

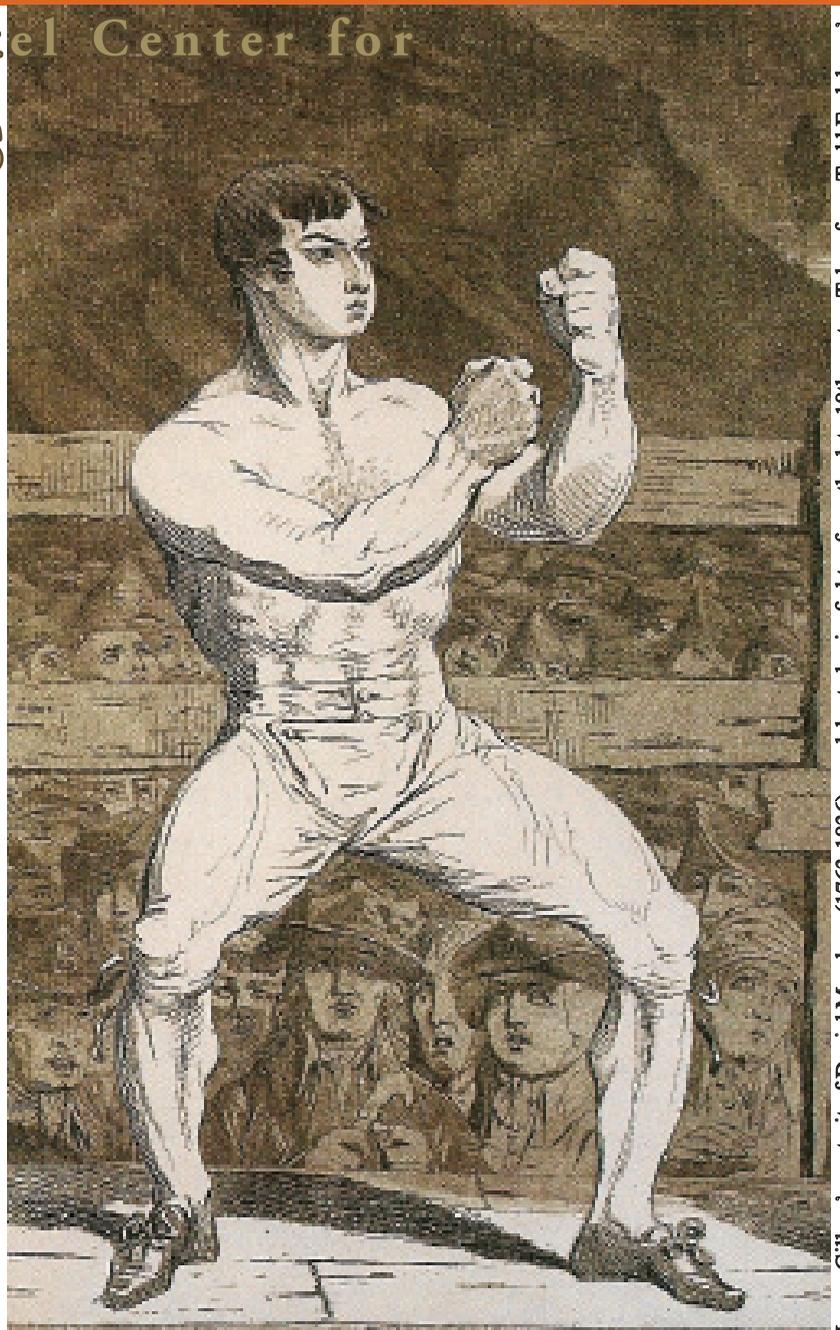
# FRANKELY SPEAKING

October 2011

## Jean & Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies

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The Frankel Center for  
Judaic Studies  
University of Michigan  
202 S. Thayer St., Suite 2111  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-1608  
JudaicStudies@umich.edu



James Gillray's portrait of Daniel Mendoza (1763-1836), a celebrated prizefighter from the late 18th century. Taken from Todd Endelman's *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714 - 1830*. (New York Public Library.)

# From the Director: AAJR @ UM

In 1920 a handful of scholars in diverse fields that then constituted Jewish studies gathered in New York City to discuss how they might promote their common intellectual interests. With zealous enthusiasm they decided to call their learned society the “American Academy for Jewish Research” (AAJR). Half a century later, Todd Endelman followed in their footsteps. As a graduate student at Harvard, he joined other emerging historians to promote common intellectual concerns at a time when opportunities for graduate study of Jewish history were limited to a few universities. These energetic young scholars organized several conferences of fellow graduate students that presaged new directions for Jewish studies in the United States. Now as president of the AAJR, Todd is bringing the venerable learned society to Michigan.

Located far from centers of Jewish religious and cultural creativity in Europe and largely employed by Jewish institutions of higher education, the founders of the AAJR nonetheless imagined possibilities for fellowship and cooperation that would advance scholarship in Judaic Studies. Looking back from a perspective of over ninety years, we can recognize that this impulse to further serious research in Judaica animated Jews in Vilna and in Jerusalem as well as New York. Both the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, established a few years later, responded to similar desires even as they reflected different political and social realities.

The members of the AAJR gathered regularly to present scholarly papers. They held their first public conference in December 1928 and incorporated the following year. Although they started to publish the proceedings of their annual conference by 1930 (PAAJR), they also dreamed of ambitious projects: a new translation of Tanach, publication of the complete works of Maimonides in honor of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in 1935.

The distinguished Columbia University Professor of Jewish History on the Miller chair, Salo Baron, and Harry Wolfson, who held the Littauer chair in Jewish Philosophy at Harvard, guided the organization for

many years, securing an endowment and overseeing its publishing initiatives. In the 1990s as a new generation rose to prominence in Jewish studies, Todd Endelman, an outstanding scholar among them, took over the helm of the AAJR.

Todd possesses a gift for leadership. Todd helped to build the Jean and Samuel Frankel Center for Judaic Studies into an outstanding Jewish Studies program. As president of the AAJR, he has guided the organization into new areas with his characteristic vision and energy. His decision to bring AAJR to Michigan from the University of Pennsylvania acknowledges the special talents of Cheri Thompson.

Cheri will take over the administration of the AAJR upon the retirement of Sheila Allen in August 2012. Passing the baton to Cheri at the Frankel Center from Sheila at the Center for Advanced Jewish Studies at Penn recognizes not only Cheri’s superb administrative achievements but also the impressive accomplishments of the Frankel Center, as well as its prominence as a top program in Judaic Studies in the United States.

As Todd plans to retire in May of 2012, he can look back on significant scholarly contributions to the study of modern Jewish history and on a solid record of institutional endeavors expanding Jewish studies in the United States. Although Todd will, of course, continue his scholarly work, we will miss his exemplary leadership as evidenced in his most recent decision to bring AAJR to UM.



*Deborah Dash Moore, Director, The Frankel Center  
Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History*

# Todd Endelman, Pioneering Historian of Anglo-Jewish History, Retires from U-M



Photo by D.C. Goings

In Spring of 2012, Todd M. Endelman, the William Haber Professor of Modern Jewish History, will retire from the University of Michigan. Endelman came to U-M in 1985, where he—along with Zvi Gitelman and Anita Norich—shaped the Judaic Studies program. They built the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and conceived of the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies.

His contributions to the field of the social history of modern Anglo Jews are immeasurable: An entire generation of Jewish historians has grown up under his tutelage, many of them now holding prestigious academic appointments. But it's not only the students who have felt the impact of Endelman's work—his colleagues also recognize the indelible mark he's made up the field of Jewish studies.

A steadily prolific scholar, Endelman has published a new, influential book approximately every decade starting with *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (1979) followed by *Radical Assimilation in Anglo-Jewish History, 1656-1945* (1990) and, most recently, *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (2002). In between he has also edited multiple volumes, including *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (1987); *Comparing Jewish Societies* (1997); *Disraeli's Jewishness* (2002); and, just last year, *Broadening Jewish History: Toward a Social History of Ordinary Jews*.

Former students, colleagues, and friends discuss the impact that Todd Endelman has had on their own careers and lives:

Todd Endelman has been an exemplary scholar, teacher and administrator. He is widely and justifiably admired for his meticulous, interesting and significant scholarship. Eschewing fashions of the moment and obfuscating jargon, Todd's writing is vivid, direct and engaging. Generations of students have benefited from his teaching in modern Jewish history, and there is a cohort of young professional historians whom he has trained. Todd has been a model leader of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies. Level-headed and patient, he has dealt kindly and effectively with faculty, students, administrators and community members. A prodigious fund raiser, Todd Endelman is respected by all. His contributions are legion. They have left an indelible mark on scholarship, on students and on all who have been fortunate to work with him.

**Zvi Gitelman**

**Professor of Political Science and Judaic Studies, University of Michigan**

I've known Todd as colleague and close friend for the past 25 years. From a young age, I suspect, Todd was emotionally suited to be a scholar. He's instinctively inquisitive, but also calm, reflective, and judicious. Whenever I try out my latest theories, his response—"Yes, but have you thought of ..."—adds a welcome note of sobriety and balance. As a critic of my written drafts, he's unmatched. The depth, sophistication, clarity of exposition, and volume of his scholarship are humbling. And for many years now, my most enjoyable intellectual exchanges have been discussing Jewish history with Todd.

More valuable by far than intellectual comradeship, however, is Todd's—and Judy's—deep personal friendship. For 25 years, our families have shared virtually every Jewish holiday. And since my wife has become ill, their friendship has been my mainstay. If my life at Michigan has been rewarding, it is in no small part due to my friendship with Todd Endelman.

**Victor Lieberman**

**Professor of History, University of Michigan**

When I decided to come to the University of Michigan in 1992 to study with Todd Endelman, some of the professors and mentors advising me asked me why. Todd did not work on the group that interested me—American Jews—nor had anyone working in the field of American Jewish history ever received their graduate training at Michigan. Still, I was convinced that Todd and Michigan were the best fit for me, and I have become even more convinced in the years since that studying with Todd was one of the most fortunate turns in my scholarly career.

I had first become aware of Todd and his work during my junior year abroad at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, where I read his *Jews of Georgian England* and made good use of it in a thesis I was writing on the Jews of colonial Maryland. The director of that thesis, Prof. Marc Lee Raphael, a scholar of American Judaism and longtime editor of the scholarly journal *American Jewish History*, encouraged me to get in touch with Todd and to put Michigan on my short list of potential graduate programs. What drew me most strongly to apply to Michigan, however, was a forum Todd participated in on the “state of Jewish studies,” in which he admonished his colleagues for perpetuating the longstanding intellectual bias against the study of American history and American Jews. He bemoaned the fact that, despite the central importance of the United States in the contemporary Jewish world, Jewish historians continued to direct their students away from the study of American Jewry. “The time has come,” he wrote, “to mark its maturation by treating its history with the respect it warrants.” When I finally met Todd during a campus visit in Fall 1991, his easygoing demeanor and our common intellectual interests made me even more convinced that Michigan was the place for me.

Fortunate to have been accepted into Michigan’s entering History cohort in 1992, I soon found that training as an American Jewish historian under Todd’s supervision had decided benefits. First, his focus on England made him aware of the pitfalls of employing overarching models in the study of Jewish history and sensitized him to the diversity of Jewish experience in different national cultures. Second, Todd’s grounding in social history, coupled with the comparative weakness of ideological movements among secularizing Anglo-Jews, allowed him to rewrite the history of Jewish modernization as one that occurred from the bottom up, revealing the rich life histories of common people. Finally, his focus on the challenges faced by Anglo-Jews in a free society and the often overwhelming pressures they faced to flee their Jewish connections led him to adopt an expansive definition of Jewish history, one that included those who no longer operated within a Jewish social context. Although these insights were derived from the study of Anglo-Jewry, I came to see that they were also crucial for understanding the history of Jews in the United States. I likely would never have made these connections if not for Todd’s unique scholarly interests and sensibilities.

Intertwined with his distinctive scholarly approach were elements of Todd’s personality that made a strong and lasting impression on me and my classmates. He imbued us with the sense of excitement he felt in pursuing the history of the common person (Could one write a history of modern Jews without mentioning Moses Mendelssohn? The answer: “watch me.”) It was from Todd that I learned to be a careful editor and to avoid academic jargon (“Use the word ‘impacted’ only in regard to a tooth!”). Most importantly, he modeled a sense of professional responsibility as an historian and a moderate approach to scholarly innovation that taught us to be open to new ideas, methods, and theories, but never to abandon the crucial need to firmly ground our work in social contexts. In sum, few people have had as significant an influence on my intellectual development and on my scholarly career as Todd Endelman. As he retires from teaching and goes on to many more adventures in scholarship, may he continue to instruct and inspire us.

**Eric Goldstein**

***Associate Professor of History, Emory University***

When Todd Endelman arrived to begin graduate work at Harvard in 1970, after a year in Israel, I was assigned by the History Department as his “big brother,” someone who had already been around for a year, who had similar interests (Modern European and Jewish history), and who supposedly could show him the ropes. We hit it off immediately (as did our wives) and ever since then, I am happy to say, Todd and I have retained our fraternal relationship, though more often than not it has been Todd who has shown me the ropes. He has always been a source of sage advice, helpful criticism, and warm friendship. I count myself very fortunate to have had Todd as both a close friend and a colleague for over four decades now, and I look forward to maintaining our ties in the years to come.

**Lee Shai Weissbach**

***Professor of History, University of Louisville***

In my first meeting with Todd after coming to the University of Michigan, Todd turned to me and said, only half-jokingly, “you read differently in graduate school.” And for the past two years, Todd has been my guide in trying to read not only the work of other scholars in a more analytical way, but also in working to read historical events and voices more deeply, with an awareness of the small, but potentially consequential details, as well as of the broader possible connections across time and space. With each question he asks in the classroom, Todd pushes his students not to be satisfied with the first or easy answer, and to think as much about the questions to be asked as the answers to be given. As a teacher and a mentor in “reading differently,” Todd has represented to me continuous passion for the detective work of history. His academic generosity and support have helped me immeasurably.

**Alyssa Reiman**  
*Ph.D. Student, History, University of Michigan*

The publication of *The Jews of Georgian England* (1979) coincided with what Todd Endelman has called the rise of a new school of Anglo-Jewish Studies. Up until the 1970s, as Todd has rightly noted, the “bulk of books and articles on Anglo-Jewry was the work of amateurs, communal dignitaries and functionaries” whose approach was “Whiggish, apologetic and triumphalist” (*The Jews of Britain*, 4-5). The new school was made up of individuals, such as me, whose books were based on doctoral work and who, in the first flush of their professional career, tended to take an iconoclastic approach to the amateur school of Anglo-Jewish Studies.

By the mid-1980s the transformation, from the amateur school to the new school, could be rather fraught with doctoral candidates achieving their first jobs and challenging received wisdom. At one conference, the late Professor Jonathan Frankel was so taken aback at the vehemence of the new generation of Anglo-Jewish scholars that he admonished us by saying that we were “not storming the Winter Palace.”

It was in this context of often heated debate that the work of Todd Endelman, both *The Jews of Georgian England* and *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History, 1656-1945* (1990), was especially important. What spoke to me at the time was not just the vast range of archival materials that he drew upon, nor his comparative approach with other European Jewish communities, but, above all as a literary scholar, the elegance and civility of his prose style. Reading his books in an often beleaguered atmosphere showed me that it was possible to write on Anglo-Jewry to the highest scholarly standard and to rise above the polemics.

Todd invited me to take up the Padnos Visiting Professorship in Judaic Studies in 1996-1997. By this time, we had met regularly and I learned a great deal from his work about how Anglo-Jewish Studies could both illuminate both British and Jewish history. My time at Ann Arbor was one of the happiest periods of my life, not least because I travelled from London with my wife and baby of 3 months. In fact, our trust in Todd was so complete that we had planned to have the baby in Ann Arbor until there were some complications. What makes Todd’s academic career so memorable is that one does not merely trust his scholarship—*The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000* (2002) will remain the standard work for many years to come— but that trust in his historical judgment extends beyond the page to the person.

**Bryan Cheyette**  
*Chair in Modern Literature, University of Reading*

When Todd set out as an historian, virtually no-one studied Anglo-Jewish history. Todd has been a pioneer in two ways. Empirically, he has explored a long-neglected element of modern Jewish history but also, conceptually, he has written about the implications of this new knowledge and his emphasis on social history for our understanding of process such as emancipation and modernization in modern Jewish history. Similar things can be said about Todd’s work on other themes such as conversion and apostasy. But if this is Todd’s mark as a scholar there is also his mark as a colleague. For mid-way through his career, Todd found his chosen specialism of Anglo-Jewish history populated by a clutch of newcomers seeking to make their own mark on the field and sometimes taking issue with Todd’s lines of analysis. Todd befriended and supported the self-styled ‘young Turks,’ myself included. He took issue with them when he thought it necessary but always engaged with them and took them seriously. In this way, the field has been hugely enriched not only by Todd’s work but also by his intellectual and personal generosity.

**David Feldman**

*Director, Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism*

*School of Social Science, History and Philosophy, Birkbeck, University of London*

Although it has been almost three years since my defense and I now have students of my own, I still think of myself as Todd's student. He has been my mentor, my teacher, and an intellectual father figure. It was Todd who introduced me to modern social Jewish history, and without him I would not be where I am intellectually and professionally. When I first arrived in Ann Arbor it was from a very conservative Polish historical school. Todd made sure that the transition to new ways of historical thinking would not leave me lost and alienated but rather invigorated and curious. Simply put, Todd made me feel at home in the American school of modern Jewish history—he made me feel a part of a family—of a lineage. I will never forget what he told me a year or two after my defense. He said that since he was a student of Yosef Yerushalmi who was a student of Salo Baron, that makes me Baron's great grand-daughter! What more can you say to give your student a sense of belonging, a sense of pride, and a sense of obligation?

Todd truly cares about his former and current students. I always felt that he wants us to be not only professionally successful but also personally happy. He truly cares about us. He edited my dissertation sentence by sentence, article by article.... During this process, I learned more about English writing than at any time before. My husband and I even coined a neologism, and enshrined Todd in verb—"to todd—which means to make a sentence clear and uncluttered by cutting out unnecessary words. Todd has no primadonna syndrome; he has no moods or issues. He is warm, kind, and generous.... In his eulogy for Yerushalmi, Todd asked whether it is a symptom of progress or decline that academic teachers are more collegial than colorful... I opt for collegial. I opt for Todd Endelman.

**Anna Cichopek-Gajraj**

**Assistant Professor of History, Arizona State University**

In a quirky sense, Todd and I began our academic careers together. I had just assumed a puppy professorship at Berkeley, and Todd was one of my first freshman students in an honors seminar in western civilization. We stayed together in the years leading to his bachelor's degree, more accomplished honors work, and, thanks to new exchange arrangements between Warwick University and Berkeley, we were able to send him to Britain for his junior year, where, as I recall, he flourished.

But he flourished at Berkeley in general. To this day I still remember him as the most "finished" beginning undergraduate I have ever taught. His essays were a model of clarity and finesse, no bumps, no digressions, no stumbling about. That seems to describe everything about him. He was always in full command of his subject, and of his life, and of course he has remained so. Whenever I read his articles and books, I see the same complete scholar, if more experienced, that he was at the age of 18. The analogy is not apt but admirers will understand if I say that like Falstaff, Todd was born at three o'clock in the afternoon. That is to say, astonishingly mature intellectually before he had any right to be so! I am sure that retirement will not in any way alter a long life of achievement.

**Sheldon Rothblatt**

**Professor of History Emeritus, University of California, Berkeley**

Todd Endelman has been an inspiration and challenge to all of us working within Britain on Anglo-Jewish history. Along with Lloyd Gartner, who sadly died this year, Todd provided the professional, critical approach to the history and culture of the Jewish experience in Britain. When I first met him in the 1980s he was a marked contrast to us (then) young scholars—beautifully turned out and immaculately presented in contrast to our rather scruffy dress code as befitted the alternative world to Thatcherite Britain. Since then, Todd has challenged us all to think more globally in respect of British Jewish history, as he has done himself. Our comparisons have been more internal—towards other immigrant and minority groups in Britain, but we owe so much to a superb scholar and friend who has taken us, and our subject matter, seriously.

**Tony Kushner**

**Marcus Sieff Professor and Director, Parkes Institute for the study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations  
University of Southampton**

Through characteristically clear, level-headed prose, Todd Endelman's impressive body of work demonstrates that even now, in a period of epistemological uncertainty, reconstructing Jewish history demands the empirical study of Jews' contextualized behavior—the ordinary and extraordinary—and not the study of representations alone. We historians are fortunate that the influence of Todd's defense of social history has extended well beyond scholarship in his own fields and periods of specialization.

**David Graizbord**

**The Arizona Center for Judaic Studies, The University of Arizona**

Todd Endelman embodies many qualities as a historian, an advisor, and a human being that make it a pleasure to have known him since I began my graduate studies at Michigan in the fall of 1991. The early 1990s were a time when the intervention of cultural studies on historical research and writing were all the rage, and for emerging historians, the question of how history should be written was very much in the air. While Todd was open to the cultural turn, he firmly opposed the use of jargon in the writing of history. A history book, he told his students in no uncertain terms, should be written so as to be accessible to any intelligent person interested in the topic. I have always tried to emulate this dictum in my own writing, and I must therefore give Todd some of the credit for my having written a book that friends and relatives outside of the profession, in addition to fellow historians, have been able to read and learn from. Todd always showed a personal as well as professional interest in his graduate students—I have particularly fond memories of dinner parties in his Ann Arbor home—and in the years since I finished by PhD, Todd has continued to be there for me as a mentor and teacher, as well as a friend.

**Nadia Malinovic**

*Associate Professor of American Studies, University of Amiens, France*

Taking students seriously and treating them as intellectual equals is, I believe, a hallmark of Professor Endelman's pedagogy. Professor Endelman offered me and his other students every possible opportunity to grow as scholars. He made himself physically and emotionally available. Professor Endelman read countless versions of grant applications, seminar papers, book reviews and dissertation chapters. Whether he was on leave or attempting to balance a heavy tremendous service and teaching load, Professor Endelman carved out time. He met with us frequently when we prepared for our exams; he took part in our reading and writing groups. He also attended our first lectures and talks. He introduced us to visiting scholars, making sure that there was sufficient time for graduate students to engage intellectually and socially with these visitors. Professor Endelman's brilliant graduate readings course on Comparative Jewish Societies (co-sponsored with CSSH) illustrated this fundamental democratic "instinct." As part of this class, Professor Endelman invited several leading scholars in Jewish history to speak on the place of comparative methodology in their work, and he eventually edited a remarkable volume that included the essays delivered at Michigan. What was particularly noteworthy was Professor Endelman's fashioning of the course. Each week, both a graduate student and a faculty member formally responded to the scholar's essay after the scholar had delivered his pre-circulated paper. These two individuals—faculty member and graduate student alike—then dined with the scholar after the class' conclusion. Professor Endelman thoughtfully asked whether I would be interested in responding to the work of a scholar who had influenced me greatly. That opportunity paved the way for a mentoring relationship, which has been extremely influential in my career. In fact, the scholar with whom I had been paired served as one of my external evaluators when I (successfully) went through the tenure process at OSU.

**Robin Judd**

*Associate Professor of History, Ohio State University*

When I first met Todd in 1991, I was an enthusiastic doctoral student, eager to learn but decidedly unformed in either the historical discipline more generally or modern Jewish history more specifically. Todd's exceptional patience and thoughtful guidance introduced me to the major controversies of the field, pushing me to think harder and ask ever sharper questions about the material I was learning. I was also fortunate to work as his teaching assistant on several occasions, which meant that I had the pleasure of regularly attending his undergraduate lectures. In this arena, Todd is really a masterful educator, able to synthesize vast amounts of material into analytic categories that an undergraduate audience can easily digest. His lectures were a tour de force, and I have actively sought to shape my own undergraduate lectures on his model.

When I began writing my dissertation, Todd's careful reading of numerous drafts focused my writing and challenged my assumptions. It is here that his impact on my career was most notable, since his insights and questions directed me at every step in the process. It is worth noting that my dissertation was relatively atypical for the field of Jewish history, since I opted to do a comparative study. Todd's support for my approach was unwavering. Indeed, he encouraged me to maintain my focus, noting with some foresight that such approaches would be increasingly welcome in the field of Jewish history. Indeed, one of his strengths as an advisor was how centrally situated he was in the broader arena of Judaic Studies, which gave him excellent insight into how his students might fit into emerging areas of inquiry.

I am exceptionally grateful to have worked with such an accomplished historian and teacher, whose efforts on my behalf provided me with the necessary toolkit to succeed in graduate school and thereafter.

**Maud Mandel**

*Associate Professor of Judaic Studies and History, Brown University*

# School of Social Work's Jewish Communal Leadership Program Welcomes New Group of Students

The second class of students has joined the Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP) at the University of Michigan. A collaborative effort of the Frankel Center and the School of Social Work, the program combines academic study in Judaic Studies and Social Work with hands-on engagement in contemporary communal challenges. Students will serve as non-voting board members and pursue field placements with local, national, and international Jewish agencies, preparing them for leadership roles in Jewish communal life.

JCLP Director Karla Goldman, who was installed as the Sol Drachler Chair at the University of Michigan's School of Social Work in 2009, is pleased to welcome the new students and continuing the work initiated by Project STaR (1990-2000) and the Sol Drachler Program in Jewish Communal Leadership (2000-2007). "This is an exciting time for the Jewish Communal Leadership Program. The second-year students have had great experiences with both the Social Work and the Judaic Studies sides of the curriculum and are returning from fulfilling summer field placements in Detroit and around the country. The incoming class are energizing the conversation with their own strong voices and insights shaped by their diverse studies, backgrounds, and experiences. And the Ann Arbor and Detroit Jewish communities continue to warmly welcome all the students—offering them both a laboratory and a home for experiencing the richness and challenge of 21st century Jewish communal life."

**Jess Alper** is a wondering and passionate Jew. After growing up and attending college in Michigan, she joined AmeriCorps in Southern California and then moved to San Francisco, where she spent the past four years managing health care service programs for the Muscular Dystrophy Association and teaching in a pluralistic Jewish education program for teenage students.

**Molly Dehrey** grew up in the Los Angeles area attending Jewish day schools. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, where she majored in Hebrew and Human Development and Family studies with a concentration in psychology, and spent a semester at Tel Aviv University. Fluent in Hebrew, Molly spent a year in Israel volunteering at the Israel Center for the Treatment of Psychotrauma in Jerusalem, which treats victims of trauma from all religious and ethnic backgrounds.

A native of Farmington Hills, MI, **Shayna Beth Goodman** is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, where

she majored in psychology. Shayna was an inaugural student in the U-M School of Social Work's Community Action and Social Change minor, which she helped to shape as a member of the program's Student Advisory Board. As a participant in the Metro Detroit Jewish Occupational Intern Program, Shayna worked at Coville Assisted Living Apartments in Oak Park, organizing supplemental activities for residents.

**Shayna Elizabeth Goodman** attended Ramaz High School in New York City and graduated from Sarah Lawrence College with a focus on Jewish Studies and Creative Writing, completing a senior thesis on "Masculinity and Modernity in Jewish Autobiography." Her studies included a year at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Shayna has worked or volunteered for a wide array of Jewish institutions and publications including the Museum of Jewish Heritage, *Lilith Magazine*, *Habitus: A Diaspora Journal*, Hadassah, and YIVO.

Originally from East Lansing, MI, **Alice Mishkin** is a graduate of the University of Michigan, where she majored in English Language and Literature. During a year off from college, Alice joined the staff of the Save Darfur Coalition and was instrumental in planning the 2006 anti-genocide rally in Washington, DC. After graduation, Alice worked for two years as executive assistant for Ruth Messinger, president of the American Jewish World Service.

A native of Ann Arbor and a graduate of the University of Michigan, **Nurit Weizman** has pursued a long journey on her way to the Jewish Communal Leadership Program. Nurit grew up in the Habonim Dror Labor Zionist youth movement, attending and working as a counselor at Camp Tavor in Three Rivers Michigan for nine years. Time spent in Israel deepened Nurit's interest in both women's empowerment and in Judaism, prompting her to switch her major from architecture to women's studies and to become involved as student co-president and head of the women's program for Jewish Awareness America on campus.

**Rachel Yerkey**, from Ann Arbor, received her Bachelor of Arts from Albion College where she majored in Religious Studies and Spanish and was president of the campus Hillel. She also spent a semester abroad in Bilbao, Spain. For the last two years Rachel has served, as part of AmeriCorps, as the Director of Interfaith Action at the Ginsberg Center at the University of Michigan.

# Frankel Institute Symposium Examines Jewish Political Behavior in the U.S., Israel, and Globally

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies, under head fellow Zvi Gitelman, is exploring the theme of Jews & Political Life.

On Thursday and Friday, Nov. 10-11, 2011, the Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies will be sponsoring a symposium on Jewish political behavior. The symposium will explore aspects of Jews' political experience in Eastern Europe, the United States, Israel and in the international arena. Among the topics to be analyzed are Zionism in Eastern Europe, Jewish radicalism, Arab-Jewish relations in Israel, the anomalies of Jewish voting in the United States, and Jews as actors in world politics.

The symposium, organized by Gitelman, will begin on Thursday morning with a panel titled "Jews in Russian and East European Politics in Historical Perspective" featuring Brian Horowitz, Andrew Sloin, and Gershon Bacon, followed by comments from William Rosenberg.

Thursday afternoon will include two sessions, one devoted to "Israeli Jews and Arabs" with Sammy Smooha, Sarai Aharoni, Ken Goldstein,

and commentator Mark Tessler, and the other on "Jewish Political Activity in the International Arena" with David Engel.

Friday's topics focus on "Anomalies of American Jewish Political Behavior" with Herbert Weisberg, Ken Wald, and Samuel Abrams. The final session will examine "Political, Cultural, and Social Challenges of Politics to West European Jews Today" with Andrei Markovits and Sergey Lagodinsky.

*The symposium will be held in the Koessler Room of the Michigan League. All sessions are free and open to the public. For a complete schedule, email [judaicstudies@umich.edu](mailto:judaicstudies@umich.edu), visit [www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic), or call 734.763.9047.*

## 2013-2014 Frankel Institute Theme to Explore Gender in Jewish Contexts

The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies will devote the 2013-2014 theme year to the exploration of gender as applied to Jews, their religion and culture, past history and current practices. It invites applications that extend questions stimulated by gender to traditional aspects of Jewish studies, such as literature, rabbinics, politics, and history as well as to new areas of Jewish studies, such as diaspora, cultural, performance, and migration studies. Proposals that contest basic paradigms—what is meant by religious life, by community, and that explore gender norms and representations—

are invited. Not only women but also men and masculinity, sexuality and the sexual politics of Jewish identity are appropriate topics for study. This year represents an opportunity to move research on Jews and gender into relatively unexplored areas, such as the senses, emotions, and new media.

Building upon several decades of scholarship, the theme of gender will bring scholars from diverse disciplines together to explore various questions linked through a common theoretical focus on gender. Past Frankel Institute fellows have come from such

diverse fields as law, literature, history, rabbinics, music, architecture, archaeology and anthropology and include such notable scholars as Barbara Mann, Chava Weissler, Aharon Oppenheimer, Sammy Smooha, Leora Auslander, Hana Wirth-Nesher, and Gershon Bacon.

The application deadline is Oct. 22, 2012. For more information and application materials, contact The Frankel Institute for Advanced Judaic Studies via email at [judaicstudies@umich.edu](mailto:judaicstudies@umich.edu), "like" us on Facebook, or visit our website at [www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic](http://www.lsa.umich.edu/judaic).

# Dos folk fodert sotsyale gerekhtikayt<sup>1</sup>: Social Protests and Yiddish in Tel Aviv

by Shachar Pinsker

## “The People Demand Social Justice”

On the night of July 28, 2011, I parked my bike and walked through the tent camp that suddenly sprung up on Rothschild Boulevard at the heart of Tel Aviv in protest against the rising cost of living and the dismantling of the Israeli welfare state. It was hot, humid, very crowded, and there was a tangible excitement in the air, both among the tent-dwellers and the visitors. The mile or so that extends between Ha'bima Theater to the north and Allenby St. to the south, normally takes about 15 minutes to walk, but on that particular night I had to stop numerous times, because at every corner of the prestigious and affluent boulevard, something else caught my attention. On one block, young activists established an ad-hoc “popular university” in which scholars and speakers addressed issues of social justice, democracy, economy and urban renewal. On another block, prominent Israeli writers such as Me’ir Shalev, Sami Michael and Etgar Keret were addressing the crowd, sitting on the floor between the tents. On a third block, some young artists were setting up an art-installation called “The Sinking House”: a cardboard piece that looked like a house sinking into the ground, with no doors or windows, just one peephole through which spectators could sneak a quick look into the inside of a dark house, something that many families in Israel cannot afford these days. This was all fascinating, something you don’t see in present-day Tel Aviv, at least not until the current wave of unrest. However, the most surprising event of that night was the sight of a young Israeli man—fully clad in suit, tie and polished shoes, standing on a bench in the middle of the Boulevard—giving a rousing speech in... Yiddish!

He spoke about social justice, Jewish and human solidarity, quoting the Bible, the Talmud, and East European social



Tent camp on Rothschild Boulevard, Tel Aviv, July 2011.

leaders and activists. All in Yiddish. Very few people on Rothschild Blvd. understood what he was trying to say, and many were wondering why he was speaking Yiddish. I heard a passerby say, “What is he doing? Bibi [Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister] doesn’t understand Yiddish.” It’s still a mystery to me who this guy is, why he spoke in Yiddish, or how he knows Yiddish. The texts he was quoting might indicate that he is a former Yeshiva student who grew up in an ultra-orthodox Yiddish-speaking environment. But it is just as plausible that he is an actor or performer, who studied Yiddish in Tel Aviv University Yiddish Summer Program, where I had given a lecture a few days before.

Initially, what caught my attention was the apparent incongruity between the very contemporary—and very young—phenomenon of social protest in Tel Aviv, and Yiddish—the language of the *alter heym* (old home) of East European Jews. However, because I’ve just spent seven months in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, doing research on the topic of Yiddish in Israel, I could see some links that were invisible to some. The Founding Fathers of Israel wanted to create a clear break from Jewish diasporic existence,

and dreamed about a new society of “natives” that would be monolingual, based exclusively on the “revived” ancient Hebrew language. Yiddish was the old language of the immigrants; the language that “must be forgotten.” But Yiddish has persisted well into the 1950s and 1960s as a language of daily communication, press, radio and theater. My research has revealed that Yiddish also exerted a strong, but mostly submerged influence on Israeli literature and culture, including some of the most central Israeli writers and works. Today, many young people in Israel are suddenly yearning to learn Yiddish in order to understand not only the world of their grandparents, but also an important part of the origin of their own Israeli culture.

A similar phenomenon can be traced in the social and political realm. The Founding Fathers of the State of Israel (especially from the dominant “Labor Zionism”) wanted to create something unprecedented in modern Jewish history, but in fact they shared many of the ideals and values of the historic Jewish labor and social movements of Eastern Europe and America. These diasporic socialist movements championed Yiddish, which they saw as the language of the “folk”

and of Jewish and social solidarity. The heyday of Social Zionism was in the 1950s and 1960s, after which it declined in power and influence. The last two decades in Israel ushered the ideas and practices of free market Capitalism, which eventually brought the dismantling of the Israel welfare system and unprecedented social disparity between rich and poor. Along the way, Israelis were losing a sense of solidarity and sensitivity to issues of social justice.

This is why the current grass-root campaign for social justice surprised so

many people. It seemed to spring out of nowhere, building and uniting disparate sections of society. However, one can easily see that the mostly young people who demonstrate and build tents in Tel Aviv and elsewhere, continue, in some ways, old Jewish traditions that go back both to Labor Zionism and to Yiddishist movements like the Bund.

Admittedly, it is impossible to tell where the current wave of protest is going and whether it will bring significant changes in the political and economic area. But it seems to me that the social

movement that began with Rothschild Blvd. tent camp is significant regardless of the immediate political outcome, because it has already changed Israeli discourse: the language people are using, the vocabulary and the way of thinking. More than everything else, this is a revolution of consciousness, one in which even a speech, or a demonstration poster in Yiddish are not out of place.

(Endnotes)

1 Yiddish for “The People Demand Social Justice,” the most prominent slogan of the protest movement during the summer of 2011 in Israel.

#### FACULTY:

**Gabriele Boccaccini**, professor of Second Temple Judaism, spent an intensive summer in Italy and Israel. In May he offered two seminars in the doctoral program at the University of Rome: “La Sapienza” on “The Historical Jesus” and “Paul and Judaism.” In June, he chaired the Sixth Enoch Seminar in Milan. The meeting, which attracted more than 80 scholars from 20 countries, was devoted to the study of two first-century Jewish apocalyptic texts—2 Baruch and 4 Ezra. A session of the conference was held at the Ambrosian Library, where the only extant manuscript of 2 Baruch is preserved. The Frankel Center sent four of its PhD students to attend the meeting and serve as secretaries—Jason Zurawski, Isaac Oliver, Deborah Forger, and Rodney Caruthers. In July, Boccaccini led a one-week seminar on Christian Origins with Enrico Norelli of the University of Geneva, Switzerland. In August he accompanied a group of the Italian Biblical Association to a two-week visit of archaeological sites in Israel.

**Sara Blair** has been awarded an ACLS fellowship for 2012, in pursuit of the project “The View from Below: Imaging Modernity and the Lower East Side.” She was also appointed last winter to the Editorial Board of the American Literature and Culture Series at Cambridge University Press. This fall, she begins a three-year term as Associate Dean for Academic Programs at the Rackham Graduate School.

#### AFFILIATES:

**Elliot H. Gertel** presented a program at the Association of Jewish Libraries’ annual conference in Montreal in June entitled “Kalman at the Bat: A Webliography of Jews in Baseball.” In addition, he chaired a session at the same conference on “The (Archival) Gloves Are Off! New Digital Platforms for Montreal Jewish History”

including the Canadian Jewish Heritage Network, Interactive Jewish Montreal Museum, and Jewish General Hospital Archives. Gertel also coordinated and moderated at the American Library Association Annual Conference on June 26<sup>th</sup> in New Orleans. The title of this joint ALA/AJL (Association of Jewish Libraries) program was “Gathering the Storm: Katrina’s Jewish Voices and the Significance of Oral History Collection.”

## Mazel Tov!

In May of this year, Frankel Center Associates **Caroline Helton** and **Paul Schonfeld** travelled with their colleagues from the School of Music, Theatre & Dance to perform a concert entitled “Voices of the Holocaust” at New York’s Museum of Jewish Heritage. Caroline Helton, soprano, and pianist Dr. Kathryn Goodson performed solo vocal repertoire by Jewish composers Kurt Weill, Robert Kahn, Erich Korngold and Vittorio Rieti on the first half of the program. (Prof. Helton is a member of the Voice faculty and Dr. Goodson is a member of the accompanying staff of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance.) The second half of the program featured the New York premiere of *Ghetto Songs*, a chamber work by University of Michigan composer Paul Schoenfield. *Ghetto Songs*, set to poetry by the beloved Yiddish poet Mordechai Gebirtig, were performed by Helton and Stephen West, baritone, with the composer at the piano and Chad Burrow playing clarinet, Andrew Jennings on violin, DMA student Pia Greiner playing cello, and Diana Gannett on double bass. The performance took place in the Edmond J. Safra Hall and was warmly received by the audience, which included Holocaust survivors and Yiddish speakers. This project was generously underwritten

by the Office of the Vice President for Research, the School of Music, Theatre & Dance, the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies, and the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

#### FRANKEL INSTITUTE FELLOWS:

**Marc Caplan** (Johns Hopkins University, 2010-2011 fellow) published *How Strange the Change: Language, Temporality, and Narrative Form in Peripheral Modernisms* (Stanford University Press, 2011).

**Hana Wirth-Nesher** (Tel Aviv University, 2010-2011 fellow) and **Avram Novershtern** (Hebrew University, 2010-2011 fellow) received a major three-year grant from the Rothschild Foundation to develop an M.A. Yiddish Studies program that is interuniversity: Tel Aviv University, Hebrew University, and Ben Gurion University. Its hub and center will be the Goldreich Family Institute for Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture. **Wirth-Nesher** also welcomed her first grandchild, Adam, on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Mazel Tov!

**Kalman Weiser** published *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation* (University of Toronto Press, 2011).

**Oded Zehavi** has been promoted to full professor at University of Haifa.

#### STUDENTS:

**Moshe Kornfeld** was awarded the Berman Foundation Dissertation fellowship in Support of Research in the Social Scientific Study of the Contemporary American Jewish Community to facilitate his continuing dissertation research.

**Sara Halpern** will intern at The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

**Nick and Sara Block welcomed** Avraham Aryeh Block into their family.

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Thurs., Nov. 10, & Fri., Nov. 11, 2011, 8:45am – 5:30pm  
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The symposium explores aspects of Jews’ political experience in Eastern Europe, the United States, Israel, and in the international arena. Among the topics to be analyzed are Zionism in Eastern Europe, Jewish radicalism, Arab-Jewish relations in Israel, the anomalies of Jewish voting in the United States, and Jews as actors in world politics.

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