

Spring 2011



Volume 3, Issue 1



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## From the Director's Desk

Friends:

On behalf of Columbia's Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies - the university's central location for the study, teaching, and discussion of Jewish life, history, and culture— I'm delighted to write once more and share details of the recent work we've been doing here with you.

Our greatest joy here, and the source of the most excitement, has been the renewed focus and energy on undergraduate students. Building on an around our newly approved Special Concentration on Jewish Studies, a first at Columbia, we've been adopting a number of exciting and innovative programs to bring students in and get them involved. One of the most successful programs is our undergraduate fellowship, which provides support for students to study or work in Israel over the summer and gives them the opportunity to attend special events with leading scholars and thinkers on Israel- related matters during the academic year. The program is now in its second year and is growing by leaps and bounds. In addition, a new program we began this fall, which brings in journalists and scholars to talk about Israel and the Middle East, has drawn dozens of students to the Institute's seminar room. It's exciting to see!

Students aren't just learning *outside* the classroom. The Institute's support of visiting faculty, ranging from professors of Jewish music to scholars of Kabbalah and Jewish-Muslim relations in the Middle Ages, has helped to supplement courses taught by our own stellar faculty. The work by both faculty and visitors are only a small cross-section of the intellectual activity that's going on at Columbia. Our seminars, public lectures, conferences, and colloquia are all part of our effort to ensure that Columbia remains what it has been for decades—a leading voice in the field of Jewish studies.

We're always thinking about how to build on what we've achieved so far, to create more activity and excitement for students, professors, and the community. We'd love to hear your suggestions, ideas, and insights about how to best accomplish that, and we hope you'll join us in the effort.

*Sincerely yours,*

*Jeremy Dauber*

Atran Associate Professor of Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture  
Director, Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies



From the screening and discussion of Joseph Cedar's film, *Campfire*. Moderated by Professor Uri Cohen.

## Celebrating our Students: Undergraduate Israel Fellows

The Institute's undergraduate fellows program combines support for study, service, or internship work during the summer in Israel and an invitation-only educational opportunity during the academic year.



Aminadav Grossman

### Researcher for Avinoam Rosenak, PhD at Hebrew University

"I gained exposure to the way academic research is conducted, translation and writing experience in Hebrew, and knowledge in areas relevant to my program of study." I am interested in Philosophy, Religion and considering the special concentration in Jewish Studies."



Raviv Markovitz

### Hebrew Language Immersion at Tel Aviv University

"I was able to gain a greater understanding of Israeli perspectives through conversations with many types of Israelis. As a jazz musician in New York City, I experienced the jazz scene in Israel, too. I am studying Political Science at Columbia, focusing on International Studies, and [...] living in Israel this summer has given me more direct experience and hands-on knowledge to bring back to my classes at Columbia.



Jill Meltzer

### Courses at Hebrew University Knesset Intern w/MK Anastassa Michaeli

"By interning in the Knesset, I learned a lot about politics in Israel. [As a Middle Eastern studies major, the internship] helped me gain a broader understanding of the political environment in the Middle East. The classes I took at Hebrew University also gave me a new perspective on Israel and its international counterparts. I learned a lot of valuable information, I am truly stunned by all the knowledge I gained."



Benjamin Frieling

### Jerusalem Municipality Intern Course at Technion

The internship at the Environmental Department on Air Pollution involved the new light rail system. The course, "Engineering for Developing Communities included hands-on fieldwork in Bedouin communities and the construction of solar panel & wind turbine, which [went beyond the academic, it] demanded the physical skills to build an alternative energy source generator."



Baila Hall

### Beren Life Sciences Center of Hebrew University Intern

"I interned in a stem cell lab run by Dr. Eran Meshorer. The lab is exploring the opportunities in neurodegenerative disorder research opened up by the utilization of induced pluripotent stem cells, specifically relating to Huntington's Disease and Machado-Joseph Disease. I was exposed to an entire area of recent scientific development and discovery that I did not know very much about previously! I also learned valuable skills and procedures that will be useful to me as I pursue a career in scientific research. The background that I garnered throughout my past two years at Barnard helped me have a basis of understanding for the research that I was privy to be a part of in Prof. Meshorer's lab. As well, the information about stem cells, genetics and iPS cells that I was taught in the lab this summer has opened up new areas of knowledge for me to explore."

## Spring 2011 IJJS Faculty Course Sampler

Jewish Immigration 1881-1924

### Gur Alroey

Emphasized the common denominator between those who came to Palestine in the Early 20th century to those who came to the Americas in the same period

Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages

### Mark Cohen

The history of the Jews in the medieval Islamic world, focusing on historiographical issues

Israeli Art of War-Theory/Practice

### Uri Cohen

Mapped and examined the figures, textual and visual, that form the Israeli cultural discourse of war.

Jews and the City

### Rebecca Kobrin

Compared Jewish life in six cities spanning from Eastern Europe to the United States during the 19th century.

Judaism, Jewishness, Modernity

### Jonathan Schorsch

Explored some of the major statements of Jewish thought and identity from the 19th century into the 21st.

Ancient Jewish Texts

### Seth Schwartz

Close reading in the original languages of ancient Jewish texts.

Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah

### Sandra Valabregue-Perry

Studied the interactions between two major intellectual trends in Jewish History, the philosophical and the mystical.

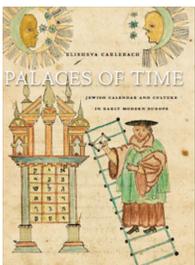


Eric Lawrence

### Yiddish Summer Program at Tel Aviv University

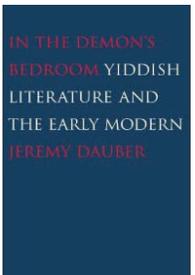
As "an intended Yiddish major, the experience with Yiddish language and culture studies will help supplement my knowledge and enable me to be a better Yiddish student."

## Noteworthy News: Recent IIJS Faculty Publications



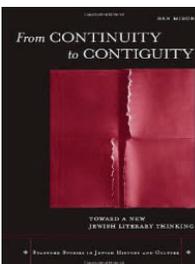
### **Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe**

**Elisheva Carlebach** – This book looks into a previously unexamined dimension of Jewish life and culture: the calendar. Jews, like all minority cultures in Europe, had to realign their time-keeping to accord with the new Christian calendar. In calendars, we see one of the central paradoxes of Jewish existence: the need to encompass the culture of the other while retaining one's own unique culture.



### **In the Demon's Bedroom: Yiddish Literature and the Early Modern**

**Jeremy Dauber**—This important study is the first to offer a sustained look at a variety of early modern Yiddish masterworks—and their writers and readers—paying particular attention to their treatment of supernatural themes and beings.



### **From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking**

**Dan Miron** begins this study by surveying and critiquing previous attempts to define a common denominator unifying the various modern Jewish literatures. He argues that these prior efforts have all been trapped by the need to see these literatures as a continuum.

## Visiting Faculty:

**Gur Alroey** *Professor, Land of Israel Studies, University of Haifa*

### **Course: Jewish Immigration 1881-1924**

Dr. Alroey's research focuses on Jewish history and immigration, more specifically the early Zionist movement, the conflict and the Mandate period. He is the author of the book *Immigrants: The Jewish Immigration to Palestine in the Early Twentieth Century* (2004).

**Mark Cohen** *Khedouri A. Zilkha Professor of Jewish Civilization in the Near East, Princeton University*

### **Course: Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages**

Professor Cohen is a well known historian of the Jews in Arab lands in the Middle Ages. In 2010 he was the first winner of the Goldziher Prize for scholarship promoting better understanding between Jews and Muslims, awarded by Merrimack College's Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations.

**Sandra Valabregue-Perry** *Rabin Post-Doctorate Fellow, Institute for Israel & Jewish Studies*

### **Courses: Readings in Kabbalah and Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah**

Sandra Valabregue-Perry is a scholar and a painter. She was a visiting scholar and lecturer at UCLA and Yale University, and the Dean Ernest Schwarc Visiting Eminent Professor in Jewish Philosophy at Queens College. She is the author of *Concealed and Revealed: "Eyn Sof" (Infinity) in Theosophic Kabbalah* (2010).

## HIGHLIGHTS from Spring 2011

**Moulie Vidas**

*Scholars, Reciters and the Making of Talmud*

**Sandra Valabregue Perry**

*The Concept of Infinity and the Rise of Kabbalah*

**David Shneer**

*Through Soviet Jewish Eyes*

**Joseph Cedar**

*Interview with Uri Cohen following a screening of acclaimed film Campfire*

**Pawel Maciejko**

*Jacob Frank and Jesus Christ*

**Mark Cohen**

*Maimonides Code of Jewish Law and the Economic Realities of the Islamic World*

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*The institute provides a vibrant and stimulating environment for discussion on campus among students, faculty, alumni, and others. Lively intellectual discourse occurs not only within classroom settings, but in other venues as well. The institute interacts with other institutes and organizations on campus to engage as many individuals as possible on topics of importance to Israel and Jewish studies.*

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