

# Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies



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Newsletter

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Bethlehem, Pa.

## Muriel Mallin Berman 1914–2004



Muriel Mallin Berman

*It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of Muriel Mallin Berman on April 13, 2004. She and her late husband, Philip I. Berman, established the Berman Center for Jewish Studies in 1984 and remained its major benefactors. The following excerpt is from the eulogy delivered at her funeral by Laurence J. Silberstein, director of the Berman Center.*

As family and friends sat around the table on the evening of the second Seder last week, we recited, as we usually do, a prayer designating a cup in the center of our table as "Miriam's Cup": *This is the cup of Miriam, the cup of living waters, Let us remember the Exodus from Egypt.*

This ceremony has been introduced into a growing number of Seders in recent years. It is based on the rabbinic legend that while Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, was alive, a well of fresh, living waters accompanied the Israelites on their journey, sustaining and protecting them. Although Miriam's name is only men-

tioned a few times in the Torah, and little is said of her role in the community, Jewish women, in search of a viable tradition, have come to see her as a role model. Through this ceremony, they have sought to restore her to a position of significance and prominence in the Exodus story.

As we recited this prayer, I could not help but think of another Miriam, Muriel Berman, whose Hebrew name is Miriam. She had hoped to be with us that evening as she had on so many other evenings. In particular, she had looked forward to spending time interacting with Lehigh students, an opportunity that she never ceased to relish. But owing to her rapidly failing health, this was not to be.

Like Miriam of old, Muriel Berman was a leader among women and a leader among Jews. In her case, one of her leadership roles consisted of creating opportunities for students and others to learn about the events of Jewish history and directly encounter the treasures of Jewish culture.

While we are saddened at the loss of Muriel Berman, it would be a mistake to equate physical death with disappearance. Besides the love that continues to burn in the hearts of her family and friends, Muriel left behind an amazing legacy of deeds—a legacy that she built together with her beloved husband, Phil, and which she continued to produce following his death in 1997. It is a legacy that will benefit countless people for generations to come.

As the rabbis teach: *One does not erect monuments for righteous people—Their deeds are their monuments.*

Muriel, along with Phil, was driven by a profound faith in this teaching and a profound passion to create and build. This passion to create is vividly evident in the opportunities she provided—in the fields of healthcare, the arts, Israeli culture, or Jewish Studies—for others to study, to grow, to learn, to appreciate, to delight,

and to heal. In the area of her activities with which I am most familiar, that of Jewish Studies, she has left a truly amazing legacy that will continue to keep her spirit alive and transmit the force of that spirit to countless others for generations to come.

Through her insight, drive, and generosity, together with Phil and then on her own following his death, Muriel created extraordinary opportunities for Lehigh students as well as students at other colleges and universities—past, present, and future—to engage in the study of the culture and historical experiences of the Jewish people. Those of us who worked with her witnessed her delight as the three professorships of Jewish Studies that she and Phil endowed, two at Lehigh and one at Lafayette, generated an ever-expanding list of Jewish Studies courses. Through these courses, students of all persuasions are able to increase their knowledge and understanding not only of Jewish life and culture specifically, but of human life and culture in general.

We watched as she, in contrast to so many generous donors, took an active role

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## Muriel Mallin Berman

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in the Berman Center for Jewish Studies' ongoing program of lectures, discussions, conferences, films, and art exhibits. For as long as her health permitted, Muriel never missed an opportunity to attend these programs and derive personal pleasure from the fruits of her labors.

As she did with all of her philanthropic activities, Muriel did not just provide financial support, she participated in them *with a passion*. For she viewed them not just as philanthropic endeavors, but as enterprises that were not to be appreciated from a distance, but actively engaged in up close. And Muriel was by no means a passive observer. Inspired by the presence of students, faculty, and members of the general community, she regularly demonstrated her knowledge and her listening skills through the questions that she posed to guest speakers at Berman Center programs. And whenever the opportunity presented itself, how she loved to join the speakers, faculty, and students for post-program dinners at nearby restaurants where she energetically participated in the conversation. At such times, she was clearly in her element. And my wife, Mimi, and I had the pleasure of regularly witnessing the delight that she derived from interacting with generations of Lehigh students in the more relaxed atmosphere of Passover Seders or Rosh HaShanah dinners at our home.

Muriel's generosity and creative activity extended far beyond the Lehigh Valley. Together, Muriel and Phil created for the Berman Center for Jewish Studies opportunities, possibilities, and connections available to few other Jewish Studies programs in the world. To take one example, it was their vision, energy, and generosity that first established, in 1995, a program through which the Berman Center began to send visiting scholars to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome to provide Jewish Studies courses to classes of priests, nuns, and Catholic lay leaders.

It was also Muriel and Phil's vision and generosity that enabled numerous faculty and administrators from across the Lehigh Valley to visit Israel and to derive the benefit of the Center's connection to such Israeli institutions as the Philip and Muriel Berman Institute for Biblical Archaeology at the Hebrew University.

Whether in Israel or in Rome, Muriel and Phil's extensive network of friends and acquaintances provided so many of us unexpected opportunities to meet political leaders, artists, archaeologists, scholars, and even the Pope. I still recall the comment of Peter Likins, the former president of Lehigh, who wrote that at the time he helped to establish a Jewish Studies program at Lehigh, he never dreamed that it would result in the opportunity for him, a Catholic, to be granted an audience with the Pope.

After Phil's death in 1997, Muriel, without missing a step, assumed responsibility for their wide network of philanthropic activities. Only the constraints of time keep me from enumerating further the seemingly endless list of educational and cultural opportunities she participated in creating. Permit me, then, to share one final anecdote. In 2000, the Berman Center sponsored a semester-long project, "Confronting the Holocaust." This program of courses, art exhibits, and lectures culminated in an extraordinary conference on the theme of the visual representation of the Holocaust. The conference brought together an impressive array of artists, curators, cultural critics, and Jewish Studies scholars. However, when we sought to publish the proceedings of this conference, as we regularly did, we were informed that our publisher did not consider the project to be financially viable. Upon learning of this, Muriel, determined that the public not be denied the opportunity to learn and study, volunteered to underwrite the total cost of producing the book. The volume, *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust*, bears the inscription:

*To Muriel M. Berman, whose vision, continuing support, and generosity made possible the publication of this volume. And to all who will continue imagining the past toward a different future.*

Muriel . . . the living waters of Muriel's well, the product of your passion, your energy, and your heart, will continue to sustain us. In the words attributed to God at the hour of Moses' death: "You have labored long and hard, go and rest!"

—Laurence J. Silberstein, April 15, 2004

## Berman Center Program in Rome Becomes Part of Cardinal Bea Center for Jewish Studies

Since 1999, the Berman Center has annually selected a Jewish Studies scholar to serve as the **Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor of Jewish Studies** at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. The student body at the Gregorian, the Catholic Church's flagship institution of higher learning, is comprised primarily of priests, nuns, and Catholic lay leaders who are pursuing graduate degrees. A high percentage of popes, cardinals, and bishops have studied at the Gregorian, one of five pontifical institutions under the auspices of the Vatican. For many students, the course offered by the Master Visiting Professor is their first exposure to the teachings of Judaism. The Berman Center's relationship with the Gregorian first began in 1995 when Philip and Muriel Berman, the founders of the Berman Center, established the first visiting professorship in Jewish Studies.

Beginning this year, the course offered by the Master Visiting Professor is part of the Cardinal Bea Center for Jewish Studies, recently established at the Gregorian by the Vatican. The Center, named for a cardinal who was instrumental in fostering interreligious cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, offers current and future leaders of the Church a wide array of courses and scholarly resources for the study of Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations.

According to the Director of the Berman Center, Professor **Laurence J. Silberstein**, who recently returned from teaching at the Gregorian, the establishment of the Bea Center is a major step forward in the Vatican's ongoing effort to educate clergy and lay leaders to the history, philosophy, and culture of Judaism. "The presence of the Bea Center," he observed, "greatly strengthens the position of Jewish Studies at the Gregorian and significantly enhances the impact of the Master Visiting Professor."

From April to June, Silberstein taught a course at the Gregorian entitled "Martin Buber and Abraham J. Heschel: Pioneers of Modern Jewish Thought." The class included priests, nuns, and theology stu-

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# Berman Center Hosts Symposium on Contemporary Jewish Writing

For some time, **Laurence Silberstein** and **Ruth Knafo Setton** of the Berman Center have been discussing the ways in which fiction writing, poetry, and critical writing relate to the formation of Jewish identity. In an effort to explore this issue, they decided to invite a diverse group of writers to Lehigh to participate in an interactive dialogue about contemporary Jewish writing in relation to identity and culture. The result was "**Imagining Jews: Contemporary Explorations**," a one-day conference on contemporary Jewish writing held in March 2004. One hundred fifty attendees, including students and faculty from Lehigh and throughout the region, gathered on campus to hear nine Jewish writers reflect on Jewish memory and identity—past, present, and future.

In her opening remarks, **Ruth Setton**, the Berman Center's Writer-in-Residence, commented, "If there is one thing that defines the world of Jewish literature, it is the question mark at the center of the narrative, an inner mystery that is never really pierced and never really answered." This question mark in Jewish literature was also mentioned by **Ilan Stavans** of Amherst College, who played a key role in the planning of the conference. Stavans suggested to the members of the audience that they keep several questions in mind throughout the symposium: What is a Jewish writer? What does the Jewish writer do to represent his or her context? Who is the audience for Jewish writers? Are Jewish writers writing for a small group of Jews that will respond only to the cultural issues raised by the writer, or are they writing for a larger audience that includes Jews and non-Jews?

The symposium was divided into four panels, each with a specific theme. The final session was a roundtable discussion that included all nine authors.

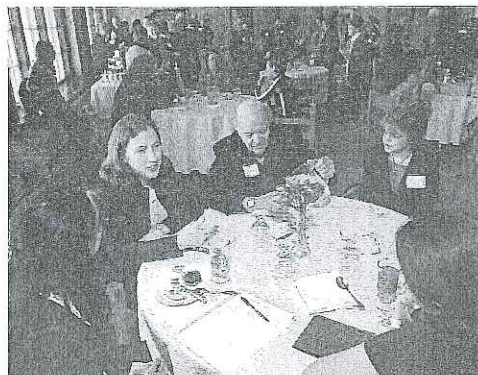
In Session I, "Multicultural Jews," **Ilan Stavans** from Mexico, **Farideh Goldin** from Iran, and **Ruth Setton** from Morocco presented alternative perspectives on Jewish identity. Stavans, who grew up speaking Yiddish in Mexico,



*Ruth Knafo Setton and Ilan Stavans respond to questions during Session I*



*Irena Klepfisz, Melvin Bukiet, and Lawrence Langer continue their debate after Session 2*



*Dara Horn (2nd from left) and Gerald Stern (center) join students during the morning break*

Photos by John Kish IV

argued that he, Setton, and Goldin, with their multiplicity of languages, diversity of traditions, and differing interpretations of Jewish history, have revitalized Jewish literature. "Yet," declared Setton, in her tongue-in-cheek presentation, "Seven Ways to Recognize a

Sephardic-Jewish Writer," "we—Sephardic, Mizrahi, Latino voices—are still struggling to be heard and read and accepted."

Panelists in the second session discussed "Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust" with each other and the audience. **Lawrence Langer**, **Irena Klepfisz**, and **Melvin Jules Bukiet** addressed the problems involved in remembering the Holocaust and the effects of those memories on contemporary Jewish life and culture.

In the third session, "Rethinking Jewish Identity," **Gerald Stern**, **Alicia Ostriker**, and **Dara Horn**, each representing a different generation of Jewish writer, discussed the ways in which Jewishness expresses itself in their writing. From commentaries and echoes of sacred texts to explorations of the importance of certain foods and rituals, these writers concluded that they view the world with "Jewish" eyes.

The fourth and final session, "Writers Reflections, A Conversation," was a roundtable discussion led by Stavans. The nine authors spoke passionately and humorously about the significance and implications of being labeled Jewish writers and discussed issues concerning the status of writers and writing in general in contemporary American culture. The open-ended conclusion to the questions initially raised by Stavans about the nature and essence of Jewish writing seemed to reflect Setton's observation that the question mark is the heart of Jewish literature: "The question is finally more interesting and relevant than the answer."

"Imagining Jews: Contemporary Explorations" sought to provide students with an opportunity to meet and listen to writers whom they were studying in such classes as Silberstein's "Responses to the Holocaust" and Setton's "Multicultural Women's Literature." "Students particularly enjoyed listening to the sometimes heated exchanges among the audience and the authors," Setton said. "It made Jewish literature come alive for them."

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Photo by John Kish IV

Steve Stern (center) talks with students in Ruth Setton's class on Jewish American Literature

## Author Steve Stern Revives Jewish Worlds

Steve Stern, the award-winning author of *Lazar Malkin Enters Heaven* and *A Plague of Dreamers*, offered a public reading from his collection of stories, *The Wedding Jester*. The reading he selected focused, as do many of his writings, on the world of Memphis Jewry in the early and mid-20th century. He also visited Professor Ruth Knafo Setton's class on American Jewish literature.

The Memphis native has earned a distinctive place in modern American Jewish fiction for retrieving Jewish worlds that are rapidly fading from memory—the Catskills, the Lower East Side, and, in particular, the immigrant Jewish community in Memphis known as “The Pinch.” Stern said that this one-time thriving East European ghetto in his hometown was almost gone before he was born. Yet in his writings, he succeeds in providing his readers with a vivid portrait of that world. According to Ruth Setton, who has long been a fan of Stern's writing, “His stories about the Memphis Pinch read like a Chagall painting come to life, with people and cows floating through the air and a wise-cracking jester on every rooftop. . . . His unique humor and magical sense of reality captivated me from the very first story I read.”

In Setton's class on American Jewish literature, Stern discussed the heritage that was lost when the Eastern European Jewish immigrants collided with the new world. He mentioned his love for European Yiddish literature, which unfortunately had its beginning and end within a span of 70 years, from the mid-19th century to the 1940s.

In his class discussion, Stern also spoke of the ways in which the generation of author Philip Roth rebelled against a tradition that they found confining. “Their expression of that rebellion was brilliant and created some of the finest literature we have,” he said, “but my generation wants to retrieve some of that tradition and yearns for the lost sense of the sacred and the mystical.”

Besides winning the 1999 National Jewish Book Award for *The Wedding Jester*, Stern has received two *New York Times* Notable Books, a Pushcart Writer's Choice Award, an O. Henry Prize, and the Edward Lewis Wallant Award for Jewish American Fiction. He teaches creative writing at Skidmore College.

Stern's visit to Lehigh was sponsored by the Berman Center's Writer-in-Residence Program, the Department of English, and the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.

## Shalom Paul Speaks on the Dead Sea Scrolls

Shalom Paul, Professor of Bible at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, discussed “The Ever-Alive Dead Sea Scrolls” in a lecture sponsored by the Berman Center, the Department of Religion Studies, and the E. Franklin Robbins Fund. Dr. Paul focused on areas of research that were revolutionized by the discovery of the scrolls in 1947. These include the development of the Hebrew Bible, pre-Rabbinic Judaism at the time of Jesus, and the development of early Christianity.

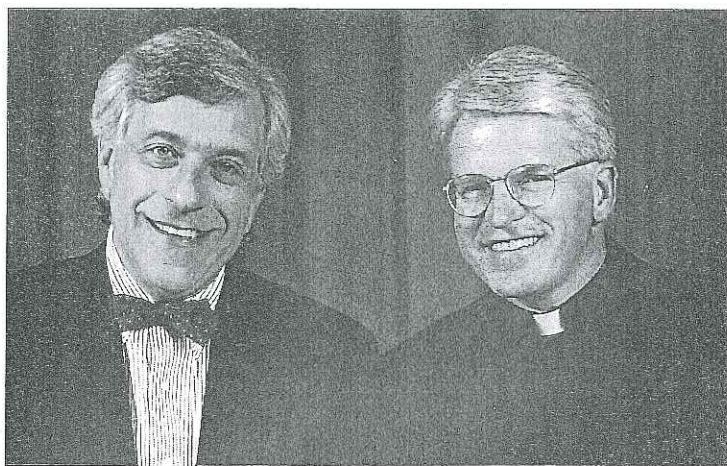
After reviewing the background of the discovery of the scrolls, Paul outlined the knowledge gained from the scholarly impact of the scrolls. He found it particularly exciting that the scrolls contained different versions of the same biblical texts. At the time the scrolls were written, the Hebrew Bible was still in flux. Only later did one version, known as the Massoretic text, become authoritative.

Besides shedding light on biblical texts, the scrolls revealed the richness and diversity of Judaism in this pre-rabbinic period. They include legal literature, prayers, hymns, and psalms. Before their discovery, very little was known about the monastic Jewish religious sect known as the Essenes. From the scrolls, we learned that the Essenes followed halakhah (rabbinic law), were more stringent in their observance than the Jerusalem Jews, and were just as authentic as the Sadducees or Pharisees. Finally, the scrolls also offered us insight into the impact of Jewish teachings and practices on the formative years of Christianity.

Shalom Paul is chairperson of the Dead Sea Scroll Foundation and the author of dozens of articles on the Bible, the ancient Near East, and archaeology. His latest books include *The Almanac of the Bible*, and *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* from the Hermeneia Series published by Fortress Press.



## "The God Squad" Lectures at Lehigh



Rabbi Marc Gellman and Monsignor Tom Hartman

**Rabbi Marc Gellman** and **Monsignor Tom Hartman**, who share their insights on all things spiritual in the nationally syndicated advice column "The God Squad," presented the 2004 Kenner Lecture at Lehigh this past spring. In an event cosponsored by the Berman Center, the Hillel Society, and the Newman Center, the two clergymen, standing side by side, interspersed their comments with humor and repartee. Addressing the more than 500 students, faculty, and members of the public, they impressed the audience with their extraordinary caring relationship honed over many years. In the course of the evening, they offered opinions on a variety of topics—from the disturbing connection between religion and violence in today's world to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.

Both acknowledged that while all religious traditions teach that it is desirable to live a life of non-malevolence, most have sacred texts that support violence. Rabbi Gellman cited the laws of warfare in Deuteronomy 2 as an example. He also pointed out that there was a time in the history of Christianity when we witnessed events comparable to Muslim terrorism today. "If you had watched the Crusaders march through the Rhine Valley, killing 50,000 Jewish men, women, and children under the cross and the slogan 'God wills this,' you would not have believed that Catholicism would have ever changed," Gellman observed. "But it did, both from within and through the Reformation, and the message of Christianity was taken back to the original teachings of Jesus. Just as Christianity redeemed itself, so can Islam."

According to Rabbi Gellman, the religions that authorize violence do so because they have become interwoven in the fabric of a nation-state. Some Muslims seem to be unable to retain the kind of prophetic distance that would allow them to be critics of the state. While Gellman and Hartman both believe that Islam is basically a peaceful religion, they look to the day when major Muslim leaders place an ad in the *New York Times* stating that what Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein have done was not "real Islam."

Speaking of *The Passion*, Monsignor Hartman remarked that when he and Rabbi Gellman watched it, they experienced different responses. Nevertheless, owing to their close friendship, they were each able to see the movie through the other's eyes. Father Tom, as he prefers to be called, having been taught that "Jesus' death was a gift and that it wasn't the Jews or the Romans who killed Jesus, but all of us," did not consider the movie to be anti-Jewish. Rabbi Gellman did not see Jesus' death as a gift, but as murder. They agreed, however, that Jews must allow Christians to tell their story honestly, and that even though Christians may not see the movie as anti-Semitic, they must be sensitive to the feelings of Jews who do.

Working together for more than a decade, "The God Squad" seeks to foster religious tolerance, bringing people of all faiths together. One of their more successful efforts is "Project Understanding," which educates Jewish and Christian teenagers about each other's religions and takes them on a joint educational pilgrimage to Israel.

Gellman and Hartman are frequent guests on national radio and television and

host a daily television talk show that reaches almost 12 million homes in the New York metropolitan area. Hartman celebrates mass at Holy Trinity High School and St. Vincent de Paul Church on Long Island, and Gellman is senior rabbi of Temple Beth Torah in Melville, New York.

## Symposium on Jewish Writing

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The writers' symposium, focusing on the relation between Jewish literature and Jewish identity, memory, and culture, continued and extended a conversation that has been carried on since 1989 at six previous Berman Center conferences. The conferences and the volumes that grew out of them have explored the theme of Jewish identity from a variety of perspectives. These included "The Other in Jewish Thought and History," "Mapping Jewish Identities," and "Representing the Holocaust: Practices, Products, Projections."

The symposium program was made possible by gifts from the E. Franklin Robbins Fund in Jewish Studies, the Paul Levy Fund in Jewish Studies, the Berman Center's Writer-in-Residence Program, and the Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation.

## Berman Center Publications

### New Perspectives on Jewish Studies Series from New York Univ. Press

- *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust*
- *Producing the Modern Hebrew Canon: Nation Building and Minority Discourse*
- *Mapping Jewish Identities*
- *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age*
- *The Other in Jewish Thought and History: Constructions of Jewish Culture and Identity*
- *Jewish Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective: Religion, Ideology, and the Crisis of Modernity*
- *New Perspectives on Israeli History: The Early Years of the State*

### Sheffield Academic Press

- *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*

For more information on publications, visit the Berman Center's website at [www.lehigh.edu/~inber/publications.html](http://www.lehigh.edu/~inber/publications.html).



## Poet Rachel Tzvia Back Describes Life in Israel

Rachel Tzvia Back, author of lyrical poems that track the heartbreaking cycle of violence and loss defining the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, discussed "Placing the Voice: The Personal and the Political, Israel 2003." In her presentation, Back read from her two poetry collections, *Azimuth* and *The Buffalo Poems*. Written in response to horrendous events in the Israeli news, her poems evoke images of missing limbs and broken bodies, suicide bombers, demolished homes, and grief and hopelessness.

The American-born poet has lived in the Galilee, an area in Israel with a large Arab population, for more than 20 years. Her unique personal perspective of the political situation in her adopted homeland is reflected in her English-language poems, which are linked to the harsh and beautiful landscapes of Israel and the reality of life in this war-torn country. In the words of Israeli poet Peter Cole, "Her verse hurts as the land itself has been hurt. . . ."

"On January 1, 2000," Back said, "my husband and I packed our children into a car, and in the predawn hours we drove up to Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem to see the first sunrise of the new millennium in what felt like a new Middle East—a place of promise and peace and possibility. Nine months later the Al-Aqsa Intifada erupted and shattered our hopes and dreams. How close we felt, how unbearably far we feel now." Thousands have been killed, she reported, and the vast majority of the dead on both sides were noncombatants—children, old people, pregnant women, and unarmed people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Back commented that until recently she had never thought of her poetry as political. Instead, she saw it as an expression of her passion for the land, a poetry of place. She was totally surprised during a recent reading in the U.S. when she was asked if she always wrote political poetry.

"I believe passionately in the poem as a site of discovery for poet and reader both, and in the language miracle that happens in poems," she explained. "All of that is in contrast to a predetermined political agenda." Yet, when she began to mull over

the question, she realized that for an Israeli today the personal and the political cannot be separated.

In addition to the two poetry collections, Back is the author of a monograph *Led by Language, The Poetry and Poetics of Susan Howe*. Her poems have been published in numerous journals and anthologies in America and abroad. She teaches English literature at Tel Aviv University and creative writing at Bar-Ilan University.

During her visit to Lehigh, Back visited two classes, one on Israeli women writers and a second on Jewish literature. Her appearance was sponsored by the Berman Center, Women's Studies Program, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, and the Paul S. Levy Fund in Jewish Studies.

## Oren Stier Discusses Building Blocks of Holocaust Memory

Oren Baruch Stier, Professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University, delivered a public lecture, "Symbolizing the Holocaust: *Maus* and Other Projects," and visited with students in Professor Laurence Silberstein's course, "Responses to the Holocaust." Dr. Stier recently published *Committed to Memory: Cultural Mediations of the Holocaust* and served as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is also a contributor to the latest Berman Center book, *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust*.

Stier discussed the ways in which representations of the Holocaust often rely on symbols to serve as a shorthand of signification. Most of these symbols originate in the visual and metaphoric vocabulary of the Nazi era, though they frequently evolve and assume lives of their own beyond their use and application within the context of World War II.

Among the symbols that he discussed, drawn from Holocaust artifacts, were shoes, the railway car, the star of David, and the swastika. Shoes, in the aggregate, have become one of the most common symbols of the devastation of the Holocaust and the absence left in its wake. The Holocaust-era railway car is

another common artifact-turned-symbol. While a shoe speaks to the murder of the individual who wore it, the memorial display of a railway car reminds viewers of the act and experience of deportation by cattle-car.

The star of David and the swastika, Stier explained, are less artifact and more graphic, allowing artists to "play with them for various ulterior motives." The yellow star, for example, became the redemptive centerpiece of artist Judy Chicago's work "Rainbow Shabbat" from her *Holocaust Project* exhibit. He called the swastika the ultimate Holocaust symbol, particularly in representing the Nazi perpetration of the events of World War II, and said it is understandable that it has a prominent place in Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, the Pulitzer prize-winning portrayal of the Holocaust in cartoon form. "Spiegelman successfully depicts Jews trapped in the Nazi whirlwind by using the swastika as a powerful way to represent Vladek and Anja's path in their desperate search for a hiding place," he said.

To Stier, *Maus* is a compelling example of symbolization. Both a biography of Spiegelman's parents, focused on their wartime experiences, and an autobiography of his own struggle to come to terms with his parents' past, this story is presented by Spiegelman in graphic words-and-pictures "commix" form. Though *Maus* relies on the artistic appropriation of many Holocaust images and symbols, such as swastikas and six-pointed stars, Spiegelman chose more generic symbols to depict nationality as an animal type, using animal heads and extremities for otherwise human characters. Germans are cats, Jews are mice, and the Poles are pigs. "It is a bold and audacious representational technique, one that has met with some resistance," Stier observed.

He emphasized that in symbolically representing the Holocaust, artists, memorial designers, memoirists, and museum curators are actively participating in the construction of a social and cultural memory of the Shoah. These symbols serve as the building blocks of such memory—they constitute its inner vocabulary, one on which we will all become increasingly reliant as the survivor generation passes and history recedes.

Stier's appearance at Lehigh was sponsored by the Berman Center, the Religion Studies Department, the Chaplain's Office, and the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.



## Recent Gifts

The Philip and Muriel Berman Center for Jewish Studies recognizes with gratitude the individuals listed here. These generous contributors have greatly enhanced the academic, cultural, and programmatic offerings of the Berman Center and Lehigh University.

### *Gifts and pledges received fiscal year July 1, 2002, to June 30, 2003*

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Sara Beth Zuckerman '98

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Mark Beckerman  
Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation  
Lee W. Brooks '82  
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*Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of this list. Gifts received after June 30, 2004, will be acknowledged in the next newsletter. If you wish to call our attention to errors or omissions, please contact Shirley Ratushny at the Berman Center (610 758-3352).*

If you are interested in supporting the Berman Center, please contact Ann H. Neitzel, Development Office, Lehigh University, 27 Memorial Drive West, Bethlehem, PA 18015-3089 (610 758-4285).



## BCJS Faculty 2003–2004

• **Laurence J. Silberstein**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *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, The Spiritual Quest in Contemporary Jewish Life*

• **Robert L. Cohn**, Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Studies, Dept. of Religious Studies, Lafayette College, *Hebrew Bible, Biblical Narrative, Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*

• **Ruth Knafo Setton**, Writer-in-Residence, Berman Center for Jewish Studies and Department of English, Lehigh University, *Jewish Literature*

• **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*

• **Benjamin Wright, III**, Dept. of Religion Studies, Lehigh University, *Hebrew Bible, Judaism in the Greco-Roman World, Archaeology and the Bible in the Land of Israel*

### Affiliated Faculty Lehigh University

• **David Amidon, Jr.**, Urban Studies Program, *American Jews: Politics and Culture*

• **Bunnie Piltch**, Dept. of Modern Languages and Literature, *Hebrew Language*

• **Oles Smolansky**, Dept. of International Relations, *Middle East Studies*

• **Roslyn Weiss**, Dept. of Philosophy, *Jewish Philosophy*

### 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*

• **Robert Weiner**, Dept. of History, *Modern Jewish History*

## Faculty Notes 2003–2004

**Robert L. Cohn**, who served on the board of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council from 2000 to 2003, received its Award of Merit for distinguished service to the humanities in Pennsylvania. He published "Negotiating (with) the Natives: Ancestors and Identity in Genesis" in the *Harvard Theological Review* and "Return to Auschwitz: A Memoir" in *Midstream*. "The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide," his review essay of *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, also appeared in *Midstream*.

**Ilan Peleg** delivered academic lectures at Bowdoin College, the Oxford Centre for Jewish and Hebrew Studies and St. Antony's College in England, and Haifa University and Ben-Gurion University in Israel. His recent publications include "Israel Between Democratic Universalism and Particularist Judaism: Challenging a Sacred Formula" in the *Report to the Oxford Centre for Jewish and Hebrew Studies* and "The Promise of Human Rights" in *A Force Profonde: The Power, Politics, and Promise of Human Rights*. He continues to serve as editor of the *Israel Studies Forum: An Interdisciplinary Journal*.

**Bunnie R. Piltch** contributed a chapter entitled "Pedagogic Content Knowledge: Teaching Hebrew Language" to *The Ultimate Jewish Teacher's Handbook*, edited by Nechama Skolnick Moskowitz. At the annual Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE) conference at Hofstra University in 2004, she presented a language pedagogy workshop entitled "Good Shema [Listening] or Bad Shema? The Shiv'ah Minim [Seven Kinds] of Teaching Ivrit [Hebrew]." She discussed seven common practices of teaching Hebrew that discourage language learning and ways to transform these practices into constructive, successful language learning in the Hebrew classroom.

**Ruth Knafo Setton** received a residence fellowship at the MacDowell (writers) Colony for August 2004, where she worked to complete her second novel entitled *If I Forget You*. She is currently writing another novel, *City of Hunger*, and a novella, *The Blue Hand*. Her first novel, *Road to Fez*, which will appear in paperback in 2005, is read in women's literature,

Jewish literature, and creative writing courses at numerous colleges and universities.

Dr. Setton was a finalist in 2004 for both the Dorset Prize for Poetry and the Sue Sanial Elkind Prize in Poetry. Her recently published essays and short stories include "Borders" in *Wrestling with Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, "Uji" in *Tiferet*, "The Life and Times of Ruth of the Jungle" in *The Flying Camel: Behind the Veil of Science*, "Hijacked" in *Living with Terror, Working with Trauma: A Clinician's Handbook*, "The Memory House" in *Life Briefs: Essays by Prominent Jewish Women*, "Merman: What the Water Hides" in *Luna*, and "Speaking in Tongues" in *Bridges*.

**Laurence J. Silberstein** co-edited, together with Shelley Hornstein and Laura Levitt, *Impossible Images: Contemporary Art after the Holocaust* and contributed to the Introduction. In April–June, 2004, he returned to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome as the Richard and Susan Master Visiting Professor in the newly established Cardinal Bea Center for Jewish Studies. While in Rome, he delivered a public lecture, "Turning Eastward: Contemporary Jews Encounter Buddhism," in a series on the Experience of Interreligious Dialogue sponsored by the Institute for the Study of Religions and Culture. His previously published article, "Toward a Postzionist Discourse," was translated into German as "Auf dem Weg zu einem postzionistischen Diskurs" and appeared in *Jüdische Geschichte Lesen: Texte der Jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung*.

**Roslyn Weiss** lectured on "Maimonides on Cosmogony and Prophecy" at Princeton University and, in Hebrew, at Bar-Ilan University in Israel. She also gave a lecture on Maimonides at the Lower Merion Synagogue titled "Maimonides: A Man for All Reasons."

**Chava Weissler** received a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship for 2003 and served as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Her sabbatical research was devoted to her book-length study, "Jewish Renewal and the



American Spiritual Marketplace," which will be published by the University of Washington Press.

Dr. Weissler also presented the distinguished Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures at the University of Washington, in which she drew from her ongoing research on the movement for Jewish renewal in the United States. She delivered invited lectures at the North American Chevra Kadisha Conference; the Tenth Annual Gruss Colloquium at the University of Pennsylvania; the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies, Chicago; the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; the University of Judaism, Los Angeles; the annual meeting of the Society for the Anthropology of Religion; and at "Awakening, Yearning, and Renewal: Conference on the Hasidic Roots of Contemporary Jewish Expression."

**Benjamin Wright** is currently engaged in two book projects: *The New English Translation of the Septuagint*, which he is coediting with Albert Pietersma, and *A Greek-Hebrew/Hebrew-Greek Concordance to the Wisdom of Ben Sira*, with Galen Marquis. His article "Access to the Source: Cicero, Ben Sira, the Septuagint and Their Audiences" appeared in the *Journal for the Study of Judaism*. He presented invited lectures at Yale University, the Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins at Princeton University, Somerville College of Oxford University, the Second International Enoch Seminar in Venice, the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies in the Netherlands, and the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense in Belgium.

## Cardinal Bea Center

*continued from page 2*

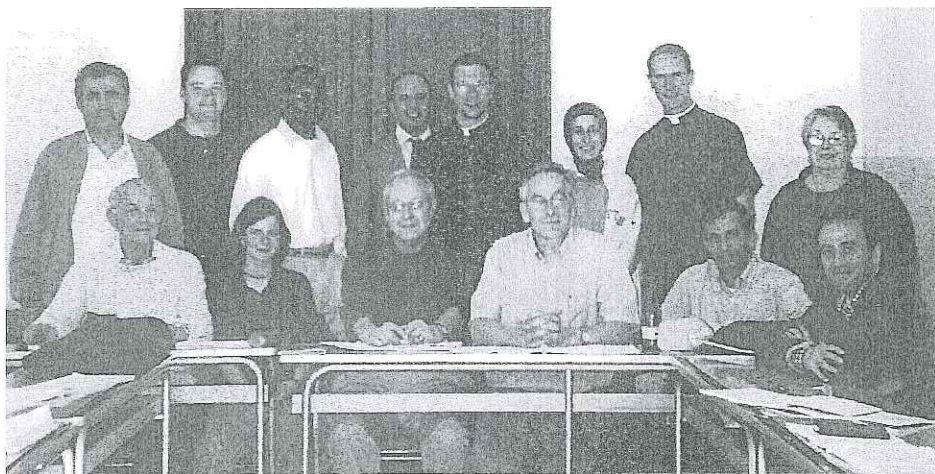
dents from the United States, India, Tanzania, the Netherlands, and Spain. Besides the Catholics, there were two Muslims and one Jewish student.

Professor Silberstein was fascinated by the ways in which his Catholic and Muslim students responded to Buber and Heschel: "Each student brought to the material the perspectives of his or her own tradition, which made for wonderful discussions. It was particularly interesting to see the impact that Buber and Heschel had on readers from other religious traditions, who were clearly moved by the words of these two great spiritual giants. It was obvious from what they said and wrote that for many, their encounter with

these Jewish philosophers had the effect of deepening their own spirituality."

While at the Gregorian, Silberstein also delivered a public lecture entitled "Turning Eastward: Contemporary Jews Encounter Buddhism" as part of the Gregorian's two-year series on interreligious dialogue.

Since the inception of the Master Visiting Professor program, the Gregorian and the Berman Center have annually selected a Jewish Studies scholar to teach at the pontifical university from such universities as Northwestern, Emory, Berkeley, and Lehigh. Michael Signer, Professor of Jewish Thought and Culture at the University of Notre Dame, will serve as the Master Visiting Professor for 2005. His course is titled "Christianity through Jewish Eyes."



*Some members of Professor Silberstein's Gregorian class—Standing left to right: Sadi Arslan (Turkey), Robert White (U.S.), Appolinaris Mapendo Msaky (Turkey), Giuseppe Castelli (Italy), Fr. Jeremy Secrist (U.S.), Lejla Demiri (Macedonia), Fr. Peter Mitchell (U.S.), Mimi Silberstein (U.S.). Seated left to right: Francis Mifsub (Italy), Ruth Liefert (Germany), Laurence Silberstein, Fr. Jan Stuyt (Holland), Fr. Matthew Palkatt (India), Roberto Nahum (Italy).*

## A Conversation about Conflict Follows Israeli Documentary

A screening of *The Last Enemy* served as the backdrop of "A Conversation about Conflict" sponsored by the Berman Center and Lehigh's Global Union. The powerful documentary follows the first Middle Eastern theater ensemble consisting of Palestinian, Israeli, and Jordanian actors through rehearsals and performances of a play that focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tensions surface in surprising ways as the actors are forced to confront their own biases. The debates, arguments, and compromises, on stage and off, reflect the challenges and complexities relating to the Middle-East peace process.

*The Last Enemy*, first shown at Lehigh several years ago, was brought back for an encore presentation at the urging of Julie Thomases, a Lehigh Valley resident active in the organization Search for Common Ground. She envisioned that the film would serve as a springboard to a series of community-wide programs focusing on conflict resolution.

Following the film, James Mirrione, the playwright of the play, also called *The Last Enemy*, opened the discussion by sharing his experiences working with this unusual group of actors, whom he had brought together to demonstrate the possibilities of peaceful coexistence in the

Middle East. He challenged the audience to address the question, "Who is the Last Enemy?" Mirrione has been the playwright-in-residence for the Creative Arts Team, the resident educational theater company at New York University, since 1978. In addition to the Middle East, his work in theater with international communities has taken him to Croatia, Great Britain, and Mexico.

To conclude the program, the audience was invited to participate in small group discussions led by trained facilitators from such organizations as the National Coalition Building Institute and Search for Common Ground.



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## BCJS Program Notes

• **The Eighth Colloquium on Judaism and Postmodern Culture**, sponsored by the Berman Center, was held at Lehigh this past June. Since the first two-day colloquium in 1993, more than 40 Jewish studies faculty from American and Israeli universities have gathered at Lehigh to present and discuss their current research. One aim of the colloquium is to provide a "safe space" in which participants can creatively explore the application of contemporary theory—literary, social, and cultural—to diverse aspects of Jewish history and culture.

Participants are encouraged to take advantage of the setting to experiment with creative avenues of inquiry relating to their scholarly work. They are invited to submit work, either finished or in-progress, which is distributed to participants in advance. These papers are then discussed at individual sessions. The topics covered this year were second-generation writers on the Holocaust; the construction of gender differences in the Hebrew Bible; fundamentalism as a con-

cept in Judaism and Christianity; Martin Buber's encounter with Daoist and Zen teachings; and the problems of history and memory in the representation of the Holocaust. At each colloquium, the group also reads and discusses a theoretical work selected from such fields as cultural studies, post-colonial studies, gender studies, philosophy, and psychoanalysis.

• **The Lehigh Valley Jewish and Israeli Film Series** presented at Lehigh two award-winning Israeli films, *Two Minutes from Faradis* and *Aviv—A F\*\*\*ed Up Generation*, in co-sponsorship with the Berman Center. *Two Minutes from Faradis* offered a fresh and comic look at suspicion and prejudice in Israel today, while the thoughtful documentary *Aviv* told the story of popular Israeli singer Aviv Geffen, an Israeli cultural icon who has become a symbol of the Israeli peace movement. More than 100 students and members of the community attended and participated in the discussion that followed. Professors Ruth Knafo Setton of Lehigh and Naomi Gal of Moravian College evaluated these films against the backdrop of contemporary Israeli society and culture. The

entire series of ten films, shown at theaters and universities throughout the Lehigh Valley, was open to Lehigh students free of charge. Other offerings in the popular series included *The Burial Society*, *Secret Passage*, *The Holy Land*, *Purity*, *The Secret*, *Manhood*, *Yossi and Yagger*, and *Moments—Israel 2002*.

This newsletter is made possible by a grant from the Philip and Muriel Berman Foundation.

To obtain additional information concerning the Berman Center and its programs or to be added to our mailing list, please contact

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