



Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies

Newsletter

Lehigh University
Bethlehem, PA

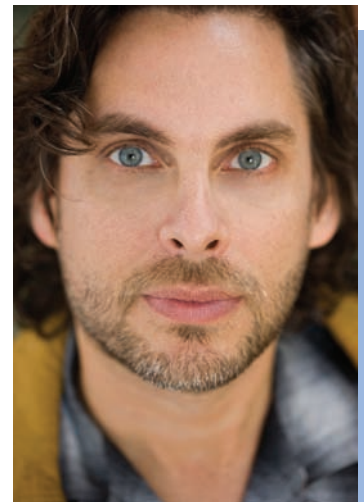
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Berman Center Celebrates 25 Years with Talk by Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author

On Sunday, March 22, as a part of its 25th anniversary celebration (1984-2009), the Berman Center will present Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon. During the program at the Zoellner Arts Center's Baker Hall, Chabon will speak on his long journey as a writer and as a Jew in search of identity. His talk will be preceded by a reception and dinner for students, faculty, and friends of the Berman Center.

Chabon's presentation, which will focus on the impact of his Jewishness on his writing, culminates a series of educational and cultural events, spanning the 2008-09 academic year, that celebrate the Berman Center's 25th year. Established in 1984 by the late Philip and Muriel Berman with one endowed professorship, the Center has grown to include five full-time faculty members, including three endowed professorships. The most recent endowment was the Helene and Allen Apter Chair of Holocaust Studies and Ethical Values established in 2006.

Michael Chabon, one of America's leading writers, became known in 1988 with the publication of his best-selling first novel, *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*. Since then, he has published two collections of short stories and five novels, including *Wonder Boys*, *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, and *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, which won many awards including the Pulitzer Prize. Various described as an outstanding, entertaining, and engaging speaker, Chabon has lectured on such topics as the art and craft of writing and the tradition of Jewish fiction. He has appeared before audiences in countries all over the world, including the U.S., Russia, Finland, Lithuania, Italy, and France, just to name a few.



Michael Chabon

Inside This Issue

Diaspora Project	2
Posen Grant	2
Postzionism: A Reader	3
Kirshenblatt-Gimblett	3
Independence or Naqba	4
Holocaust Remembrance	4
Michaelson/New Culture	5
Bartov/Jewish Galicia	6
Lemelman/Mendel's Daughter	6
Bacon/Polish Jewish History	7
Faculty Notes	8
Gifts	9
Shaye Cohen/Gregorian	9
Seth Goren/Lehigh Hillel	10

Sunday, March 22, 7:45 p.m.

Baker Hall, Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University

MICHAEL CHABON

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

Open to the public without charge

Berman Center Receives Three-Year Grant for the Study of Secular-Cultural Judaism

The Berman Center for Jewish Studies at Lehigh University has been awarded a three-year grant in the amount of \$50,000 per year by the Posen Foundation, which is affiliated with the Center for Cultural Judaism. The grants are awarded on a competitive basis to foster the development of courses and programs that highlight the secular dimensions of Jewish history and culture. Directed by Professors Larry Silberstein and Ruth Setton of the Berman Center, the Lehigh project will include new courses on secular Jewish history and culture, faculty seminars, colloquia, an interdisciplinary conference, and the publication of a conference volume. A core course taught by Professor Silberstein will focus on the Jewish encounter with the secular and the emergence of secular-cultural forms of Jewish life. Other courses will incorporate units on the secular dimensions of ancient and modern Judaism.

According to Silberstein, as a recipient of the Posen Foundation Grant, the Berman Center becomes a participant in a cutting-edge discussion concerning the nature of Judaism, past, present, and future. The courses and programs sponsored by the Posen Foundation will open students to dimensions of Judaism of which they were previously unaware. Having come to regard Judaism as a religion, most Americans, Jews and non-Jews alike, know little of the secular forms that have emerged in Jewish life since the middle of the 19th century.

As stated in recent sociological studies, nearly half of American Jews consider themselves secular, a term that, like religion, means different things to different people. The percentage of secular Jews is even higher in Israel. These Jews are heirs to forms of secular Jewish culture that reach back more than two centuries.

Under the terms of the grant, the Berman Center is sponsoring an interdisciplinary group of Lehigh faculty to explore current critical thinking on the concepts of the secular and secularization. The faculty reading group has initiated the discussion and plans to continue to meet throughout the academic year. While the Center has regularly sponsored year-end colloquia on a variety of topics, the grant enables it to significantly expand its 2009 colloquium to include a broad cross-section of scholars in Jewish studies and related fields. These schol-

ars will engage in an in-depth inquiry into the concept of secular Judaism. This will be followed in 2010 by the ninth Berman Center conference, which will again bring to Lehigh a group of Jewish Studies scholars from across the nation and abroad. The conference, addressing the complex interplay of the religious and the secular in Jewish history and culture, is open to students, faculty, and the public. According to Anne Meltzer, Dean of Lehigh's College of Arts and Sciences, "the Berman Center's many achievements make it well positioned to carry out the Posen Foundation's mission to increase awareness of cultural Judaism. The Center is known within the College of Arts and Sciences for its distinctive interdisciplinary approach that has engaged faculty from a wide variety of fields in its various programs."

Initiated in 2000, Posen Grants have been awarded to forty colleges and universities in the United States, Israel, Canada, and Europe. The program involves more than 100 academics and 1500 students. Each year, scholars from Jewish Studies programs receiving Posen Grants gather for two days to share their experiences and reflect on issues relating to the secular dimensions and forms of Judaism.

Center Director Publishes *Postzionism: A Reader*

Center director Larry Silberstein's edited volume, *Postzionism: A Reader*, was recently published by Rutgers University Press. A follow-up to Silberstein's previous book, *The Postzionism Debates* (Routledge, 1999), the reader provides the most complete collection of postzionist writings available in English. Incorporating recently published material, the volume presents a broad spectrum of innovative and controversial views on Zionism and its place in the global Jewish world of the 21st century. In addition to Israeli scholars, several American contributors discuss the relationship of Israel to

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett Describes Pre-war Life in Jewish Poland

Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discussed “Painted Memories: A Jewish Childhood in Poland before the Holocaust” during a program sponsored by the Berman Center and Lehigh’s Religion Studies Department. Her talk was based on the book *They Called Me Mayer July*, which she co-authored with her father, Mayer Kirshenblatt.

According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, who interviewed her father over a period of forty years, Mayer feared that future generations would know more about how Jews died than how they lived. As a result, he made it his mission to remember the world of his childhood in living color. At the age of 73, at the urging of his family, he taught himself to paint. Using his paintings and her narrative, their co-authored book is a remarkable record of Jewish life in a Polish town before World War II as seen through the eyes of an inquisitive boy. This intimate and humorous memoir was a finalist for the 2007 National Jewish Book Award.

During her Lehigh talk, Professor Kirshenblatt-Gimblett showed slides of her father’s artwork and explored their long collaboration. “This is the single most gratifying of all the projects I have done in my life,” she said. “My father is endlessly fascinating and has the most



Inside the synagoge, by Mayer Kirshenblatt

incredible memory. Because I am trained as a folklorist and anthropologist, I had an infinite curiosity about everything in his world. As he became older, he became more interested in talking, and at a certain point what had started as my project became his project.”

In a short video clip shown during the talk, Mayer explained, “My wife said that if I can paint a house, there was no reason I couldn’t paint pictures. Memories of my childhood in a Polish shtetl emerged on my brush.” His wife asked him to paint a picture of the kitchen of the house he lived in in Poland, which became his first painting.

“You can tell,” Kirshenblatt-Gimblett said, pointing to a painted image of the kitchen, “that my father has a keen memory for detail. He was 17 when he left Poland, yet he remembers everything. What is quite extraordinary is that he was one of the last people born and raised in Poland before World War II who has memories that were not shaped by the trauma of experiencing the Holocaust first-hand.” (To see and hear Mayer talk about his paintings and life in Poland, visit his website at www.mayerjuly.com.)

Professor Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has chaired the Department of Performance Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University for more than a decade. She is also affiliated with the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies. Her books include *Image before My Eyes: A Photographic History of Jewish Life in Poland, 1864-1939* (with Lucjan Dobroszycki); *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, and *The Art of Being Jewish in Modern Times* (edited with Jonathan Karp). She is currently leading the core exhibition development team for the Museum of the History of Polish Jews on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto.

American Jewish identity, critically engaging such key Zionist concepts as homeland and diaspora. Another section offers perspectives of Palestinian citizens of Israel, Jews of Middle-Eastern origin (Mizrahim), women, and the queer community. In an introductory essay, “Reading Postzionism,” Silberstein offers his formulation of postzionist discourse, describing the ways that each chapter contributes to that discourse.

According to anthropologist Virginia Dominguez, author of *People as Subject, People as Object: Selfhood and Peoplehood in Contemporary Israel*: “Wonderfully conceptualized, this reader brings together works that capture the spirit of critique—honest, caring, and trenchant—in and about contemporary Israel.”

Israeli Independence, Palestinian Naqba (catastrophe), or Both?

Using film clips from three documentaries depicting the 1948 War, Larry Silberstein, Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, and Yechiel Klar, Russell Berrie Visiting Professor from Tel Aviv University, led a discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Klar, a social psychologist whose specialization is conflict resolution, remarked that the story each party tells about this conflict has great consequences. For Jewish-Israelis, the 1948 War is the heroic “War of Independence,” in which a barely armed community of about 600,000 people, many of them Holocaust survivors, fought against their hostile neighbors and the surrounding Arab states. For the Palestinians, however, the 1948 War is the “Naqba” (catastrophe), a loss of their homeland, expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians from their homes, and the destruction of some 500 Palestinian villages—all of these, in their eyes, the result of Israeli aggression and expansionism backed by international powers.

Showing segments of two documentaries made for Israeli television, *Pillar of Fire* and *Tekumah*, Silberstein and Klar pointed out subtle differences between these two narratives. *Pillar of Fire*, made 25 years after the war, speaks about the “Zionist revolution” and concludes with the 1948 War. Referring to the “rebirth” of Israel, it seeks to connect the 1948 State of Israel to the historical Land of Israel. *Tekumah*, created in 1998 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Israel’s birth, starts from the point that *Pillar of Fire* ends—the creation of the State of Israel.

According to Silberstein, *Tekumah* generated an enormous amount of controversy in Israel. Many critics objected to the fact that the film depicted the expulsions and plight of the Palestinian Arabs and spoke of atrocities on both sides. Prior to 1987, he explained, the dominant narrative in Israeli society was that the Arabs fled of their own volition or because of unfilled promises by their leaders, who announced on a broadcast that if the Arabs would leave the area, they would come back as conquering heroes. In 1987, Zionist scholar Benny Morris published *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*. His extensive research contradicted the accepted narra-

continued on page 10

Israeli Visiting Professor Discusses the Centrality of Holocaust Remembrance in Israeli Culture

In a faculty seminar sponsored by the Berman Center for Jewish Studies and the Department of International Relations, Dr. Yechiel Klar, an Israeli social psychologist from Tel Aviv University, discussed the ways that individuals confront the moral complexities involved in intractable intergroup conflicts. Klar, who served as a visiting professor at Lehigh in 2007-08, based his talk upon a research program currently in progress at Tel Aviv University. Specifically, he focused on the complicated and contradictory role that Holocaust remembrance plays in Israel’s ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. In Israel, according to Klar, the Holocaust is an issue of constant concern, and Israelis are reminded of it every day—in the newspapers and on television. He considers it extraordinary that every conflict is in some way connected to the Holocaust.

In a recent survey conducted at TAU, Klar’s research associates determined that on Holocaust Remembrance Day, almost every Israeli watches programs about the Holocaust. More than half of those surveyed said they knew a great deal about the Holocaust, while a slightly smaller group said that the Holocaust affects

their beliefs and attitudes on a variety of issues. While, according to Klar, these responses reflect some degree of participation in the culture of the Holocaust, another part of the sample group indicated that the Holocaust is part of their life most of the time. More than half of this latter group said they occasionally contemplated how they would have behaved if they had found themselves in Holocaust conditions. Almost as many expressed fear that the Holocaust would be repeated and said that the memory of the Holocaust affects their behavior.

Klar suggested that one reason Israelis react the way they do to the Holocaust may be the ways in which catastrophic events are inscribed in Jewish collective history, such as the slavery in Egypt and the wandering in the wilderness. The Torah is very explicit about how readers are supposed to behave when recalling such events. Jews are commanded to remember all instances when the life of the nation was put in jeopardy. Speaking of the

continued on page 10



Yechiel Klar

Jay Michaelson Describes the New Jewish Culture

Jay Michaelson, author and columnist for the national Jewish newspaper the *Forward*, made two public presentations during a visit sponsored by the Berman Center, the Religion Studies Department, the Creative Writing Program, and Lehigh's LGBTQA Services. In addition to a reading entitled "Another Word for Sky: Poetry and Mythmaking through a Queer Eye," Michaelson also spoke on "Letter and Spirit: The Archaic Revival in Contemporary Jewish Writing and Culture." In the latter talk, he examined the recent renaissance of Jewish culture, spirituality, and identity among younger educated Jews and what these new spiritual and literary movements mean for the Jewish future.

Michaelson described the new Jewish culture as a grass roots movement comprised mostly of younger Jews in New York, San Francisco, and Boston. He cited examples of the diversity of this new culture including the Hasidic reggae superstar Matisyahu, the ironic hipster *Heeb Magazine*, and his own journal, *Zeek*. Michaelson also mentioned JDub Records as well as the group Storahtelling, which has brought back the ancient idea of the *meturgamon* [expositor]. He referred to the blog site Jewschool as an example of the rapidly expanding on-line projects.

Largely the products of secular Jews, the new Jewish culture integrates religious and secular themes. As an example, Michaelson contrasted the writing of several new Jewish authors, Jonathan Safran Foer, Myla Goldberg, Michael Shabon, and Nathan Englander, with the earlier work of Isaac Bashevis Singer: "There is a sharp critique of religious ideology in Singer that you don't find the current generation of Jewish writers making, even though they identify as nonreligious, nonobservant Jews. The newer writers also utilize religious themes in the way that Singer or other writers of that period would have been unlikely to do." Michaelson describes them as taking pieces of something that used to fit together, crumbling them up, and getting new pictures and designs that can be quite interesting.

Michaelson also spoke of spiritual groups in New York that attract young Jews. Among those known for throwing the best parties and having the best Friday night services are Hadar, a traditional yet egalitarian religious community; Kol Zimrah, which incorporates drums and guitars at its services; and Romamu, which features meditation and other spiritual practices, including yoga.

Michaelson used the term *archaic revival* to refer to the resurgence of nonrational primitive forms within the global youth culture. He explained this in terms of a resurgence of the nonrational in a technologically advanced age and advanced context. In his view, what is currently occurring in the new Jewish culture reflects this archaic revival. Thus, the independent minyan movement of Neo-havurot, made up of groups experimenting with new prayer forms, is a revival of the nonrational in a serious way. Further examples are Habad and the Kaballah Center, two Jewish outreach movements that are astonishingly successful.

When taken together with the decline in identification with denominations, the above phenomena suggest to Michaelson that the "archaic revival" in the spiritual and religious life of the new Jewish culture parallels the secular writing and culture that he described earlier. In both instances, aspects of Jewish tradition that had been deliberately neglected are now being re-embraced in a very nonfundamentalist way.

A recent finalist for the Koret Young Writer on Jewish Themes Award, Michaelson writes the "Fringes" column on emerging Jewish spiritualities for the *Forward* newspaper. He is a contributor to the *Jerusalem Post*, *Shma*, and other publications, the author of *God in Your Body: Kabbalah, Mindfulness, and Embodied Spiritual Practice*, and is a founder of *Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture* and *Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture and Spirituality*.

Historian Omer Bartov Finds Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia

Brown University historian Omer Bartov, a leading Holocaust scholar, discussed his latest book, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine*. In his presentation, Bartov described his efforts to collect the rapidly disappearing evidence of the Jews of western Ukraine, who were rounded up and murdered by the Nazis during World War II with help from the local populace.

Bartov said that what began as a deeply personal chronicle of the Holocaust in his mother's hometown of Buchach soon became a journey across Galicia and back through history. His trip revealed "the complete erasure of the Jews and their removal from public memory, a blatant act of forgetting done in the service of a fiercely aggressive Ukrainian nationalism."

Presenting photos from his trip, Bartov recreated the histories of some of the vibrant Jewish and Polish communities that had once existed and described their current condition following their brutal and complete destruction. In his journey, he discovered that Jewish cemeteries had been turned into marketplaces, and synagogues made into garbage dumps. He found unmarked burial pits for victims of the mass killings. He also found monuments that had been hastily built after Ukraine's independence in 1991 that glorify leaders who collaborated with the Nazis in the murder of Jews. According to Bartov, the newly independent Ukraine—with its ethnically cleansed and deeply anti-Semitic population—has recreated its past by suppressing all memory of its victims.

In Lviv, Bartov said, almost nothing remains of the 16th-century Golden Rose synagogue, which the Germans destroyed. A modest plaque does not mention the pogroms unleashed by the Germans in which 7,000 to 10,000 Jews were murdered. Similar situations of destruction, neglect, and denial exist throughout the area. In Drohobych and Buchach, Bartov found no signs of the massacre of the Jewish population. The Great Synagogue in Buchach, damaged in the war, was razed by the Soviets.

"Galicia remains," he said, "the object of prejudice, legend, and myth. Its inhabitants are engaged in creating a single national historical narrative, an undertaking of massive simplification and erasure. Nevertheless, Galicia's

history, and its denial, is more visible than in many other parts of Europe."

Omer Bartov is the John P. Birkelund Distinguished Professor of European History at Brown University. Besides his latest book, *Erased*, he is the author of *Germany's War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories*, and *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and the War in the Third Reich*, which has been published in five languages.

Bartov's visit was sponsored by the Berman Center, Lehigh's Department of History, and the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.

Martin Lemelman Discusses His Graphic Memoir of the Holocaust

Martin Lemelman, a freelance illustrator and author, delivered a talk on the ways that memory, research, and art came together in his first graphic memoir, *Mendel's Daughter*. The book is a transcription of the harrowing testimony of his mother, Gusta, about her childhood in Poland in the 1930s and her eventual escape from Nazi persecution during World War II. The story was brought to life through the addition of Lemelman's powerful drawings.

Lemelman began to interview his mother about her family in 1982, recording her story on videotape. After his mother's death in 2002, he used that video to create a memorial to her life. He described why he illustrated the graphic memoir in a realistic style: "I decided to take the photographs my mother had in the drawer by her bed and use them in the book. When I did research on creating a graphic novel, I found that the consensus was that the characters should be generalized so that everyone could relate to them. But I wanted my mother's face and my grandmother's face in my book so that everyone would know that these photographs are of real people—and most of them did not survive. Even now there are Holocaust deniers. This is one of the motivations for why I did it this way."

Besides images from the book, the Kutztown University professor also showed photographs of his own journey to Ukraine. In Buchach he visited his grandfather's house and met the people who helped his mother

survive the Holocaust in the forests of Poland. He was also able to see his grandparents' well, which in a way had saved his mother's life. Before the war, this well was the only one on the entire street, and his grandparents allowed everyone to use it. When Lemelman's uncles and mother were discovered hiding in the forest, these neighbors remembered that the Lemelman family had always been kind to them and they protected the Lemelman children.

Lemelman's presentation was sponsored by the Berman Center and the E. Franklin Robbins Fund in Jewish Studies.

Bar-Ilan Professor Focuses on the Problems of Writing Polish Jewish History

Gershon C. Bacon, Professor of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University, discussed Polish Jewish identity and the problem of writing the history of Polish Jewry. "Over the past three decades," Bacon said, "we are witnesses to a sea-change in the way that Polish Jewry is studied and written about. He talked about the collective biography of those who have chosen to work in the field of Polish Jewish history, the new directions that biography has taken, and the major challenges and sensitivities that this historiography has to deal with.

Bacon noted that the last major synthesis of Polish Jewish history, *The Jews of Poland* by Bernard Weinryb, was published in 1970. Bacon himself published a book in 1984 with Gershon Hundert that surveyed the entire field of Russian and Polish Jewish history. Today, with all the research that has been carried out, he said that it is highly unlikely that another such project could be undertaken. Bacon cited the noteworthy project of the Zalman Shazar Center, which published the two-volume *Kiryum*

va'Shever, the first attempt at a synthesis of the topic in 30 years, and he said he is eagerly awaiting Antony Polonsky's two-volume history of the Polish Jews.

Bacon described the present generation of historians of Polish Jewry as heirs to the generation of post-1968 exiles from Poland who traveled to Israel and the U.S. "We owe them a debt for keeping alive some minimal level of Jewish historical research in the not-always congenial conditions of Communist Poland." He explained that the exposure to Poland itself is clearly a formative experience for today's historians. Not committed to any particular view of what Polish Jewry was supposed to be like, they have no ideological issues at stake in forging the historical narrative. "This generation of historians doesn't have nostalgia for Poland, but does have empathy for Poland and Polish Jewry. . . . However, only in recent years has there been a willingness to explore some uncomfortable topics, such as those Poles who informed on their Jewish neighbors during World War II and the willingness to understand Polish antisemitism in the wider context of development of the Polish state."

In summary, Bacon said that the present generation of Polish Jewish historians have made contributions in three key contexts: (1) making Jews a part of Poland and not just an object of governmental policy; (2) making Jewish history a part of general history; and (3) being aware of the personal context—that "our generation's narrative of Polish Jewish history reflects who we are and what we have learned from previous generations."

At Bar-Ilan University, Gershon Bacon holds the Klein Chair for the History of the Rabbinate in Europe during the Modern Period.

Besides publishing numerous essays and articles, he is the author of *"From Poland" to "Eastern Europe": East European Jewry, 1771-1914*, and *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916-1939*.

The program was sponsored by the Berman Center, Department of History, and the E. F. Robbins Fund in Jewish Studies.



Gershon Bacon

Faculty Notes

RUTH KNAFO SETTON was awarded a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, a writers' colony, where she completed her second novel, *Darktown Blues*. Among her recent publications in 2008 are an essay, "Women Writing Desire," in the anthology *Desire: Women Write about Wanting*; a poem, "Midden of Dreams," selected by the Tupelo Poetry Project; and several poems in *Arabesques Review*. She also gave a reading and talk, "On the Road: A Writer and Her Novel," at the Associated Writing Conference in New York City; participated in a roundtable on Philip Roth's *Exit Ghost* at the American Literature Association Conference in San Francisco; moderated a panel of Jewish women writers at the Lehigh Valley Jewish Book Fair; and gave readings in New York City, Los Angeles, Tel Aviv, and Oaxaca, Mexico. She is presently working on her third novel.

LAURENCE SILBERSTEIN's edited *Postzionism: A Reader* was published in August by Rutgers University Press. It is the most complete collection of postzionist documents available in English. In his introductory essay, he analyzed the meaning of the concept postzionism and the way that each contribution contributed to postzionist discourse. His article, "Minority Voices and the Ethics of Jewish Identity: Critical Reflections," appeared in *Kulturelle Grenzraume im Judischen Kontext* [cultural boundaries in a Jewish context], edited by Klaus Hodl.

CHAVA WEISSLER published "Women of Vision" in the Jewish Renewal Movement: *The Eshet Hazon* ['Woman of Vision'] Ceremony in the journal *Jewish Culture and History*. The essay also appeared in *New Age Judaism*, edited by Celia E. Rothenberg and Anne Vallely. She co-edited "Material Culture and Everyday Life" in the *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe*. Her other articles included "'Art is spirituality!': practice, play, and experiential learning in the Jewish Renewal Movement" in *Material Religion*; "Sarah bas (bat) Tovim" in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*; "Tkhines" in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jewish Life in Eastern Europe*; and "Jewish Life in Second Life: A New Research Frontier" in *2Life: The Jewish Magazine in Second Life*, an online publication at www.2lifemagazine.com, written under the name of her Second Life avatar, Taybe Abramovic.

Among her invited lectures were "Performing Kabbalah" at Ben Gurion University in Israel, "Performing Kabbalah" at Skidmore College, and "Performing Kabbalah/'Kabbalah' in the Jewish Renewal Movement" at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

ROSLYN WEISS published "The Piety of Socrates and Maimonides: Doing God's Work on Earth" in *Expositions* and "Natural Order or Divine Will: Maimonides on Cosmogony and Prophecy" in the *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*. Her book review of *Maimonides on the Origin of the World* by Kenneth Seeskin appeared in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*.

BENJAMIN WRIGHT coedited (with Albert Pietersma) *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, the first English translation of the ancient text since the mid-nineteenth century. He published "Ben Sira on Kings and Kingship" in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers*; Introduction and Notes to "Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach" in *The Westminster Discipleship Study Bible*; and "Transcribing, Translating, and Interpreting in the Letter of Aristeas: On the Nature of the Septuagint" in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Rajja Sollamo*.

Wright presented "The Epistle of Jeremiah: Translation or Composition?" at the Fourth International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Shime'on Centre for Jewish Studies in Pápa, Hungary; and "Response to Richard Horsley's Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea" and "Ben Sira on the Sage as Exemplar" at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature.

To obtain additional information concerning the Berman Center and its programs or to be added to our mailing or e-mail list, please contact

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BCJS Faculty 2008-2009

- **Laurence J. Silberstein**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *modern Jewish thought and culture*

- **Robert L. Cohn**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religious Studies, Lafayette College, *Hebrew Bible, history of Judaism, comparative religion, Jews in Poland*

- **Ruth Knafo Setton**, Writer-in-Residence, Berman Center for Jewish Studies and Dept. of English, Lehigh University, *Jewish literature*

- **Chava Weissler**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, Jewish folklore, early modern Judaism, contemporary American Judaism

- **Benjamin Wright, III**, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, Hebrew Bible, history and literature of early Judaism and Christianity

Affiliated Faculty Lehigh University

- **Bunnie Piltch**, Dept. of Modern Languages and Literature, *Hebrew language*

- **Roslyn Weiss**, Dept. of Philosophy, *Jewish philosophy*

Affiliated Faculty Lafayette College

- **Ilana Levy**, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Hebrew language*

- **Ilan Peleg**, Dept. of Government and Law, *Middle East politics*

- **Robert Weiner**, Dept. of History, *modern Jewish history*

Shaye Cohen to Serve as 2009 Master Visiting Professor at the Gregorian

Professor Shaye J. D. Cohen, Director of the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, will serve as the 2009 Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor in Jewish Studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Cohen is the eighth scholar chosen for this collaborative program, which is administered by the Berman Center. At the Gregorian, a flagship institution of the Roman Catholic Church, Cohen will teach a six-week course entitled "Covenant, Conversion, and Intermarriage: The Limits of Jewishness." The course is offered under the auspices of the Gregorian's Cardinal Bea Center for Judaic Studies.

Professor Cohen is the Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard. He is perhaps best known for his *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (1987; second edition 2006), which is widely used as a textbook in colleges and adult education. More recently he published *The Beginnings of Jewishness and Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism*.

Lehigh's Hillel Society Appoints First Full-time Director

In June, Seth Goren was appointed as the first full-time director of the Lehigh University Hillel Society, a student-run organization devoted to encouraging and strengthening Jewish values among the university's Jewish students. To Berman Center director Larry Silberstein, who served as a member of the search committee, "Goren's appointment is an important and long-awaited landmark in the development of Jewish life at Lehigh. His openness to diverse perspectives, his welcoming presence, and the programmatic expansion that he will undoubtedly help to generate provide a much needed complement to Lehigh's extensive Jewish studies program. For the first time since my arrival in 1984, Lehigh is in a position to effectively compete for prospective students who consider a supportive Jewish environment to be a priority. From my conversations with students, the positive effects of his presence are already being widely felt."

Goren was ordained as a rabbi at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in May 2007. Before his appointment at Lehigh, he served as a project consultant at Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning in Washington and as director of graduate student and young adult programs at the Hillel Jewish University Center in Pittsburgh. Goren also holds an M.A.H.L. from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, where he received several honors. After earning his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Pennsylvania, he continued at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. Prior to entering rabbinical school, he served as an attorney for several years with a major Philadelphia law firm.

Israeli Independence

continued from page 4

tive, concluding that the Arabs left for many reasons—because they were afraid of atrocities, because they were driven out by the Israeli military, or because they wanted to leave. Morris's multi-causal explanation shattered a myth that had prevailed in Israel and was taught in Israeli schools since 1948. "As we watch *Tekumah*," Silberstein explained, "it does not look all that controversial, but for Israelis in the 1990s it was extremely controversial."

Following the discussion of the various Israeli depictions of history, the audience was presented with scenes from Palestinian film maker Muhammad Bakri's 1948—*Naqba* (1998). In contrast to the previous films, Bakri's

film offered Palestinian perspectives. In *Naqba*, elderly Palestinian Arabs share their memories about the moment when they became refugees, losing their houses, their land, their towns or villages, and their dignity. Some described the brutality with which they were treated, while others discussed the fear of a massacre that led them and their families flee for their lives.

Professor Klar concluded the discussion by explaining that a narrative can feed conflict or, in rare instances, can help pave the way to reconciliation: "In 2008 the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has not yet reached the point where the two stories lead to a common understanding. Nonetheless, it is very important to understand the various narratives of the 1948 War, Israeli and Palestinian alike. This war lies at the root of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and much of what has happened in the Middle East since 1948 have been attempts either to undo the consequences of the war or to sustain them."

Israeli Visiting Professor

continued from page 4

unprovoked attack by the Amalekites when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, the Torah states "Remember what the Amalek did to you on your journey, after you left Egypt." To subsequent generations of Jews, including Jews of today, Amalek became the prototype of any nation that threatens the Jewish people.

According to Klar, a group that perceives itself to be a perpetual victim may blur the distinction between past and present. Thus, those whose culture emphasizes victimhood come to see themselves as perpetual victims of history. Such a self-perception impedes the realization by a group that they, too, may also be victimizers. In the case of Israelis, the evidence indicates that when the recent horrors of the Holocaust are interwoven into the long-standing emphasis on victimhood, it reduces the group's ability to view other groups as victims. It also makes it difficult for them to accept moral responsibility for the harm they inflict on other groups.

Dr. Klar, who received his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D from Tel Aviv University, has been a member of the TAU faculty since 1990. He currently holds the position of Associate Professor. In addition to Lehigh, Klar has also served as a visiting professor at the University of Kansas, Carleton University in Canada, and the University of Connecticut. In the last decade he has focused his research and teaching on issues relating to contemporary Israeli life.