



## *Amudim 1996-1997* A TRIBUTE TO JEWISH STUDIES FACULTY

*The University of Florida's Jewish Studies faculty represents a breadth of academic disciplines and research interests that is not easily matched. We at the Center for Jewish Studies are extremely fortunate to work with noted scholars in areas such as Jewish cinema, Hebrew linguistics, Israeli politics, Jewish-American fiction, and Modern Hebrew literature, to name but a few. In honor of their achievements, Amudim takes a closer look at our faculty and their particular areas of expertise.*

**G**erman historian Geoffrey Giles has long recognized the Holocaust as the major historical issue of the 20th century. In his early years at UF, Dr. Giles devoted only two course periods to the topic each semester due to time limitations and the subject's inherent unpleasantness. "I welcomed the suggestion of

the Holocaust Educational Foundation that I consider devoting an entire course to the history of the Holocaust," Giles says.

The course has become so popular that in 1996, class size was expanded to 150 and some students were still turned away. In 1997 Dr. Giles will lead a group of college professors on a study seminar to Eastern Europe death camps which will be the focus of a PBS documentary.

Maureen Turim of the UF English Department teaches "Jews and Cinema," an area of study emanating from her lifetime involvement with Jewish culture in the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East. Her book entitled Flashbacks and Film: Memory and History includes a chapter on "Holocaust Flashbacks: Trauma and Repression." This research sparked Dr. Turim's desire to

work with representations of Jews and Jewish culture on film. An area of special interest to her is the vitality of Yiddish and its virtual demise due to the Holocaust and widespread Jewish assimilation.

When not engrossed in the *Star Wars* trilogy or a host of other science fiction analyses, Andrew Gordon teaches Jewish-American fiction at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Gordon wrote his dissertation on the fiction of Norman Mailer at the University of California, Berkeley, and has also written about a number of other Jewish-American authors including Joseph Heller, Cynthia Ozick, Jerzy Kosinski, and Saul Bellow.

Certain faculty members developed an affinity for their field at an early age; for others the path was a bit more circuitous. Ken Wald, for example, says that as a child he "memorized election results and baseball statistics with the same enthusiasm."

His fascination with politics continued throughout his undergraduate and graduate education. As a political scientist, Dr. Wald developed a specialization in the impact of religion on politics (*see interview, page 4*). In fact, the political behavior of American Jewry remains at the top of his research agenda.

Sheldon Isenberg planned to attend a dual program at Columbia University and at the Jewish Theological Seminary in

*(continued on next page)*



*The Jewish Studies Faculty (names listed on p. 2)*

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# Fall 1996 Lecture Series

## Yehuda Amichai



Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai

The Center for Jewish Studies was extremely honored to host eminent Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai for a lecture and poetry reading on September 18, 1996.

Born in Wurzburg, Germany, Yehuda Amichai emigrated with his parents to Palestine in 1935. He served in the British Army in World War II and afterward, in the commando units of the Haganah. He saw active service in the Israeli War of Independence, the Sinai Campaign, and the 1967 "Six-Day War."

Mr. Amichai taught in primary schools, high schools, and at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

He has been a guest writer and professor at the University of California at Berkeley, New York University, and Yale, and has participated in numerous international poetry festivals. A prolific author of ten books of poetry, Amichai's other writings include radio plays, novels, and short stories.

## Benny Morris

Dr. Morris, an authority on modern Israeli history, was the Center's visiting Israeli professor for the fall term 1996. On October 23 he spoke on "New Perspectives on Modern Israeli History," which provoked a lively dialogue among audience members.

Benny Morris was born in 1948 in Ein HaHoresh, Israel, and raised in Jerusalem and New York. He received a B.A. in history and philosophy from Hebrew University in 1973 and a Ph.D. in Modern European History from Cambridge University in 1977.

From 1978 to 1991 Dr. Morris was a journalist and editor for the *Jerusalem Post*. He returned to academia in 1985 as an Associate Member of St. Antony's College, Oxford. Since that time, Dr. Morris has held fellowships at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. and at the Davis and Truman Institutes of Hebrew University.

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## *(TRIBUTE continued from page 1.)*

order to become a rabbi. But his mind quickly changed during freshman year after experiencing a "disinterest in Seminary courses and the growing conviction that the rabbinate was not the career for me." His answer? A joint major in religion and philosophy.

Seminars with professors Jacob Taubes and Susan Sontag sparked Dr. Isenberg's interest in Gnosticism, leading to a Harvard Ph.D. in New Testament and Early Christianity. Even so, his dissertation work was in Rabbinics and he has worked in Jewish Studies throughout his career, often focusing on ancient and modern Jewish mysticism. To complete the cycle, in 1996 Dr. Isenberg received *smicha* (ordination) as a rabbi.

Galia Hatav had a difficult time choosing her field because she enjoyed all the subjects she studied!

Settling on Hebrew linguistics and philosophy, Dr. Hatav noticed that she mainly chose courses on the philosophy of linguistics, so she pursued this subject in her graduate studies. Dr. Hatav developed a Ph.D. thesis based on a verbal system theory which she applied to biblical Hebrew. She has been working in both fields, general linguistics and biblical Hebrew, ever since.

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*Photo, page one: Row one (foreground); Maureen Turim, Galia Hatav, Melissa Aubin, Stefanie Siegmund. Row two; Kenneth Wald, Warren Bargad, Melvyn New. Row three; Avraham Balaban, Yosef Yariv. Not shown: Dora Friedman, Geoffrey Giles, Andrew Gordon, Sheldon Isenberg, Allan Lehmann, James Mueller, Miriam Peskowitz.*

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# Price Library of Judaica

A new home for 1996-1997

**Robert Singerman**

*Jewish Studies Bibliographer*

It was, as they say, a “moving experience.” We reported in this space last year about the renovation of Smathers Library and the necessity for the Price Library of Judaica to relocate its collection and staff for the duration. Happily, the move into the Education Library in Norman Hall went smoothly under the direction of professional library movers.

The Judaica library’s service operations and offices were quickly reestablished and the computerized catalog, truly a life-support system in any library, was up and running once the required wiring was installed. The staff of the Education Library, headed by Suzanne Brown, has been exceedingly gracious and accommodating as our host until our anticipated return to Smathers Library in December, 1997.

The Price Library now holds in excess of 55,000 volumes, boosted by gifts and purchases from around the world. In addition to visiting researchers who make use of our collection, out-of-town faculty and other patrons routinely borrow our uncommon volumes through interlibrary loan or request copies of articles from our extensive journal collection. The library’s holdings of Hebrew publications from Israel and elsewhere are unrivaled in the southeastern United States.

The Jewish Studies bibliographer sees to it that the most important Israeli research literature and creative writing are not only acquired soon after publication but also catalogued and on the shelf soon after receipt. New books in English and other western languages are also captured through automatic shipments from our principal domestic jobber.

Other titles are identified for acquisition by scanning reviews and notification slips, publishers’ catalogs and announcements, offers from booksellers, and searching the major library databases. It is not unusual for us to obtain elusive pamphlets, research reports, and community histories, seemingly not held by other libraries, as evidenced by our contribution of original cataloging for these titles to the OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) database, one that is international in scope. The net result of this detective work is that an enviable collection supports UF’s academic programs in Jewish Studies and, by extension, other programs in the humanities and social sciences.

Thanks to an enthusiastic response to our mail fundraising campaign in the spring of 1996, we hope to maintain our collection and expand it by adding videos on Holocaust themes. Thank you one and all for your support and donations throughout the years. The gift by Leonard and Rhoda Wolf in honor of their granddaughter Leslie Brooke Scheinberg, an entering freshman at the University of Florida, was an especially thoughtful tribute capping off a successful campaign.

## **UF Jewish Studies Instructional Staff**

Melissa Aubin

*Introduction to Judaism*

Warren Bargad, Director

*Modern Hebrew Language and Literature*

Avraham Balaban

*Modern Hebrew Language and Literature*

Dora Friedman

*Hebrew*

Geoffrey Giles

*History of the Holocaust*

Andrew Gordon

*American Jewish Literature*

Galia Hatav

*Hebrew, Hebrew Linguistics*

Sheldon Isenberg

*Jewish Mysticism, Classical and Modern Judaism, Women in Judaism*

Allan Lehmann

*Hasidism*

James Mueller

*Hebrew Scriptures, Judaism and Christianity*

Melvin New

*The Modern Jewish Novel*

Miriam Peskowitz

*Rabbinic Judaism, Gender and Judaism*

Stefanie Siegmund

*History of the Jewish Family, The Jews of Florence, Modern Jewish History*

Maureen Turim

*Jews and Cinema*

Kenneth Wald

*Religion and Politics*

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# *An AMUDIM Interview:* **Professor Benny Morris**

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**T**he Center welcomed Dr. Benny Morris, a Truman Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as distinguished guest lecturer for the Fall 1996 semester. Dr. Morris taught *The Arab-Israeli Wars* to UF undergraduates and *Israeli Secret Wars* at the graduate level. He is a leading authority on modern Israeli history, and in 1997, will teach at the Ben-Gurion University in Beersheba.

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*Amudim:* You spent 13 years at the *Jerusalem Post*; were you always interested in being a journalist?

*Morris:* I fell into it. Well, it's true that I was interested in newspapers. My Ph.D. dissertation dealt with the British press in the 1930's. So I'd always been into newspapers but it's true I hadn't intended to go into journalism — it was at the back of my mind rather than the forefront. But the job was available.

*Amudim:* Did you write about political issues?

*Morris:* Most of what I did was political reporting.

*Amudim:* Who was the most interesting person you ever interviewed or met?

*Morris:* There was a woman poet called Zelda. She was an ultra-Orthodox Jew. I interviewed her before she died. She began to write poetry late in life and was really a fine poet. She was quite an interesting character.

*Amudim:* Did you leave the profession because you were burned out?

*Morris:* It's true that was the main reason. I think I felt I was wasting my time in journalism. Journalism is a superficial profession. I'm not saying it doesn't affect things, it probably does — in Israel less than some other countries perhaps. What a journalist does is essentially superficial. He goes and interviews somebody, writes down what the guy says, covers this subject, that subject, never really knowing very much about the subject, and moves from one thing to the next. But he has to, otherwise he doesn't produce. I got tired of the superficiality and I got tired of the profession. As it worked out, this happened while the *Post* was in decline because of a change in ownership.

*Amudim:* Do you think a majority of Israelis support the peace process?

*Morris:* Most Jewish Israelis voted for Netanyahu. Netanyahu won by a razor's edge — but among Jews he had an eleven percent advantage. That says something. It doesn't mean that all those who voted for Netanyahu are against the peace process. I assume a large portion of them are [for it]. But everybody wants peace on certain terms; either without Israel or without the Palestinians.

The question is whether they support peace which involves the compromises that can lead to peace. And the same applies to Netanyahu. He also wants peace, but if he's unwilling to make the compromises which produce it, then it's quite possible he won't make any advancements towards peace and may in fact move the process into reverse again.

*Amudim:* What do you see happening in the future for Israeli-Palestinian relations?

*Morris:* It's difficult to tell. There are some people in Israel who believe that the peace process is irreversible — so many foundations have been laid so solidly that things will just move at a certain pace — either faster or slower. With somebody like Netanyahu, they will move slower, with a Labor government faster, but things are inevitably moving in the direction of some great Israeli-Arab reconciliation in general and Israeli-Palestinian in particular.

*Amudim:* How is teaching at an American university different from teaching in Israel?

*Morris:* What I can say about the general academic community in the two places is that everything is much smaller in Israel. There are only five or six universities in Israel. It's compressed and pressured, whereas here, one gets the feeling of much more space and in some ways, freedom. I assume you have a greater academic freedom here in many ways, especially in the fields that concern me. In Israel, because the country is so small and the academic community is so small, everything interacts. People are under all sorts of pressures from the academic world that probably don't exist here.

*Amudim:* I have to ask: How did you enjoy your semester in Gainesville?

*Morris:* I enjoyed it very much. It's a relaxing town with a lot of nice people.

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# SPECIAL REPORT

## UF Fulbright Scholar Visits Israel

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**Dr. Kenneth Wald,**  
*Department of Political Science*

**T**he Center for Jewish Studies is fortunate to have many distinguished lecturers on its staff who have traveled and lectured in Israel. Dr. Wald was kind enough to share with us his recent experience as a Fulbright Scholar at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

*Amudim:* Why did you choose Israel for your Fulbright work?

*Wald:* My interest in teaching in Israel was largely due to the enthusiasm of a former Israeli Fulbright who taught at the University of Florida, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov of the Hebrew University. Yaacov's friendship and enthusiasm were decisive in my choice.

*Amudim:* What spurred your fascination with Israeli politics while you were there?

*Wald:* At the Hebrew University, I found myself working among the world's leading authorities on Israeli politics. They were expert by virtue of academic standing, of course, but also based on experience in government, the military and various political movements. Discussions at lunch and coffee break seemed inevitably to focus on contemporary politics and I exploited their expertise to help me understand better what was going on around me. It also helps that there is superb academic literature in English about Israeli affairs and English-language news sources. Thanks to these various resources, I was able to acquire enough grounding in Israeli politics to begin my own teaching and research on the subject.

*Amudim:* How do Israeli and American politics differ? Any similarities?

*Wald:* There are some surface similarities in politics between the two countries and Israel is often accused of slavishly imitating American politics because the United States exerts such prestige. For example, Israeli elections have become much more Americanized with the advent of party primary elections, the direct election of the Prime Minister, and the use of American-style campaign techniques.

Nonetheless, the two major differences are more striking. First, Israeli politics is focused on matters of life and death instead of secondary concerns about tax rates and government programs. Israelis are more much more informed and interested about politics because they understand the connection between public affairs and their own lives. There is a passion and energy to political conflict in Israel that is largely lacking in the United States.

Second, one encounters Israelis who have lived through the significant events in the nation's short history. Imagine being able to talk directly to Americans who participated in the founding of the United States or people who could recall the Civil War era. That's what it's like in Israel because there are so many "veterans," a term for people who have lived there since the state

was founded or even earlier. Their memories make history come alive.

*Amudim:* How large (or small) a role does religion play in Israeli politics?

*Wald:* Religion is an important factor in Israeli political life in all sorts of ways. Even if the conflict between Israel and the Arab world (including the Palestinians) isn't fundamentally about questions of faith, religion defines the competing sides and religious language is often used to mobilize mass support. That is true for the Arab world, which sometimes calls for holy wars and the "liberation" of Jerusalem, but it is also true in Israel where the right wing has conferred sacred status upon the West Bank and some extremists even justified the Rabin assassination according to a warped version of Jewish law.

Domestically, Israel is regularly shaken by conflicts involving religion. These controversies sometimes involve questions over where to draw the line between religion and government — a compelling issue in a Jewish state — and equally settle disputes over the relative status of Orthodox and non-Orthodox forms of Judaism. At the moment, for example, there is an ongoing war over whether or not to close a particular Jerusalem street on the Sabbath and a potentially more serious proposal by an Orthodox party to deny Israeli citizenship to people converted abroad by non-Orthodox rabbis. There are an increasing number of scholars who think that the clash between religion and secularity will become as dangerous to the future of the state as the current national conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

*Amudim:* What was it like teaching at the Hebrew University compared with UF?

*Wald:* The typical Israeli student has completed military service and taken a post-military year sabbatical to see the world. As a result, they are older, more mature, and more settled. Because they may be married and usually work to earn a living, the campus had more of a commuter feel to it than UF. While this may make University studies more peripheral in their lives, it is more than offset by a greater enthusiasm for the topic and a higher level of cosmopolitanism.

*Amudim:* Why should American students study in Israel?

*Wald:* American students should study abroad — anywhere — to develop broader understanding of the world and their place in it. Israel is particularly attractive because it is small, informal, very friendly, and easy to accommodate if one only speaks English. Israel is also a convenient gateway to much of the world.

*Amudim:* How can our community learn about Israeli politics?

*Wald:* From time to time, I teach an Israeli politics course at UF. Students can also access the Israeli site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.israel.org>), read the English language Israeli press (the daily *Jerusalem Post* or the biweekly *Jerusalem Report*), and attend the Israeli programs sponsored by Hillel, the Gainesville Jewish Appeal and the Center for Jewish Studies.

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# Late Breaking News

## *Faculty and Alumni Update*

**Andrew Gordon.** In addition to teaching Jewish-American Fiction this spring semester, Dr. Gordon's essay "Herzog's Divorce Grief," appears in Saul Bellow and the Struggle at the Center, ed. Eugene Hollahan (New York: AMS Press, 1996).

**Sheldon Isenberg.** Professor Isenberg served as acting chair of the Department of Religion this past year. He is currently working on an edited volume of essays entitled "The Ideal in World Religious Perspective." An article entitled "God and Evil in Judaism" is in press. During the summer of 1996, he received rabbinical ordination from Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. As part of his community service, Dr. Isenberg also chairs the board of directors of ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal and is educational consultant for the Spiritual Eldering Institute.

**Yosef Yariv.** A visiting lecturer from Israel, Dr. Yariv spent sixteen years in the Israeli Air Force teaching math and electronics. He earned his Bachelor's degree at UF and spent three years as an engineer with the Kennedy Space Center where he won an award for electronic design innovations. This is his first year teaching Hebrew.

**Avraham Balaban.** Dr. Balaban became the chair of the Department of African and Asian Languages and Literatures last August. His recent article about two main characters in A.B. Yehoshua's *Mr. Mani* has been included in a book titled Mr. Mani, edited by Nitza Ben-Dov.

**James Mueller.** Dr. Mueller was recently awarded the Sassoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism Grant for a project relating to the anti-Judaism of early Christian apocryphal material. He was also appointed to the editorial board for the series "Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature" to be published by Walter de Gruyter (Berlin, New York). In addition, at the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, he presented a review of Text and Context: An Introduction to the Old Testament.



*Maureen Turim*

**Melvin New.** After a year's research leave on a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, Dr. New has returned to UF. In Spring 1997 he is teaching an English Honors course using the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas to read the poetry of Paul Cèlan. Both are Jewish. Professor New has also been invited by the scholarly journal The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation to edit a future issue on the subject of "Levinas and the 18th Century." New's two-volume edition of Laurence Sterne's sermons was published in May 1996 by the University Press of Florida. His edition of Sterne's Tristram Shandy will be published this summer by Penguin Classics.

**Stefanie Siegmund** came to the Center and the History Department from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York during the fall of 1995. In May of that year she was invited to present a lecture on the subject "Family, Community, and Jewish Identity in Early Modern Tuscany" at an



*Stefanie Siegmund*

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international conference held at Northwestern University. In June she delivered a paper on women, gender, and ghettoization at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women. Both papers develop themes of the book she is writing on the Jews of late 16th century Florence. Dr. Siegmund's chapter "Life in the Ghettos" was published in the fall of 1996 in an Italian volume on the history of the Jews of Italy (Turin: Einaudi, 1996). The courses she has taught include a survey of medieval Jewish history and seminars on Italian Jewish history; the history of the Jewish family; and the social, economic, and religious background of the Italian Renaissance.

**Warren Bargad** and his co-translator, Stanley F. Chyet of Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles, are travelling to Israel this summer to complete the final stage of a second volume of *Israeli Poetry: A Contemporary Anthology*. The three-year project is comprised of 300 Hebrew poems by 10-11 Israeli poets. The trip is partially supported by a grant from the Department of English.

**Heidi Barron** hails from Boca Raton and graduated from UF with honors in 1990. She received a B.A. in Liberal Arts with a major in Jewish Studies. In 1994, Heidi received a Master's in Jewish Letters from the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion in



*Heidi Barron*

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## **1997 GRADUATES**

Hearty congratulations and best wishes to all of our graduating seniors.

Jerusalem and Cincinnati, Ohio. She was ordained in 1995 and served as a student rabbi in Dubuque, Iowa; Muncie, Indiana; and Lima, Ohio. Rabbi Barron is serving in her first full-time position at Temple Israel in Tulsa, Oklahoma as Assistant Rabbi/Educator.

**Sara O'Donnell.** After graduating in 1991 with her B.A. in English and Jewish Studies, Sara spent a year at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. Upon completion of that year, she entered rabbinical school at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York. Sara is currently a fourth year rabbinical student and is on a leave of absence from the Seminary this year to train as a hospital chaplain at The Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. She is engaged to Jeremy Adler, also a University of Florida graduate. After they are married in September, Sara will continue her rabbinical school program by studying at the Seminary's affiliate school in Jerusalem. Sara expects to be ordained a Conservative rabbi in May, 1999, and plans on a career in health care chaplaincy.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

Studying in Israel presents one of the most exciting and rewarding opportunities for a student of Hebrew language and Jewish culture. Thanks to our generous benefactors at the Norman Shulevitz Foundation, this spring seven hard-working students will receive stipends toward study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University. *Mazel tov* to the following scholarship recipients:

**Shana Auerbach, Todd Hurst, Lauren Levine,  
Loren Robins, Dara Saltzman,  
Alison Schaffer, Lori Siegal.**

### **Jewish Studies Majors:**

**Mara Addison, Michael Feiner,  
Cindy Goldberg, Alan Haspel, Stacey Lasky,  
Harold Levy.**

### **Jewish Studies Minors:**

**Rachel Cohen, Rachel Harman,  
Richard Oelberger, Rebecca Tropp.**

## Fall Semester Courses

Beginning Modern Hebrew 1  
(4 sections)

2nd-Year Modern Hebrew 1  
(2 sections)

3rd-Year Modern Hebrew 1  
Biblical Hebrew  
Hebrew Scriptures  
Jewish Mysticism  
The Jews of Florence

## Spring Semester Courses

Beginning Modern Hebrew 2  
(4 sections)

2nd-Year Modern Hebrew 2

3rd-Year Modern Hebrew 2

Biblical Mishnaic Hebrew 2

2nd Year Modern Intensive Hebrew

Modern Jewish Literature

Introduction to Hasidism

Introduction to Judaism

Jews in Cinema

Jewish American Fiction

Philosophy of Judaism

Readings in Classical Hebrew Literature 2

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