American Jewish Year Book Ceases Publication after 108 Years

The American Jewish Year Book, published annually since 1899, was regarded as the authoritative record of events and trends in Jewish life in the United States and around the world by many Jewish organizations.

Publication was initiated by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS). In 1908, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) assumed responsibility for compilation and editing while JPS remained the publisher. From 1950 through 1993 the two organizations were co-publishers, and in 1994 AJC became the sole publisher.

Issues of the Year Book featured special articles dealing with major themes or anniversaries, as well as reports on Jewish life in countries across the globe that were written by local correspondents, and Jewish demographic data. The U.S. and Israel, by far the largest Jewish communities, received especially detailed treatment. The Year Book also provided lists of national Jewish organizations, Jewish federations, and Jewish periodicals; obituaries of important American Jews who died over the past year; and Jewish calendars.

Publication ceased with the 2008 edition. To some extent, this decision was a result of the current economic climate. But it is also true that some sections of the Year Book have been supplanted by more up-to-date information on the Internet and by the changing ways in which we all communicate. Thus, it is also a casualty of changing technology. All previous issues are at: www.ajcarchives.org.

Regardless of the reason, although not a refereed publication, it is probably fair to say that over the years, the AJYB has published some of the most important, and most cited, articles in Jewish social science and history. David Singer and Larry Grossman, the latest editors, and those who preceded them are thanked for their hard work over all these years. The American Jewish community is poorer for the demise of this important work.

As of this writing, the ASSJ is considering various options that would continue the Year Book in some form, particularly the articles on the US Jews by Ira M Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky and the article on World Jewish Population by Sergio DellaPergola. ☺
Editor’s Column

The first issue of this Newsletter in July 2009 was met with praise from many quarters and I would like to thank all the members who contributed materials that made the inaugural issue of such interest!

Please think about items that you might submit for publication in the Newsletter. This is your chance to boast—to tell us of your achievements—about books and articles published, papers presented, awards earned, etc. It is also a place to tell us what you are working on so that others might communicate with you on current projects.

If someone wants to contribute an editorial or brief article on a substantive topic, the Newsletter might be considered as an outlet. We can also publish brief descriptions of the relevant happenings at your University or place of employment. All material should be sent to isheskin@miami.edu.

I e-mailed the previous issue to all “lapsed members” for whom we had e-mail addresses and a few people re-joined. If you know of some people who “should” be members, why not forward this e-mail to them.

Ira M. Sheskin, Newsletter Editor
Geography Department and Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies
University of Miami  

President’s Column

Let me first thank Ira for renewing, reformatting and revitalizing a much needed ASSJ newsletter. This is a wonderful way to keep abreast of new developments in the field, news about each other, and topics of mutual concern. I hope you will all learn to use it to your own advantage.

And Ira will be the first Board member I formally apologize to. By now you should all have received your annual membership letter—but with faulty letterhead! The officers and board members were carry-overs from last year. To set the record straight (and finally show that I really know who my current board is!), the current officers are Sylvia Barack Fishman (Brandeis University), VP—she’ll be in touch with you soon about nominations for the 2010 Sklare award nominations; Benjamin Phillips (Brandeis University), Secretary, to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude for redoing our website in a more efficient and economical manner; Gail Glicksman (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College), Treasurer, who has valiantly stepped in to relieve Carmel Chiswick from her many years of service and is now your address for dues payments and donations. Our current board members are: Paul Burstein (University of Washington); Barry Chiswick, (University of Illinois at Chicago); Arnold Dashefsky (University of Connecticut); Ariela Keysar (Trinity College); Sherry Rosen (Jewish Theological Seminary); and Ira Sheskin, (University of Miami). Ex-officio board members include Samuel Heilman (CUNY Queens), Contemporary Jewry editor; Sergio DellaPergola (Hebrew University) representing Israel; David Graham (Oxford University) representing Europe; Judit Bokser Liverant (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México) representing Latin America; Sherry Israel (Brandeis University), immediate past president; and Matthew Boxer (Brandeis University), student representative. Each board member would be more than happy to

Includes Special Pull-Out Section:
Program Guide to Sessions of Interest at the 2009 AJS!
hear from you and to help make your ideas for ASSJ a reality.

Congratulations to our Sklare awardee, Professor Charles Kadushin! See more about him later in the newsletter. Come hear his talk on "Social Networks and Jews" at the upcoming Sklare Memorial Lecture at the Association of Jewish Studies, followed with commentary by Paul Burstein and Roger Waldinger. We'll exemplify one of those social networks at the reception following the session (see more on this later in the newsletter), where I hope to meet many of you.

I hope many of you got a chance to tune in to our first webinar in a series of presentations cosponsored by the Berman Jewish Policy Archive (see more on the archive later in the newsletter). Keep on the lookout for the next webinar, and be sure to send ideas for future topics and presenters to Steven Cohen at the BJPA (steve34nyc@aol.com).

By now you have enjoyed the first year that Contemporary Jewry has three issues published. Kudos to Samuel Heilman, Editor and Yoel Finkelman, Managing Editor, for working with Springer to make this happen, to the guest editors for special issues, and to all of you who have submitted articles and/or reviewed articles for the publication. Keep your good work showcased in CJ, and volunteer to help review submissions. It's a great way to stay connected.

I'd like to launch a "Member Get a Member" campaign, whereby each of you reaches out to one colleague engaged in the "social scientific study" of Jewry or with interests in the field, who is not currently a member, and suggests that they join. You can also send me their contact information and I'll be happy to extend a personal e-vite to them. The more our network encompasses, the more interesting and vital it will be. A membership form is found as the last page of this Newsletter.

And what else is new for this year? You tell me. Send any ideas my way—or to any of the board members. You're welcome to attend our board meeting at AJS (Sunday Dec 20 at 2-4) or to send me items for the agenda.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Harriet (Hartman@rowan.edu)

Members Honored

**Jack Nusan Porter**

Jack Nusan Porter has just won the Robin Williams Lifetime Achievement Award for Research, Teaching, and Policy from the American Sociological Association’s Section on Peace, War, and Social Change. The award was awarded to Porter at the annual meetings in San Francisco in August 2009. Porter was honored for his work in conflict and conflict resolution and in Holocaust/genocide research. See Jack's autobiography later in this issue.

**Barry R. Chiswick**

Barry Chiswick, Distinguished Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago, received a PhD (Honorary) from Lund University, Lund, Sweden at their graduation ceremonies in May 2009. 😊
Arnold Dashefsky is professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut. He was invested as the inaugural holder of the Doris and Simon Konover Chair of Judaic Studies at an investiture ceremony on April 3, sponsored by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In the citation, it was noted that he serves as director of the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Life as well as the Berman Institute - North American Jewish Data Bank at UConn. His research centers on Jewish identity, and his most recent works are a book about charitable giving and a report on interfaith marriage. He is past president of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry and is the immediate past secretary-treasurer of the board of directors of the Association for Jewish Studies.

For more information and a podcast by the new chair holder:

Photos of the ceremony are available at the CLAS website:

JFR:

THE JEWISH FACULTY ROUNDTABLE

JFR is an independent e-mail collation of news and comments on campus Jewish issues by and for Jewish faculty, staff, and doctoral students from all disciplines and all Jewish viewpoints at U.S. and Canadian colleges and universities. Submissions are selected, reviewed, shortened, and bundled.

To join go to:
http://essmail.ess.niu.edu/mailman/listinfo/jfr

Please submit items for the June, 2010 issue (Volume 2, Number 1)

TO: ISHESKIN@MIAMI.EDU

The deadline for submissions is: May 15, 2010.

Happy Chanukah from ASSJ
News from Members

Marcia Cohn Spiegel
At 82, I am no longer active in writing, teaching or research. While I do maintain a seminar at HUC in LA for students from all the schools to examine stigmatized behaviors in the Jewish community and to encourage them to engage in research, I am really pulling back. I live on the west coast.

Morton Weinfeld
Morton Weinfeld, Professor of Sociology at McGill, is now again, for his sins, Chair of the Department. He continues to work on a comparative study on the issue of competing identities and loyalties for diaspora Jews, looking at Canada and Britain. He published "Misconceptions of Immigrant Economic and Social Integration" in Jack Jedwab and Karin Amit eds: *Promised Lands of Settlement? Immigrants, Integration, and Identity in Canada and Israel*. Canadian Universe, vol 1 no. 1. He is writing several review articles on the state of current social scientific knowledge about Canadian and Montreal Jewry.

Samuel Heilman
*The Rebbe*, over five years in the research and writing, is a story of great drama, triumph and tragedy, filled with mystery and intrigue, of how one man was swept away by his beliefs and expectations and led to assume that death could be denied and history manipulated. It tells of how an ancient idea—that there is a messiah and he will come—could be brought onto the agenda of the modern world and make headlines, of how a small and relatively obscure group of Hasidim could capture the imagination of the world and deign to transform it.

It tells the story of Lubavitcher Hasidim and their leader or "rebbe," Menachem Mendel Schneerson and how they became caught up in a belief that they could hasten the Messiah. It traces the origins of that belief and details the activities driven by it by a dedicated worldwide movement of emissaries sent out on behalf of their rebbe. In the course of their campaign, they also became convinced that their rebbe was the redeemer incarnate.

It tells the personal story of the Rebbe, and how he reinvented himself from being a French-trained electrical engineer hoping for a career in Paris into a charismatic leader who believed that he and his followers could change history and transform the world. It reveals how his messianic convictions ripened and expressed themselves, reaching a crescendo at the close of twentieth century and what happened after he died in 1994, a death not completely accepted by many of his followers.

Based on interviews, archival research and even detective work, this book reveals the story of an extraordinary Hasidic master and his disciples who rebuilt themselves from a small religious group on the run first from the Soviets and then the Nazis and finally on the verge of collapse in 1950 with the death of their sixth Rebbe. This movement and their seventh leader, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who would never again leave New York after dramatically seizing the group's leadership, gained fame and influence that no one would have predicted when he took over in 1951. It describes how from their Gothic mansion on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn where they reestablished their court, they created a series of heightened expectations and world attention to their messianic mission. The book tells how that mission grew to include the entire world, and how they would cope with the death of their would-be redeemer and the failure of his prophecies and their expectations.

About the Book: This book collects in one readily-accessible volume the pioneering research of Carmel UM Law School. Chiswick on the Economics of American Judaism. Filling a major gap in the social-scientific literature, Chiswick's economic perspective complements that of other social scientists and historians. She demonstrates clearly that economic analysis can deepen our understanding of the historical experience of American Jewry and provide insights into its current situation.

The author applies the methodology of modern labor economics to examine how America's unique economic environment in the twentieth century provided a context for the ancient Jewish religion to adapt to new circumstances. The development of distinctively American synagogue movements is linked to the economic assimilation of American Jews and their rapidly rising levels of education, social assimilation, and changing family structure. The economic perspective gives a fresh insight into questions of the long-run viability of Judaism in America. In a final section, economic analysis is applied in a novel way to highlight the symbiotic relationship between American and Israeli Judaism.


**Allen Glicksman**

Allen Glicksman and Tanya Koropeckyj-Cox have published an article entitled “Aging Among Jewish Americans: Implications for Understanding Religion, Ethnicity, and Service Needs” in the July issue of The Gerontologist, the leading journal in the field. Among the topics discussed are that many of the issues being debated about younger age cohorts, especially the growing rift between religious vs. ethnic based identity, are also to be found among older Jews.

The results were also presented at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem in August 2009.

Three ASSJ members (Sam Klausner, Sergio DellaPergola and Carmel Chiswick) all helped the authors think about the issues involved.

**Ira M. Sheskin**

Department of Geography, University of Miami and Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies

- Ira M. Sheskin was a featured panelist at a session on “Jewish Public Opinion and the Changing Jewish Demographic of the Jewish Vote in America,” at the Washington Conference of the National Jewish Democratic Council, Washington, DC (2009).

**Gerald Bubis**

Gerald Bubis has five papers scheduled for publication:

- “What’s New with Jewish Elderly,” will be published in the Association for Jewish Aging Service’s Journal on Jewish Aging in Winter 2010.
- “Governance and Leadership in NGO's” will be published in the Administrative Section of the American Psychological Association.
- “Jewish Awakening and Jewish Education,” is a chapter in What We Now Know about Jewish Education (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Publishers, 2009)
- “Founders and Leadership Styles,” his Founder’s Day address appears on the Hebrew Union College website.

Gerald is celebrating his 85th birthday and 61st wedding anniversary!

Keren McGinity
Gleaning from her new research project on Jewish men, Keren R. McGinity presented a lecture, "Of Mice and Mensches: An American History of Intermarriage and Fatherhood," at the University of Michigan's Frankel Center for Judaic Studies on October 14, 2009. ASSJ members interested in this and related topics are invited to attend the multidisciplinary panel she has organized for the AJS conference, "From Chuppah to Parenthood: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Intermarriage and Jewish Trajectories."

McGinity will be speaking about her book, Still Jewish: A History of Women and Intermarriage, on January 26, 2010 at Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor, on February 25 at Temple Emanuel in Newton, MA, and on February 3 at Creighton University in Omaha. Still Jewish was positively reviewed in Moment, the Jerusalem Post, the Jewish Week, the Washtenaw Jewish News, and online by the Jewish Outreach Institute, the Jewish Women's Archive, www.MyJewishLearning.com, and www.InterfaithFamily.com.

McGinity is advising graduate student Aura Ahuvia, who is completing a master's thesis about the relationship between childhood experiences of Jewish identity and adult attitudes about synagogue life. Reading suggestions are most welcome and may be sent to kerenm@umich.edu.

Ayala Fader

Mitzvah Girls is the first book about bringing up Hasidic Jewish girls in North America, providing an in-depth look into a closed community. Ayala Fader examines language, gender, and the body from infancy to adulthood, showing how Hasidic girls in Brooklyn become women responsible for rearing the next generation of nonliberal Jewish believers. To uncover how girls learn the practices of Hasidic Judaism, Fader looks beyond the synagogue to everyday talk in the context of homes, classrooms, and city streets.

Hasidic women complicate stereotypes of nonliberal religious women by collapsing distinctions between the religious and the secular. In this innovative book, Fader demonstrates that contemporary Hasidic femininity requires women and girls to engage with the secular world around them, protecting Hasidic men and boys who study the Torah. Even as Hasidic religious observance has become more stringent, Hasidic girls have unexpectedly become more fluent in secular modernity. They are fluent Yiddish speakers but switch to English as they grow older; they are increasingly modest but also fashionable; they read fiction and play games like those of mainstream American children but theirs have Orthodox Jewish messages; and they attend private Hasidic schools that freely adapt from North American public and parochial models. Investigating how Hasidic women and girls conceptualize the religious, the secular, and the modern, Mitzvah Girls offers exciting new insights into cultural production and change in nonliberal religious communities.
Recent conference publications.
• 2009 "Nature Knows No Boundaries?" Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace. Toronto, York University, June. This was a particularly controversial conference and I have put down in text some reflections on the issues raised by it. I will share these on request.
• 2009 "Minding the Common in a Conflict Zone." Canadian Sociology Association, Ottawa, May.
• 2008. "Is Purim the Anti-Pesach?" Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education. August, University of Vermont, Burlington. August

Invited presentations:
• 2009 "Cooperation and Barriers to Providing Ecosystem Services in the Eastern Mediterranean," NATO Advanced Research Workshop, Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island.
Robert Sands


Sarah Bunin Benor and Steven Cohen

HUC-JIR Faculty Release Results of Survey of American Jewish Language and Identity

How do American Jews speak English? Who uses Hebrew and Yiddish words and New York regional features? When using Hebrew words, who prefers Israeli pronunciations and who prefers Ashkenazic ones? Which Yiddish-origin features do some non-Jews use? Two researchers from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion have begun to answer these questions. Linguist Sarah Bunin Benor and Sociologist Steven M. Cohen have released the results of a large-scale survey of Jews and non-Jews in the United States.

The online survey began in the summer of 2008 with an e-mail invitation to about 600 people, and within 6 weeks, over 40,000 people had participated. Several newspapers and dozens of blogs reported on the survey. “We were amazed at how much interest there was and how quickly the survey spread around the world,” says Dr. Benor, who has published several papers on the Yiddish-influenced English speech of Orthodox Jews.

Benor and Cohen found that American Jews use many Yiddish words and constructions within their English speech (such as heimish, bashert, “staying by them,” and “she has what to say”) and that many non-Jews use selected Yiddishisms (especially klutz, shpiel, and “money shmoney”). Most Yiddish words are more common in the older generations, but some (including bentsh, leyn, and shul) are increasing among younger Jews who attend synagogue frequently. American Jews, especially those who have spent time in Israel or are highly engaged in religious life, also pepper their English with Hebrew and Aramaic words (including yofi, balagan, davka, and kal vachomer). Jews with different social networks have different understandings of the meanings of certain words (such as whethershmooze means ‘chat’ or ‘kiss up’).

Outside of New York, Jews are more likely than non-Jews to use certain New York regional pronunciations, such as pronouncing “orange” as “AH-range.” And Jews are somewhat more likely than non-Jews to report that they have been told that they interrupt too much. The info and report are here: [http://huc.edu/survey/09/](http://huc.edu/survey/09/).

Steve Gold


Rela Mintz Geffen

Rela stepped down as President of Baltimore Hebrew University in June of 2007, moved back to Philadelphia, and is currently Adjunct Professor of Sociology at Gratz College and Professor Emerita at Towson University which, as of July 2009, became the new home of the Baltimore Hebrew Institute.

Rela Mintz Geffen delivered a paper at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in August in Jerusalem entitled: "At the Margins or At the Center: The Emerging Roles of American Jewish Grandparents." She will be chairing a session at the Association for Jewish Studies.
in Los Angeles on "The Five Original Colleges of Jewish Studies: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow"

Her most recent publications include:

She also published 14 articles for The Cambridge Dictionary of Jewish History, Religion and Culture, Judith R. Baskin (Editor), forthcoming from Cambridge University Press. Articles include life cycle events (Circumcision, Bar Mitzvah, Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Consecration) and longer articles on Conservative Judaism, Life Cycle Rituals, Sisterhoods, and the Jewish Community Center Movement.

**Ariela Keysar**

- American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population (September 2009) See Book cover on page 12.

**Sergio DellaPergola**

The Shlomo Argov Professor in Israel-Diaspora Relations at the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem is currently on sabbatical leave as the Visiting Senior Israeli Scholar at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC). He taught a course on Overview of Contemporary Jewry: Israel and Diaspora in the framework of the UIC program in Jewish Studies and the Israel Studies project sponsored by the Chicago Jewish Federation.

Recent publications include:
- "Jewish Demography and Peoplehood", in N. Tzabar-Ben Yehoshua, G. Shimoni, N. Hamo (eds.) Jewish Peoplehood. Tel Aviv, Beit Hatfutzot, 2009, 59-86 (Hebrew).


**Michael Weinstein**

I am appointed Visiting Scholar in Sociology at Harvard for the spring semester 2010, while I am on sabbatical leave from the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Department of Sociology.
American Nones: The Profile of the No Religion Population

A Report Based on the American Religious Identification Survey 2008

Principal Investigators
Barry A. Kosmin & Ariela Keysar
with
Ryan Cragun and Juhem Navarro-Rivera

Trinity College
Hartford, Connecticut
Judit Bokser Liwerant, Head of the Graduate School in Social and Political Sciences at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, was a Research Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from March through August 2009. She took part in the International Research Project on Contested Models of Citizenship and Democracy in Latin America.

In 2008 she was awarded with the Fisher Prize in Jewish Education, by The Pinkus Fund in Jewish Education, Jerusalem.

Among her recent publications:
- Sociedad, Política e Identidades (Society, Politics and Identities) (Ed.) with Saúl Velasco, UNAM-Siglo XXI, 2009 (Sp)

Articles:
- "Identidades colectivas y esfera pública: judíos y libaneses en México" (Collective Identities and Public Sphere: Jews and Arabs in Mexico) en Raanan Rein (Editor) Árabes y Judíos en el Iberoamérica, Fundación Tres Culturas, Colección Anfora, 2008.
News from Universities

University of Illinois at Chicago
Sergio DellaPergola, Hebrew University, is Visiting Professor in the Jewish Studies Program, University of Illinois at Chicago for the Fall Semester 2009.

University of Michigan
Mandell L. Berman Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Contemporary American Jewish Life. A two-year postdoctoral fellowship is an opportunity for a recent PhD (since June 2006) to pursue research on American Jews and the American Jewish community in conjunction with University of Michigan faculty. A strong commitment to multi-disciplinary work in the social sciences is required. The fellow will be expected to be in residence during the academic years of the fellowship, to conduct research, to participate in the intellectual activities of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, and to disseminate scholarship to diverse audiences. Please send application by January 4, 2010. Http://www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic/.

Obituaries

Gary Tobin

As most members probably know by now, Gary Tobin, formerly the Director of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University and the Founding Director of the Institute for Jewish & Community Research in San Francisco died this year.

Obituary by Larry Sternberg
(Executive Director Hillel at Brandeis, former Associate Director of the Cohen Center)
I know I speak for many who worked with Gary, whose good nature and kindness were always evident in his personal and professional interactions, that the loss we experience is not only the loss of a personal friend, but of a friend to the Jewish people and to all who are devoted to creating thriving and caring communities.

Gary's belief that people, and the institutions we create and maintain, can make a difference in our lives and the lives of our neighbors, was at the root of his devotion to the study of Jews and Jewish communities. He was a quick study, always ready to listen and learn, always eager to work with others across disciplines, and always ready to lend a helping hand or insight.

I never saw Gary as a maverick or an iconoclast; he was a straight-shooting planner, whose insights about the community may have been expressed by others (sometimes his respondents!), but not with the combination of authority and creativity that
Gary possessed. It was precisely because Gary was an insider – working at first as a PI in community surveys for Jewish federations and later for major philanthropic foundations – that his observations and suggestions were taken seriously. Often, because he saw the big picture he was able to help others see more clearly beyond the boundaries of their organizational frameworks.

Gary helped foster the growth of applied research in the Jewish community. His ability to communicate broadly -- to those who were neither ensconced in the ivory tower nor in the innermost core of Jewish communal institutions -- that research was a critical tool to understanding our community and its needs, helped the community begin to embrace strategic approaches to problems and creative efforts at growth and change.

His warmth, humor, love and devotion – all these so native to who Gary was – are gifts that will always be with us.

Y’hai Zichrono Baruch – his memory is a blessing for all of us.

Obituary by Ben Harris, JTA

There are probably few students of American Jewry equally comfortable arguing for more aggressive efforts to grow Jewish numbers through conversion as they are assailing the hostility towards converts and the gentile spouses of Jews. While Jewish organizations were complaining that wealthy Jews were directing their philanthropy to non-Jewish causes, Tobin told them to quit kvetching and give them a good reason not to.

And while many Jewish institutions were content to ignore Jews of non-European origin, Tobin actively sought them out. Through its initiative B’Chol Lashon (In Every Tongue), his institute reached out to Jews of color and helped educate the mainstream community about Jewish diversity.

“Gary was a visionary about the Jewish community,” said Leonard Saxe, a professor at Brandeis University who succeeded Tobin as director of the Cohen Center. “He identified problems and issues in the community and often developed these really creative analyses, whether it was about the role of synagogues or the makeup of communities and more recently about philanthropy."

Lacking a background in sociology, Tobin often came at problems from a different perspective than many of the researchers who dominate the study of American Jewry.

While most communal professionals were bemoaning the loss of Jews to intermarriage and assimilation, Tobin assailed the community for its insularity and hostility toward converts and the gentile spouses of Jews. While Jewish organizations were complaining that wealthy Jews were directing their philanthropy to non-Jewish causes, Tobin told them to quit kvetching and give them a good reason not to.

And while many Jewish institutions were content to ignore Jews of non-European origin, Tobin actively sought them out. Through its initiative B’Chol Lashon (In Every Tongue), his institute reached out to Jews of color and helped educate the mainstream community about Jewish diversity.

“To the black Jewish community he was a friend, a colleague and just one that cared a great deal about seeing the broader community be more inclusive of Jews of color, particular African Americans,” said Capers Funnye, a black Chicago rabbi and the associate director of B’chol Lashon.
Tobin showed up 12 years ago at Funnye’s synagogue in Chicago and the two have been friends ever since. Funnye, a cousin of first lady Michelle Obama, said he had a closer relationship with Tobin than with any mainstream Jewish organizational leader.

(This loss, for me, it is indeed like losing a brother, a member of my family,” Funnye said.

While Tobin staked out liberal positions on issues of Jewish community and identity, he had no qualms about making common cause with conservative groups in defense of communal interests. In 2004 he was named to the Forward Fifty list of the country’s most influential Jews, which noted both his “maverick liberal” attitudes on conversion and racial diversity as well as his partnership with the neo-conservative Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, a post-9/11 creation intended to fight the spread of radical Islam.

It was there that Tobin produced studies on American attitudes toward Israel and anti-Israel sentiment on campus and conducted public opinion polls relating to national security and the Middle East. In 2005, Tobin co-authored “The Uncivil University,” which charged that universities had violated the public trust by permitting a climate of rampant anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment to take root.

Tobin also was a fierce critic of the National Jewish Population Survey, claiming that its methodology was flawed and that it had vastly undercounted American Jews. He estimated the American Jewish population at 6.7 million, more than 1 million more than the 2000 NJPS found.

“He was first and foremost a planner,” said Larry Sternberg, who was Tobin’s associate director at the Cohen Center. “His orientation was that of a person whose first response is to understand the nature of how the community looks. I think that as a planner he saw these people as people with needs, he saw them as human beings.”

Tobin’s most audacious writings may be those that urged the Jewish community to abandon its longstanding coolness to newcomers. Tobin saw such thinking as a relic of the Jewish experience of suffering and persecution and more befitting shtetl life in 19th century Europe than 21st century America. Jews, Tobin argued, needed to get over their fear and stop seeing their institutions as a bulwark against assimilation.

“No number of day schools or summer camps is going to turn back the clock on religious freedom and competition,” Tobin wrote last year in a JTA Op-Ed. “It is time for Jews to join every other group in America and quit obsessing about who is being lost and start acting on who might come in. Right now it is largely a one-way street because we cling to dangerously obsolete ideas, attitudes and practices about conversion. We do not welcome people with open arms but rather we stiff-arm.”

Tobin is survived by his wife, Diane, the institute’s associate director, and their six children. Funeral services are scheduled for Thursday.

Obituary by Sid Goldstein

It was with shock and much sadness that I learned of the death of Gary Tobin. I still recall the day, years ago, when Gary, then working in public service in St. Louis as an urban planner, visited me in my office at Brown. He was aware of my work in Jewish demography and wanted to explore the possibility of changing his career orientation to the study of Jewish population. Being keenly aware of the shortage of Jewish demographers in the US and very eager to recruit qualified newcomers to the field, I jumped at the opportunity to encourage Gary to shift his interests toward
Jewish demography and offered a number of suggestions about the technical skills he would need to master the challenges, and the opportunities that would lie ahead for him if he seriously wanted to become a social demographer concerned with the status, both socio-demographic and religious, of American Jewry at the community and national levels. In succeeding years, to my delight, Gary became an important member of the group of Jewish demographers who were responsible for assessing American Jews, especially at the community level.

Gary rapidly developed a national reputation and was called on frequently to do community studies and to advise on national surveys. His impressive record led to his appointment as Director of the Cohen Center at Brandeis. From there he moved to the Institute for Community and Jewish Research in San Francisco. During this time, he contributed important insights to the quality and to the meaning of the demographic statistics on American Jewry. Many colleagues, including myself, took strong exception to the directions in which he was moving and the claims he was making. We nonetheless respected the new insights he provided about possible ways to encompass more Jews in our surveys, and the innovative but controversial conceptions he offered by which to define who is a Jew and what constituted the Jewish population of the US. Gary's insights, speculations, and major substantive works will serve as a lasting memory to his contributions to American Jewish demography and to the right decision he made in transferring his interests from urban planning to work on the American Jewish community.

We have lost a strong and valuable colleague at a much too early age. We would undoubtedly have had many more substantive and methodological contributions, as well as challenges and differences of opinion in the years ahead had he lived to continue on the productive path he had developed. May he rest in peace, and may he be an inspiration to all of us, as well as to younger colleagues seeking to contribute to the development of American Jewry.

J. Alan Winter
From the Connecticut College Website

A former chair of the sociology department at Connecticut College, Professor Winter conducted much of his research on contemporary American Jewry.

He passed away on March 31, 2009. He brought his expertise to his course on the "Sociological Analysis of Jewry," which examined the sociological and cultural forces affecting the behavior, norms and organization of Jewry. He also taught "Organizational Dynamics," which examines the structure and function of complex, formal organizations or bureaucracies with special attention to human service organizations, and a seminar on "Human Nature and the Social Order," which examines the relationship between theme as seen by various theories of interpretive sociology. In addition, Winter led a class on the foundations and development of sociological theory which viewed the development of sociology as an analysis of industrial and post-industrial societies. In this course he places particular emphasis on the relationships of contemporary theory to the works of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber.

Winter's most recent book is Jewish Choices: American Jewish Denominationalism (1999, SUNY Press) which he co-authored with colleagues in the U.S. and Israel. Winter is also the author of Continuities in the Sociology of Religion: Creed, Congregation and Community (1977) and co-author of Clergy in Action Training (1971). He also edited The Poor (1971) and co-edited Vital Problems for American Society (1968). Winter has published over 30 articles, reports, and
book chapters. In addition, he has written over 30 review essays and book reviews and presented his work at numerous professional meetings.

A former visiting professor at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Israel, Winter was the secretary and treasurer of the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry. He is an Associate Editor of *Review of Religious Research*. He was previously the editor of *Contemporary Jewry*.

Professor Winter retired from Connecticut College in 2002.

**The Association of Religion Data Archives**

The Association of Religion Data Archives, in partnership with national religion journalist David Briggs, has launched a weekly report to lift up the latest news in religion research from throughout the world.

“Ahead of the Trend” is a collegial effort, enlisting the cooperation of researchers, universities, journal editors, institutes and associations of scholars to increase the impact and awareness of important findings in religion research.

The project offers ASSJ members (among others) a forum to reach the U.S. and international media and present their work to the public in an objective manner that will encourage further exploration.

David Briggs, who holds a master’s degree from Yale Divinity School and is one of the nation’s most honored and respected religion writers, will provide a regular update on relevant research in an entertaining manner, with links to the full papers and articles and other related research in the Association of Religion Data Archives site.

ASSJ members are invited to be a part of this effort to make religion research available and understandable to a global audience by alerting David to new research findings and public actions of importance to the field.

He can be reached at dbriggs@thearda.com or by phone at 615-891-7303.

One web site that should be of significant interest to all members is [www.jta.org](http://www.jta.org). This is the web site of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, which is basically an Associated Press for Jewish news. In particular, you can sign up for an e-mail that comes each weekday that provides headlines from the Jewish world and links to stories in other publications.
Program Guide to Sessions of Interest at the 2009 Association for Jewish Studies Meeting

The AJS 41st Annual Conference will be held December 20-22, 2009 at the Hyatt Regency Century Plaza, Los Angeles, California

School, Camp, Student Movement: Historical Perspectives on Creating Jewish Identity in 20th Century America

Sponsor: Modern Jewish History in the Americas (Sun, Dec 20 - 9:30am-11:00am, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 11)

Session Participants

Recreation and Identity Creation: The Early History of Camp Cejwin, Miriam Stern (American Jewish University)

Defining and Defending American Orthodox Girlhood: The Case of the Bais Yaakov Schools, Leslie Ginsparg (New York University)

The Soviet Jewry Movement and the Transformation of American Jewish Identity, Jonathan Krasner (HUC-JIR)

Chair: Bethamie Horowitz (New York University)

Abstract:

A central theme in the American Jewish experience is the evolution of Jewish identity as Jews in every era have struggled to locate themselves along the continuum of assimilation and survival. Historians complicate the dualistic conception of “American Jewish synthesis” by factoring additional characteristics of identity such as gender, age, and social class, into the analysis of how “Jewish identity” has been shaped and challenged in the American milieu. Moreover, in the past thirty years they have come to understand identity construction as a continuous and unending process. This session juxtaposes three distinctive portraits of the process of Jewish identity formation in 20th century American Jewish history in order to compare and contrast changes in these processes over time and among different populations in various settings. Miriam Heller Stern’s paper, “Recreation and Identity Creation: The Early History of Camp Cejwin,” examines how Camp Cejwin hoped to imbue interwar youth with “authentic” and positive American Jewish experiences in order to facilitate American integration along cultural pluralistic lines. The model of an educational institution designed to engineer identity is echoed in Leslie Ginsparg’s paper, “Defining and Defending American Orthodox Girlhood: The Case of the Bais Yaakov Schools,” which focuses on the socialization of Orthodox adolescent girls in the postwar period in response to shifting expectations of appropriate behavior for Orthodox females. Finally, Jonathan Krasner’s paper, “Soviet Jewish Activism and the Transformation of Jewish Identity,” explores the shaping of Jewish political and cultural identity among college students in the context of 1960s-70s grassroots activism. Collectively, these papers will shed light upon common historical themes. In every generation, Jewish leaders and policy-makers have developed new institutions aimed at fostering a particular brand of Jewish identity among youth; and in every generation, youth have through their own activities evolved their own identities and challenged the “American-Jewish” equation. While sociological and psychological literature theorizes the nature of identity formation in terms of human development and group dynamics, this session offers the perspective of how historical developments influence Jewish identity construction.

Demography: Small Towns, Big Cities, National Comparisons

Sponsor: Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Sun, Dec 20 - 11:15am-1:00pm, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 6)

Session Participants

Boundaries, Institutions and Contents: A New Look at Jewish Identification in the U.S. and Elsewhere, Sergio DellaPergola (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Jewish Identity on the Suburban, Urban, and Rural Frontiers: The Effects of Community Size, Matthew Boxer (Brandeis University)
**Speaking in Tongues: Varieties of Expression and Authenticity in the Study of Contemporary Jews and Their Jewishness**

**Sponsor:** Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore  
Sun, Dec 20 - 11:15am-1:00pm, Brentwood

**Session Participants**

Narrative, Voice and Authenticity: A Feminist Approach to the Study of Jewish Identities  
*Debra Renee Kaufman* (Northeastern University)

Voices from the Edge: Authenticity as an Element in the Boundary Formation among Young American Jews  
*Bethamie Horowitz* (New York University)

Respondent:  
*Shaul Kelner* (Vanderbilt University)

Chair:  
*Emily Budick* (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

**Abstract:**
A theoretical postmodern shift and a renewed interest in narrative have had far reaching effects on the social sciences in general and on the social scientific study of Jews in particular. This two-fold development raises debates among many scholars about what constitutes authentic and/or traditional ethnic and religious values and practices when studying Jewish identity. It raises questions about whose experiences define shared culture and whose authority authenticates a tradition, leading us to think about “voice” and “authority.” It raises epistemological issues about fluidity, linearity and essentialism in the study of both tradition and identity, as we see how much identity varies across particular historical, socio-cultural and political contexts and is responsive to them.

The panelists in this session each delve into the complexities of constructing Jewishness, and look at how contemporary “traditions” are reworked and creatively refashioned from the store of “given” ideas and practices of their particular worlds. From different disciplinary perspectives (sociological, educational and socio-psychological) the panelists bring together their work across a variety of contemporary contexts. Together these presentations and the comments of the respondent will provide a lively opportunity to consider a wide variety of expressions, practices and meanings of Jewish identity.


Tali Hyman’s paper, "Negotiating Valentine’s Day And Halloween: An Ethnographic Study Of The Politics Of Authenticity In American Jewish Identity Formation," investigates how the various stakeholders in a liberal American Jewish high school navigate contemporary American Jewish identity tensions, in an ongoing struggle over which versions of American Jewish “hybridized” identities count as legitimate, authoritative, and authentic.

In Bethamie Horowitz’s paper, “Voices from the Edge: Authenticity as an element in Boundary Formation and Legitimation of OPEN ORTHODOXY,” she considers the dynamics of boundary formation/maintenance between Orthodoxy and non-Orthodoxy in the case of a new liberal Orthodox rabbinical seminary.

**Jewish Past, Jewish Present, Jewish Future: The Role of the Historian**

**Sponsor:** Interdisciplinary and Other  
Sun, Dec 20 - 2:00pm - 4:00pm  
Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 2

**Session Discussants**

*Robert Chazan* (New York University)  
*Robin Judd* (The Ohio State University)  
*Aaron D. Panken* (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion)  
*Jacob J. Schacter* (Yeshiva University)  
*Jack Wertheimer* (Jewish Theological Seminary)

Chair:  
*Yehuda Kurtzer* (Brandeis University)

**Abstract:**
In addition to the well-attested historical role that the study of history has played in the formation of denominational Jewish identity, in the last several years historians have increased their public roles in the Jewish community in the professional contexts and conversations on Jewish leadership and planning for the Jewish future. This includes historians in leadership positions in university programs that train students in Jewish professional leadership; graduate fellowships from the Jewish community awarded to Jewish historians to support their academic output; and of course the continued role that historians play in the leadership of the various denominational seminaries.
In this session, we will engage with the question of why the discipline of history is becoming central to contemporary Jewish leadership. What does a knowledge of Jewish history provide to the discourse of contemporary Jewish life and leadership, and what are its limitations?

At the same time, we will ask the reciprocal question: What happens to the study of history in the process of its adaption to contemporary utility? What becomes of the past when it is synthesized with the present and future?

The panel consists of six historians (including the moderator), all of whom are also engaged with the work of contemporary Jewish leadership as either an extension of their professional vocation, a peripheral set of commitments, or both. Robert Chazan (NYU) co-directs the Wagner/Skirball dual-degree program in Non-Profit Management and Jewish Studies, co-directs the Steinhardt School doctoral program in Education and Jewish Studies, and chairs the Wexner Graduate Fellowship Selection Committee; Robin Judd (OSU) serves in positions of leadership in the Columbus Jewish Federation, Jewish day school and Hillel; Aaron Panken (HUC-JIR) is Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives at HUC-JIR; Jacob J. Schacter (YU) is University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought and Senior Scholar at Yeshiva University’s Center for the Jewish Future; and Jack Wertheimer (JTS) has served as Provost of JTS. The moderator, Yehuda Kurtzer (Brandeis), is working on a book on the relationship between history and memory and the major issues facing the contemporary Jewish community, and teaches in the Hornstein Program at Brandeis University.

This diverse panel will consider both ends of this complex question: What does the study of history have to offer the work of Jewish leadership in the present? And what are the ramifications for history itself and the past in the process?

Categories, Boundaries and Borders in Jewish Cultural Studies

Abstract

This panel engages questions raised by Jewish cultural studies in general and the recent work of Jonathan Freedman in particular to examine the following questions.

1. Given that boundaries and categories are always culturally constructed, what are the most productive ways to theorize or imagined the place of boundedness in Jewish cultures?

2. How do scholars who work with cultural production and scholars who examine social relationships talk across their differences; do boundaries mean different things in literary, cultural, and historical studies?

3. Jonathan Freeman’s work contributes not only to the ways in which Jewishness is constructed, but the ways in which both other minorities and subsequent waves of immigrants construct themselves via images of Jewishness. What are the comparative ways in which to understand the issues of cultural boundedness, hybridity, cosmopolitanism and other such concepts across groups in the United States? Is the Jewish case different from others?

4. How do these issues help to shape a comparative Jewish cultural studies across cultures?

The aim of the panel is to fully investigate the implications of a call for Jewishness as a pass through to a larger modernity that will reconfigure both Jewishness and the nation.
**The ASSJ Marshall Sklare Memorial Lecture**

**Sponsor:** Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore and the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (Sun, Dec 20 - 4:15pm-6:15pm, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 10)

The Sklare Reception will follow the session and will be co-sponsored by ASSJ, the Brandeis University Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, the Yale University Program in Judaic Studies & the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

**Session Participants**

*Social Networks and Jews, Charles Kadushin* (Brandeis University)

Respondent: *Paul Burstein* (University of Washington)

Respondent: *Roger Waldinger* (UCLA)

Chair: *Harriet Hartman* (Rowan University)

**Abstract:**

The Marshall Sklare Award is given annually by the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry (ASSJ) to a scholar who has made a significant scholarly contribution to the social scientific study of Jewry, primarily through the publication of a body of research in books and articles. The Sklare Memorial Lecture is delivered by our honoree of the year at the Sklare Memorial Lecture session.

This year Charles Kadushin has been selected to receive the Marshall Sklare Award. Kadushin is Professor Emeritus of Sociology, at the Graduate Center, CUNY and Distinguished Scholar, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies and Visiting Research Professor, Sociology, Brandeis University. His presentation is entitled “Social Networks and Jews” (abstract submitted separately). His lecture will be followed by comments from two respondents, Professor Paul Burstein of Washington University, and Professor Roger Waldinger from UCLA.

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**Next Generation: Identity, Engagement and Outreach**

**Sponsor:** Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Mon, Dec 21 - 8:30am-10:30am, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 3)

**Session Participants**

*Taglit-Birthright Israel: Where Does the Journey Lead?, Leonard Saxe* (Brandeis University)

J-How: Organizational Strategies for Reaching Los Angeles Jews in their 20s and 30s, *Julie Childers* (Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles)

HIPSTER FRUMKEIT: Cosmopolitan Jewish Young Adults Choosing Parochialism in San Francisco’s Mission District, *Tobin Belzer* (University of Southern California)

**Young Adult Jewish Identities, Theodore Sasson** (Middlebury College)

Chair: *Fern Chertok* (Brandeis University)

**Abstract**

Young adult American Jews, like other millennials, increasingly defer marriage and postpone raising children until their 30s and beyond. One consequence is that many Jewish young adults remain beyond the orbit of synagogues and other Jewish formal organizations during an extended and developmentally important phase of their lives. Jewish institutions, including a growing group of grassroots organizations, have created a number of new programs to foster Jewish identity and engagement among young adults. This panel will examine a number of such programs, explore the diverse identities of the young adults whose needs they are meant to address, and assess the impact of these efforts.

The largest of the new young adult initiatives, Taglit-Birthright Israel, has provided cost-free educational tours of Israel for more than 150,000 North American young adults since its inception in 1999. As part of the panel, Leonard Saxe will present the first assessment of the Taglit’s long-term (up to eight years) impact on participants’ Jewish identities and practices. Programs developed at the community level aim to address diverse young adult populations and needs. Julie Childers will present an overview of the field of young adult engagement in Los Angeles, focusing on the range of organizations and engagement strategies and their compatibility with the interests of target populations. Young adults have also established their own spiritual communities (minyanim) in a number of cities. Tobin Belzer will present
Space and Place in Jewish Studies

**Sponsor:** Interdisciplinary and Other (Mon, Dec 21 - 8:30am - 10:30am, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 4)

**Session Participants**
- *The Limits of Space and Place: Spatial Categories and the Case of Rabbinic Urban Boundaries,* Gil P. Klein (Franklin & Marshall College)
- *Space for Reflection: Urban Environments, Synagogues, and Methodological Approaches to Jewish History,* Saskia Coenen Snyder (University of South Carolina)
- *Rhythm Analysis and the Jewish City: Representations of Jewish Urban Rhythms,* Vered Shemtov (Stanford University)
- *Spatial Practice and Diasporic Imaginings: The Structural Dynamics of Israel Experience Tourism,* Shaul Kelner (Vanderbilt University)

**Respondent:** Charlotte Fonrobert (Stanford University)
**Chair:** Barbara Mann (Jewish Theological Seminary)

**Abstract**
This panel will examine the recent intersection between Jewish studies and critical theories of space and place. How has the "spatial turn" found expression in Jewish studies? Without essentializing the relation between Jews and space, this panel seeks to explore what kinds of theoretical or methodological issues emerge from the critical treatment of space in Jewish cultures. The panel may be multidisciplinary and cut across periods and methodologies; interdisciplinary approaches are welcome. Topics might be drawn from architecture, geography, literature, rabbinics, urban studies, history and anthropology.
3. What are the methodological implications of conducting research on American Jews that might inform a future national study?

4. What do local American Jewish community studies reveal about changes in Jewish connectivity measures over time?

From the Chuppah to Parenthood: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Intermarriage and Jewish Trajectories

Sponsor: Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Mon, Dec 21 - 2:00pm-4:00pm, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 4)

Session Participants

Mutually Beneficial, Bruce A. Phillips (HUC-JIR)

Guarding the Gates on Shifting Sands: Rabbis, Intermarriage, and Officiation, Fern Chertok (Brandeis University) and Benjamin Phillips (Brandeis University)

The Jewish Masculine Mystique: Interfaith Romance and Fatherhood in American Life, Keren R. McGinity (University of Michigan)

Non-Jewish Women As Heads of Jewish Families, Jennifer Thompson (Emory University)

Chair: Sylvia Barack Fishman (Brandeis University)

Respondent: Deborah Dash Moore (University of Michigan)

Abstract

This panel brings together three disciplines—sociology, history, and anthropology—to elucidate some of the newest research on American Jewish intermarriage. This diversity bodes well for better understanding the complexities of intermarriage, what it meant and how it was represented in the past, as well as how people experience it today. Moving from the “chuppah moment,” to subsequent decades, panelists will describe the influence of rabbis, respective religious backgrounds, and the gendered experience of Jewish-Gentile marriages. The paper topics overlap, using different approaches, thereby creating a new model of synergistic discourse.

Combining quantitative and qualitative findings in her paper, Fern Chertok discusses the issue that has caused considerable consternation among Reform rabbis: whether to marry a Jew to a non-Jew, and if so, under what conditions. Her research sheds considerable light on how rabbis’ policies evolve based their own experiences, that the boundaries are moving, and how their decisions often play significant influence on intermarried families’ Jewish trajectories. Work by Bruce Phillips likewise weaves together survey data and qualitative research to describe how interfaith couples negotiate aspects of the wedding ceremony, such as who performs it, the location, and the extent to which religious traditions are present. His paper analyzes the concerns that inform the couple’s choices, discusses the role of compromise and neutrality, and examines what influences their decisions.

Keren McGinity’s paper discerns what intermarriage meant for “ordinary men” and how it changed over the second half of the twentieth century. Based on in-depth personal interviews with 40 Jewish men who self-identified in a wide range of ways and their respective historical contexts, her findings demonstrate the absolute necessity of analyzing the relationship between gender, intermarriage, and parenting in order to better understand the complexities of Jewish intermarriage and continuity. Adding to the qualitative narrative is Jennifer Thompson’s innovative work on non-Jewish women married to Jewish men. Using an ethnographic approach, her research depicts the lived experiences of intermarried Jewish-Christian couples, distinguishing between what she terms “ethnic familialism” and “universalist individualism” in the process. This path-breaking paper illustrates how non-Jewish women can head Jewish families, paradoxes notwithstanding.

Negotiating Multiple Heritages: Jews and Blended Identities

Sponsor: Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Mon, Dec 21 - 4:30pm-6:30pm, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 3)

Session Participants

Can the Kitchen God Live Next to the Kiddush Cup?: Adoption and Jewish Identity, Jennifer Sartori (Northeastern University)

“It’s not just about the food”: Jewish American and Asian American Marriages, Helen Kim (Whitman College) and Noah Leavitt (Whitman College)

Reconciling Multiple Heritages: Young Adult Children of Intermarriage Differentiate Between Religious and Ethnic Aspects of their Identities, Rachel Rockenmacher (Brandeis University)
Abstract
At least since the beginning of the modern era, negotiating multiple identities has been a hallmark of the Jewish experience. Wherever even the possibility of living outside a closed Jewish community has existed, Jews have faced decisions – sometimes wrenching, sometimes unconscious – about how to bring their Jewishness together with other aspects of their identity. A vast literature exists, for example, on Jews' attempts to develop ways of being simultaneously Jewish and full members of their surrounding societies. These efforts to balance or blend identities can result in significant numbers of Jews discarding or minimizing Jewish identity; they can also result in the creation of dynamic new forms of Jewishness.

As the papers in this panel demonstrate, for many American Jews the experience of negotiating multiple heritages has become far more intimate and personal in recent decades. As barriers between Jews and non-Jews have fallen, new religious and cultural influences have entered the heart of many Jewish families. The three papers in this panel examine the ways in which American Jews, as individuals and as families, have worked to incorporate other heritages into their Jewish identities.

The most commonly discussed aspect of this phenomenon today involves intermarriage, a subject discussed by panelist Rachel Rockenmacher. Rockenmacher, however, approaches this subject in a novel way by examining the internal process through which young adult children of intermarriage construct identities that incorporate aspects of each parent's heritage. The remaining papers explore less familiar topics. Jennifer Sartori explores how American Jewish adoptees and their adoptive families work to construct viable and authentic identities in relation to both the Jewish community and the adoptees' birth heritages. Helen Kim and Noah Leavitt's paper investigates how racial, ethnic, and religious identities intersect among couples where one partner is Jewish American (of any racial or ethnic descent) and one partner is Asian American (of any religion).

Families such as those discussed in these papers are becoming more and more common in the American Jewish community. This panel thus sheds light how Jewishness is being redefined and reshaped in an increasingly multicultural world.

Young Adults, Leadership, and 21st-Century American Jewish Cultural Change

Sponsor: Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Mon, Dec 21 - 4:30pm-6:30pm, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 11)

Session Discussants
Sarah Bunin Benor (HUC-JIR)
Sylvia Barack Fishman (Brandeis University)
Ari Y. Kelman (University of California, Davis)
Shaul Kelner (Vanderbilt University)
Riv-Ellen Prell (University of Minnesota)

Chair: Jack Wertheimer (Jewish Theological Seminary)

Abstract
The past several years have witnessed an explosion of new research on American Jews ages 25-40. Unlike earlier generations, this cohort tends to remain single and childless longer and has little contact with organized Jewish life. Jewish communal leaders have expressed concern about this lack of engagement and its implications for the future of Jewish institutions. At the same time, some young adults are participating in Jewish organizations and are even taking on leadership roles. Organizations like the American Jewish Committee and local Federations are expanding their young leadership divisions, and young Jews themselves are founding and leading new Jewish initiatives. These “start-ups” include cultural publications like NEXTBOOK, GUILT AND PLEASURE, and ZEEK; independent minyanim and new congregations like Hadar, Ikar, and the Mission Minyan; and political and social justice organizations like the Progressive Jewish Alliance, Jewish Funds for Justice, and Hazon. This roundtable seeks to understand the young leaders of these longstanding and recently founded Jewish organizations.

Questions include:
1. How do young Jews become influential among their peers? What role do leadership training programs and social networks (real-life and virtual) play?
2. How do young Jewish leaders understand the organized Jewish community, Israel, and Jewish peoplehood? What types of Jewish collective identities do they advance through their work?
3. What are the similarities and differences among the leaders of diverse initiatives (according to type of activity, region, denomination, mainstream vs. start-up, etc.)?
Rituals and Relationships over the Lifecourse
Sponsor: Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Tue, Dec 22 - 8:30am-10:30am, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 2)

Session Participants
Creating Ritual Space in a Toronto Jewish Retirement Home, Jillian Gould (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

Fathers and Sons: Rethinking the Meaning of the Bar Mitzvah, Simon Josef Bronner (Pennsylvania State University)

Remaining Single in a Family Oriented Society: Prolonged Singlehood among Israeli National Religious Jews, Ari Engelberg (Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Chair: Theodore Sasson (Middlebury College)

Iranian Jews and Their Migration to the United States: Their Religious, Psychological, and Cultural Identity
Sponsor: Sephardi/Mizrahi Studies (Tue, Dec 22 - 8:30am-10:30am, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 12)

Session Participants
JAPS: 1st-Generation Jewish American Persians and their Hybrid Identity in America, Saba Tova Soomekh (Loyola Marymount University)

The Religious Identity of Iranian Jews in Post Revolution Era in the United States, Nahid Pirnazar (UCLA)

Psychosocial Acculturation Process of the Iranian Jewry in the Last Thirty Years, Morgan Hakimi (Touro University)

Respondent: Mark Kligman (HUC-JIR)
Chair: Mark Kligman (HUC-JIR)

Abstract
Los Angeles is home to the largest concentration of Iranians outside of Iran. With the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the consequent fall of Mohammad Reza Shah and the Pahlavi dynasty, seventy-thousand Iranian Jews fled the newly forming Islamic fundamentalist country and flocked to the United States, specifically to Los Angeles. Iranian Jews live mainly in Beverly Hills, West Los Angeles, and the San Fernando Valley. This panel will discuss the religious, psychological, and identity issues which have affected the Iranian Jewish community of Los Angeles thirty years after the Islamic Revolution.

Dr. Nahid Pirnazar will present a paper discussing the religious identity of Iranian Jews in America. She looks at their swing towards right wing religiosity for some and embracing reformed and conservative new options for others. The impacts of such wide range of religious identities upon the community from individual, family, generational and socio-economic perspectives will be discussed, along with how the community has dealt with this trend. Dr. Morgan Hakimi will examine the acculturation of Iranian Jewry in Los Angeles (IJLA) during the past 30 years. Hence, the distinctive theory of acculturation process by Berry (1990, 1994) categorized in 4 attitudes assimilation, Integration, Separation, and Marginalization is applied in understanding the (IJLA) psychosocial behavior. Finally, Dr. Saba Soomekh will present a paper that explores the cultural identity of first generation Iranian Jewish men and women who were born in either Iran or America and raised in Los Angeles. The hybridity model is used to describe how young Iranian Jewish men and women are constantly negotiating their identity as they live in a world where they respect the rules, values, and cultural norms of their parents’ generation while appropriating the American Jewish culture that they have grown up in.

Jewish Demography at the Antipodes
Sponsor: Social Science, Anthropology, and Folklore (Tue, Dec 22 - 1:45pm-3:45pm, Hyatt Regency Century Plaza / 7)

Session Participants:
Estimating the Number of Jews in the U.S. with Cross Survey Analysis, Charles Kadushin (Brandeis University)

Jewish Values in the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century: Comparing Australian and American Survey Findings, Andrew Barry Markus (Monash University) and Nicky Jacobs (Monash University)
Evaluating the Use of Opt-In Consumer Internet Panels for Surveys of American Jews
Benjamin Phillips (Brandeis University)

Chair: Matthew Boxer (Brandeis University)

Abstract
Jewish demography, its implications, and the methods used to derive population estimates have received attention in the past decade as never before. Substantively, the worldwide Jewish population has experienced major population transfers and there is a widespread feeling that Diaspora populations are almost universally declining, with the common assertion that the Israeli Jewish population has equaled or exceeded the size of the Jewish population of the United States marking a turning point. Methodologically, the findings of the National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000-01 have remained controversial and the United Jewish Communities’ announcement that they would not support a 2010 survey marked a pivotal point in the field of American Jewish demography, with widespread uncertainty about future sources of data about American Jews and new means of collecting data being explored.

This session encompasses the antipodes of Jewish demography in a literal and figurative sense, with up-to-the-moment data on American and Australian Jewry and the latest developments in demographic methods. Charles Kadushin and Elizabeth Tighe stand at the antipodes of American Jewish demography, presenting new and larger estimates of the size of the American Jewish population in 1990, 2000, and c. 2005 from the Steinhardt Social Research Institute’s ongoing, cutting-edge analysis of the American Jewish population drawn from cross-survey analysis of high quality surveys not focused on the Jewish population. This provides for the first time an independent assessment of the trajectory of the American Jewish population beyond custom surveys like the NJPS 1990 and 2000-01. From the Antipodes proper, Andrew Markus and Nicky Jacobs present findings from a new and important survey of Australian Jews. Australian Jewry stands as an important counterpoint to other English-speaking Diaspora populations, having experienced population growth as a migrant destination, characterized by the relatively recent migrant histories of the Jewish population, and heavy investment in day schools. Once more at the methodological antipodes, Benjamin Phillips provides a constructive critique of surveys based on opt-in Internet consumer panels, an increasingly popular vehicle for surveys of American Jews used by organizations as diverse as JStreet, the American Jewish Committee, and Synagogue 3000.

Sklare Award

The Marshall Sklare Award is given annually by the ASSJ to a senior scholar who has made significant contributions to the social scientific study of Jewry. Charles Kadushin of Brandeis University will receive the award at the 2009 Association for Jewish Studies meeting in Los Angeles.

Previous Sklare Award winners:

1992 Sidney Goldstein (Brown, demography)
1993 Seymour Martin Lipset (Hoover Institute and George Mason University, sociology)
1994 Celia Heller (NYU, history)
1995 Daniel Elazar (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, Temple University, and Bar Ilan University, political science)
1996 Samuel Klausner (University of Pennsylvania, sociology)
1997 Walter Zenner (SUNY at Albany, anthropology)
1998 Bernard Reisman (Brandeis, communal service)
1999 Sergio DellaPergola (Hebrew University, demography)
2000 Charles Liebman (Bar Ilan, sociology)
2001 Calvin Goldscheider (Brown, sociology and demography)
2002 Jonathan Sarna (Brandeis, history)
2003 Samuel Heilman (CUNY, sociology)
2004 Egon Mayer (Brooklyn College, sociology)
2005 Elihu Katz (University of Pennsylvania and Hebrew University, communications)
2006 Deborah Dash Moore (University of Michigan, history)
2007 Barry Chiswick (University of Illinois at Chicago, economics)
2008 Paul Ritterband (Haifa University, sociology)
2009 Charles Kadushin (Brandeis, sociology)
The Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry
Volume 1 Number 2

The 2009 Marshall Sklare Award
Awarded by Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry
to Charles Kadushin

Charles Kadushin, Ph.D., is a leading authority on the design and analysis of survey research. He has extensive experience developing sampling methodology for difficult-to-reach populations and in the use of advanced multivariate statistical techniques. A founder of the social network field, he helped to create some of the first computer tools for the analysis of large sized social networks. He helped to develop state of the art methods for Internet surveys. He currently writes on social network theory.

Some representative publications include:
- 2008 Charles Kadushin and Elizabeth Tighe. How Hard is it to be a Jew on College Campuses? Contemporary Jewry, 28, 1, 1-20.
30 The Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry  Volume 1 Number 2

About the ASSJ

The Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry is a cross-disciplinary organization of individuals whose research concerns the Jewish people throughout the world.

The ASSJ encourages and facilitates contact among researchers, supports the dissemination of research, and assists in the cultivation of younger scholars.

The organization's journal, *Contemporary Jewry*, is issued three times per year. The journal publishes research that draws on a range of social scientific fields and methodologies, and encourages cutting-edge research and lively debate.

All social science disciplines are represented, including sociology, social psychology, anthropology, demography, geography, history, social work, economics, political science, and Jewish education.

Our members are primarily academics, but also policy analysts, communal professionals and activists, and are engaged in a wide range of scholarly activity, applied research, and the links between them.

A membership form is found on the final page of the Newsletter.

www.assj.org

Matt Boxer opened up an igive.com account for ASSJ. This is an easy way to donate to ASSJ. Next time you go to order online, check out igive.com and give ASSJ's name. A small percentage will be donated to our cause for every purchase made.

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Introducing our New Treasurer
Gail Glicksman

Thank You to Carmel Chiswick

Gail Glicksman serves as dean of students and assistant professor at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), where she was ordained. She completed a Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania, where she focused on the history and sociology of medicine and the cultural, social and historical study of education. Her previous professional work includes many years in academic administration at the University of Pennsylvania, where she oversaw advising resources for students and alumni applying for post-graduate study. She also served as a research associate and director of the Judaism and Health Care Ethics Initiative at the Park Ridge Center for the Study of Health, Faith, and Ethics in Chicago. She has taught such topics as the sociology of health and illness, bioethics, and contemporary Jewish studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University and Gratz College.

Glicksman, who has served as a rabbi and as a chaplain, is interested in the interface between religion and health. Her current research agenda focuses on the ways that Jewish communal institutions, especially synagogues, respond to the social, emotional and spiritual challenges of the increasing presence of those with chronic illness. She has authored or co-authored several articles or book chapters which have been published in the Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging, in The Handbook of Bioethics and Religion: Faith at the Frontiers; Society and Medicine: Explorations of their Moral and Spiritual Dimensions; and Methods in Religion, Spirituality and Aging. She and Dr. Allen Glicksman are currently under contract to write a multi-disciplinary scholarly book on older American Jews.

For a number of years, she served with Dr. Allen Glicksman as co-editor of the ASSJ newsletter, and in this role, she participated in an ex-officio capacity in board meetings. She also served on the executive board of a professional association of advisors.

ASSJ would like to thank Carmel Chiswick for all of the years and hard work she's put in to ASSJ as she retires from her position. Carmel has seen us through financial lows and improvements, wisely guiding -- and chiding -- us to a much sounder basis than we once had. Carmel has never failed to take ASSJ business (not only the Treasurer role) seriously and has always been committed to ASSJ's welfare.

Annual Summer Fellowship

The Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University announces its annual summer fellowship to support research in the American Jewish experience.

The grant of up to $2,500 is available to predoctoral and postdoctoral scholars. Applications should include a proposal of no more than five pages, a letter of recommendation, and a CV. Materials are due by March 19, 2010 to:
Announcement of awards will be made in May. Please direct any questions to Dr. Nancy Isserman (isserman@temple.edu). The Center welcomes applicants researching any area of American Jewish life, but for the summer of 2010 has a special interest in research that focuses on American Jews and the multiple dimensions of urban life, including politics, culture, geography, the arts, religion and sexuality.

Fellows may be asked to participate in Center workshops or public lectures for the 2010 -2011 year.

Myer and Rosaline Feinstein Center for American Jewish History
http://www.temple.edu/feinsteinctr/

An Autobiography of Jack Nusan Porter
(Editors Note: We invite others to write a similar piece about heir own lives.)

Jack Nusan Porter, 63, in July of 2007 in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina was elected treasurer of the nearly 400-member International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS), the world’s largest organization of inter-disciplinary academics, diplomats, activists, artists, genocide survivors, journalists, jurists, policy makers, and community leaders dedicated to the understanding and prevention of genocide.

This milestone capped a forty year career fighting for human rights and crimes against humanity. This Newton, MA-based activist began his work in the 1960s in the anti-war and civil rights movement with his classic book Jewish Radicalism; later in the 1970s he edited the first anthology on genocide--Genocide and Human Rights: A Global Anthology. In the 1980s he recognized the gay genocide with his book Sexual Politics in Nazi Germany, and most recently it all culminated in his work: The Genocide Mind (2006).

Born in the Ukraine in 1944 to two Soviet partisans, fighters against Nazism, Irving and Faye Puchtik, Porter came to America in July 1946 on one of the first two ships to leave Europe after the Holocaust (interestingly USHMM leaders Miles Lerman and Benjamin and Vladka Meed were also on board that same ship, the Marine Perch). They had spent a short time in a DP camp in Bindermichel, Linz, Austria waiting for a boat to Palestine but the Arab-Israeli war was soon to break out and conditions were gauged too dangerous to go.

He grew up in the Midwest, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, active in Habonim-Dror, a Labor Zionist youth movement where his mentors included Ivan and Malke Frank, Sam
Bergman, and Label and Zelda Fein. He left for Israel soon after high school and worked on Kibbutz Gesher Haziv and in Jerusalem, where his mentors included Haim Avni, Amnon Hadary, Muki Tzur, Mikey Duvdevani, and Max Langer.

He returned to Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee where his teachers were Professor Allan Corre, Rabbi David Shapiro, and Professor Irwin Rinder as well as Rabbi Michel Twerski and Rabbi Isaac Lerer in Milwaukee. He just missed Professor Jacob Neusner by a semester. Majoring in sociology, he was accepted in 1967 to the prestigious sociology program at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois where he studied under such eminent scholars as Howard S. Becker, Bernard Beck, Charles Moskos, Jack Sawyer, Don Campbell, and Ibrahim and Janet Abu-Lughod.

In the late 1960s, he was an active leader in the moderate wing of SDS, Students for a Democratic Society, and in the civil rights movement, where he was mentored by such black leaders as James Turner, James Pitts and Eva Jefferson. In Chicago, he befriended several defendants of the famous Chicago Seven (actually Eight) trial---Lee Weiner, Jerry Rubin, and Abby Hoffman. However, in response to the growing anti-Zionism emanating form the black and white left, he and others at Northwestern founded in 1970 the activist Jewish Student Movement, a forerunner to all the Jewish "renewal" groups, and long before Michael Lerner's Tikkun movement.

Porter has always been ahead of his time: his Jewish Radicalism came out in 1973; his recognition of Jewish resistance was reflected in his 1981 two-volumes called Jewish Partisans; Jewish "deviants" from Lenny Bruce to Magnus Hirschfeld were discussed in his 1981 book The Jew as Outsider; new religious movements in his Kids in Cults in 1978; the plight of the agunot, Jewish women unable to get a divorce, in his 1986 Women in Chains; comparative genocide and the roots of evil in his 2006 The Genocidal Mind; and the debate over the future of sociology in his most recent book Is Sociology Dead? (2008). Future books will tackle sex and Judaism, the political struggles of American Jews, and anti-Semitism.

In mid-life, Porter was ordained a rabbi by an Orthodox Vaad in New York City; attended the trans-denominational American Academy for Jewish Religion in Manhattan in the late 1990s, and served congregations in Marlboro and Chelsea, MA and in Key West, FL, where he led a controversial outreach to conchs (native Key Westers), northern Jewish "snowbirds," Miami Jews, Cubans, transvestites, gays, and lesbians.

Porter's brother, Rabbi Shlomo Porter and Shlomo's wife Shushy, along with her brother Moshe Unger, are leaders in the Jewish outreach movement in Baltimore and Philadelphia, while his sister Bella and her husband Mitch Smith are active in NCSY and frum circles in Minneapolis.

His former wife, Miriam Almuly Porter, stems from the "grandees", old Sephardic families like the Alcalays, Almulys, Davicos, and Benaroyos, harking back to 1492 Spain, and from there to Turkey and the Balkans. The family has many artists, teachers, businessmen, and especially diplomats both in Europe and in the USA. For example, the painter Albert Alcalay of Harvard University; teachers Gingy and Mishko Alcalay; Leon (Lonny) Davico of UNESCO; Oscar Davico, famous writer and intellectual in the former Yugoslavia; Sven Alcalay, Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Zarko Kalmic, former Vice-President of Serbia and now leader of an important opposition party there. Miriam and Jack produced two children, Gabe, 27, and Danielle, 25. Porter's second wife, Rona Vogel, passed away recently.
Contemporary Jewry, the journal of the ASSJ, serves as the single source for the social scientific consideration of world Jewry, its institutions, trends, character, and concerns. In its pages can be found work by leading scholars and important new researchers from North America, Europe, Australasia and Israel. While much relevant scholarship about Jewry is published in general social science journals, as well as more narrowly focused periodicals, no other single scholarly journal focuses primarily on the social scientific study of Jewry.

Over 150 articles have been published in Contemporary Jewry since its inception. Each issue includes articles or review essays across a variety of social science disciplines, including anthropology, demography, economics, education, ethnography, history, politics, population, social psychology, social history, geography, and sociology. In addition, many issues include research notes or important work originally published in Hebrew but translated and made available to the English language reader. Special issues have focused on such topics as the National Jewish Population Survey, Jewish community surveys, Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Women in the Holocaust, economic frameworks for understanding Jewry, and Jewry in Israel. Individual articles have ranged from Jewish identity in Syria, the Ukraine, New Zealand and Israel; from an analysis of rabbis’ salaries to a historical study of Jewish women physicians in Central Europe; from survey research to ethnography to historical analysis.

Each year Contemporary Jewry includes the Marshall Sklare Award lecture, delivered at the Association of Jewish Studies conference in co-sponsorship with the Association for the Social Scientific Study of Jewry, the founding association of the journal, by distinguished scholars chosen to receive the award because of their contributions to the field of the social scientific study of Jewry. The distinguished editorial board reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of the journal.

www.springer.com/humanities/religious+studies/journal/12397

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The Mandell L. Berman North American Jewish Data Bank is the central repository of social scientific studies of North American Jewry.

The Data Bank’s primary functions are to:

1. Acquire, archive, and disseminate quantitative data sets and reports, both contemporary and historical, and to
2. Encourage utilization of the archive through training and provide information about methods for studying Jewish communities.

Our goal is to aid in understanding North American Jewish communities, and to improve the quality and utilization of research conducted about North American Jewry.

The Data Bank reports that, as a result of removing the need to login, the number of PDF downloads from the site approximately doubled. The elimination of the login and the payment of a small fee to Google means that almost all material on the website is now indexed by Google, leading to many more hits on the web site. In May-June 2009, users downloaded 3,677 files.

2,150 users receive the Data Bank Bulletins and Briefs. If you are not one, you might want to go to the website and join the mailing list. They only send e-mail about four times per year.

What’s new at the Data Bank (www.jewishdatabank.org)


2. Several new Slide Sets from the 2004 Miami demographic study on philanthropy, South Dade, and preschool in South Dade, by Ira M. Sheskin.


4. The 2008 article on Jewish Population in the United States, 2008 from the American Jewish Year Book by Ira M. Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky. The online version includes six community vignettes (Seattle, Westport, Bergen, Columbus, Sarasota, and Tidewater) not included in the print version. Also included are tables in Microsoft Excel format. Tables 1-2 provide State and Census Region and Census Division Jewish population estimates. Table 3 provides estimates for almost 1,000 Jewish communities and parts of communities.

6. Jewish Population Survey of Congressional Districts: 2000 and 2006 by David M. Paul, Ph.D., Skagit Valley College, Associate Dean, reviews data estimates of the Jewish population for each congressional district for the 2000 and 2006 Congresses. The study record includes a main report with a summary of findings for 2000 and 2006 as well as a basic introduction to the analytical process used. There are also six supplemental spreadsheets of data available for download.

Dr. Paul was the first recipient in 2008 of a Mandell L. Berman Summer Research Fellowship, which partially supported his research.
This study is now available at the North American Jewish Data Bank website. The study was sponsored by The Jewish Federations of North America and the Berman Institute - North American Jewish Data Bank at the University of Connecticut with funding provided by the Mandell L and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation and the Albert and Audrey Ratner Foundation. The Principal Investigators were Sid Groeneman and Tom W. Smith from The National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (NORC).

This report presents the results of secondary analyses of three sources of data on the American Jewish community. The analyses were designed to understand the impact of the mobility of Jewish persons and Jewish households on the fabric of Jewish life. Nine recent Jewish communities in the South and the West which had experienced relatively high mobility - Atlanta, Denver-Boulder, Las Vegas, West Palm Beach County (FL), San Diego, San Francisco region, South Palm Beach County (FL), Greater Phoenix, and Washington, D.C.—were analyzed. The National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01 (NJPS), provided a look at mobility patterns among the American Jewish population as a whole. Three decades of data from NORC’s General Social Survey (GSS) allowed a comparison between Jews and non-Jews.

Major Findings Inc.

Jews continue to exhibit high levels of residential mobility, especially in growing Jewish communities in the South and West. One in six residents of the local communities moved into their current community within the past four years, and another one in six moved in from five to nine years ago.

More recent movers are much younger than non-movers, less likely to be married, more likely to be college graduates (but with lower income) and slightly less likely to have a Jewish denominational identity.

Mobility reduces all Jewish Federation related perceptions and behaviors, including familiarity with the local Federation and giving to the Federation at any level. In general, the strongest adverse effects of mobility are in the domain of philanthropy, particularly with respect to local Jewish Federations.

Mobility also reduces donations to other Jewish charities and causes.

Mobility reduces synagogue membership.

Mobility reduces a sense of belonging to the Jewish community.

In contrast, mobility has a positive effect on Internet usage for Jewish content and information. This suggests that online communications are critical for federations and other Jewish organizations seeking to reach recent movers.

Data from the nine local Jewish communities in the South and West indicated that minimal and non-statistically significant differences existed between movers and non-movers for Jewish ritual behaviors, attachments to Israel, raising Jewish children and providing them with a Jewish
education.

However, multivariate analysis of the national data sources showed a decline in raising children as Jews and providing them with a Jewish education as a correlate of mobility.

Finally, a series of focus groups with Jewish professionals (local and national) were conducted to explore the implications of the quantitative data.

Strategic/policy implications and recommendations are presented for four broad areas: (1) sharing information about movers; (2) understanding today’s consumer orientation; (3) reaching out to newcomers through marketing, communications and branding; and (4) identifying how national organizations can add value to local affiliates.
We are pleased to announce the launching of the Berman Jewish Policy Archive (BJPA) (www.bjpa.org), an online database of research on North American Jewry. Based at NYU's Wagner School of Public Service, BJPA offers open access to a fully-searchable and annotated archive of over 4,000 documents. Its primary areas of focus are: Jewish communal life, education, identity, religion and spirituality, social activism, demographic trends, leadership, and organizational development. I am confident that you will find BJPA to be an invaluable resource for your research needs and I encourage you to share it with colleagues and students alike.

Here are some of the many ways you can use BJPA:

1. find key articles in your subject area that have yet to be digitized (the online BJPA archive already contains over 35 years'-worth of the Journal of Jewish Communal Service, and the remaining 60 years are in the process of being uploaded)
2. locate relevant research in your field that you have yet to uncover (for every article that appears on BJPA, the archive will point you to other items on the same topic and by the same author)
3. design course syllabi (and save your students time and money)
4. showcase your own research to a wider audience (BJPA is intended for academics as well as practitioners)

Question: What do these ASSJ members have in common?

Answer: Their work appears among the 4,000 policy-related research documents found on the Berman Jewish Policy Archive (www.BJPA.org).

We would be pleased to expand the archive to include your relevant work. If your name doesn’t appear above, and you have work you’d like us to post on BJPA, please write to Mordy Walfish at mwalfish@nyu.edu. And, if you have any feedback—positive or critical—I would love to hear it.

Prof. Steven M. Cohen
Director, Berman Jewish Policy Archive @ NYU Wagner, Steve34nyc@aol.com

The BJPA is generously funded by the Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation and the Charles H. Revson Foundation.
American Jewish Mosaic in Chinese Eyes
Reflections on my Stay in the US, 2008-2009

by Dr. Lihong Song (Dr. Lihong Song is associate director of the Glazer Center for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University. He just completed a year at the RRC in Philadelphia.)

Generously sponsored by Dr. William Fern and the Jewish Community Foundation, I was truly fortunate to spend a year, from August 2008 to July 2009, at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC), especially considering the economic recession and having a chance to experience in person the nationwide excitement of Obama's election as the first African-American president of the US.

My visit to the US was a logical step after my intensive Hebrew study in Jerusalem in the summer, 2007. Before I set out for Philadelphia, I had two sets of goals: personally, to survey a wide array of contemporary expressions of Judaism in America through conversations, site visits, holiday observances, institutions, cultural events and religious services; and, pedagogically, to collect textual and visual materials in order to enrich and to bring a more systematic approach to my class teaching, and to design new courses of Jewish Studies tailored to the needs of my Chinese students while keeping them abreast of the most recent advancements in this field.

Unlike Israel, in America religion is totally voluntary, and religious diversity is the norm. I can hardly imagine a more ideal base to fulfill my goals than RRC, the heart of the Reconstructionist form of Judaism and a harbinger in many ways of greater changes within American Judaism. Needless to say, to study at a rabbinical college—a seminary for training future rabbis—was adventurous and unpredictable for one who had only been exposed to, and felt at home with, the circumstances of large secular universities.

Therefore, when I joined in trepidation the awe-inspiring morning davening at RRC, sat and rose with the group in which women donned prayer shawls (and phylacteries), read and sang parts of the service, I reminded myself, “This is Judaism in practice, rather than Judaism in books.” When I took notice of the insertion of the names of matriarchs in the siddur and the change of gender from masculine to feminine, I realized that this was a brand of American Judaism that testified to the striving for egalitarianism and the freedom to make religious choices. Whenever I picked up a much-needed book from the “tzedakah desk” in the student lounge where people discarded their unwanted items, I was excited and thought, “Is this a creative way to carry out the highest degree of charity as defined by Maimonides so that the recipient may become autodidactic?” When I participated in a Rosh Hashana service led by a Reconstructionist woman rabbi, hearing the blasts of tekiah, shevarim and teruah that echoed under a stained-glass roof bearing the huge painted image of a personified Trinity, I concluded that in America a Jewish service could be held in a borrowed Christian church. At the brit milah of Shlomo Simchah, with whose mother—an RRC student—I had danced eight days ago at the thronged Congregation B’nai Jeshurun in Manhattan’s Upper West Side on Simchat Torah, I observed every move of the mohel, sensed the breathless interest of other members of the RRC community. I was touched by the charm of the intimate quality of this small seminary. After attending a rich variety of lectures and workshops organized by the school—where topics ranged from Jewish arts to chazanic activity, from aging in Judaism to drama, from Jewish food to Jewish crafts—I became ever more aware that these aspects of Jewish life are no less intrinsic to Jewish civilization than doctrines and ceremonies. Surprised to learn that some of the RRC students and faculty members had received their religious education in or ordination by Reform, Conservative or even Orthodox seminaries, I became increasingly aware why in American Jewish religious discourse the term "denomination" has been persistently eschewed while "movement" still prevails—because ethnic ties among Jews continue to transcend doctrinal boundaries and because what ultimately matters is the idea of Klal Yisrael.

Reconstructionism conceptualizes Judaism as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. Accordingly, each year’s core curriculum of RRC is devoted in sequence to one of the five principal historical periods of Jewish civilization: biblical, rabbinic, medieval, modern and contemporary. Sitting in the survey courses of these periods afforded me a rare opportunity to approach Jewish civilization from a non-secular Jewish perspective. Trained as a historian, before exploring the significance and potential of a subject, I habitually ask what we should accept and what we should deny as historical fact; in other words, I try to be "objective" in my outlook. This, however, may not always appear to be in alignment with a class ambiance that is replete with keen questions like, "What does this mean for us as Reconstructionist rabbis? How do we help our congregation with this?" “If Herodotus was the father of history, the fathers of meaning in history were the Jews.” Professor Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi’s famous articulation never seemed to me more compelling than at RRC.
At the start, my academic bent surreptitiously drove me to challenge some of the associations that, however beautiful and profound in appearance, struck me as more or less groundless, abrupt and far-fetched. Later, after spending more time in the religious services, observing how the sacred history of the Jewish people was reenacted time and again in the murmuring of daily prayer, I began to understand that prayer for Jews may be a recitation of the history of partnership. Through the recurrent review of Torah, that unique partnership between God and the Jewish people is continually reaffirmed and reinforced to such a degree that it is almost instinctive for Jews to anchor the meaning and power of present reality to their sacred past-to such biblical archetypal experiences as the Akeidah or the Exodus. It is around this sort of remembrance that Jewish identity is, and will continue to be, structured. The importance and implications of prayer for Jews, which initially eluded me, germinated. I gradually became sympathetic to those prospective rabbis’ impassioned endeavors to temper the knowledge with their contemporary concerns and their social commitments.

Now I am back home in Nanjing, re-reading Yerushalmi’s classic Zakhor that I purchased several years ago in Tel Aviv. This time, I think I have a much better understanding of the antipodal relations he formulated between traditional Jewish memory and modern Jewish history. Jews in the pre-modern period, according to his view, related to their past in an ahistorical way. Radically new events, such as the Crusades, were construed through such biblical archetypes as the Akeidah and preserved in memory, not in the form of event-based chronicles, but in prayers and memorial books. In contrast, Jews today have abandoned the quest for this kind of traditional memory. Instead, they have turned steadfastly to the pursuit of a profane historical truth. This entails a paradoxical connotation that the more Jews painstakingly restore the historical contexts to the biblical or rabbinic texts the more they become increasingly alienated from the very sacred heritage that they are trying to embrace. Yerushalmi’s disturbing observation has called my attention to the fact that until now the study of Jewish liturgy is still not on the research agenda of Chinese Jewish studies. This seems to be an unavoidable consequence of a Jewish studies not bolstered by Jewish identity and, perhaps no less important, without access to the lived Jewish experience.

It also touches off a string of questions. In what terms shall I, as an observer outside of Jewish tradition, approach Judaism and Jewish civilization? Some elements of Judaism, such as prayer, are fundamental components of Jewish tradition but structurally alien to the way we live now in China. How is it possible to present these elements in my own teaching and research, so as to induce enough awareness of their intrinsic value to Judaism and still avoid inciting suspicion that I am trying to ferment faith commitments? Thinking of those countless monographs dealing with each and every aspect of the Jewish past, down to its most arcane minutiae, I begin to wonder what I shall assimilate from this mammoth-size modern Jewish scholarship, especially because, unlike the Christian West or the Islamic East, there is no reason whatsoever in China to quarrel over the authenticity and meaning of any shared books or common spiritual heritage. Moreover, having been nurtured in a historiographical tradition whose superlative model, as defined by Sima Qian about two thousand years ago, is to “investigate the relations between Heaven and human beings, perceive the changes running from the antiquity to the present, and form one’s own insights,” I cannot help but ponder the future of modern Chinese historiography. As Yerushalmi already sharply pointed out, having faithfully followed the vision and method of Western historicism, modern Jewish historiography cannot but parallel its defeats as well as its triumphs. Will modern Chinese historiography, which by now has been no less faithful in this respect, meet with the same fate? Had I not stayed at RRC for an academic year, these questions would hardly have become as nagging as they are. I venture to regard them as the most enduring legacy I got from my experience as a scholar at an American rabbinical college.

For myself, as an individual, the greatest privilege of being based at RRC is to work and to develop friendship with two rabbinical students who helped me navigate Jewish-American life: Erica Steelman and Boris Dolin.

With Erica and her family, I had a fondly memorable Yom Kippur in Baltimore. On Erev Yom Kippur, we went to a Conservative service held at Beth El Congregation. The chazan chanted Kol Nidre in a legendary manner—from pianissimo to fortissimo, accompanied by organ, totally an operatic aria—a manner whose captivating, and once powerful, emotional impact made me realize the potential of a Jewish liturgy that is not reduced to the level of a mere “service” but rather to religious theater. The import of the Book of Jonah seems quite cryptic. Is repentance per se, even that of those unbelievers "who do not yet know their right hand from their left," sufficient to turn away God's anger? The sonorous and triumphant tekiah gedolah at the end of Ne'ilah appears to endorse a "yes" to this question, in stark contrast to the negative answer proffered by the universal church-extrac ecclesiam nulla salus, "no salvation outside the Church."
Before Minhah, I chatted briefly with Rabbi Alan Yuter. His formidable knowledge of halakhah, though I did not comprehend all of it well, left me with the impression that he himself is the living embodiment of that Talmudic dictum: "He who studies halakhot is assured to be a member of the world to come." A few months later, to my surprise, he invited me to give a talk about "The Long-standing Friendship between Chinese People and the Jews" on an Erev Shabbat. I thus had a better opportunity to interact with him and his congregants whose presence that night was more balanced. No longer overwhelmingly male, there were also an African-American convert, a former Presbyterian, and a gay couple. Rabbi Yuter turns out to be an enlightened and progressive Orthodox rabbi—the first rabbi of this sort that I have ever encountered. Notwithstanding, he is above all an Orthodox Jew for whom true Torah learning consists of intellectual explorations in halakhah, rather than in the historical quest.

Among other activities that ranged from a naming service to a shiv'ah, which Erica and I attended together, two were exceptionally impressive. First was the bat mitzvah for Tamar, a Chinese girl adopted by a Jewish family. It was enthralling to observe her punctiliously read the Torah scroll in Hebrew, present her d'var Torah, and see her surrounded by her friends as they—including many Chinese adoptees of her age and gender—were honored with an aliyah. In the subsequent lavish dinner serving Chinese cuisine, a friend of this family, who had also adopted two Chinese girls, informed me that the number of Chinese adopted by Jewish families continues to grow rapidly in the US. I cannot help but wonder what impact these Chinese adoptees may have on American Jewish identity. After the rite of passage, Tamar is not simply a "daughter of commandment," but a sensible woman as well. How will she manage with her natural and nurtured heritages? Pointing to a huge dragon kite decorated on the ceiling and purchased from China, one of her mothers replied, "We are trying to raise her at once Jewish and Chinese in the hope of instilling in her an appreciation of both cultures."

In late March, we attended Gratz College for a lecture by an RRC alumnus. Having fulfilled his service as the only Jewish Chaplain in western Iraq in Operation Iraqi Freedom 2008, Commander Jon Cutler related his unique role as the Jewish supervisor of 20 Christian chaplains and chaplain assistants and gave an insider's view on what was actually taking place in Iraq. Prior to this, in my own lectures on the diversified functions of the modern rabbi, I had been quite vague about chaplain duties. This lecture, and his photos, not only conjured up a very vivid and authentic picture of the work and daily life of military chaplain, but also deepened my understanding of the significance of well-organized community life in preserving and perpetuating Jewish values and Jewish identity. We lunched together shortly thereafter, and Jon also kindly let me sit in on the beit din he supervised for an African-American convert in a Reform Temple. Despite the fact that he is still a reserve chaplain, Jon prefers to be called Rabbi.

"Welcome aboard!" Erica's father, Barry, a 1970 graduate of the UM Law School. S. Naval Academy, proudly showed me the Jewish chapel of his alma mater. Shaped like a vessel, it is the most elaborate synagogue architecture I have seen. A son of Russian immigrants, Barry realized his American Dream through the education at Annapolis and retired recently as an attorney. The shelves of his study brim with autographed baseballs and various biographies of Jewish sports stars. The annual Army-Navy college football game is a must-attend event on his schedule. With great luck, I was his guest this year in the Lincoln Financial Field—my first American football game, and live, too. At the sight of some Navy fans' sign reading "Congress, bail out Army!" I was cheered by its ingenious intimation of the depressed economy. "Navy has won six straight times," Barry added with elation. As anticipated, the Midshipmen routed the Cadets once again, but I never expected that a touchdown could be scored with such admirable strategy and elegance. Yet, first and foremost, the Army-Navy rivalry is more than a game. It was unveiled by pre-game pageantry featuring parachutes, fighter jets and battle helicopters. It began with chants of "USA! USA! USA!" as President George W. Bush walked to midfield for the ceremonial coin toss, and ended in the playing and singing of both alma maters to celebrate the brotherhood of the military in the city of brotherly love. Barry and his family were a natural part of this ritual, from start to end. They are not so much American Jews as Jewish Americans.

Boris is another Jewish American. Born in Portland, Oregon, he hopes to make aliyah to his hometown as a pulpit rabbi upon graduation. He is scarcely tackled by sports, but squarely by vegan diet, ecological awareness, animal rights, and, most of all, a national "sport" of a special kind-presidential electioneering. The passion he poured into volunteering for Obama's campaign astonished me. It prompted me to reflect upon why I am basically apathetic to current political affairs and to reconsider whether the two-party system really looks like two gigantic teams whose political differences are hardly discernible to an outsider. I watched him enter the voting booth. We watched Obama's inauguration ceremony in an African-American church. And that is when I asked him, if given the opportunity, he would vote for a Jewish presidential candidate. "If that candidate is good enough," he replied instantly.
It was very pleasant and informative to spend time with Boris: to learn the American vernacular, to set up his sukkah, to examine bizarre mosaic murals (by a Jewish artist who was his relative), and to visit Jewish sites in Philadelphia. In New York City, we visited the Museum of Jewish Heritage where he had volunteered as a docent. We roamed through the Lower East Side in which the Tenement Museum, now wedged in part of the Chinatown, still testifies the struggle of the first generation of Jewish immigrants, and tasted the yummiest falafel near Yeshiva University when it was holding the largest Judaica book sale in North America. Toward evening, we arrived at his alma mater, the Jewish Theological Seminary. We sat in the famous library for a while. It was in this quiet enclave that Saul Lieberman, the premier Talmudist of the past century, once heard a "voice of Torah" which brought back to him the voice of the Yeshivoth of the old country. And Elias Bickerman, one of my favorite Jewish scholars, must have labored here, marshaling the ancient sources to compose his leitmotif: Hellenism should not be seen as a temptation to be resisted and the success of Judaism in achieving and maintaining power rests precisely with its ability to come to terms with Hellenism.

Shortly after I arrived in the US, Jake Rubin, then an RRC senior student, asked me to speak at the Hillel of Swarthmore College where he was serving as Jewish Student Adviser. I thus had a chance to observe the operation of Hillel in American campus life. On a Shabbat afternoon, I gave a similar talk at the heartwarming Congregation Beth El, headed by Rabbi Joshua Boettiger and located in picturesque Bennington County, Vermont.

Famous as it is, I did not know about Philly cheese steak until I was in the city. Before that, I did know Philadelphia was world-renowned for a Jewish center and its orchestra. Thanks to the hospitality of Professor David Ruderman, I was able to sit in the weekly seminars held at the Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Study at the University of Pennsylvania and to make use of its superb library. Addressing the subject of "Jews, Commerce and Culture," these seminars are particularly fascinating in problematizing the stereotypes and exaggerations of the Jewish commercial triumph, characteristics prevalent in today's Chinese society that is also deeply immersed in a climate of economic entrepreneurship.

A fortuitous manna from the seminars was to meet David Stern, a distinguished professor of classical Jewish literature and religion and a true intellectual. With permission, I audited his illuminating course on "Akeidah in Jewish Tradition." I not only dined with his family in his sukkah and recited the Four Questions in Chinese at his Seder table, but I devoured his essays and reviews published in The New Republic, Commentary, and The New York Times Book Review. He inspired me to open this semester in Nanjing with a new graduate course entitled "Modern Jewish Scholarship," whereby I hope my students can reach a basic understanding of the development of Jewish studies as an academic field, acquire awareness of some of the methodological innovations, and ultimately achieve a broader perspective that may align their own research closer to Jewish studies as a whole. I joined David for a conference on "Rabbinic Literature and the Material Culture of Roman Palestine" at Princeton University, and a workshop of "The Traditional Eastern European Jewish Book, 1500-1900" led by Professor Moshe Rosman at the Katz Center. At my invitation, David and his wife, Kathryn Hellerstein, a professor of Yiddish at Penn, delivered two lectures at the Nanjing Institute in June.

David once related to me an episode, smacking of a parable in Midrash. Once, while traveling to Portugal, he met a local Orthodox rabbi who was very hospitable and amicable. When he told the rabbi that he had taught Talmud to many non-Jews too, the rabbi, however, was vexed because "Talmud is the love letter that G-d wrote to Jews." This raison d'être for Talmud must have left David stirred, not so much for the powerful, emotional image of "love letter" as, I venture to assume, for a sense of rupture or alienation the very image elicited in his mind, a rupture between a Talmud chacham and a university scholar. Jewish intellectuals constitute another variety to the modern Jewish identities.

As a concertgoer in Philadelphia for its world-renowned orchestra, I once queued up at the Kimmel Center box office. Unexpectedly a man approached me, with an extra ticket in his hand, for free. And I found myself seated in one of the best seats, usually not for sale. It turns out he was a conductor and had even guest-conducted in China, a protégé of Leonard Bernstein, and Jewish too. After the concert, he said "Tonight's program is well-chosen; it has a common theme: love and death." It struck me that his patron had a state-of-the-art recording of Tristan and Isolde. "Do you like Wagner?" I asked. "Sure." The enthusiasm of many a Jewish conductor for Wagner, from Otto Klemperer down to Daniel Barenboim, seems to me an uncanny footnote to the history of Jewish responses to Anti-Semitism.

Leaving Philadelphia, I also made several professional trips within the US. In Washington DC, I took part in the 40th Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) in December, which afforded me a panoramic view of Jewish studies as practiced in North America. In January, I was accepted to the 2009 Jack and Anita Hess Faculty Seminar on "The Holocaust and Other Genocides: Historical Contexts, Legal Issues, and Ethical Dilemmas," co-directed by Professors John Roth and Donald Bloxham, and sponsored by the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I returned to the same Museum in June for another seminar on "Christianity and the Holocaust: History, Analysis, Implications" led by Dr. Victoria J. Barnett. A week before I arrived, a black security guard was tragically killed in a racist attack on the Museum by an 88-year-old gunman with a violent anti-Semitic past.

Holocaust studies is an integral component of the research agenda of the Nanjing Institute, promoted through translations, dissertations, international symposiums and summer workshops. My experience at these seminars was enormously constructive in designing my own syllabus which seeks to contextualize the Holocaust within a broader vista of the history of anti-Semitism and of Jewish responses to catastrophe. Moreover, addressing the Holocaust using a comparative perspective-with Darfur and Rwanda in particular-opened for me a new way to understand why there is a growing international concern regarding abuses of human rights. China is becoming increasingly integrated into international society. For the sake of mutual understanding, it will be good to share this view through class teaching and translation.

Invited as International Jewish Studies Speaker of DePauw University in Greencastle, Indianapolis, I was honored to deliver two public lectures on "Teaching Jewish Studies in China" and "Jewish Diaspora in China: Chinese and Western Perspectives" in the middle of March. My interaction with the faculty and students there was truly thought-provoking and agreeable.

In Ann Arbor, I visited Professor Aharon Oppenheimer in early April. He had supervised my Post-doctoral research at Tel Aviv University and was currently a visiting fellow at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. Aharon planned to visit Nanjing in October 2010, and we discussed the proposed topics of his lectures-on the social world of Talmud and the Holy War in ancient Judaism. Aharon also introduced me to Professor Deborah Dash Moore, Director of the Frankel Center, and we discussed the possibility of academic exchange.

In Berkeley, I attended the 2009 American Academy of Jewish Research (AAJR) Early Career Workshop in May. Directed by Professors Robert Alter and David Biale, and devoted to the enhancement of the teaching and research of scholars at the early stages of their careers in Jewish studies, the workshop was fascinating in developing ideas and methods of instruction, stimulating scholarly research and writing, and in creating a community of scholars. Every participant submitted for mutual discussion a paper or book-proposal, and a syllabus of a Jewish studies course that she/he had offered, and was, in addition, asked to present an "intellectual autobiography"-to lay out the path to the present. In his own autobiography, Professor Biale recalled interviewing Gershom Scholem after the publication of his book on this master scholar and asking him what new fields ought to be developed in Jewish Studies now that he had put Jewish mysticism on the map. Scholem replied, "The history of Jewish criminals." If any attempt were made to write such a history now, it might fittingly end with Bernard Madoff.

In New York City, I was admitted into the 2009 Educational Program on Yiddish Culture (EPYC) Educators Seminar at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in the latter half of June. A series of invited lectures delivered by distinguished scholars highlighted the major aspects of Eastern European Jewry and their repercussions in America. Special sessions-including a concert of Yiddish show tunes and a walking tour of the Hasidic sections of Brooklyn-were really eye-opening. Many materials that I gathered from this seminar, such as photos, CDs and DVDs, can be readily incorporated into my undergraduate survey course on Jewish civilization.

New York was the place to renew old friendship. Professor Fred Lazin of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, with whom we had an exchange program of students, was on sabbatical leave at New York University. We talked about the extension of the program, the arrangement of his upcoming visit to China, and the translation into Chinese of his award-winning book on Jews and American politics. I joined Fred as his guest when he lectured on current Israeli politics at a Reform synagogue of Philadelphia, and therefore availed myself of this chance to have a glimpse of the attitudes within a local American Jewish community toward Israeli issues.

Professor Samuel Heilman of Queens College visited the Nanjing Institute several times, most recently as a Fulbright Senior Specialist in American Judaism. He unfolded me the saga of New York from a New Yorker's perspective, and, of course, guided me through the Orthodox topography, including a foray to Borough Park of Brooklyn on a Sukkot night to observe the celebrations of the split Bobover Hasidim and Munkatcher Hasidim. In the huge, packed Bobover sukkah on 45th Street, as soon as a curious young hasid standing nearby started a conversation with me, I realized it difficult to determine the best way to explain Reconstructionism to him. He looked at me in perplexity: "Why not study in a Yeshiva?" I answered, "You see, I am not Jewish." He breathed a sigh of relief. In the end, he bid me farewell with "Meet you in Jerusalem."
Three days before I left the US, Sam called me while I was packing. Our common friend Professor Menachem Friedman of Bal-Ilan University was in New York. They had just finished collaborating on a biography of the last Lubavitcher Rebbe and intended to collect some photos for the new book in Queens and Crown Heights tomorrow. “Will you join us?” How could I miss such an opportunity?

Six years earlier, in a street of Tel Aviv, I had been given a card with the Rebbe’s portrait and the Seven Noahide Laws on it. Since then, this “King Moshiach” and his avatars seem to manifest themselves repeatedly, like the seeds of dandelion, on the street walls of Hebron, in the eager question of “Excuse me, are you Jewish?” that I overheard before the Western Wall in Jerusalem and at Times Square on Christmas Eve, and in his emissary in Shanghai. The time was ripe to visit the Rebbe’s headquarters.

We went to his graveyard in Queens first, watching pilgrims praying and delivering notes. I delivered my own, as I did before at the Western Wall. In the visitation center near the Ohel, I picked up a brochure entitled The Rebbe: An Appreciation—the official presentation of him, I thought. Then we washed our hands and drove to Crown Heights on the very road he took to pay his monthly visits to the gravesite of his predecessor, side by side with whom the Moshiach lies now. After some time, we finally found the house at 770 Eastern Parkway. It was from here that the Rebbe directed his emissaries’ work and involved himself in details of blowing his dandelions. We all took photos of this house.

On my plane back to China, I started to read the brochure. Copiously illustrated, it is a product of deep devotion. I turned it back and forth, trying to locate its author, but in vain. It is anonymous. When I looked through to page 34, my eyebrows were raised. The Rebbe once asked a US Senator if he could request a favor. The Senator thought to himself: Aha, the Rebbe was looking for the payoff. The Rebbe continued: “There is a growing community in Chinatown. These people are quiet, reserved, hardworking, and law-abiding—the type of citizens most countries would treasure. But because Americans are so outgoing and the Chinese are, by nature, so reserved, they are often overlooked. Thus they miss out benefitting from government programs. I suggest that as US senator from New York, you concern yourself with their needs.” The Senator “was overwhelmed.”

I sat motionless, feeling different.

Acknowledgments

Besides those persons mentioned above, I am also deeply grateful to Rebecca Alpert, Gail Glicksman, Dan Ehrenkrantz, Tamar Kamionkowski, and Xu Xin for their time and indispensable coordination to make my stay at RRC not only possible but also enjoyable. I am greatly indebted to David Brodsky, Reena Friedman, Joel Hecker, Ilan Peleg, Jacob Staub, Ira Stone and David Teutsch: sitting in their classes always left resonating in my mind that famous saying in Avot—“Cover thyself with the dust of wise men’s feet, and drink in their words with thirst.” My sincere thanks go to Richard and Kathleen Baum, John Bliss, Amy Brenner, Eileen Fisher, Dayle and Audrey Friedman, Paul Glasser, Arthur Kiron, Vivie Mayer, Nancy and Seth Fuchs-Kreimer, Dieter Kuntz, Jinyu Liu, Gilya Schmidt, Sheila Steelman, Claire Winick for making my life in the US so enriching, memorable and agreeable. I world like to thank Deborah Stern and Manel Frau—the books I purchased from your library are a significant addition to the Judaic collection of the Nanjing Institute. Last but not the least, to all prospective rabbis at RRC: Thanks for having allowed me to spend such a heartwarming year with all of you!
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