



Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies



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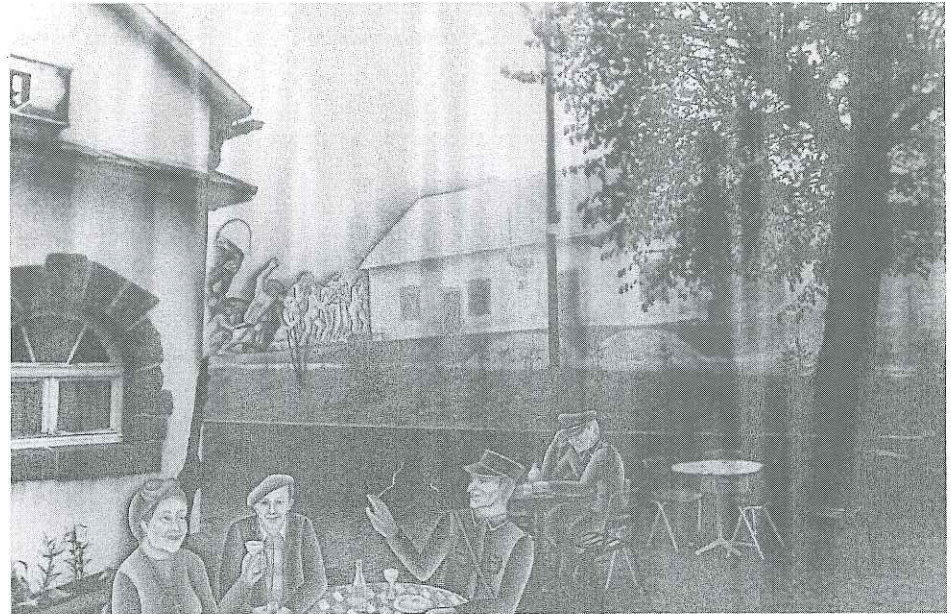
Newsletter

Lehigh University
Bethlehem, Pa.

Berman Center and LU Art Galleries Plan Year 2000 Project

"The Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light," an imaginative and controversial art exhibit by internationally known artist **Judy Chicago**, with photography by **Donald Woodman**, opens at Lehigh's Zoellner Arts Center in February 2000. The exhibit, which uses the Holocaust as a prism to view other victim experiences and to explore the human condition in the modern world, will serve as the cornerstone of the College of Arts and Sciences Year 2000 project, "The Holocaust: Critical Reflections on Modernity." Organized by the Berman Center and the Lehigh University Art Galleries, the overall project is aimed at stimulating a critical assessment of the values and institutions of modern life at the end of the 20th century. It will culminate with the Berman Center's biennial conference May 21-24, 2000, which will examine the problems and limitations of representing the Holocaust in art, literature, film, and monuments.

Eight years in the making, "The Holocaust Project" exhibit takes visitors on a journey into one of the darkest periods of modern history through a series of works including a tapestry, stained-glass pieces, and large-scale tableaus that combine painting and photography. While researching the Holocaust prior to starting the artwork, Judy Chicago began to perceive that "the unique Jewish experience of the Holocaust could be a window into an aspect of the unarticulated but universal human experience of victimization. The problem was how to express that while honoring the particularity of the Holocaust as a historical event... We wanted to invite the viewers to take a journey with us and to understand, as we did, how learning about the Holocaust helps us clearly see the world in which we live, a world disfigured by power and violence."



Banality of Evil / Struthof from "The Holocaust Project"

Chicago and Woodman present their art in a series of themes that point to some often overlooked consequences of human progress. These include such subjects as the sanctity of life, the unethical uses of technology, the development of weapons without regard for human consequences, and the necessity of exercising knowledge and power responsibly. Chicago, a pioneer in the feminist art movement, devotes special attention in the exhibit to the role of women in the Holocaust and to the rarely discussed relationship between antisemitism and antifemale discourse.

Several courses on the Holocaust will be scheduled to coincide with the exhibit, not only at Lehigh, but also at Lafayette College and Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales. Discussions are underway to integrate the multitude of issues raised in "The Holocaust Project" into the curriculum of Lehigh courses in art, Africana studies, English, international relations, history, journalism, philosophy, religion studies, sociology,

theater, and women's studies. In addition, the Berman Center and the LU Art Galleries are planning an evening lecture and a student seminar by Judy Chicago, and a series of gallery lectures by invited speakers that will cover such topics as the role of women during the Holocaust, the relationship of the Holocaust to other acts of genocide, Holocaust art and museums, and the history of the Holocaust.

Judy Chicago is best known for *The Dinner Party*, a multimedia installation that represents the symbolic history of women in Western civilization through a series of thirty-nine place settings, set on a triangular banquet table. This monumental project has been seen by approximately one million viewers during its fourteen exhibitions. Her other works include *The Birth Project*, a series of images celebrating birth and creation, and *Powerplay*, a groundbreaking series about men. She has published four books including *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist*.

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Jews and Modernity Topic of Littauer Lectures

Richard I. Cohen, Professor of Modern Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, presented two lectures at Lehigh sponsored by the Berman Center and the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation. A specialist in modern Judaism, he is currently a fellow at the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is working on the first full-length biography of Naftali Herz Wessely. Cohen is the author of *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe*.

In an afternoon program, Cohen discussed some seminal issues in the history of Western European Jewry in the latter part of the 18th century, comparing the lives and writings of three leading figures of the Berlin Jewish Enlightenment—Naftali Wessely, Moses Mendelssohn, and David Friedlander. All were pioneers in the effort to formulate an effective synthesis of Jewish and European ideas and values and to create a world view and value system that would bridge the gaps between Judaism and modernity. Each in his own way through his writings, Cohen said, challenged traditional society.

In an evening lecture accompanied by slides, Cohen illustrated the Jewish past from a visual perspective. While it is commonly believed that Jews shied away from figurative images due to their observance of the Second Commandment, he demonstrated their constant interest in self-representation, concerns with self-identity, and preoccupation with the social and ideological uses of visual material. Showing examples of how Jews were portrayed in the modern period, he interpreted the images not only as artistic creations, but as historical statements that provide a unique view into the world of the creators and the depicted Jews.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the rabbinic image was used almost as an icon or talismantic amulet in Orthodox Ashkenazic Judaism. At a time when traditional Judaism was being challenged by modernity, the images provided

something tangible with which to identify. These popular lithographs or photographs of rabbis often included a formal inscription in Hebrew and the vernacular to identify and glorify the rabbi or traditional amuletic phrases, such as "this is a protection of the newborn and his mother." At the end of the 19th century, composite pictures of various rabbinic figures from different periods and persuasions began to appear. These collections often included fabricated images of major rabbinic figures of the Middle Ages. It was a way, Cohen contended, of mobilizing support for the cause of orthodoxy by asserting that all Jews are part of the same tradition.

In Cohen's opinion, this approach could not reach the acculturated Jews who had moved far away from that tradition, and in the mid-19th century in various countries, Jewish artists began to paint Jewish topics using the Jewish past as a source of cultural inspiration. In particular, he highlighted the work of Moritz Oppenheim and Isidor Kaufmann. The German painter Oppenheim (1800-1882) did an important series, "Scenes from the Traditional Jewish Family Life," that left an imprint on generations of German Jews. He portrayed Jewish religious life as a warm family experience that easily blended with social responsibility and national loyalties.

Kaufmann (1853-1921) also used the Jewish tradition as a source of inspiration and clearly sensed the power of nostalgia. He traveled extensively to the shtetls of Eastern Europe in an attempt to recapture the way of life of traditional Jews unaffected by the processes of modernization. Kauffman himself said that he wanted his work to reveal all the beauties and nobilities of Jewish culture and to make these traditions accessible to Jews and gentiles as well.

In conclusion, Cohen said, as they moved away from their traditional society, both traditional Jews and acculturated Jews used art to convey traditions and evoke memories of a particular view of the Jewish past.

Donors Create New Programs in Jewish Studies

The Berman Center has extended its program abroad to incorporate two new academic programs—one in Israel and the other in Italy—thanks to the generosity of an alumni family and friends. **Susan Ballenzweig** of New York City has endowed the Howard Ballenzweig Memorial Fund for Study in Israel in memory of her husband, **Howard Ballenzweig**, Class of '65. **Richard** and **Susan Master** of Bethlehem have established a visiting professorship in Jewish studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome.

The **Howard Ballenzweig Memorial Fund** will provide support to Lehigh students in programs of study in Israel approved by the Lehigh University Study Abroad Committee. This year nine students who enrolled in the first "Lehigh in Israel" summer program have received Ballenzweig grants. Religion Studies professor **Benjamin Wright**, a specialist on early Judaism and Christianity, will lead the trip and teach a new course, "Archaeology and the Bible in the Land of Israel." Students will visit numerous ancient sites including Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Qumran, Masada, Caesarea, Acco, Nazareth, Sepphoris, Gamla, Beth Shean, and Hazor. Wright hopes that the course will give students a better understanding of the complex interaction between texts and archaeological remains and sensitize them to the difficulties of interpreting them. It should also lead to an increased awareness of the history of the land of Israel, particularly the Jewish and Christian presence in the ancient world.

In establishing the **Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professorship in Jewish Studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome**, the Masters made it possible for the Berman Center to continue the Lehigh-Gregorian connection that was initiated at the suggestion of the late **Philip Berman** and his wife, **Muriel Berman**. Center director **Laurence Silberstein**, who will coordinate the new cooperative program, was the first visiting professor in Jewish studies at the Gregorian in 1995, while David Blumenthal of Emory University served as visiting professor the following year. In 1996, Father Arij Roest Crollius of the Gregorian faculty came to Lehigh as a scholar in residence at the Berman Center.

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Donors

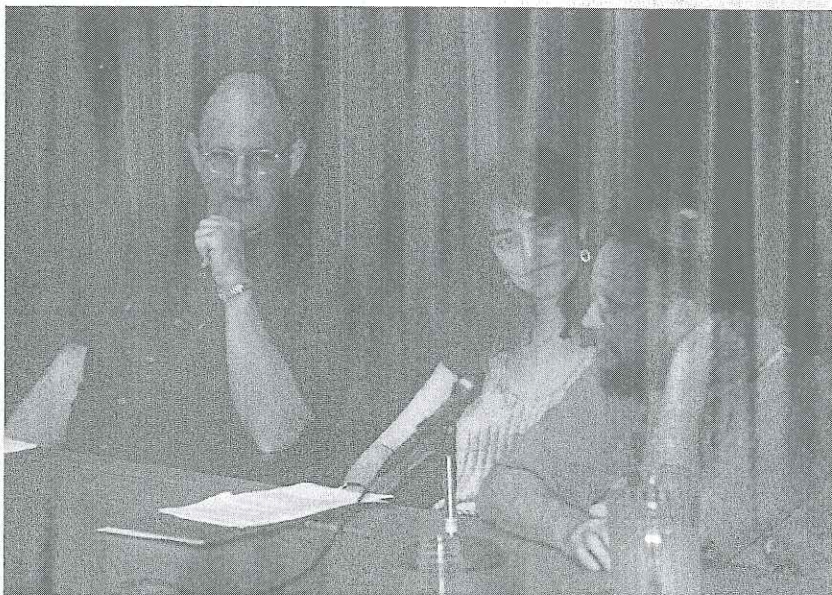
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In thanking the Masters and the Center, the Rector of the Gregorian Franco Imoda, S.J., wrote: "I express my gratitude for this venture and for the wonderful academic cooperation it has provoked. I am convinced that it will be an important step in the development of Jewish Studies in our university." The Gregorian, a Pontifical institution and one of the leading academic institutions of the Roman Catholic Church, has an international teaching faculty and draws students from more than one hundred nations.

Following a search conducted by a faculty committee, **Manfred Vogel**, professor in the Department of History and Literature of Religions at Northwestern University, was named as the first Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor in Jewish Studies at the Gregorian. He will teach a course at the Gregorian this fall entitled "Jewish Theology in the 20th Century." The course will survey the thought of such leading Jewish theologians and philosophers as Hermann Cohen, Leo Baeck, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, A. J. Heschel, and Mordecai Kaplan. Vogel has been on the faculty at Northwestern since 1971 and has served in visiting positions at universities in Israel and England. He has published widely in the field of modern Jewish and Christian thought and is the author of *A Quest for a Theology of Judaism* and *Rosenzweig on Profane/Secular History*.

Bobb Carson, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, recently expressed Lehigh's gratitude for these two major enhancements of the Berman Center's program: "In very different ways, each of these gifts augments the role of the Center both for our students and for the community. The Howard Ballenzweig Memorial Fund will make possible the 'Lehigh in Israel' experience for some students who might not otherwise have been able to study abroad. The Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor, by educating future church leaders in the teachings of Judaism, will have a positive impact on Catholic-Jewish dialogue. I am pleased that the cooperative relationship between Lehigh and the Gregorian will continue, bringing benefits to the students of both institutions. These gifts enrich the education we offer Lehigh students and perpetuate the humanistic goals of the Center as envisioned by Phil and Muriel Berman."

Center Conference Maps Jewish Identity



Photograph by Pam Sheedy

Panelists Adi Ophir, Laura Levitt, and Daniel Boyarin

"Mapping Jewish Identities" was the theme of a conference sponsored by the Berman Center at Lehigh University last May. The conference presentations explored the ways in which theories drawn from such fields as cultural studies, gender studies, and postcolonial studies both clarify and problematize the processes through which Jewish identities are constructed. A particular concern of the conference was to explore alternative theoretical approaches to Jewish identity in light of the far-reaching social and cultural changes that contemporary Jews are experiencing in their everyday lives.

Conference speakers were **Ammiel Alcalay** (Queens College), **Gordon Bearn** (Lehigh Univ.), **Daniel Boyarin** (Univ. of California), **Gerald Cromer** (Bar-Ilan Univ.), **Geoffrey Eley** (Univ. of Michigan), **Laura Levitt** (Temple Univ.), **Michelle Friedman** (Haverford College), **Tresa Grauer** (Hebrew Univ.), **Hannan Hever** (Tel Aviv Univ.), **Regina Morantz-Sanchez** (Univ. of Michigan), **Anita Norich** (Univ. of Michigan), **Adi Ophir** (Tel Aviv Univ.), **Ann Pellegrini** (Harvard Univ.), **Miriam Peskowitz** (Univ. of Florida), **Laurence Silberstein** (Lehigh Univ.), and **Deborah Starr** (Univ. of Michigan).

The conference also included a panel discussion, "Reflections on Identity." Daniel Boyarin, Laura Levitt, and Adi Ophir reflected on the place of the term *identity* in their own research and writing and discussed the ways in which their thinking about identity in general, and Jewish identity in particular, has changed over the years.

The conference papers are currently being edited for publication by Center director Laurence Silberstein. The resultant volume, *Mapping Jewish Identities*, will be published in the spring of 2000 as the fifth volume in the Berman Center's series with New York University Press, "New Perspectives on Jewish Studies." The previous volumes are *New Perspectives on Israeli History* (1991), *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective* (1993), *The Other in Jewish Thought and History* (1994), and *Judaism in a Postmodern Age* (1996). Publication of the latest conference volume is being supported by a grant from the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.

Chava Weissler Discusses Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women



Chava Weissler with her new book
"Voices of the Matriarchs"

Berman Professor **Chava Weissler** discussed her new book, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*, during a recent lecture. The pioneering volume is an effort to restore balance to our knowledge of Judaism by providing the first comprehensive study of women's devotions in Yiddish (*tkhines*), a nearly lost genre of Jewish literature. This contrasts with most studies of Judaism that focus on sources in Hebrew, produced by and for learned men.

When Weissler first began to think about the *tkhines* in 1980, little was known about the religious lives of pre-modern Jewish women. "The history of Judaism," she said, "has been written by those who were fascinated by the elites—the scholars, rabbis, philosophers, and mystics." Her work on the prayers of Ashkenazic (Eastern European) women was part of a rising tide of interest in women's religion and history. The true importance of the *tkhines* and other popular religious material in Yiddish, she explained, is that they enable us to reconstruct the religious lives of ordinary Jews, and especially women, who were not given the opportunity for the most part to learn Hebrew.

Weissler attributes the popularity of the *tkhines* during the 17th and 18th centuries to two events: the invention of the printing press, which made it possible to distribute written materials widely and

cheaply, and the rise of mystical thinking, which caused a tremendous increase in pietist practices in Judaism. The *tkhines* took their origin from women's desire to participate in this pietist revival. In fact, the earliest collection of *tkhines*, published in Amsterdam in 1648, begins with a statement that it was compiled at the request of "several honorable women and pious Godfearers" so that women might understand the praises, thanksgivings, and prayers that the sages composed in Hebrew. It includes many adaptations and paraphrases of the mystical prayers in Hebrew written for men.

Much can be learned from the *tkhines*, Weissler emphasized. At a time when women were excluded from central religious duties in Judaism, the *tkhines* reveal how women felt about their opportunities for spiritual life within Judaism, and it is obvious not all women felt the same. Many *tkhines* valorize women's traditional roles of wife and mother. There were prayers for all kinds of events that took place in a woman's life—from baking bread to pregnancy and childbirth.

Other *tkhines* look beyond traditional roles and express hope that women might do some of the things that men do. Sarah bas Tovim, author of the *tkhines* "The Three Gates," envisioned a paradise in which women sang hymns and studied Torah just like men. Leah Horowitz, the most educated of the *tkhine* authors Weissler discovered, wrote an amazing text in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish that combined an appreciation of women's traditional roles with an assertion that women's prayers with weeping had the power to reunite the feminine Divine Presence with the Holy Blessed One and bring redemption. Leah's understanding of prayer was a clearly mystical one, Weissler commented.

Chava Weissler is an associate professor of religion studies at Lehigh University, where she holds the Philip and Muriel Berman Chair of Jewish Civilization. She teaches courses on Jewish folklore, Jewish religious tradition, and women in Jewish history. She has published many articles on the prayers of early modern Jewish women.

Berman Professors Publish Books

Two books have recently been published by Berman Center faculty. **Chava Weissler's** new volume, *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*, is available from Beacon Press (see related article, this page). *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (Routledge) by Center director **Laurence Silberstein** appeared in May 1999. Both Silberstein and Weissler hold Philip and Muriel Berman professorships in the Religion Studies Department at Lehigh.

In *Voices of the Matriarchs*, the first comprehensive study of the religious lives of Central and Eastern European Jewish women, Weissler examines women's devotional prayers in Yiddish (*tkhines*). In addition to considering the influence of these prayers on the construction of gender in Ashkenazic Judaism, she explores the ways in which Ashkenazic women participated in the popularization of mystical teachings that became the basis for mass religious movements. She also reflects on the implications of her research for Jewish feminism. Praised by religion scholars and feminist scholars alike, Weissler's book is an insightful study that recovers a nearly lost genre of Jewish women's literature. It was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Award in Women's Studies.

Laurence Silberstein's volume, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture*, is the first book to discuss and analyze current debates over postzionism that go to the heart of Israeli national identity and culture. Postzionism is a term increasingly used in Israeli culture to refer to those who question the adequacy of Zionist discourse for addressing the challenges confronting Israel today. Applying a framework drawn from contemporary cultural studies, postcolonial studies, and the writings of Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari, *The Postzionism Debates* considers the arguments of the critics of

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Visiting Scholar Examines Myth of Ben-Yehuda

In a lecture "Ben-Yehuda: Constructed Myth or Shattered Icon?" Dr. Ron Kuzar of Haifa University analyzed the circumstances contributing to the revival of modern Hebrew as a spoken language. Kuzar, who earned his Ph.D. in linguistics from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, served as the Berman Center's 1997-98 Philip and Muriel Berman Visiting Scholar. In addition to a research project on Ben-Yehuda and the revival of Hebrew, Kuzar is also studying the debates over the Hebrew language in Israel in the 1950s as they relate to the cultural and political issues of that period.

Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who immigrated to Palestine in 1881, is known in Israeli culture as the reviver of modern Hebrew. Examining texts written during the last eighty years, Kuzar illustrated the changes that have occurred in the narratives surrounding Ben-Yehuda and the revival of Hebrew. While those written in the early 1900s describe the revival as a miracle and portray Ben-Yehuda as a mythical hero, writings from the seventies and eighties characterize the revival as a normal social and cultural process. Kuzar's objective was not to determine which narratives were true, but to analyze their cultural and political dimensions.

According to Kuzar, the simple story of Ben-Yehuda served an important political function in early Zionism. As part of its efforts to attract followers, Zionism constructed such superhuman figures as Ben-Yehuda, Herzl, and Trumpeldor. The "revival" of Hebrew converged with other Zionist ideological concepts such as "the revival of the Jewish people" and "the new Jew." Thus, texts published in 1918 by Hillel Bavli and Israel Shapiro depict Ben-Yehuda as a visionary hero who miraculously revived the Hebrew language.

In contrast, nearly fifty years later Professor Samuel Eisenstadt, a member of the Hebrew Language Council, described the emergence of spoken Hebrew as a natural and inevitable result of the ongoing contacts among Jews of different language groups. In 1985, Tel Aviv University Professor Shlomo Yiz-

reel went one step farther and declared that modern Hebrew was not a "revived" language at all, but a new "pidgin" language. His intention, he declared, was to shatter the myth of the "miracle" revival of Hebrew.

Kuzar connected the changing interpretations of the seventies and eighties to a reawakening of sociolinguistics and to the rewriting of the history and sociology of Zionism and Israel associated with the so-called "New Historians." "This is the age of iconoclasm in Israeli culture," Kuzar observed. "Scholars are more willing to research areas of knowledge that were once seen as endangering national projects." In this context, glorifiers of Ben-Yehuda have been criticized for constructing a mythical icon.

While Kuzar agreed that Ben-Yehuda is a constructed icon, he contended that it is one that has been constructed and reconstructed time and again in different cultural contexts within different discourses. Ending his lecture on a lighter note, Kuzar quoted a popular 1970 Israeli song that parodies Ben-Yehuda. Like Herzl and Trumpeldor, other Zionist heroes, Ben-Yehuda has been transformed from a mythic character to the object of folkloristic study, as is often the fate of demoted myths.

Robert Cohn Finds Changing Israelite Identity in Deuteronomy

In a lecture entitled "The Second Coming of Moses: Deuteronomy and the Construction of Israelite Identity," Robert L. Cohn, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies at Lafayette College, discussed "who is Israel?"—a question that reverberates through biblical sacred history. According to Cohn, a succession of creation stories, from Genesis to 2 Kings, offers answers to this question and conveys the sense of Israel as a single people with historical continuity. Yet identity is neither a stable nor continuous frame of reference, he asserted, but a changing process.

Focusing on the book of Deuteronomy, Cohn examined traces of the changing process of identity that exist within

the Bible once one looks for them. Despite disagreements about its origin and purpose, he believes Deuteronomy most likely functioned in the late 7th century to instigate or support Josiah's political and cultic reform. Clearly distinct in style and perspective from the rest of the Pentateuch, it depicts Moses establishing a second covenant between God and Israel and giving the law all over again. In its conception of a new covenant and its stipulations, it defines Israel's cultural boundaries.

When read as a manifesto of Israelite values at a particular moment in history, Deuteronomy becomes a vehicle for examining Israelite identity formation. Cohn approached this process of identity construction by examining its representation of Israel's relationships to its past and to the Other. The Deuteronomist, in the guise of Moses' speeches to the Israel that emerged from the wilderness, addresses his own contemporaries with a definition of who Israel is. He reshapes the ancient past to legitimate his own vision of Israel in the present and positions his community as the sole owner of that past. In the process, he labels rival claimants of that history "Canaanite" and defines their otherness in cultic terms.

Cohn stressed that his reading of Deuteronomy was a cultural one. "When we read Deuteronomy in this light, we can hear it as a record of a contest between rival constructions of who and what constituted Israel. Though we witness only one side of the debate, we can recognize in the silenced 'Canaanites' the Other that the Deuteronomist opposed. By their own definition, those whom Deuteronomy disenfranchised surely considered themselves Israel. Yet the more exclusive construction of Israel by Deuteronomy eventually prevailed, for from its position in the biblical canon, Deuteronomy came to define both the past and the Other," he concluded.

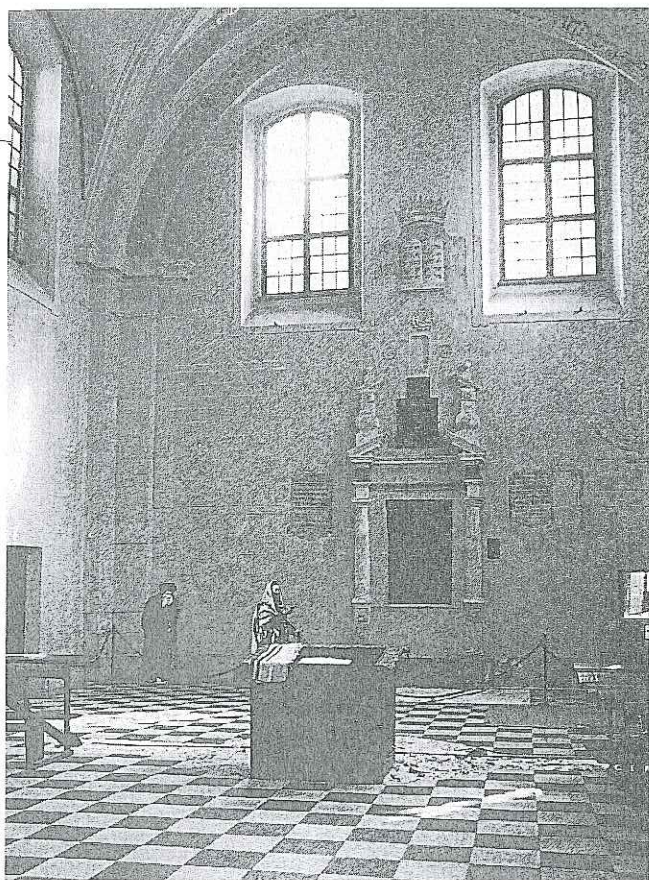
Cohn is coauthor of *Exploring the Hebrew Bible* and author of *The Shape of Sacred Space: Four Biblical Studies*, "1 Samuel" in *Harper's Biblical Commentary*, and "Narrative and Canonical Perspective in Genesis" in *The Pentateuch: A Sheffield Reader*. At Lafayette College, he teaches courses in Hebrew Bible, Biblical Narrative, and Jewish Responses to Catastrophe.

Notes from Poland, 1998

by Robert L. Cohn

Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Religion Department, Lafayette College

Photograph by Uwe Bauer



Newly restored Isaac Synagogue in Krakow

Krakow proved to be a felicitous setting for last July's Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting, and the warm summer weather was matched by the warmth of our Polish hosts at the Jagellonian University. For me this was a return journey, not so much to Krakow, but to Poland, where I spent a memorable six weeks in 1993 teaching and living in Catholic seminaries around the country under the auspices of the American Jewish Committee and the Polish Episcopate. Then the "Jewish question" was uppermost and I was its focus. Now I was just another academic among a handful of Jews at an international Bible conference. Still, for a Jew visiting Poland, the Jewish past—and present—are inescapable, and I encountered it in a variety of ways.

The opening event of the conference was a concert featuring Jewish music at the new Center for Jewish Culture in Kazimierz, the formerly Jewish quarter of the city. As I sat listening to touching renditions of Bruch's *Kol Nidre* and Jewish

folk melodies, I couldn't help reflect on the ironies of the situation. In my experience the Society of Biblical Literature, despite the book that it totemizes, has not included an event of Jewish cultural interest at its meetings in cities with large Jewish populations. Yet here in Poland, where hardly any Jews live anymore, I was sitting in a Jewish concert hall among international non-Jewish colleagues awash in the music of "my people."

While others ducked out of conference sessions to visit Auschwitz and Czestechowa, I focused on Jewish sites in the city. Wandering down to Kazimierz on a quiet Sunday morning, I encountered a raucous flea market on the very streets where Jews once peddled their wares. Having seen the Old Synagogue (now

a museum) and the Remuh Synagogue (still active) during my last visit, I headed to the recently restored Isaac Synagogue. On its walls are centuries-old Hebrew inscriptions discovered during the restoration. For me at least, the serenity of the huge space is disturbed by the continuous showing of a short film documenting the deportation of Krakow Jews in 1942 against a background of mournful cantorial music. The life-size cardboard figures of Hasidic Jews placed around the synagogue only added to the kitsch. More inspiring is the magnificent edifice of the huge Tempel Synagogue, its stucco exterior gleaming in the hot summer sun. Inside, however, it was damp and dark, with full restoration a long way off.

At the Jordan Bookshop I bought a guidebook entitled "Retracing 'Schindler's List,'" only to realize later that the steps I was retracing were actually Steven Spielberg's, the sites he shot as he prepared his film: life imitates art imitates life. I found the house of Amon Goeth, the sadis-

tic commandant, and the field where the Plaszow concentration camp once stood, itself built on the site of what had been the newest Jewish cemetery in Krakow. Nothing remains of either.

I was pleased to be able to see friends I had made on my first trip to Poland. My priest from Kielce, host and translator during my stay there, picked me up one morning eager to show me sites in the Kielce diocese. Several of these were towns with formerly majority Jewish populations. In Wolbrom I had coffee with the mayor's staff and then saw what remained of the Jewish cemetery, a small fenced-in area with a single monument to Holocaust victims built ten years ago. They did not want me to see the synagogue, embarrassed that it is used as a factory, but I persisted and saw it anyway, a factory indeed, indistinguishable from its surroundings.

In Pinczow, by contrast, the early-17th-century synagogue has been partially restored and was just dedicated in May. The massive stone Aron Hakodesh (ark of the covenant) was returned to its place, the roof rebuilt, the floor relaid, and the grounds landscaped. The town's museum director, who supervised the restoration, pointed out one photo in particular in the exhibit now on display in the sanctuary. It is a collage of portraits of the men of the city council in the late 1920s: fifteen Poles and fifteen Jews. It is this legacy that the town officials want to preserve even if there are no Jews left in Pinczow.

Our last Jewish city stop was Dzialoszyce. The local priest, always in these parts the repository of knowledge about Jewish sites, was out of town, but an old woman pointed in the direction of the synagogue. Utterly in ruins, it struck me as strangely beautiful. With its roof and windows long since gone, its walls jab powerlessly upward amid the weeds growing between them and cascading down from niches atop them. Were it not for the garbage strewn around the building, one would have a purer sense of nature overtaking the ruins not only of a synagogue, but of a civilization.

The evening that the conference ended, I took an overnight train to Bydgoszcz in the north to visit two remarkable students I had taught and befriended in 1993 at the seminary in Gniezno, the oldest bishopric

in Poland. Tomek and Mirek were now parish priests, one in Bydgoszcz and one in the small town of Kcynia about twenty miles away. Happily, we were able to pick up where we had left off, with mutual eagerness to understand each other's traditions and life work. A long day of touring ended with two especially moving encounters. In the late afternoon we raced to Kcynia so that Tomek could celebrate mass—and I could watch. Illuminated at first only by the strong rays of sunlight streaming through the open western door, the small church slowly filled with silent individuals, here for their daily spiritual succor. The lights went on and mass proceeded, the joking, bejeaned Tomek transformed in a flash into a priest. He confided to me afterwards that my presence made his arms tremble as he held forth the chalice.

From Kcynia we returned to Bydgoszcz to see the abandoned synagogue and the site of the Jewish cemetery, now a small wooded area surrounded by new apartment buildings. At dusk we arrived at the day's last stop: Death Valley, a park-like memorial site where 1200 Polish "intellectuals"—writers, doctors, engineers—had been executed by the Nazis in November 1939. At the end of the long entrance road overlooking the valley is a giant cylindrical monument topped with a cross surrounded in barbed wire. Affixed to the monument are plaques naming each of the dead, Jews and non-Jews alike. Mirek brought flowers to lay at the foot of the monument and said a prayer just as darkness began to envelop us.

If the "Jewish question" remains vital for Poles as they construct a modern pluralistic identity in their country so long divided and dominated by others, then the "Polish question" gnaws at Jews who seek to make peace with a place and a people who witnessed their destruction a generation ago. In a letter I received after I returned, Tomek spoke to these questions for a new Polish generation:

It's not a compliment—and, please, don't treat this in that way—but Judaism, thanks to you, is becoming to me something still more and more familiar, closer, more precious. And, from the wider point of view, I realize more and more that the dialogue is not arguing, even not a compromise. The dialogue is kindness, culture, goodness, forbearance—is the return to humanity. And that's all—and that's it.

What more is there to say?

—Robert L. Cohn

The Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies recognizes with gratitude the individuals listed here. Through annual and endowment gifts, these generous contributors have greatly enhanced the academic, cultural, and programmatic offerings of the Berman Center, Lehigh University, and the community at large

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Gifts received between December 19, 1997, and March 15, 1999

Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. If you are interested in supporting the Berman Center or wish to call our attention to errors or omissions in the lists, please contact John Van Ness, Associate Vice President, Office of Development, Lehigh University, 27 Memorial Drive West, Bethlehem, PA 18105-3087, at (610) 758-3714.

Berman Center & LU

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Donald Woodman's photography is included in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London; the Museum of Art and History in Fribourg, Switzerland; the Albuquerque Museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico; the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and various private collections. His work has appeared in *Vanity Fair*, *Art in America*, and *New York Newsday*.

Group tours of the "The Holocaust

Project" exhibition should be scheduled by calling the LU Art Galleries at 610-758-3615 or 758-4836. For information on the related events and the Berman Center's conference, contact the Center by phone at 610-758-4869 or by e-mail at inber@lehigh.edu. A schedule of all educational events including gallery hours and directions will be available on the Center's website at <http://www.lehigh.edu/~inber/inber.html> beginning September 1.

Faculty Notes

Robert L. Cohn presented "Constructing the Jewish Past in Germany Today" at the Northeast Modern Language Association meeting in Baltimore in April 1998 and "The Theology of Chronology in the Book of Kings" at the Society of Biblical Literature International Meeting in Krakow, Poland, in July 1998 (see "Notes from Poland," p. 6).

Howard Marblestone published two articles in the Hebrew journal *Hadoar*: "Researching the Past . . . Toward a Better Future: On the Last Two Books of Professor Nathan Spiegel" and "Ninetyeth Birthday Celebration for Professor Cyrus H. Gordon."

Ilan Peleg edited *The Peace Process in the Middle East: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* and coedited *Human Rights and Culture*. He published essays in *Books on Israel V; Human Rights, Democracy and Democratization in the Middle East; Israel at 50; and The Role of Domestic Relations in Israeli Peacemaking*. His recent journal articles include "Constitutional Order and Kulturkampf: The Role of Ben-Gurion" in *Israel Studies* and "Human Rights under Military Occupation: The Need for Expansion" in *The International Journal of Human Rights*.

Bunnie Piltch, who began teaching Hebrew language at Lehigh in 1998, is a doctoral student in Second Language Education at Temple University, where she is currently doing a pilot study on language interaction and code-switching. Her article "An Examination of Second Language Research Findings: Truth or Dare" appeared in *Jewish Education News*.

Ruth Setton recently returned from a "Semester at Sea" voyage during which she taught courses on World Women's Literature, Creative Nonfiction Writing, and an interdisciplinary course on Jews of the Islamic World. She recently completed a book *Everyone Needs a San Francisco*, consisting of two novellas and a tale. She was awarded a Jakobsen Scholarship at the Wesleyan Writers

Conference and was invited to serve on the advisory board of the International Research Institute on Jewish Women.

Laurence Silberstein's book *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* was recently published by Routledge (see p. 4). He presented "The Ambivalent Search for Home" at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies and "Mapping, Not Tracing" at the Berman Center's May 1998 conference, "Mapping Jewish Identities," which he organized and chaired. He participated in a panel discussion on the Vatican Statement on the Shoah at Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales.

Roslyn Weiss presented "The Prominence of Reward in Saadia's Theodicy" at the Association for Jewish Philosophy Conference and "Visiting the Iniquity of the Fathers' and the Concept of the Covenant" at New York University. Her article "Saadia on Divine Grace and Human Suffering" will appear in the *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*.

Chava Weissler published *Voices of the Matriarchs: Listening to the Prayers of Modern Jewish Women* (Beacon Press) (see p. 4). The book is an alternate selection for the Jewish Book Club. She delivered papers on "The Americanization of Tkhines" at a conference on "The History of Jewish Women in America" at Temple University, and "Polish Tkhines for the Sabbath before the New Moon" at the Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Toledo, Spain.

Benjamin Wright presented "The Apocryphon of Ezekiel and 4QPseudo-Ezekiel: Are They the Same Work? How Do We Know?" at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature and "The Jewish Scriptures in Greek: The Septuagint in the Context of Ancient Translation Activity" at the University of Maryland conference "Biblical Translation in Context." This summer he will teach the first "Lehigh in Israel" course, entitled Archaeology and the Bible in the Land of Israel.

BCJS Faculty, 1998-99

- **Laurence J. Silberstein**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Jewish Responses to the Holocaust, Modes of Jewish Identity in the Modern World, Sex and Gender in Judaism: The Feminist Critique, Judaism in Israel and the United States*
- **Robert L. Cohn**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion, Lafayette College, *Hebrew Bible, Biblical Narrative, Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*
- **Chava Weissler**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Jewish Folklore, Hasidic Tales, Modern Judaism, Mystical Tradition in Judaism, Women in Jewish History, Gendered Jewish Lives*

Affiliated Faculty - Lehigh University

- **David Amidon, Jr.**, Urban Studies Program, *American Jewish Politics and Culture*
- **Tania Oldenhage**, Dept. of Religion Studies (adjunct, 1998), *The Holocaust*
- **Bunnie Piltch**, Dept. of Modern Foreign Languages, *Hebrew Language*
- **Oles Smolansky**, Dept. of International Relations, *Middle East Studies*
- **Roslyn Weiss**, Dept. of Philosophy, *Jewish Philosophy*
- **Benjamin Wright III**, Dept. of Religion Studies, *Hebrew Bible, Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*

Affiliated Faculty - Lafayette College

- **Ilana Levy**, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Hebrew Language*
- **Howard Marblestone**, Dept. of Foreign Languages and Literatures, *Hebrew Language*
- **Ilan Peleg**, Dept. of Government and Law, *Middle East Politics*
- **Ruth Setton**, Dept. of English, *Jewish Literature*
- **Robert Weiner**, Dept. of History, *Modern Jewish History*

Laura Levitt Looks at Jewish "Home" in America

In her presentation "Pictures and Places: Envisioning America as a Jewish Home," Dr. **Laura Levitt** contended that simple family snapshots offer insights into the ways that Jews continue to embody an ambivalent legacy of being at home in America. In her lecture, Levitt, associate professor of religion at Temple University, connected her current work on family photography and American Jewish memory with her previous work on issues of Jewish feminist identity and home.

To Levitt, home is about issues of identity—an intertwining of place, context, and positionality. Place is not only the site where we live, but it is also our bodies. Pictures are representations of visual culture and loyalties. She asked the audience to think about what pictures and places tell us about the various ways in which Jews have made America their home.

Using photographs from her family album, Levitt illustrated the bodily traces of the immigrant legacy that she describes in her book, *Jews and Feminism*. The frontispiece of the book is a photograph of her grandmother, dressed in red, white, and blue, standing in front of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., with arms spread wide almost as if embracing America. This photo, which hung on the wall in Levitt's childhood home, is a representation of family, nation, and home all mixed together. She told the audience that this image haunts her. It reminds her of the complicated

legacy of liberalism for contemporary Jewish women in the United States. "In my world there were no differences between Judaism and liberalism," Levitt said. "U.S. citizenship was sacred. The desire to be American continues to be a part of the ways Jews fashion themselves even in the present." Jewish women fought hard to find a place within the American dream, she stressed, but had to face the limitations built into that dream. "America said to them, 'You can do this, but. . .'"

Ironically, the desire of Jews to be like everyone else has in fact marked them as different. It is the excess in their effort to blend in that Levitt sees when she looks at family photographs. In her parents' home, this desire was translated into the need to be better than everyone else in their small town. "We had to be smarter, better read, more politically active and socially involved in the community to be accepted." She believes that these desires and the images that embody them prevent Jews from imagining other possibilities and from seeing the limitations and contradictions built into the discourse of liberalism.

Besides writing *Jews and Feminism*, Levitt coedited *Judaism since Gender*. Her recent articles include "Becoming an American Jewish Feminist" in *Horizons in Feminist Theology*, "Blurring the Familial: An Afterword" in *The Familial Gaze* and "Covenant or Contract: Marriage as Theology" in *Cross-currents*.

BCJS Academic Advisory Board

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Berman Professors

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postzionism, who regard it as subverting the historical foundations of the state of Israel, and its proponents, who consider it to be a necessary prerequisite of Israel's emergence as a fully democratic society. According to Silberstein, the debates over postzionism represent a conflict over national memory and the control of cultural and physical space. In what Gordon Shafir calls "one of the best scholarly books on contemporary Israel," Silberstein both analyzes the phenomenon of postzionism and provides an intervention into this debate.

The BCJS Newsletter is published once a year and is made possible through a grant from the Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation. To obtain further information concerning the Berman Center and its programs or to be added to our mailing list, please write to Shirley Ratushny (sar0@lehigh.edu), Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies, Lehigh University, 9 West Packer Avenue, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3082.

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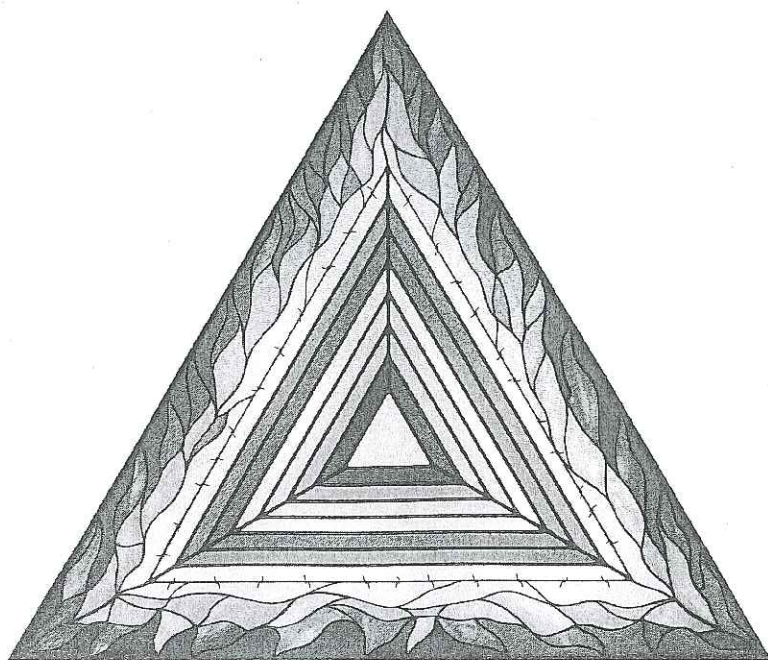
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