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“Kudos and thanks to Professor Harris from all of us at the Center for Jewish Studies for being a faithful shepherd and a lively guide.”

— Shaye Cohen, incoming Director

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Professor Shaye J.D. Cohen, Nathan Littauer Professor of Hebrew Literature and Philosophy will assume the directorship of the Center on July 1, 2006, succeeding Professor Jay M. Harris, who will assume the role of chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. Professor Cohen, who joined the faculty in 2001, will be the Center’s fifth director since its founding in 1978. Professor Cohen is a specialist in ancient Jewish history, culture, and law, who has written extensively on Jewish identity in the ancient world and beyond. He has extensive administrative experience, having served as Dean of the Graduate School and Librarian of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

This past year, Professor Cohen created a new Core class, “Literature and Arts C-70: From the Hebrew Bible to Judaism, From the Old Testament to Christianity,” which was one of the most popular courses in the college. In addition, he has taught “Jewish Studies 210 Seminar: From Pharisees to Rabbis,” “Jewish Studies 125 Seminar (formerly History 1091): Jewish History in the Second and Post-Temple Period,” “Jewish Studies 300: Reading and Research in Post-biblical Jewish Studies,” “Jewish Studies 123: Jews and Greeks, Judaism and Hellenism” and many other courses. He has also initiated a continuing seminar in Jewish Studies under the auspices of the Humanities Center.

All of us at the Center look forward to Professor Cohen’s creative leadership over the next three years.
All of us at the Center for Jewish Studies are grateful to Professor Jay M. Harris for his five years of service as Director of the Center (2001-2006). Under his leadership the Center has maintained its profile as one of the leading venues for Jewish studies in the United States.

Professor Harris arrived at Harvard from Columbia in 1989 and was appointed the first Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies in 1994. He is the author of two widely-praised books, *How Do We Know This? Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (1995) and *Nachman Krochmal: Guiding the Perplexed of the Modern Age* (1991) and numerous articles; he has also edited several volumes. Professor Harris is that rare scholar who is fully at home in the rabbinic texts of antiquity and in the history of the Jewish cultures of modern times.

As director of the Center Professor Harris presided over a cavalcade of visiting fellows, lecturers, and conferences. Each year our Starr Fellows program brings to Harvard a half dozen scholars, mostly from Israel but also from Europe and across the USA, to pursue research on a stated theme. Under Professor Harris’ leadership these past five years have seen a rich diversity of themes and a particularly rich assortment of visitors. The theme for our Starr Fellows in 2002 was “Popular Religion in Early Modern Times”; in 2003 “Modern Biblical Scholarship and Jewish Belief.”; in 2004 “Unity and Diversity in Jewish Literatures”; in 2005 “Biblical Exegesis from the Second Temple Period through the Middle Ages.” In 2006 there was no set theme for the Starr Fellows; the Center hosted instead seven scholars early in their careers who could put a post-doctoral fellowship to good use. Aside from our Starr Fellows, the Center also hosted numerous lecturers and visiting professors. In October 2004, the Center sponsored a conference on the work of Maimonides in honor of the 800th anniversary of his death. That conference was co-sponsored by the Shazar Center for Jewish History of the Hebrew University.

Kudos and thanks to Professor Harris from all of us at the Center for Jewish Studies for being a faithful shepherd and a lively guide.

During these past five years Professor Harris has also been active in campus life, serving on a variety of academic committees and being appointed Master of Cabot House. He leaves the Directorship of the Center but is not going far away; he is the incoming Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures. We wish him success in his new position.

THANK YOU, JAY M. HARRIS

BY SHAYE J.D. COHEN

PHOTOS BY MARCUS HALEVI
History Rachel Greenblatt will be joining the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and begin teaching at Harvard in the fall 2006 semester. Greenblatt specializes in early modern Jewish history and the history of Jewish women. Her Hebrew University of Jerusalem doctoral dissertation is entitled, “A Community’s Memory: Jewish Views of Past and Present in Early Modern Prague.” Applying innovative methods of historical research, Greenblatt analyzes traditional textual sources as well as materials resources such as gravestones, and examines the long-neglected history of women in the Jewish community. A graduate of Cornell University, Rachel Greenblatt has also studied at the University of California, Berkeley, before pursuing her doctorate in Jerusalem.

Greenblatt will offer four courses at Harvard in the upcoming academic year. In the fall semester, she will offer a Freshman Seminar focusing on Jewish burial grounds in Europe and North America and an undergraduate survey course on Jewish society and culture in Early Modern Europe. In the spring, Greenblatt will offer a course on gender roles and the role of gender in Jewish history and an advanced course on Jewish autobiography, with special emphasis on women’s autobiographies. Some of Greenblatt’s courses will be listed by the program in the Study of Women, Gender and Sexuality (WGS), marking an interdisciplinary expansion of the Jewish Studies offerings at Harvard.
Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies and offered two courses: History 1419, “History of the Jews in Poland” and Jewish Studies 133, “The Beginnings of Hasidism: Seminar.”

MICHAEL OREN, historian and Senior Fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem, our third Nachshon Visiting Professor of Modern Israel Studies, taught a lecture class and a seminar: Near Eastern Civilizations 111, “Power, Faith and Fantasy: The United States in the Middle East, 1776 to 2006” and Jewish Studies 124, “The History of Zionist and Israeli Diplomacy: Seminar.”

PHOTO BY MARCUS HALEVI
RABBI JOSEPH LEVI, Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Florence, Italy, was our eleventh Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow during the 2006 spring semester. The Silver Fellowship, established in memory of Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver ’48, enables an active congregational rabbi to spend a semester at Harvard engaged in full-time research.

While at Harvard, Rabbi Levi worked on a study entitled “On Kabbalah and Science: Italian Jewish Thought Between Tradition and the Challenge of Modernity.” This research examines “the manifestation of the conflict between tradition and modernity through the spectrum of the discussions of the attitudes toward Science and Kabbalah in Italy,” from the 15th through 20th centuries.
This marked the twelfth year of the Harry Starr Fellows in Judaica at Harvard. Founded with a generous bequest from the estate of Harry Starr ’21, former president of the Lucius Littauer Foundation, the Starr Fellowship supports a group of scholars from around the world to gather at Harvard to engage in full-time research in Judaica.

Normally, the Starr Fellowship is organized around a designated subject area and open to scholars at different phases of their academic careers. This year the Executive Committee decided, instead, to invite only recent Ph.D.s, but not to restrict the subject area within the field of Jewish studies. At the Starr Seminars, Starr Fellows presented their current research and elicited lively discussion between the Starr Fellows, other visiting scholars, and faculty and students from Harvard and other area universities. Several Starr Fellows expressed their gratitude for the critical support that the Fellowship offered at the start of their careers: providing opportunities to receive feedback at the Starr seminars, access to the many resources at Harvard, and time to prepare research for publication.

Thursday, February 23, 2006
Marc Caplan
“The Hermit at the Circus: Der Nister, Yiddish Literature, and German Culture in the Weimar Period”

Thursday, March 2, 2006
Michela Andreatta
“Hebrew Religious Poetry of the Baroque Period in Italy: Chananyah Eliakim Rieti’s Elegy for the Death of his Wife”

Thursday, March 9, 2006
Marcus Pyka
“Respectability: Jewish Bourgeoisie and Identity Politics in 19th Century Germany”

Thursday, March 16, 2006
Haim Gertner
“‘Holy Gravestones:* The Beginning of Archaeological Excavations in the Old Jewish Cemeteries in Eastern Europe”

Thursday, March 23, 2006
Barry Wimpfheimer
“Birth Control, Wet Nursing and Rabbinic Legislative History”

Thursday, April 6, 2006
David Wacks

Thursday, April 27, 2006
Geoffrey Herman
“The Messiah’s Magical Donkey: Uncovering Persian Influence in the Bavli”

Thursday, May 4, 2006
Shulamit Furstenberg-Levi
“The Boundaries between ‘Jewish’ and ‘Catholic’ Space in Counter-Reformation Florence as Seen by the Convert Yohanan Medici”
Rachel Neis took a less than direct route to pursuing her lifelong love of Jewish Studies and her dissertation topic “Vision and Visuality in Rabbinic Culture.” After studying in various women’s seminaries in Jerusalem and gaining a law degree at the London School of Economics, Rachel earned an M.A. in the Philosophy of Religion at Boston University, and then enrolled in the Ph.D. program at Harvard.

Rachel describes her dissertation topic with great enthusiasm. “In much of the scholarship, Rabbinic Judaism was usually seen as anti-iconic.... But the more I studied the texts, the more I saw that the rabbis were deeply concerned with the visual, its meaning and its deployment in the making of identity and religious practice.” She suspects that this prevalent historiographical tradition was imposed later as an effort to differentiate the Rabbinic tradition from Christian tradition.

In her dissertation, Rachel examines “the great exegetical, legal and narrative energy exerted by the rabbis in an effort to regulate and rabbinize sight and its objects. She shows how this varies across different spatial and temporal conditions in Rabbinic Palestine and Persia.

Rachel raves about the terrific resources Harvard has offered, including the extensive collections at Widener library and the diversity and excellence of academic offerings, from courses to colloquia and lectures. She has also been very grateful for the professionalism, support and encouragement of her academic advisors.

Now completing her dissertation, Rachel has just accepted a job in the History Department and Judaic Studies Program at the University of Michigan, where she will teach about Judaism in late antiquity and Rabbinic culture.
GRADUATE SUMMER STUDY AND RESEARCH AWARDS 2006:
The Center for Jewish Studies offered 15 fellowships to graduate students for summer research and study in 2006.

Elitzur Bar-Asher (NELC), Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship, to study German at the Goethe Institute in Berlin
Cory Crawford (NELC), Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship, to participate in an archeological dig in Israel
Jessica Fechter (NELC), Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship, to study Yiddish at the YIVO Summer Program in New York
Aryay (Ari) Finkelstein (NELC), Anna Marnoy Feldberg Fellowship, for summer study in Israel
David Flatto (NELC), Edward H. Kavinoky Fellowship, to conduct dissertation research in Israel
Rachel Gordan (NELC), Anna Marnoy Feldberg Fellowship, to study Yiddish at the YIVO Summer Program in New York

Jennifer Heilbronner (NELC), Anna Marnoy Feldberg Fellowship, for summer research at Harvard

Jewish Studies, to travel to Bucharest and Vienna to conduct senior thesis research

Laura Togut, Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, to attend the Vilnius Summer Program in Yiddish

Sara (Sunny) Yudoff, Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, to attend the Vilnius Summer Program in Yiddish

Amy Zelcer, Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, to conduct senior thesis research

HARVARD-HEBREW UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP
A $12,000 fellowship jointly sponsored by Harvard University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to enable a Harvard graduate student or recent graduate to study in the field of Jewish studies for a year at the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University.

Shira Kieval, Harvard College class of 2004
Kandace Geldmeier, Harvard Divinity School, MTS program
Michael Spalling, Harvard Divinity School, MTS program
The French speak French, the Germans speak German, the Chinese speak Chinese, and the Ashkenazi Jews speak Yiddish. Or at least some of them still do.

Many a college experience includes exploring various cultures and even studying a new language. With hard work and a little finagling, such a student may get the chance to go to France, Germany, or China, and put their hard-earned skills to good use. But as a Yiddish student, it’s not so easy to come across people who still speak Yiddish, let alone be put in a situation where we’d have to rely on our language skills. There is no Yiddish Land we can travel to in order to have the kind of language immersion experience that so many other students have. But—if only for a day—we can come close.

“Yiddish-Tog” or “Yiddish-Day” is an event put on by Yugntruf, the Yiddish youth organization. In the same spirit as their annual Yiddish-Vokh (Yiddish-Week), the event is more or less just as it sounds: one day in which everything is entirely in Yiddish. As part of our Yiddish language program, with the support of the Friends of the Center for Jewish Studies, we were given the opportunity to travel to New York City where in the Workmen’s Circle building we joined other Yiddish speakers of all ages, fluencies, and backgrounds for this event. There we listened to speakers, had discussions, sang, danced, laughed, learned—and every word spoken was Yiddish.

As students of the language, understanding everything was at times a challenge, but a welcome one. And when we found that we could understand not only each other, but the culture itself in a much deeper way than can be done in English alone, it was wonderfully rewarding. True, it was only a roomful of Jews and only for several hours. But even so, for that one day, it really did feel like we were in Yiddish Land.

TO BE YIDDISH FOR A DAY

BY LAURA TOGUT

“...WE LISTENED TO SPEAKERS...DANCED, LAUGHED, LEARNED—AND EVERY WORD SPOKEN WAS YIDDISH.”

—LAURA TOGUT

The Center for Jewish Studies would like to congratulate those students who graduated in 2005 and 2006 in Jewish Studies:

ARYAY (ARI) FINKELSTEIN
A.M., JEWISH STUDIES
CHANAN GAFNI
PH.D., JEWISH STUDIES
JESSICA MUNITZ
A.M., JEWISH STUDIES

HARVARD COLLEGE:
AYELET LEBOVICZ
(SOCS, NELC)
SARA (SUNNY) YUDKOFF
(NELC)

CONGRATULATIONS!
During the spring semester, 2006, Professors Carol J. Oja and Kay Kaufman Shelemay co-taught a seminar at Harvard titled “Before West Side Story: Leonard Bernstein’s Boston.” The class focused on Bernstein’s formative years, beginning with his birth in 1918 and extending through his early adulthood in Boston. The class, which was supported in part by funds from the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard, gave particular attention to the cultural and musical influences on Bernstein as a member of the Boston Jewish community.

During class sessions, students conducted interviews with Bernstein’s family and associates, including his daughters Jamie and Nina, and his brother, Burton Bernstein. They also interviewed childhood friends and classmates, including Sid Ramin (who grew up in Roxbury with Bernstein and, of course, went on to become one of the orchestrators of West Side Story), Harold Shapero (a composer friend from Harvard days), and Jonathan Sheffer (who reconstructed Bernstein’s student composition “The Birds”). The class, which also divided into research teams that worked outside of class to search out new archival and ethnographic sources, made particularly energetic efforts to locate and interview Bernstein’s other surviving childhood acquaintances, in order to preserve memories that would otherwise be lost.

In addition to tracing Bernstein’s pathway through Boston educational institutions ranging from Roxbury elementary schools and the Boston Latin School to Harvard, a primary focus for seminar inquiry was Congregation Mishkan Tefila, the Bernstein family synagogue. Situated in Chestnut Hill, where it relocated from Roxbury in the 1950s, Mishkan Tefila is one of the oldest Jewish congregations in the Boston area and has a fascinating history, especially in music. The longtime Mishkan Tefila organist and choir director, Viennese immigrant Solomon Braslavsky, had a profound personal and musical impact on the young Bernstein, much of which students documented through materials preserved in the Mishkan Tefila archive.

In March, the class took a bus tour to Bernstein sites around the Boston area, including Temple Adath Sharon, located south of Boston in Sharon, where the Bernstein’s had a summer home. Through members of Temple Adath Sharon, the class was able to locate a number of elderly individuals who had spent childhood summers with Bernstein in Sharon and had participated in musical performances Bernstein organized. All of these interviews and other research materials have been compiled by members of the class; tapes and transcripts are being archived in the Harvard Music Library.

The seminar was timed to dovetail with “Leonard Bernstein—Boston to Broadway,” a major international festival that will take place at Harvard for October 12-14, 2006. For it, students have helped to curate an exhibit on “Boston’s Bernstein,” which will be mounted in the Music Library, and selected research from the seminar will be presented at a festival symposium. Carol Oja and Judith Clurman (Juilliard School) are co-directors of the festival.

For more information: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ofa/bernstein/
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

CORE CURRICULUM
Tel Aviv: Urban Culture in Another Zion
Modern Jewish Literature
The Book of Job and the Joban Tradition
“If There is No God, All is Permitted”: Theism and Moral Reasoning

FRESHMAN SEMINARS
Ancient Interpretive Traditions and the Great Stories of the Bible
Who Is a Jew? Jewish Identity and Identifiability in the Modern World

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
Saul Bellow’s Planet
Mysticism and Literature: Seminar

GOVERNMENT
International Politics in the Middle East

HISTORY
Jewish History in the Second and Post-Temple Period
The Jews in Muslim and Christian Spain
History of the Jews in Poland

NEAR EASTERN LANGUAGES AND CIVILIZATIONS
Biblical Archaeology
Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures
Biblical Interpretation
Myth and Myth-Making in the Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern World
Jewish Apocalypticism
Readings in the Septuagint

Biblical Theology: Hebrew Bible
History of the Study of the Hebrew Bible: From the Renaissance to the Present: Seminar

POSTBIBLICAL JEWISH STUDIES
Modern Jewish Thought
History vs. Literature in Modern Jewish Texts
Beginnings of Hasidism: Seminar
The History of Zion and Israeli Diplomacy: Seminar
Deconstruction and Questions of Jewish Identity: Seminar
Guided Readings in Jewish History From Pharisees to Rabbis: Seminar
Reading and Research in Postbiblical Jewish Studies

HEBREW LANGUAGE COURSES
Elementary Classical Hebrew
Intermediate Classical Hebrew
Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew
Elementary Modern Hebrew
Intermediate Modern Hebrew
Advanced Modern Hebrew
Contemporary Israeli Culture: Seminar
The Layers of Hebrew in Texts about Jerusalem: Seminar
Hebrew for Academic Reading: Seminar

HEBREW LITERATURE AND HISTORY COURSES
Introduction to Rabbinic Literature
Problems in the Literature, History, and Religion of Israel: Seminar

Literature of Israel: Seminar
The Binding of Isaac (Aqedah): Seminar
The Song of the Sea: Seminar

YIDDISH
Elementary Yiddish
Intermediate Yiddish
Advanced Yiddish
The Yiddish Poem Itself
The Yiddish Novel Under Tsars and Stripes

THE STUDY OF RELIGION
Judaism: The Liturgical Year

ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
The Hispanic and the Judaic after 1492: Seminar

HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL
Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures/ Old Testament
Reading Midrash

HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
Jewish Law: The Legal Thought of Maimonides
Talmudic Law for Beginners

HARVARD EXTENSION SCHOOL
Modernity and Tradition in Jewish Literature
The Bible and Politics

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