

THE PROGRAM IN JEWISH
STUDIES
AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Annual Report
(2003-2004)

Jack M. Sasson
Program Director

June 30, 2004

117 Alumni Hall
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<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/>

SUMMARY

The Program in Jewish Studies was launched in August 2002 when, after broad consultation with reviewers, relevant University faculty, and officials, Provost Nicholas Zeppos named Jack M. Sasson, The Werthan Professor of Judaic and Biblical Studies (Divinity School), as the program's director during its three-year construction period. (See <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/JS%20Review%2002-03.htm>, Annual Report, 2002-2003.)

SECOND YEAR UNDERTAKINGS

Faculty development

- Filled a senior position in History and in Jewish Studies (David Wasserstein, lastly from Tel Aviv University)
- Invited Sasson Somekh (Emeritus, Tel Aviv University) as visiting faculty for Fall 2005, to offer courses on modern Arabic and Judeo-Arabic literatures

Curriculum development

- Created a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies within the Graduate Department of Religion
- Opened a number of graduate courses with Jewish Studies content to qualified seniors
- Stimulated the creation of a number of courses in Jewish Studies by Vanderbilt faculty members
- Continued discussion about joint ventures with Peabody

Program development

- Continued stimulating awareness about JS through faculty lunch- and supper-seminars
- Created a student awareness about JS, via the web, brochures, open-house and advertisement
- Issued a favorable report on CET's *Jewish Studies in Prague*
- Presented lectures and prepared for a Maimonides Conference in Fall 2004

THIRD YEAR PLANS

Faculty development

- *To fill a position in Sociology of Jews and Judaism in the Americas*
- *To continue the Visiting Professor program*

Curriculum development

- *To launch a Junior Year Abroad program (Prague, Jerusalem)*
- *To stimulate the production of more JS courses within and without Vanderbilt*
- *To develop with Peabody a Concentration in Jewish Services*
- *With Peabody College, to create such programs as Master of Education in JS, with multiple foci*

Program development

- *To continue seminars for faculty and launch equivalent forums for undergraduates*
- *To broaden public interest in JS through lectures and conferences*
- *To move into new quarters in Buttrick Hall*

FULL REPORT

The Program in Jewish Studies was formally launched in August 2002, when Provost Nicholas Zeppos appointed Jack M. Sasson to a three-year term as its director and commissioned a committee to shape the Program. During the first year of work, signal progress was made in creating a curriculum, filling the first of three faculty appointments, establishing a community of interest in Jewish Studies and forging communication within and without Vanderbilt. The second year of work carried this program further, with the institution of a Master of Arts in Jewish Studies within the Graduate Department of Religion; the hiring of a senior colleague, Professor David Wasserstein; and the planning of initiatives with Peabody College.

IN ITS SECOND YEAR: JEWISH STUDIES AT VANDERBILT

STEERING COMMITTEE AND ITS WORK

In its second year of operation, the Program and its operations were directed by a faculty committee made up of the following:

Dan Cornfield (Professor in Sociology, A&S)
Ellen Goldring (Professor of Education Policy and Leadership, Peabody)
Lenn Goodman (Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities, Dept of Philosophy)
Leah Marcus (Edwin Mims Professor of English)
Beverly Moran (Professor of Law; Professor of Sociology)
Michael Rose (Associate Professor of Composition, Blair School)
Helmut Smith (Martha Ingram Professor of History)
Martina Urban (Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and of Jewish Studies)

This committee met three times each semester, making major decisions, as detailed below, on faculty and curriculum development, reviewing applications for MA candidates, approving lectures, evaluating course proposals submitted by Vanderbilt faculty, assessing program initiatives, and helping steer the program toward fuller integration at Vanderbilt.

The Director takes this opportunity to thank the committee membership for its wonderful participation in all aspects of the Program; but especially so to the four members who are rotating off the committee.

- *For 2004-2005, the Director proposes the following committee:*

Robert Barsky (Professor of Comparative Literature, of French and Italian)
Idit Dobbs-Weinstein (Associate Professor of Philosophy)
Amy-Jill Levine (Carpenter Professor of New Testament Studies, the Divinity School)
Leah Marcus (Edwin Mims Professor of English)
Beverly Moran (Professor of Law and of Sociology)
Michael Rose (Associate Professor of Music, Blair)
Marcy Singer-Gabella (Research Assistant Professor-Teaching and Learning, Peabody College)
Martina Urban (Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Jewish Studies)
David Wasserstein (Professor of History; Professor of Jewish Studies)

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

During its formative period, the Program worked well with Arts and Science and the chairs in its departments to establish the status of appointments:

1. Appointee will hold two titles, one connected with JS, the other with the host department.

2. While all personnel actions (tenure and promotion) are vetted within the host department, through its Director or its appointee, JS has a voting presence.
3. Search committees will be co-chaired by a delegate from JS and from the host department, with equal representation from both bodies.
4. Appointees will offer courses equally divided between JS and the host department, all courses being cross-listed.

The Second Faculty Appointment, with the History Department

The first faculty search concluded in the Spring '03 with the hiring of Dr. Martina Urban as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and of Jewish Studies. The second search was pursued jointly with the History Department, with the following advertisement:

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY. Jewish History. The History Department and the Program in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, invite nominations and applications for an experienced scholar in Jewish history and culture at a tenured associate or full professor level. The appointment will be for a scholar with a distinguished record in research and teaching. Although we welcome applications in all fields of Jewish history we have a strong interest in any of the following areas: modern Middle East (with proficiency in Hebrew and Arabic); medieval/early modern (any geographic area); modern Eastern Europe; or the diaspora into the Americas.

Residing in the History Department, the successful candidate will also hold an appointment in—and contribute instruction to—the interdisciplinary Program in Jewish Studies. This would be the second of three appointments in the Program, adding to Vanderbilt's present strengths in Jewish Studies. The first of the three posts, in Modern Jewish Thought, was filled in the Department of Religious Studies.

A search committee, co-chaired by Helmut Smith (History and Jewish Studies) and Sasson (Jewish Studies), included Lenn Goodman and Leah Marcus (Jewish Studies), Frank Wcislo and Matthew Ramsey (History). Three candidates were brought to campus and proved to be almost as equally compelling. The search committee recommended to the History Department and the Jewish Studies Committee the appointment of **David Wasserstein**, currently a senior scholar at Tel Aviv University's Department of Middle Eastern and African History, as Vanderbilt's Professor of History and Professor Jewish Studies.

In coming here, Professor Wasserstein will strengthen the History Department by adding a historian of Islam, of Judaism in Islam, and of the medieval world. He will enhance the range of scholarship and teaching on Jewish topics and will tighten links among a number of colleagues now in Religious Studies, Philosophy, and Classics departments, as well as in the Divinity and Law schools. Dr. Wasserstein is a well-published scholar with much experience in organizing international conferences and seminars. Among his most recent projects is an oral history of Bukharian Jews. The committee has every expectation that Dr. Wasserstein will continue international cooperation with Vanderbilt as his base.

Equally attractive is Professor Wasserstein's broad record as a teacher, on all levels of study. His first course for Jewish Studies in the Fall of 2004 will be "The Jews of Islam: From Muhammad through the Crusades," exploring the Jewish experience under Muslim rule, the changing legal status of Jews, their economic activities, their religious developments, their cultural contributions, and their reaction to the Crusades. In Spring '05, he is likely to teach courses on Jewish historiography and on Muslim Spain.

For 2004-2005: The Third Search

- *The JS committee has held many discussions on the nature of the mid-level appointment available to Jewish Studies. Three relevant areas quickly emerged: Sociology of Judaism, Post-antiquity Hebrew literature (including, of course, modern Israeli literature), or Jewish Law (so including rabbinics, but*

also beyond). The chairs of Sociology (Gary Jensen) and Comparative Literature (Earl Fitz) have reported the unanimous interest of their respective faculty in hosting a Jewish Studies appointment. Talks with the Law School (where presumably an appointment in Jewish Law might serve best) are currently on hold until a new Dean is appointed.

- Provost Zeppos and Dean McCarty have supported splitting the single mid-level position into two tenured-track posts, both on the junior level, thus enriching faculty support for Sociology, Comparative Literature, as well as Jewish Studies. The Dean commits now to request approval for a search during the Fall 2005 for a junior, tenure-track position in Post-Rabbinic Hebrew Literature, to be hosted by Comparative Literature, Jewish Studies, and possibly also an established department. The exact specialty for this position will be determined after wide consultation during the coming academic year.
- For Fall 2004, pending final approval, there will be a search to fill a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in the **Sociology of Jews and Judaism in the Americas**. The advertisement will read as follows:

The Department of Sociology and the Program in Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University are jointly recruiting for a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of Sociology and of Jewish Studies for 2005 (pending administrative approval). Candidates must have expertise on the sociology of Jews and Judaism in the Americas. Other areas of specialization are open, although we have particular interest in such areas as: race, class, gender; religion, religious identity; diaspora, ethnicity, immigration; work; health and mental health. Applicants should demonstrate promise of outstanding research and teaching. They should submit a letter of interest in the position, curriculum vitae, examples of recent scholarship, information on teaching effectiveness, and three letters of reference. All materials must be received by October 1, 2004. Vanderbilt is an Equal Opportunity-Affirmative Action Employer and women and minority candidates are encouraged to apply. Send all materials to Search Committee Chair, Department of Sociology, 2301 Vanderbilt Place, VU Station B Box 351811, Nashville, TN 37235-1811. Information on the Department of Sociology (College of Arts and Science) and e-mail addresses can be obtained on the Internet at <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/sociology>. This would be the third appointment in Jewish Studies, adding to Vanderbilt's present strengths; for information and email addresses, see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies>

Visiting Faculty Appointment

By inviting scholars from beyond Vanderbilt, the Program hopes to bring expertise that is not at hand, locally or regionally, and so to broaden the repertoire of courses available to students as well as to enrich faculty discourse. Dean McCarty has championed the cause of this particular enterprise and the Program wishes to acknowledge his contribution to it.

During Fall 2004, Dr. Nina Warnke, currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Texas, Austin, will teach courses on Yiddish culture and literature. Her visit is co-sponsored with German Studies. For the Program, Dr. Warnke will teach *Yiddish Culture in America: From Immigrants to the Klezmer Revival*, exploring the meaning of Yiddish culture for immigrants and how it is memorialized and transformed today. For the German department she will offer, *Germans, Jews, Theater, and Society*, examining the discourse about Jews in German-speaking countries from the Enlightenment to today through an analysis of dramatic texts and the history of their theatrical productions.

- For the Spring 2005, Jewish Studies and Comparative Literature will team up to host a semester visit by Sasson Somekh. Professor Somekh, born in Iraq and recently retired from Tel Aviv University, has just published his memoirs (in Hebrew, *The Last Arab Jew*, a translation of which is under consideration at our VUP), in which he uses his life's trajectory as a paradigm for cultural dislocation, but also as a yearning for a lost past. Earlier in his career, Somekh became the premier interpreter of Arabic literature, writing very profoundly about Naguib Mahfuz, the Nobel Laureate from Egypt, and

so bringing him and his writing to the attention of the western world. He has had many honors and has taught at many Universities in Europe and Israel.

(See the following article in Haaretz

<<http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=37740>>).

There is much hope that this joint sponsorship of visiting scholars will continue in the future. Within JS, discussions are still developing on a two-year post-doctoral program that calls for applications on a broad array of JS expertise. Alliances with diverse A&S departments will be pursued and opportunities to attract a senior scholar for briefer visits not be neglected.

Enlarging the Tent

Although Jewish Studies cannot claim credit for it, it is pleased to welcome the appointment in German Studies of Barbara Hahn. She comes to us immediately from Princeton where she has been Professor since 1996. Her teaching and research concentrate on the history of German-Jewish culture, the theory of literary genres, intellectual history, and women authors. Dr. Hahn is currently working on a book about diverse sites of knowledge (university, salons, intellectual groups, journals, etc.) and continues to collect, edit, and publish letters from the Berlin salons around 1800, especially those of Rahel Levin Varnhagen (1771-1833), who occupied a unique place in German intellectual history, inspiring the works of writers of the Romantic and the Young Germany schools. Her presence here will strengthen Vanderbilt's enviable resources on the European intellectual history and will surely enhance the Program's graduate component.

Course Enhancement

The Program's Jewish studies resources continue to increase with the appointment of new faculty members. But it has developed other means by which to further develop these opportunities.

Development of JS courses through current Vanderbilt faculty

Following a pattern began a year ago (see the Annual Report for 2002-2003) Sasson continued to interest colleagues in enriching their teaching repertoire, either by creating new courses or enlarging the Jewish Studies content of old ones. One such created course was Konstantin Kustanovitch's, *Russian Jewish Culture: History of Survival and Search for Identity*, taught Fall 2003.

In September 2003, via the office of the Dean, a broadcast was sent out to Vanderbilt tenured or tenured-slot colleagues seeking proposals for courses with Jewish studies contents. It offered a stipend of \$5,000 (plus benefits) to be paid during the summer following the completion of the initial offering of the course. (Alternately, the same amount minus benefits could be treated as a research fund, to be used within five years of the fund's creation.) The response was very heartening. The Program's committee vetted a number of proposals and accepted the following courses that will be offered in Spring 2005:

- Professor Robert Barsky (Comparative Literature, French & Italian): *Einstein, Language, and Politics in Jewish America*. A survey of three different but overlapping themes: science (particularly Einsteinian physics), linguistics (and anthropological approaches to the study of language) and fiction (and literary theory) to uncover the structural, mathematical, psychic, poetic, or biological basis of language.
- Professor Thomas Schwartz (History): *Power and Diplomacy in the Modern Middle East*. Examination of the international history of the 20th century Middle East, with an emphasis on the role of the United States in the region.
- Professor Gregory Barz (Blair School of Music): *Music and Identity in Jewish Traditions*. This course focuses on music and identity in global Jewish cultures. Provides an introduction to the cultures, contexts, and historical development and structure of Jewish communities

throughout the world and considers the ways that music is adopted, adapted, and transformed when performed by individual Jewish communities.

In addition the following course is accepted but is not yet scheduled:

- *Dr. Paul Miller (Spanish & Portuguese): Latin American and Caribbean Jewish Writers. This course shows that concerns and themes of Jewish writers in Latin America and the Caribbean, (such as isolation and insularity, immigration and assimilation, displacement and exile) are resonant with intellectual currents of the areas.*

During the forthcoming academic year, JS will increase efforts to facilitate the creation of JS courses through targeted mailing and through personal contact, including colleagues at neighboring colleges and universities. It is likely that the course Adam Meyer of Fisk taught this past Fall, "Black-Jewish Relations in History, Literature, and Art," will be repeated in Fall 2005.

CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT

Undergraduate Program

The creation of a JS major and the reshaping of JS minor were primary objectives for the Program's first year. The new catalogue carries the full language of these curricula, and they are also available via the JS webpage <vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/curriculum.html#current>. From inspecting the list of courses currently available for students interested in JS, it will be obvious that much progress has been achieved, not just through the creation of new courses, but also because a number of colleagues have voluntarily enlarged the JS components of courses they already teach, making their inclusion in our roster possible.

For Seniors only

A very rich vein of classes was made available to undergraduates (of any major) when the Divinity School, via the Graduate Department of Religion, permitted a restricted number of qualified seniors to take courses normally not available to them. Such seniors must have better than a "B" average and must not be taking more than 15 hours a semester. (For a full listing, see <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/Grad-Undergrad%20Courses.html#Qualifications>>.)

Study Abroad: CET's Jewish Studies in Prague

The Program allows up to 9 elective hours for students wishing to study abroad, normally in their junior year. With the U.S. State Department discouraging travel in Israel, another option became desirable. As CET provides Vanderbilt with fine study abroad service (Italy and China), Director Sasson traveled to Prague to assess CET's *Jewish Study in Prague* program. Sasson met with students, audited some of the classes, conversed with the Prague faculty, and interviewed the Resident Advisor. He visited the facilities and experienced the Jewish context. His conclusion is that CET's program in Prague is a valuable resource that should be made available to our students; but also that some of its features will require adjustment.

- *The Program will join with the Director of Vanderbilt's Study Abroad program, Gary Johnston, to achieve formal acceptance of the program early in the coming academic year.*

Master of Arts in Jewish Studies

In Spring '04, the Program inaugurated a Master of Arts program, under the aegis of the Graduate Department of Religion. It requires 24 hours and may be pursued via various interdisciplinary methodologies, such as historical and literary studies, philosophical descriptions and analyses, and theological and ethical interpretations. For a full description, see <<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/MA-Info.html>>.

The course of study includes two tracks:

- *General M.A. in Jewish Studies* provides an opportunity for an individually crafted study of Judaism based on personal interest and goal. This is a fine vehicle for gaining a studied understanding of Judaism as a religious and cultural phenomenon as well as for developing insight on its role in human life and experience. Aside from permitting exploration of personal interests, this degree will strengthen credentials for those wishing to acquire degrees enhancing their teaching skills.
- *M.A. in Jewish Studies* addresses those who wish to sample graduate work in Jewish Studies, with the expectation that they might matriculate elsewhere in a doctoral degree. Students who apply for this degree can expect to deepen their preparation in Jewish studies and to strengthen their credentials for application to other programs.

The Program received a number of applications and this Fall will enroll two fine applicants, their tuition 85% covered by the GDR (70%) and by JS (15%).

CURRICULAR PLANS FOR 2004-2005

Undergraduate Programs

The JS committee has set a number of curricular objectives for 2004-2005. There are sure to be some adjustments to the major and minor as presently conceived, including the requirement that a Senior Seminar be taken. Especially deserving of attention is the crafting of clearer goals and contents for training and research electives in "Service Learning" (3 hours) and "Internship" (6 hours).

- *Majors currently can dedicate 3 hours to "Service Learning in Jewish Studies" or 6 elective hours to "Internship in Jewish Services." In the former, individual faculty members may include a non-traditional learning component (such as participation in community, religious, or state organizations) within their courses. A course currently slated for teaching in Spring 2005, Professor Barz's Music and Identity in Jewish Traditions, is likely to include such an idea.*
- *The Program is currently shaping a 6 hour **Concentration in Jewish Services** that gains much by tying together Jewish Studies, Human and Organization Development, and the office of Service Learning. Service Learning is a pedagogic tool in which JS majors and non-majors expand their knowledge though experiencing a diversity of learning opportunities via institutions in the local community. Students who would take advantage of this program are expected to fulfill, as a prerequisite, enrolling in at least 9 hours of HOD coursework.*

Graduate Program

- ***Master of Education in Jewish Education.** This potentially vital program develops from three conditions: the incomparable prestige of Peabody as a premier institution in the study and implementation of education, the steadily maturing Program in Jewish Studies, and the acknowledged shortage of qualified teachers in Jewish education, at all levels.*

The field of Jewish education has long suffered from a shortage of professional Jewish educators, many of whom have no formal training and even fewer have strong backgrounds in Jewish studies. In fact, the Commission on Jewish Education in North America has declared the building of the profession of Jewish education a most essential condition for improving Jewish education in North America. In Boston and Los Angeles, a program was recently launched to attract, train, inspire, and retain top-quality educators in Jewish day schools. This initiative does not include the South where in our cities, and in our smaller towns, the need increases but cannot yet be met.

Higher education institutions that serve the Jewish community (among them Spertus College in Chicago and Baltimore Hebrew College), do train Jewish educators; however, such institutions lack the capacity to meet the demand and, more importantly, they lack the research mission of premiere universities. Recently, some of our peer institutions have inaugurated Jewish Education programs, most notably at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and at New York University. These programs are attracting quality candidates wishing to earn a prestigious degree in Jewish Education. At Vanderbilt, we can offer as much or better, while at the same time serve the needs of Jewish education in the South.

The Program has held wide discussions with colleagues in A&S, at Peabody, and with local leaders in Jewish education to assess the viability of such an undertaking and to evaluate our resources. The gist is that we are within striking distance of creating a premiere program here. More deliberation will continue in the Fall.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Administration of the Program

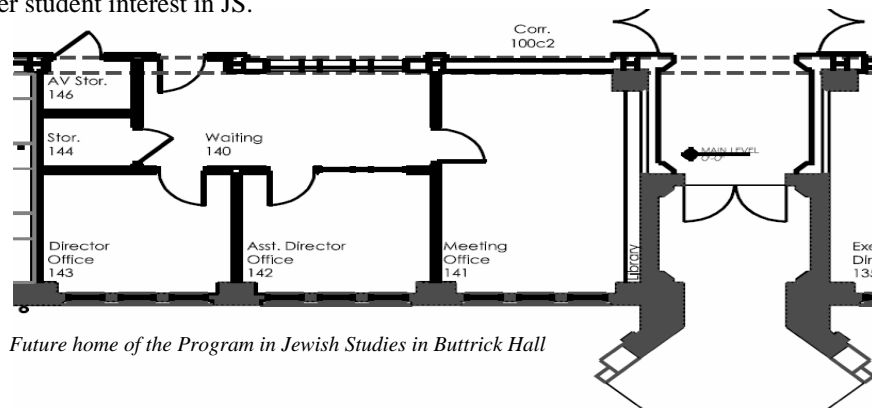
THE OFFICE

Toward the beginning of the new academic year, the Program crossed a major threshold when it hired its first full-time administrator. The Program is directed by a faculty member with teaching, research, and collegial duties. Normal office activities, that include responding to queries from students or outside callers, require the attention of a qualified resident administrator. In this endeavor, the Program was materially aided by Provost Zeppos, Nancy Falls, and Bonnie Parker.

Our administrator, a Nashville native who attended Vanderbilt briefly, brings over 15 years of managerial experience to the position. Under her management, the Program has developed a routine that had escaped it during its first year, when it relied on part-time service. With many interpersonal skills, she works with students and faculty on promoting the Program's goals, advertising courses, organizing information sessions, and facilitating JS faculty interaction; she coordinates outreach activities, including scheduling and promoting events and bridging communication with non-university units; she is maintaining a website that increasingly has become, for students and inquirers, the primary entry to the Program's curriculum, news, and schedule of events, and has produced and distributed brochures for majors and for MA candidates.

In late August, the Program moved to its new space at 117 Alumni Hall. It includes a cheerful Administration office and a rather cramped cubicle for the Director. (The last has proven useful when a Fisk professor teaching at Vanderbilt needed space to meet with students.)

The Program looks forward to moving into new office space in the refurbished Buttrick Hall, now scheduled for the Fall of 2005. The move will allow the office to hold a modest collection of publications to further student interest in JS.



Future home of the Program in Jewish Studies in Buttrick Hall

Faculty Supper- and Lunch-Seminars

The Program continued its series of faculty supper- and lunch-seminars inaugurated in its first year with a goal of fostering a community of faculty with interests in JS. The supper-seminars draw on Vanderbilt or regional faculty for their presentations while the lunch-seminars take advantage of visits by colleagues from other universities. Within circumscribed periods in mid-afternoon or early evening, participants schmooze, listen to a presentation, lunch or sup, and discuss issues of common interest. The following programs took place this year, all well attended.

Supper-Seminars

- September 15, 2003 – Michael Rose (Blair School of Music)
From the Synagogue to the Concert Hall
- January 26, 2004 – Lenn Goodman (Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Humanities)
Does Islamic Humanism Have a Future?
- March 23, 2004 – Robert Barsky (Professor of Comparative Literature, of French and Italian)
Inside Albert Einstein's Zionist Brain

Lunch-Seminars

- September 24, 2003 – Paul Mendes-Flohr (University of Chicago, Hebrew University)
Jewish Philosophy and Theology: Identical Twins or Rival Siblings?
- November 4, 2003 – Clive Webb (University of Sussex)
Mob Violence Against Jews and Mexicans in the United States
- February 4, 2004 – Julius Grey (McGill University Law School)
Judaism and Civil Rights

These programs will continue next academic year with the scheduling of two faculty supper-seminars per semester and at least one lunch-seminar, the latter depending on the good conjunction of fortunes.

Lectures

The Program gladly sponsors lectures, either on its own or with other departments. As JS and its scope become better defined in the minds of colleagues, the Program expects to receive an increasing number of proposals for co-sponsorship. The program has committed to contribute yearly to the campus Holocaust Series.

During academic 2003-2004, the Program has sponsored or co-sponsored the following lectures, all open to the public:

With the Divinity School

- Oct 23, 2003** Leonard Greenspoon (Creighton University)
Lost--And Found--In Translation: The Septuagint and the History of Jewish Bibles

With the University Research Council (URC)

- Nov 3, 2003** Clive Webb (University of Sussex)
"We Will Not Yield": Racial and Anti-Semitic Violence in 1950s Nashville

With the Schulman Center

- Sept 14, 2003** Dany Benshalom (Wingate Institute at Zinnman College)
Workshop in Israeli Folk Dancing
- Oct 10, 2003** María Rosa Menocal (Yale University)
The Ornament of the World How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain

With Philosophy

Feb 20, 2004 Richard Cohen (University of North Carolina, Charlotte)
Levinas: Ethics, Politics and Religion

With Spanish & Portuguese

Mar 25, 2004 Sílvia Planas Marcé (Nahmànides Institute for Jewish Studies, Girona)
Jewish Girona (Catalonia): A Flourishing Community in the Middle Ages.

Future lectures are in the planning, including presentations by Halina Goldberg (Indiana University) on the Polish context of Jewish music as well as other lectures with broad appeal. Sharper coordination is contemplated with the Schulman Center in sponsoring presentations that appeal beyond Vanderbilt.

Conferences & Occasions

With the Graduate Department of Religion, URC and other departments

Jan 12, 2004 **First Annual Hebrew Bible Symposium** on “*Does Biblical History Have a Future?: David as a Test Case for Historical criticism.*”

The conference was unusual in that it was developed and run by GDR graduate students. It included lectures that were open to the wider public, with responses by Vanderbilt colleagues and by graduate students. Among the formal presentations were:

- Baruch Halpern (Pennsylvania State University)
David in History or Not? Dating the Texts and the Recollections of Samuel

- Steven McKenzie (Rhodes College)
A Historian's Tools: Techniques for Painting a Portrait of the Historical David

With the Divinity School

March 28, 2004 “**In Celebration of Randall Falk: The Future of Liberal Judaism.**”

On this occasion, the program honored Rabbi Randall Falk of Temple Ohabei Shalom, who has been at the forefront of religious leadership in Nashville for many years. Rabbi Falk has taught at the Divinity, where he earned a Doctorate, and has made significant contributions to Jewish life in Nashville, the struggle for Civil Rights, community building among the increasingly diverse groups in the city, and in Jewish-Christian relations. A keynote was delivered by Peter Haas, currently the Abba Hillel Silver Chair of Religious Studies at Case Western Reserve University, but for a longer time a faculty member in Vanderbilt's Religion. His lecture “*The Future of Liberal Judaism*” is now posted on the web at < <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/jewishstudies/Haas%20Talk.htm> >.

The Program is currently preparing for distribution a pamphlet on the occasion.

- *In December 2003, the Program, in conjunction with the Divinity School Library successfully applied for a grant from the Library of America and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The funds will serve to develop programs about Isaac Bashevis Singer and his legacy, as part of the Singer Centennial celebration, “Becoming an American Writer: The Life and Works of Isaac Bashevis Singer.” Among the celebrations planned for the Fall is a public lecture by Robert King (University of Texas), a Yiddishist who knew Singer personally, entitled “Isaac Bashevis Singer: Personal Reminiscences.” There will also be a community family-oriented storytelling event.*

- *On November 14-15, 2004 (Sunday and Monday), the Program will join other sponsors (Vanderbilt Divinity School, Medical School, Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, and Department of Philosophy) in hosting a conference on “Maimonides and his Milieu.” The aim is to explore the background, cultural and intellectual environment, and the enduring influence of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, known in Arabic as Musa bin Maimun, in Hebrew as the Rambam, and in the West as Maimonides. He died on April 4, 1204, so 800 years ago.*

Seminars for students

The Program has adapted its faculty Supper-seminars format and held two such occasions, one with a visiting scholar, the other with members of the Program's faculty. Neither was particularly well attended; but there is hope that in the future better or more imaginative scheduling will make such occasions more attractive to undergraduates.

Sept 24, 2003 Paul Mendes-Flohr (University of Chicago)
The Future of JS

Apr 14, 2004 With Vanderbilt Professors
Open House: Questions and Answers.

- *The Program recognizes the importance of drawing the student's interest to the opportunities and the promise of JS and will experiment in developing a format that will be more attractive to students. The space in Buttrick Hall, where the Program moves a year from this Fall, might prove a more welcoming space in which to hold such occasions.*

TOWARD THE THIRD YEAR OF JEWISH STUDIES AT VANDERBILT

- *A cause for much celebration is the founding of **The Center for the Study of Religion and Culture (CSRC)**, with the mission to develop, promote, and increase interdisciplinary research at the intersections of religion and culture. The Program cannot but benefit by its presence, not just because it presages Vanderbilt's resolve to test issues of global significance, but because it affirms the commitment to diversity that was crucial to the creation of the Program in JS. Undoubtedly, the research projects, the graduate stipends, and the publication subsidy that **Center** sponsors cannot but give indirect support to the Program and its goals.*
- *As it enters its third year of existence, the Program has every reason to be hopeful about its presence at Vanderbilt. It continues to receive strong support from members of the administration and of the faculty members. It is integrating well within Vanderbilt and its many courses are being increasingly 'discovered' by undergraduates. The launching of sophisticated and innovative graduate programs does not seem too distant in the future.*
- *During its third year, the Program will also look for a new Director, as the term of office of the current Director comes to an end. Luckily, there will be no shortage of capable candidates.*

As was noted in last year's Annual Report, "the future of Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt, indeed, is bright." At this juncture, the glow is no less vivid.

COMMENTS WELCOME

As you finish reading this report, by all means consider emailing any comment, suggestion, encouragement, or even caution to the program's director at: <jack.m.sasson@vanderbilt.edu>

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