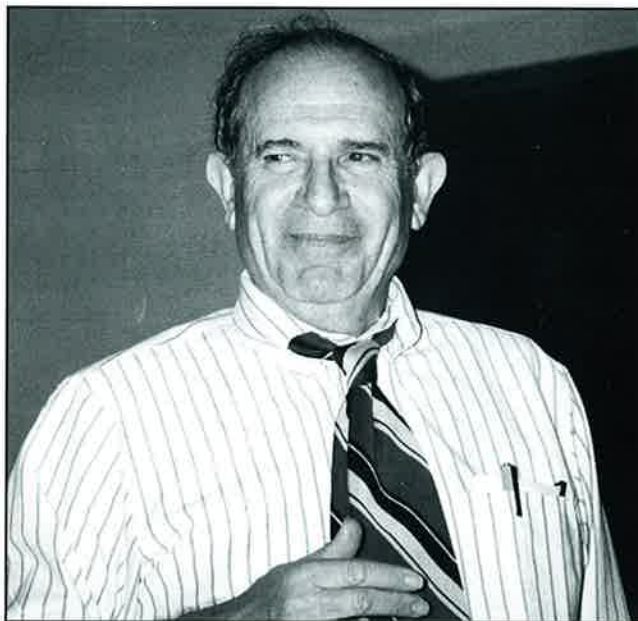
Additional programs, sponsored solely by our department or cosponsored

with other departments, which took place and will take place, are described in the following pages.

Before closing, I should like to note with gratification the establishment of a new undergraduate major in Jewish Studies that will go into effect September 1, 2000. This undergraduate Jewish Studies major, which is a college-wide, interdisciplinary major with a faculty of more than twenty five scholars, will teach more than fifty courses and will be one of the most important such programs in the U.S.

I should also like to note the further development of the existing Islamic Studies Program and our exploration of the possibility of adding an MA degree to this program.

Harold Liebowitz



Harold Liebowitz, opening the Workshop on the Teaching of Islamic and Jewish Studies

Judaism and Islam: Cross Currents

The conference on March 8 and 9 entitled "Judaism and Islam: Cross-Currents" will consist of four panels designed to focus on cultural, religious and intellectual values shared by two of the world's great religions. The participants include faculty from within the College of Liberal Arts and scholars from elsewhere in the U.S. and Israel.

On the evening of March 8 we will present a concert, Jewish and Islamic Musical Traditions at 8:00 to 9:30 in the Texas Union Showroom. The first part will include soloists who will sing Yiddish, Ladino and Turkish songs. Following the intermission, the Middle Eastern Ensemble will play a rendition of Middle Eastern music.

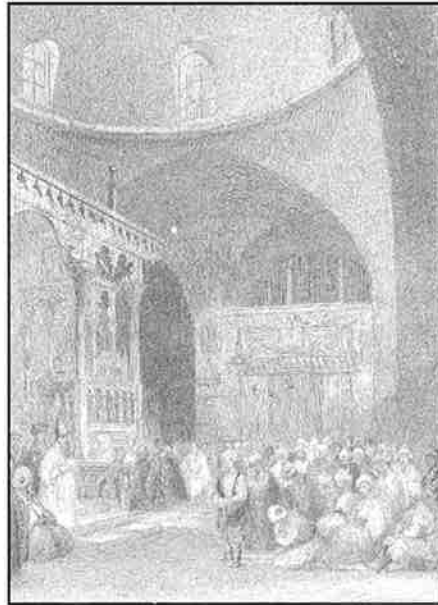
The department is most pleased to open these programs to the broad community for two reasons: 1) it is a means of celebrating the development of Islamic Studies as a major component of our department and a means of drawing attention to the beginning of a full-fledged undergraduate Jewish Studies major to be housed in the department beginning September 1, 2000.

2) From all that one reads in the press, there is nothing but strife between these two world religions. However, a deeper look at various aspects of Jewish and Islamic cultural life shows a significant degree of intersection and crosscurrents, which enriched both religions. Not to deny a history of strife, there were many periods of mutual enrichment. Perhaps a growing awareness of the shared cultural elements may encourage a greater spirit of understanding and cooperation. Indeed, we are pleased that in our department we encourage our Islamic Studies and Jewish Studies students to become more aware of one another's rich cultural heritage.

We are therefore delighted to invite the general public to attend this seminal event.

Both day sessions will take place from 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon and from 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 in the Harry Ransom

Center Auditorium 4.252. This program is co-sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, the Philosophy Department, Women's Studies, Texas Cowboys and Texas Hillel. (See schedule on back page.)



February 8 Steinfeld Lecture

On February 8 Professor Zvi Steinfeld, former Chair of the Talmud department at Bar Ilan University, Israel, and Editor of *Sidra*, a Journal for the Study of Rabbinic Literature and Talmudic Studies, gave a lecture in the Harry Ransom Center Auditorium entitled "Jewish-Gentile relations in Rabbinic Literature." Steinfeld, one of the leading authorities in modern Talmudic studies, shared his vast knowledge of early Rabbinic literature with an enthusiastic audience.

The program was sponsored by MELC and co-sponsored by the Audre and Bernard Rapoport Regents Chair of Jewish Studies, the Gale Chair of Judaic Studies, and the Texas Hillel. We wish to thank Professor Robert King and Professor Seth Wolitz, the occupants of these Chairs for their help in making this lecture possible.

Jewish Studies Major

The approved major, which will replace the existing Two Track Concentration in Jewish Studies, is an inclusive, college-wide field of study that will focus on the broad-based Jewish experience from the Biblical period until the present. Geographically, it will cover the Middle East, Europe, Asia, North Africa and the Western Hemisphere. It will cut across disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, religion, the visual arts, music, literature and folklore. Thus, as opposed to the Hebrew Studies Program, which focuses on the Hebrew language and texts written in Hebrew, the new major is far broader in scope.

We seek through the major to impart a sense of the complex patterns of continuity and change, adaptability to changing political conditions, the interplay of geographically dispersed Jewish communities, the duality of inward and outward looking perspectives, and the richness of an age-old, yet continually self-renewing culture. The areas of study will include a repertoire of more than fifty courses distributed over the following topics: Jewish culture; Jewish life; Israeli society and culture; fine arts; Jewish literature; Biblical studies; and Holocaust studies.

The program will include a major (24 semester hours) and a minor (12 semester hours) and a Jewish Studies Honor Program. Courses included for the fall 2000 are Introduction to Jewish Culture and History I; European Judaism: Past and Present; Hitler, the Holocaust and Memory: 1933 to the Present; Modern Jewish Prose and Poetry; Spain in 1492; Culture in Medieval Spain; and Jewish Women's Writings.



Undergraduate Student News

For the first time, the Arabic program has six undergraduate majors: Jonathan Addison, Jennifer Hollis, David Kimberly, Christopher Micklethwait, Natasha Omene, and Christopher Young. Despite the difficulty of Arabic, they are enjoying the challenge of learning a significant non-Latin-based language. Christopher Micklethwait, who will be graduating this Spring semester, began his Arabic Studies in the fall of 1996. He also attended two intensive summer programs, one in Morocco, the Texas-Meknes Intensive Summer Program, and the other in Lebanon, in 1997 and 1998 respectively.

Sarah Radin who spent her fall semester in Israel, studying at the Hebrew University, extended her stay to the spring. Teresa Cigarroa Keck has left for a semester at Haifa University and will return for the fall semester of 2000.

Student Scholarships

Two MELC students were awarded the Hibbs scholarship, Jennifer Hollis and Nahid Anjim. Two students in Arabic were awarded scholarships from money provided by the Arab Community of Austin: Loretto Caitora (Graduate Student) and Cris Micklethwait (Undergraduate Student). The following students have received a Hebrew Studies scholarship for the 1999-2000 academic year: Joshua Ross, Erik Berk, Andrew Friedberg, Rachel Lichtman, David Walker, Jaime Sasso, Jorge Ordaz, and Teresa Keck. The Dan C. Danciger Foundation and the Moshana Foundation provided the scholarships. Congratulations to all recipients!

MELC Faculty Awards

Peter Abboud was honored along with four other distinguished professors during a special reception at Wayne

State University on October 15, 1999, sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern and Asian Studies in conjunction with the American Association of Teachers of Arabic, for his pioneering work and longtime service in the field of teaching Arabic. The reception was held during a Symposium entitled "Bridging Past, Present, and Future: Arabic as a Foreign Language in the New Millennium."

Esther Raizen won a Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Award for developing web-based materials for the UT Biblical Hebrew language sequence. Her Modern Hebrew Project web site won a Jewish Agency for Israel Top Ten Award in the fall of 1999.

MELC Faculty Grants

Kamran Aghaie has received the KSA grant to study the popular social aspects of religious identity in turn-of-the-century Tehran.

Zilla Goodman also received the SRA grant to write two books entitled "Of Demon's Breath" and "Silent: Voices of the Collective and Individual in Modern Hebrew Literature."

Michael Craig Hillmann has a Dean's Fellowship during the spring 2000 to support completion of an anthology of translations called "Classics of Persian Literature, 900-2000" and a bibliography called "Iran: New Edition", World Bibliographical Series (ABC/CLIO, Oxford).

Akel Kahera was awarded the fall 2000 Research Grant to write "Omar Said's Memoir of Captivity: A Critical Evaluation and Translation of an Antebellum Slave Narrative."

Harold Liebowitz has received a SRG to prepare Iron Age (12th to 8th centuries B.C.E.) pottery remains from Tel Yin'am for publication.

Esther Raizen has received a Faculty Research Grant for a manuscript on environmental concerns in Hebrew literature. She will spend part of summer 2000 in Israel, collecting materials for the manuscript.

MELC Faculty Lectures and Presentations

Amman Attieh has been invited by The University of Washington to give a presentation in a workshop to be held in Seattle on April 1 and 2, 2000 entitled "Developing Goals for Cultural Proficiency in Arabic."

Zilla Goodman presented a conference paper entitled "The Jewish Diaspora: Between Exile and Dispersion." February 11, 2000, at World 2000, sponsored by The World History Association and the National Council for Geography Education

Michael Hillmann presented a slide lecture called "An Aesthetics of Persian Carpets" at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona on January 27, 2000. Professor Hillmann will present a paper on "Aspects of Hafez's Popularity among Iranian (-American)'s" at the 3rd Biennial Conference of Iranian Studies in Bethesda on the weekend of May 26 to 28. He has scheduled a minicourse for advanced students of Persian at University of Baltimore during the week of May 22 to 26. His new textbook called "Vocabulary Acquisition" (draft manuscript) will constitute the syllabus for the course.

On February 17th Harold Liebowitz lectured on Synagogue Art and Architecture in Medieval Spain for the Tracking Cultures Program.

Esther Raizen conducted a national workshop on October 15 and 16, 1999 to developing Hebrew computerized materials for the Web at the University of Arizona. The Western Consortium of Middle Eastern Studies Centers organized the workshop. On February 23, Esther Raizen spoke about "Judaism and the Environment: In the Eye of the Beholder" at the UT Jewish Studies Faculty Forum. On March 2, Esther Raizen gave a workshop at Princeton on creating and using web-based materials in Hebrew instruction.

Faculty Publications and Other Creative Work

A man Attieh has recently produced an anthology entitled *Short Fiction by Saudi Arabian Women Writers* published by Literature East and West. This book includes the literary works of seventeen female fiction writers of the first generation up to the mid-1980s. Most of the 31 stories in this anthology have not heretofore been translated.

Harold Liebowitz (with Anne Dehnisch) published an article "A Unique Stone Mortar from Tel Yin'am" in *Levant* (2000).

Esther Raisin's book *Modern Hebrew for Beginners* has gone to press and will be published by the University of Texas Press in April of 2000. Michael Hillmann's in-press *Tajiki Textbook and Reader* (Dunwoody Press) is the first textbook of the language written for American readers and the core of the course syllabus in MELC's Tajiki Basics and Tajiki Texts courses.



Linda Gradstein: Reporting from Ground Zero

The Department will cosponsor a program featuring Linda Gradstein, the Jerusalem correspondent for National Public Radio. Scheduled for March 6, 2000, Ms. Goldstein will describe her experiences reporting from the Middle East as an American woman and the developments she observed in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The talk will take place in the Texas Union Santa Rita Room at 7:30p.m..

Leon Yudkin to Speak April 6

The Department will cosponsor a lecture by Professor Leon Yudkin entitled "Straining at the Leash: New Directions in Israeli Fiction." Professor Yudkin teaches Hebrew and Comparative Literature at University College, London, and is the editor of the Monograph Series, *Jews in Modern Culture*, Symposium Press. We encourage all to attend this seminal lecture organized by the Gale Chair of Judaic Studies.

Michael Morgan Lecture

MELC in conjunction with the Philosophy Department will sponsor a lecture by Michael Morgan entitled "Kafka, Buber, Benjamin: Themes in the Modern Jewish Experience. The lecture will be held on Thursday, March 30, 2000 @ 3:30pm in Parlin Hall, Room 201.

A Retrospective of Haim Shiran's Films

Yaron Shemer has arranged for Haim Shiran to visit Austin for a three-evening event entitled: "Jewish life in Morocco, Tunisia, and Spain: A Retrospective of Haim Shiran's Films." The event will be held at 7p.m., March 27-29 at the University Teaching Center, room 4.104.

Born in Morocco and educated in Paris, Haim Shiran has become one of Israel's foremost personalities in the television and film industry. He helped create and develop the Israel Educational Television Station of which he was Chief Executive Producer, and his films have won acclaim both in Israel and throughout the United States and Europe. Mr. Shiran has lectured at various universities in the U.S. and Israel,

developed a television studies track for Israeli high-school students, and helped initiate several successful Sephardic-Jewish film festivals in New York City.

For over thirty-five years Mr. Shiran has dedicated himself to advancing the representation of Sephardic culture in the Israeli media. Many of his films have focused on the beauty and complexities of Sephardic Jewry, giving a deeper insight into the heritage, culture, and lifestyles of North African and Spanish Jews. Additionally, his work with educational programming has won him high praise, and most recently he successfully transformed the Inbal Dance Theater into the established Ethnic Arts Center, of which he has become General Manager and Art Director.

Five of Mr. Shiran's films will be screened during the festival, including the feature films "In Praise of David" and "Pillar of Salt," which won several international awards and have been shown on a number of European television networks. Additionally, three documentary movies will be shown: "The Mimouna," "The Jews of Morocco," and "Embroidery of Stone and Words." Each evening during the festival, Mr. Shiran will personally introduce each work and share his insight into the making of the films. Immediately following the screenings, an open question-and-answer discussion will be held with the producer-director.

The Retrospective of Haim Shiran's Films is sponsored by The Center for Middle Eastern and cosponsored by: The Consulate General of Israel in Houston; The Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures; The Department of Radio/Television/Film; The Department of Anthropology; The Austin Film Society; Texas Hillel; The Jewish Community Association of Austin.



Faculty Profiles



Dr. Aaron Bar-Adon, Professor of Hebrew, Jewish Studies, and Linguistics, received his Ph.D. in 1959 at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. His dissertation on "Children's Hebrew in Israel," which won a Best Dissertation Prize, constituted the first linguistic study of Hebrew child language. It explored the evolvement of native spoken Hebrew among the children who were born into the recently revived Hebrew-speech community (after 1700 years of dormancy), and their contribution to its development.

What attracted him to this original research was the rare opportunity to study a child's individual language-in-the-making within a societal language-in-the-making (ontogeny within phylogeny), which would provide special insights into the study of child language/language acquisition in general. Up to the middle of the century, the study of language acquisition was almost exclusively the domain of psychological approaches. This pioneering linguistic study based on extensive fieldwork was thus a contribution to the linguistic approach to this important topic.

The next couple of decades were devoted to the study and teaching of various aspects of child language, both Hebrew and general, resulting in numerous papers and a book *Studies in the Lexicon of Israeli Children* (1967) and *Child Language: A Book of Readings* (1971).

While recording evidence from the contemporaneous children and from

the earlier (and earliest) Hebrew-speaking "children" (who in the meantime were at a very advanced age), it occurred to him that this would also be a unique historical opportunity to study not only the evolvement of native Hebrew among the children, but also the linguistical and socio-linguistical study and documentation of the entire revival process of modern Hebrew, from 1882. And this is what he has been doing in the last twenty-five years.

This research has resulted in various articles and several books, including *The Rise and Decline of a Dialect: A Study in the Revival of Modern Hebrew* (1975) (which studied the evolvement of a very special Galilean dialect between 1895-1920) and *(S.Y.) Agnon and the Revival of Hebrew Year* (which studied the reflection of the Hebrew revival in the different writings of the Israeli Nobel Prize Winner S.Y. Agnon and his oral pronouncement.)

In recognition of Dr. Bar-Adon's original research, he was awarded research grants and fellowships, including the prestigious "The American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Senior Research Fellowship"; "The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Grant"; and the "Rockefeller Foundation Humanities Fellowship."

In recent years he has been working on three books: (1) a comprehensive study on the history (Saga) of the Hebrew revival; (2) encounters with S.Y. Agnon on Language and Society; (3) *The Struggle for a Uniform Pronunciation for Modern Hebrew*.

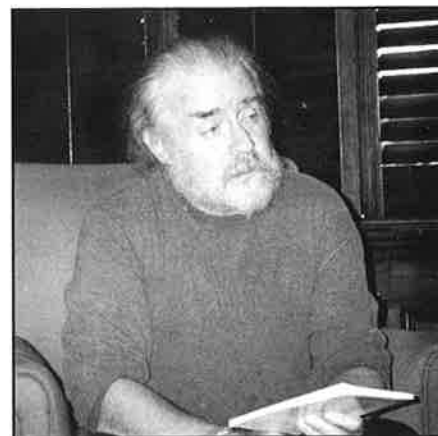
Prof. Bar-Adon came to U.T., in 1963 as Associate Professor in Linguistics, and since 1966 he has served as full Professor. Within this period he also served three times as Visiting Professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Within the Dept. of Linguistics he was given the opportunity to initiate and develop a Hebrew Studies Program which grew from 5 students in 1963 to 850 in 1970, in about 25 classes, with 6 full time professors and 8 graduate assistants. It is his hope that now, in the favorable environment of MELC and the growth of the student body at U.T.

the number of students and faculty in Hebrew and Jewish Studies will increase.

Workshop on the Teaching of Islamic and Jewish Studies



The Department sponsored a mini-workshop on teaching Islamic and Jewish studies. Two guest presenters, Dr. Zev Garber, the Director of Jewish Studies at Los Angeles Valley College, and Mr. Shabbir Mansuri, the Founding Director of the Council on Islamic Education presented participants with two distinct perspectives on teaching about the two civilizations. Dr. Garber focused on issues of methodology and academic freedom, and Mr. Mansuri discussed legal issues pertinent to outreach and teacher training, particularly at the K-12 level in the state of Texas. The event, which produced a long, lively discussion between the participants, marks the growing cooperation between MELC faculty involved in the development of Jewish and Islamic Studies majors.



Judaism and Islam: Cross-Currents

Harry Ransom Auditorium, Room 4.252

March 8, 2000

WELCOMING REMARKS:

Harold Liebowitz, Chairman, Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

INTRODUCTION:

Richard Lariviere, Dean, College of Liberal Arts

9:30 A.M. PANEL 1: Travelers

CHAIR: *Abraham Marcus*, Director, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

M.R. Ghanoonparvar, 'Naser Khosrow and Farahari: Two Shi'ites on Pilgrimage to Mecca'

Nina Berman, 'Elsa Lasker-Shueler's Orient'

Zilla Goodman, 'Medieval and Late 19th Century Middle Eastern and Orientalist Travelers'

Shifra Epstein, 'Contemporary Pilgrimages to Sages by Middle Eastern and Hassidic Jews'

1:30 P.M. PANEL 2: Warrior Women in Middle Eastern Cultures

CHAIR: *Desley Deacon*, Director, Women's Studies

Esther Raizen, 'The Biblical Women in War and Siege'

Fawn Shirazi, 'Women in the Military in Contemporary Muslim Societies'

Kamran Aghaie, 'Zaynab, the Lioness of Karbala'

Yaron Shemer, 'The Woman Soldier in Israeli Cinema: The Absence of Power and the Power of Absence'

Cosponsored by: The College of Liberal Arts, The College of Fine Arts, The Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Women's Studies, Department of Philosophy, B'nai B'rith Hillel, the Texas Cowboys

March 9, 2000

WELCOMING REMARKS:

Akel Kahera, Professor Middle Eastern Languages & Cultures

INTRODUCTION:

Teresa Sullivan, Vice-President and Dean, Graduate Studies

9:30 A.M. PANEL 3: PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Chair: *Aaron Bar-Adon*, Professor, Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

Tamar Rudavsky, 'Creation and Time in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy'

John Willis, 'The Religion of the Semites: Ritual and Doctrine'

Reuven Firestone, 'Fall from the Garden in Judaism and Islam: Text and Interpretation in Light of Christianity's Original Sin'

Joseph Ginat, 'Ordeal by fire: The Bedouin Lie Detector Test'

1:30 P.M. PANEL 4: THE ARTS

Chair: *Charles Roeckle*, Dean, College of Fine Arts

Carel Bertram, 'Serving the Sacred: Textile Arts of the Jews in the Islamic World'

Harold Liebowitz, 'Jewish and Islamic Funerary Art'

Yildiray Erdener, 'Sounds from the Muslim World'

Pamela Sezgin, 'Sephardic Music'



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures
Austin, Texas 78712

The Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures

West Mall Building— 5.120

Phone: (512) 471-1365

Fax: (512) 471-4197

<http://www.utexas.edu/depts/melc/>