Congratulations...

To **Dr. Lily Kahn** who has been appointed to a permanent Lectureship in the Department.

To **Prof. Sacha Stern** who has been awarded a British Academy Small Research Grant for the project entitled 'Jewish Calendar Controversies in the 10th -11th Centuries Near East: A Historical and Codicological Analysis'.

To **Prof. Mark Geller** who has been awarded a two-year Wellcome Trust Grant which will provide a Medical History and Humanities fellowship for **Dr. Ulrike Steinert** for her study entitled ‘Gynaecology in the Medical Texts of Ancient Mesopotamia from the 1st Millennium BC’.

To undergraduate **Joshua Mirwis** and his wife, Eli, on the birth of their daughter, Layla Amélie.

To undergraduate **Genc Sejko** on the birth of his baby girl.

To **Dr. Alinda Damsma** on the occasion of her forthcoming wedding to Dr. Nader Saffari (Reader in Ultrasonics, UCL Mechanical Engineering)

To the 2010/11 awardees of the Ian Karten Charitable Scholarship:

**Yonatan Birnbaum** (MA Language, Culture and History: Hebrew and Jewish Studies)
**Jan Henning** (MA Language, Culture and History: Holocaust Studies)
**Aneta Horniak** (MA Language, Culture and History: Hebrew and Jewish Studies)
**Ari Lamm** (MA Language, Culture and History: Hebrew and Jewish Studies)

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Edited by Rosa Speers Final Year Undergraduate
Readers’ responses to my call for help in the last issue of the Newsletter, where I invited suggestions on how to identify and measure the impact of departmental research on the “wellbeing of society”, have been most welcome but disappointingly few. Sheila Lassman – an MA alumna, prominent member of the Jewish Historical Society of England and long-standing President of its Essex branch – highlights our Continued Education provision, which enables interested members of the public, many of them Seniors (or, as she puts it, “over 45 – give or take a decade or three”) to attend “superb courses in the centre of London, and … have access to the Library”, which “improves their ‘quality of life’ and may even stave off the dreaded Alzheimer’s”, evidently having a beneficial impact not only on their cultural experience but also on their health! She goes on to say how much both she and her husband enjoy the courses they have been auditing in the Department, and concludes with the following: “I spent 3 years doing a degree at LSE. I never go back there now. I spent two years, part time, doing a Masters in the HJS dept. of UCL, and every time I go back, it feels like home”. Thank you, Sheila. This is just what we like to hear, although I am not sure that we would be allowed to refer to any of our teaching activities at UCL as evidence that our academic research is having any impact on or even reaching society at large. We would first have to demonstrate how our teaching arises directly from particular published pieces of research (our “outputs”, as they are now being called), and only then establish its impact, not – perversely – on our regular students, who are excluded from the official definition of “the public” or “society”, but rather on our much valued Continued Education constituency, which must, I suppose, be included in the definition. This type of evidence of research impact might, however, be considered too indirect, but if “evidence” and “research impact” are ever defined clearly, and if references to any teaching activity turn out to be admissible, then we shall certainly follow your advice, and incorporate our Continued Education in the “impact statement” that every academic department (or rather “unit of assessment” in Research Excellence Framework terms) is expected to submit to its panel of evaluators, which would include – so we are told – lay members of the public as representatives of our “user community”, or “beneficiaries”, who are deemed to be better qualified than our academic peers to assess the extent and judge quality of the our research impact.

Another response to my call for help came from Dr. Morris Greenberg, husband of our Syriac specialist, Dr. Gillian Greenberg, and a medic who has lived through any number of NHS reviews, reforms and reorganisations. His message begins with what can only be describe as a rant against the “management speak” of the “barbarians at the gate”, who are about to take charge of our universities as they have taken charge of our medical services. It goes on to disenchant us about the “sexiness of matters medical and scientific”, which – as I naively suggested in my earlier “impact” piece – are perceived by us in the Humanities as so much more capable of yielding tangible evidence of impact on the wellbeing of society. As Morris points out, this is no more than an illusion. “The therapeutic breakthroughs announced in the media, in press releases that promise a cure/prevention of cancer or dementia, may testify to PR expertise rather than rigorous science”, especially since “no scientist
is on oath when predicting … the clinical benefit … to be expected from a study”. Moreover, mo-
mentous scientific discoveries have often been purely inadvertent, devoid of impact until long after
they have been made. In other words, impact-oriented research, such as we are now being driven to
produce, is no more likely to yield any real impact than the research that aims at nothing other than
solving an intriguing but purely intellectual puzzle.

To those who responded to my plea – many thanks for your thoughts, whether they pointed at useful
directions or simply shared my indignation at our predicament. Once again, I urge all readers to send
me their views and suggestions.

Professor Ada Rapoport-Albert is Head of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies

BSGN-BB
Bildungs- und Sportgemeinschaft 'Nordau'
Bloomsbury Branch

Last July, the world celebrated the one hundred and sixty first anniversary of Max Nordau (1849-
1923), co-founder of the World Zionist Organization and the spiritus rector of muscular Judaism. In
reference to this contribution to Jewish culture, a small but dedicated group of enthusiasts has re-
cently founded the Bloomsbury Branch of the Bildungs- und Sportgemeinschaft 'Nordau'. The BB
focuses predominantly on racket sports. It entertains a highly competitive table tennis division, suc-
cessfully appropriating a ping pong table on the first floor of Foster Court, and a partially competitive
tennis division, practising in the early morning hours on Parliament Hill. Competitive or partially
competitive new members may apply in rooms FC 326 and 328. Usual ballot system for
membership applications.

Forget the Spin Club! Join the BSGN-BB!
Seeing with Two Pairs of Eyes
Experiences of a Jewish Anthropologist

Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz

I am currently in my second year of a part-time PhD, and have embarked on the investigative stage of my research. As I’m studying the religious lives of Orthodox Jewish women in contemporary London, I find myself in the curious position of being both an insider and an outsider. I am religiously observant (if pushed, I would define myself as ‘Modern Orthodox’) and have lived in Hendon for nearly ten years, but am now engaging with some aspects of the local Orthodox community that I’ve never explored before. The result is faintly schizophrenic, as I subdue instinctive reactions that stem from my own religious opinions in favour of taking a long, steady, and (I hope) objective look at practices that I didn’t even know about until very recently.

As part of my research plan, I’m looking at women’s ‘unofficial’ communal rituals and activities---such as brakhah (blessing) parties, women’s tefillah (prayer) groups, and tehillim (psalms) groups. I had never heard of bracha parties before (not surprisingly, as they only seem to have started in Hendon about four years ago), but they sounded fascinating, so when I found out that a bracha party is held every Rosh Chodesh (New Moon) at a local Sefardi synagogue, I seized the chance to go along and find out more.

I arrived shortly after the official starting time, and found a few women standing around, some laying tables in the L-shaped women’s section. It resembled Sefardi synagogues I’d seen in Israel: plastic flowers, florescent lights, an overblown gilt clock, a picture of the third Temple, and a notice with ‘Ribono shel olam [Master of the World], you have done so much for us this year …’. The tables that ran the length of the room were laid with cloths covered with clear plastic sheets, and bore paper plates, plastic shot glasses with grape juice, paper napkins, bowls of crisps, apples, pears, pineapples, carrots, crackers, plates of cake, jelly beans, and those horrid pink and yellow marshmallows one finds in Israel. An Israeli woman in a blonde wig seemed to be organizing---she pressed me into pouring grape juice and putting out forks. I got talking to a middle-aged woman, originally from Tunisia, who told me that usually it’s very crowded, with fifty women or so.

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Women drifted in slowly, talking to each other. Eventually someone said ‘We’re doing the bakashot [requests]’---I asked for an explanation and was shown pieces of paper headed ‘parnasah [livelihood]’, ‘refuah [healing]’, ‘zivug [finding a mate]’, on which people had written names of friends and acquaintances in Hebrew and English. I wrote ‘my’ names, and asked whether there was one for children---there wasn’t, so taking a slightly unanthropological active role, I wrote ‘yeladim [children]’ on another piece of paper and added the name of a friend who dearly wants a baby. Women lined up to write on the lists, which, I was told, are passed to the rabbi to be blessed.
Women began to sit down, others drifted in. I sat next to my new Tunisian friend, who confided that she ‘wasn’t religious’ but liked being around religious people, as it made her feel good. Later it transpired that she lives on her own and is lonely, and tries to have something to go to every evening. When it came to saying the brakhot [blessings], though, she knew them and seemed to be saying them with genuine devotion, so clearly this was more than a social occasion for her. Around us other women were chatting, more women were coming in and sitting down, and there was an air of mild hysteria among the organizer and her mates as they tried to get everyone seated and start things off. Some women were obviously religious, with sheitels or full head coverings, some had scarves thrown quickly over the head, some had no head covering though of an age to be married, and there were also some younger single girls—even one wearing trousers. By 9 o’clock there were about fifty women there.

We kicked off with the blessing over baked goods, mezonot (‘for parnasah [livelihood]’, the organizer told us). The first woman held up a biscuit and said the blessing and everyone responded ‘Amen’ loudly; then the next woman said the blessing, and the next, and so on. About half the women seemed to be Sefardi, judging from their Hebrew pronunciation, addition of the phrase barukh hu [Blessed be He] when responding to a blessing, and (later on) familiarity with the Sefardi version of the prayer Nishmat kol chai. The line of blessing women went down one side of the table and then up the other, then down and up the next table, then to the tables at the back (there were great cries of ‘Is there anyone else who hasn’t said the brakhah?’). Some women prefaced their recitation of the blessing by mentioning a name, or a list of names, of people whom they hoped to help by participating in the ritual.

A middle-aged rabbi with a long wispy grey beard and a black hat perched on his head in a very Ashkenazi manner (though he turned out to be Sefardi) appeared, gravitated to one of the green chairs and said the brakhah last, finishing off with a Hebrew prayer for parnasah which was loudly responded to with lots of Amens (a high proportion of the women seemed to know Hebrew; several were Israeli). The organizer announced that there would be a special phone link-up with the tomb of Benjamin (which is apparently near Kfar Saba in Israel) and handed out sheets of paper (in Hebrew and English) with a colour photograph of the tomb and a space for one’s name and any requests ‘to be raised to shamayim [heaven]’. The woman next to me filled out her Hebrew name carefully, wrote ‘adequate housing’ in the request space and then wondered aloud to me how to phrase a request for a new husband. I suggested she write ‘zivug’, which she did, followed by ‘to a good man’, rounding it off by a request for good health. At this point my inner conflict got the better of me—I tend to follow Maimonides’ rationalistic tradition (he would have hated the thought of praying at holy tombs), and couldn’t bring myself to fill out any requests. Feeling a little guilty, I rolled up my piece of paper and sneaked it into my pocket.

Six women went up to stand behind the table with the bowls of dough—this point I realized that they were going to take challah. The rabbi said a few preliminary words about the importance of the mitzvah [commandment] as one of the three women’s mitzvot, and asked any married women to cover their hair while saying the blessing (there was some hasty scarf-borrowing by one woman). The women held sheets with the blessing and another prayer, introduced by the Yehi ratson (‘May it be Thy will’) formula, though only one of them actually read the latter, which sounded very like the traditional east European khateneh (Yiddish supplication) that links the woman’s activity in making challah to the high priest’s service in the Temple. Encouraged by the rabbi (there was a certain amount of confusion and rival advice), each woman recited the blessing, held a piece of dough aloft, and declared ‘harei zot chalah [behold, this is the challah portion]’.
before wrapping it in tin foil. Some read out a list of names of people in whose merit they were performing this commandment. I wondered whether we were all going to do this in batches of six, but no more women went up. Later on I discovered that this is a voluntary ‘extra’.

The rabbi explained that taking challah parallels God’s creation of the world, and talked of sanctifying a small part of things first in order to sanctify and bring blessing on the whole. He seemed kind, and not at all patronizing; I got the impression that he was simplifying ideas and using the opportunity to preach on good behaviour, but that he regarded this as a valid and worthwhile religious occasion. His presence seemed to add authority, validation, and gravitas to the occasion for the women, who occasionally appealed to him for explanation or instruction.

Next we drank grape juice (‘for zivug’) – in the middle of the round of blessings a second rabbi entered and the organizer announced, ‘Ladies, we have a guest, Rabbi X’. Everyone stood up as he made deprecating motions with his hands and squeezed his way past the women. He was young, with a wispy black beard, and several people congratulated him – apparently he had just had a daughter. He sat in the other armchair; both rabbis combed their beards from time to time in an absent-minded way. Once again, the first rabbi wrapped up the round of blessings with a Hebrew prayer relating to zivug, punctuated with loud and enthusiastic Amens, and there were cries of hashanah! [this year!] directed at singles, with good-natured laughter.

Throughout the whole evening the women chatted, moved around, texted, or answered mobile phones with no embarrassment, and the organizer often had to shout ‘Ladies, please, we want to hear the brakhot!’. The women’s attention seemed easily distracted and there was a certain amount of giggling among the young and protracted conversations among the older.

Between rounds of blessings, one or the other of the rabbis stood up and gave short talks, on moral themes, often linked to the week’s Torah portion. Subjects covered included ‘leadership’, in the context of a comparison of Noah and Abraham, and the need for divine mercy.

As the guest rabbi was nearing his peroration there was a sudden commotion around the organizer—the call from the tomb of Benjamin was about to come through. The rabbi was not best pleased, but I got the impression that he knew he was outranked by the holy tomb and its attendant holy rabbis, and he stood there patiently, looking a bit sad. After some fluster it was established that the call to the tomb would be made in another five minutes, and the rabbi picked up where he had stopped, a bit deflated, and went on to talk about the three floors in Noah’s ark; the top one is the spiritual nature of man, the middle – his physical nature, and the lowest one the ‘trash’ that needs to be acknowledged and removed. The women applauded, shouting ‘Amen’ as he finished with the traditional prayer for the rebuilding of the Temple.

The guest rabbi was thanked and left, and the first, apparently local, rabbi thanked all those who had helped organize the event, and informed us that a regular attendee was currently in Israel and had prayed for us all at the tomb of Shimon Hatsadik today. I quelled my Maimonidean objections with a bad conscience.

At this point the call from the tomb of Benjamin came through and the phone was hastily handed to the rabbi, who told the (unidentified) rabbis (?) at the other end that we were asking for brakhot [blessings], that there were a lot of women here who had requests for yeshuah [salvation], parnasah
etc., and asked for a blessing. After a little confusion, the rabbi held the phone up, with a beaming smile, and a stream of rapid-fire and totally unintelligible (at least from where I was sitting) Hebrew came crackling out. Presumably someone could understand as there were occasional ‘Amens’ from women nearer the rabbi. Eventually the blessing stopped and the rabbi thanked the person on the other end and added his own blessings, and the call was over. He told us that Benjamin had died on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan (the date of this brakha party), and that it was a very important and holy night at the kever [tomb]; he was immediately corrected by a large woman in a blonde sheitel, who pointed out that Benjamin was born and his mother Rachel died on this date. Luckily the rabbi took this in good part.

We did the next round of blessings (bore peri ha’etz, over fruit, ‘for children’), followed by another talk from the rabbi, interrupted by the appearance of an older woman who went up and spoke to him. After listening to her for a moment, he announced that she needed help---she herself was ill and had an autistic son, plus various other problems. The woman started to make the rounds of the tables with a plastic cup, and women responded with amazing generosity, stuffing so many £20 notes and pound coins in the cup that she had to get a new one.

There were two more rounds of blessings (bore peri ha’adamah, over vegetables, ‘for healing’; and shehakol, over ‘miscellaneous’ foods---in this case, sweets, ‘for anything that you wish to ask for’), in the course of which the rabbi left to deliver a shiur [lesson] elsewhere, and then we wrapped the evening up by reciting Nishmat kol chai, a prayer that forms part of the sabbath morning service. At the time I had no idea why this was being said, but I’ve since found out that it is credited with great powers to bring blessing, so I presume this is why it was chosen. One girl read it out, and I got the impression that most women were not familiar with it (they may well turn up at synagogue after it is said, as it is recited well before the Torah reading). The organizer told us that if we made a donation for the purchase of a Torah scroll at the tomb of Benjamin we would definitely receive a very strong blessing for all sorts of good things for the coming year, but I couldn’t see that anyone responded to this. The moment she had finished all the women rushed out of the building, leaving me a little surprised---I had expected some sort of formal end to the evening.

I made my way home rather thoughtfully---it had been a wonderful evening from the research and anthropological ‘outsider’ point of view, but left me feeling a bit uneasy in my role as ‘insider’. While I could not doubt the sincerity and enthusiasm of the women, I felt disturbed by the transformation of blessings over food---required by Jewish law as an act of acknowledgement of the source of all in God---into a quasi-magical means of obtaining divine blessings and cures. It seemed almost mechanical, a sort of ‘short cut’ somewhat reminiscent of all those moisturizers and cosmetics that promise perfect skin and the eradication of wrinkles. Clearly I am going to end up with more questions than I started with ….
During the autumn of 2010 I took a 4-month 'career break', which I spent visiting Jewish communities and libraries in South Africa and California with my family. It was fascinating to experience these two very different communities, and to compare them with the UK.

Our first stop was Cape Town, where we stayed with a friend who is one of three Reform rabbis in the city. Despite emigration in recent years, there are still some 75,000 Jews in South Africa. As in the UK, the majority belong to Orthodox synagogues, and in South Africa the Reform are a somewhat beleaguered minority. There is one Reform community in Cape Town – the Cape Town Progressive Jewish Congregation (Temple Israel) – made up of three synagogues in different areas of the city. The three rabbis work with all three synagogues, though each has his 'home' community. We celebrated the High Holydays, Sukkot, Simchat Torah and several Shabbatot in the community, attending services and events at all three synagogues. Each has a very different character: one is 'classical Reform' (roughly equivalent to British Liberal), with an organ, choir and formal style of service, the second is rather more traditional and closer to British Reform, while the third and newest community is more informal and lively, with a musical tradition influenced by members from the 'Cape coloured' community.

South Africa has a strong system of Jewish day schools and the majority of parents send their children to Jewish schools. My children spent a day at a Chabad Montessori school, where they study not only Hebrew but also Xhosa. We also went to the South African Jewish Museum, which was opened by Nelson Mandela in 2000. It includes South African's oldest synagogue, built in 1863, and exhibits about the history of the Jews in South Africa and their origins in Eastern Europe (my children particularly enjoyed the re-creation of a shtetl), and about Jews and Apartheid. There was also a temporary exhibition about the involvement of Jews in rugby in this sport-obsessed country.
On the professional front, I spent time at the Jewish Studies Library at the University of Cape Town. This shares a building with the Centre for Jewish Studies and Research, a Bet Midrash, and a kosher canteen. There is no longer a Hebrew and Jewish Studies Department at UCT, but the library supports relevant courses in other departments. While I was there the library was unusually busy, as students in the History department had an assignment on the Holocaust and many had left it to the last minute (students being the same the world over!) I was also shown some of the extensive archival material in the university's Special Collections. Afterwards I enjoyed wandering around soaking up the vibrant multicultural atmosphere of this beautiful campus on the slopes of the Devil's Peak mountain.

One question I have frequently been asked is 'did you feel safe?', as South Africa has a bad reputation for crime. Perhaps I was just lucky, but I did not witness or suffer any criminal behaviour, although I did hear of the murder of one member of the congregation a few years ago. Of course we took sensible precautions, just as you would in any big city. Wendy Kahn, director of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies claimed just before the World Cup (which finished not long before our visit) that 'Anti-Semitism in South Africa is probably one of the lowest in the world. Crime is a problem in certain pockets of the cities, but there are many initiatives to address it. With the eyes of the world on the country, the authorities have gone to great pains to reduce crime in the country.' I found both the Jewish and wider communities to be extremely warm and friendly and came away with very positive impressions of this beautiful country.

After a few days back in freezing England we went on to California, where we stayed in the city of Santa Clara at the heart of Silicon Valley. The Jewish community here could not be more different from either the UK or South Africa. There are over a million Jews in California, forming 3% of the population. The community is very diverse, with a plethora of different congregations, the majority of which are non-Orthodox and much more self-confident that the non-Orthodox movements in the UK or South Africa. We visited Reform, Conservative, blended Reform-Conservative, Renewal and independent congregations, of varying sizes, all with very different styles of service. I was particularly impressed by their musical creativity. Most employ a cantor or cantorial soloist and many use one or more musical instruments. One of the most memorable services was 'visual tefillah' at Peninsula Temple Beth El, where the words of the prayers, with accompanying illustrations, were projected onto screens on either side of the bimah, and the music was provided by the talented Elana Jagoda and the Hallelu Band, with piano, percussion, guitar, violin and cello.

We spent Chanukah in California, which provided an example of the prominence of the Jewish community in America. The run up to Christmas was as all-pervasive as it is here, but the standard greeting is 'happy holidays' and Chanukah celebrations were very much in evidence. Even small shops were selling chanukiot, candles and other merchandise; a daytime TV show had a chanukiah (with the correct number of candles) as well as a Christmas tree in the studio; candle-lighting ceremonies took place at a local shopping centre, and the Jelly Belly factory in Fairfield (all of whose products are kosher) had a Chanukah display, complete with Mr Jelly Belly dressed as Judah Maccabee!
My children again visited a Jewish school, this time an elementary and middle school affiliated with the Conservative movement. All faith schools in the USA have to be private because of the separation of church and state, and people were astonished (and envious!) to hear that my children attend a Jewish state school in the UK. The school had wonderful facilities and we were particularly impressed with the standard of Hebrew. It shares a site with the Jewish Community Center. The JCC is an American Jewish phenomenon which is about to be copied in London. They offer social and educational facilities for people across the Jewish community and beyond. The one in Los Gatos has a swimming pool, gym, cafe, pre-school, adult education courses and mikveh (which is open to women and men for any kind of 'life transition' as well as regular monthly use).

I visited a number of libraries in California. These included Stanford University's Green Library, where I was shown some items from the The Elia- asaf Robinson Tel Aviv Collection, which comprises printed works and archival material about the early history of Tel Aviv (much of which is now available in digital form at http://lib.stanford.edu/telaviv); Berkeley, where I was interested to hear about the workings of the University of California and how it compares with the University of London; the impressive library of Congregation Beth Am, a large Reform syna- gogue in Los Altos; and the Jewish Community Library in San Francisco, which serves both the adjacent secondary school and the general public.

My travels were a wonderful opportunity to see some very different Jewish and academic environments and to learn from them – as well as to spend time with my family. Moreover, the experiences abroad have given me new perspectives and insight into our own H&JS department and library services, as well as the UK Jewish community.

Vanessa Freedman Hebrew and Jewish Studies Librarian
THE ADATH YISRAEL CEMETERY IN WEISSENSEE, BERLIN

Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg

Just before Tisha B'Av the family went to visit the ancestors in Berlin. Their graves lie in the cemetery of the Adath Yisrael (there they spell it Adass Jisroel) in the Weisssensee suburb of East Berlin. It is a small cemetery and separated from the large Weisssensee one, that was used by the whole community for a hundred years before WW2. The orthodox Adath insisted on having their own plot, away from that used by the Reform community, and great-grandfather Gustav Hirsch bought the land for them in 1870.

He and Samson Rosenberg were among the founders of the Adath Yisrael Kehilla (Congregation) in Berlin and had invited Azriel Hildesheimer to be their first Rabbi. Hildesheimer was Rabbi in Eisenstadt, in Hungary, but his advanced ideas did not suit the traditional Hungarians. So he was happy to move to Berlin in 1869 and by 1873 Rabbi Hildesheimer (who has a road named after him in the German Colony of Jerusalem) had founded the famous Berliner Rabbiner Seminar in the Gipsstrasse. It was partly set up as an antidote to the Reform's Institute of Scientific Judaism founded by Leopold Zunz, whose premises were around the corner. Hildesheimer was out to protect traditional Judaism from the Reform, but he was no diehard fundamentalist, he saw the need to apply the modern ideas that he had learnt in the Hebrew school of Hamburg and the University of Halle.

His was the first orthodox seminary to teach secular subjects together with the traditional Halakhic-Talmudic learning, and it went on to train many of the most famous modern orthodox Rabbis of the twentieth century in England and France. One of its graduates, Rabbi Dr. Eli Munk, founder of the Golders Green Beth Hamedrash, had completed his doctorate on the subject of William Wordsworth. Not the normal dissertation for an orthodox Rabbi, but it certainly helped him when he received the call to come to London in 1934.

In spite of the growth of the Reform in Germany, the Adath flourished in East Berlin, the old part of the city, which was then the centre of the Jewish population. A Jewish school was established, an old-age home and a hospital and, along with the growth of the living, the cemetery also filled up. All this came to an end towards 1938, when German Jewry saw the shape of things to come, many left in time and the community fell into severe decline. By 1942 nearly all the remaining Jews had been deported, after being concentrated in the old-age home in the Grosse Hamburger Strasse.

The Adath cemetery was still used for a few individual graves but soon fell into disrepair. I rediscovered it in 1956 when I crossed into East Berlin in British Army uniform and found the place deserted, badly overgrown but not destroyed. With some excitement I cleared the undergrowth from family graves and others, and then determined to find an authority that might be held responsible for its upkeep.
And there was one. The Adath Yisrael had regrouped in their original premises in the Artillerie Strasse, now renamed Tucholsky Strasse, after a prominent Jewish Communist writer. The Kehilla had little funds, having been cut off from the main Jewish community in West Berlin by the division of the city, between the Russian Communists in the East and the three Allied Powers in the West. The Jews of Berlin, such as they were, nearly all lived on the West side, and any newcomers had drifted there. In Germany, the religious communities were funded through the State, and the East Germans were not rushing to support this small Jewish Kehilla in the East.

Our family arranged to send the Kehilla an annual sum to have the graves cleaned and reinstated but suddenly in 1980 the regular requests for money stopped. Only during a later visit did we find out why.

The East German government had declared the Adath Weissensee cemetery to be defunct, which actually it was, as all funeral activity was now taking place in West Berlin. The East had decided to acquire it unilaterally, by compulsory purchase, for the STASI, the East German police, who wanted to build a regional office in the area, as well as to lay out a football ground for their men.

The Adath did not even know of this until 1984, when the STASI builders started to break ground for the new building. Immediately emergency measures were taken, important Rabbis in Europe and Israel were contacted and it was pointed out that the cemetery was not completely unused. It had been utilised after 1940 to bury some Berlin Jews who had committed suicide before their Nazi arrest, and also to inter some bodies that had, by miracle, been returned to their families from the camps. This enabled the Community, and the Rabbis, to claim that the cemetery was not totally inactive and that any building work would be a desecration of the recent burials, as well as the ancient ones. Luckily the STASI authorities took note and the work was stopped.

But the East Germans did not give up. Now that it was established that the Adath Kehilla were the guardians of the site, negotiations for parts of the area recommenced. They dragged on and fortunately were not completed by 1989, when the Government collapsed and when, at the end of that year, the Wall came down.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall was an earth-shattering event felt all around the world, a powerful symbol of the fall of the Communist system, and in Berlin, one small side-effect was that the Weissensee cemetery of the Adath Yisrael Kehilla was saved.

Now safely back in its hands, the Adath Community went about restoring the graves. Being still short of funds it managed to use voluntary non-Jewish student labour for the task, which took several years. The perimeter wall was rebuilt, the Ohel (chapel) restored and all the matzevot (headstones) re-erected. That of Rabbi Azriel Hildesheimer, in the original grey basalt marble, even had its incised Hebrew inscription regilded.
It is usual for an orthodox Jewish cemetery to have no trees, so that Cohanim (priests) can walk around it without being under the same canopy as a grave. Luckily this has not been enforced here, and the cemetery is wonderfully wooded, giving it an unusually restful and romantic atmosphere. For the family it was a beautiful experience to see the ancestral graves fully restored and their remains lying in their last resting place in such a beautiful setting saved, first from the Nazis, and then from the STASI.

Stephen Gabriel Rosenberg is Senior Fellow of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem.

No Simple Stories Indeed

François Guesnet

In cooperation with the Lithuanian Institute of History (LIH) in Vilnius, the Institute of Jewish Studies held a two day international workshop on Jewish-Lithuanian relations (February 6-7, 2011). The convenors, Darius Staliunas from the LIH and myself, have collaborated on a number of occasions, including the joint editing of one of the 2009 issues of *East European Jewish Affairs*, devoted to Modern Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe. This workshop was a sequel to an earlier workshop, organized in the fall of 2009, as a collaboration between UCL and the LIH, devoted to the heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.
In three panels, leading experts discussed the history of Jewish-Lithuanian relations in the 19th century, in the early 20th century, and during World War Two.

Two papers focused on the history of anti-Jewish violence in Tsarist Russia (Heinz Dietrich Löwe, University of Heidelberg) and on attempts to theoretically grasp this violence (Werner Bergmann, Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Technical University Berlin). After a broad introduction on the social and legal status of the Jews in the Tsarist Empire in the late 19th century, presented by Professor Löwe, Klaus Richter (a PhD student at the Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Technical University Berlin) discussed the emergence of cooperatives in ethnically Lithuanian territories during the last decade of the 19th century. These institutions were founded with the explicit objective of establishing an alternative to Jewish commercial activities, an objective which echoed similar developments taking place in the Polish lands some years earlier. Richter’s study shows the late development of the Lithuanian national movement, the way the so-called Jewish question featured in the imagery of this movement, and the futility of attempts to establish alternative economic structures in Lithuania, where the cooperative movement soon failed.

Darius Staliunas (LIH) discussed the comparatively small degree of anti-Jewish violence during the revolutionary upheaval of 1904/05. This is a period when a massive wave of pogroms swept through much of the Tsarist Empire, and among the regions with a sizeable Jewish population in the Empire, Lithuanian territories were among the least touched by pogroms. According to Staliunas’ understanding, this had a lot to do with the relative stability of economic and social relations in the region - everybody was poor in this economic periphery of the Empire. Thus the perceived shift in economic relations between neighbouring communities, which is thought to be a major factor in triggering inter-ethnic violence, did not occur. This dynamic was later discussed in detail by Werner Bergmann.

Motti Zalkin (Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva) offered some fascinating insights into the attempts of predominantly Zionist cultural agents to bring some of the most popular Lithuanian traditions, such as songs or legends, to the knowledge of the Jewish community, whether by publishing Hebrew and Yiddish translations of these traditions in the press, or by their integration in Jewish School textbooks. Zalkin documented his findings with a fascinating slide show of these materials, stemming from the interwar period. Already during World War One, Lithuanian and Jewish political leaders had arrived at some far reaching agreements about possible post-war arrangements. The active integration of Lithuanian literary and folk traditions into Jewish educational curricula was intended to contribute to mutual understanding in a shared nation state. The remarkable achievement of including Jewish national minority rights in the post-war Lithuanian constitution echoed these attempts to establish a common ground.

Antony Polonsky (Brandeis University) compared the Lithuanian development to the much less successful attempts of Polish Jews to achieve a constitutionally recognized status as a national autonomous minority. Sarunas Liekis (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas) gave an account of the implementation as well as the dismantlement of Jewish autonomy after the coup d'état of 1926. He argued that the vast scope of national autonomy aroused opposition within the Jewish community, especially by those who feared state and secular interference with religion and education.

Vladas Sirutavicius’ (LIH) discussed the increasingly authoritarian character of Lithuanian government and administration, and the close relationship between state institutions and the antisemitic far right in the late 1920s and 1930s. These formations echoed earlier developments in Europe, especially the successes of the Italian fascist movement.
The intensification of antisemitic attitudes in the Lithuanian far right as a result of the Hitler-Stalin pact, and the subsequent occupation and annexation of Lithuania to the Soviet Union, was discussed by Joachim Tauber (Institut für Geschichte und Kultur der Deutschen in Nordosteuropa, University of Hamburg). He convincingly argued that the Soviet occupation lead to a political and ideological rapprochement of the exiled Lithuanian far right with Nazi Germany. This is a period of intensified anti-Jewish incitement from the Lithuanian extreme right, and collaboration with Nazi agencies in anticipation of a German invasion.

The German attack on the Soviet Union in July 1941 opened a new chapter in the darkest years in European history. Tomasz Szarota, in his study 'On the threshold of annihilation' (U progu zaglady), defined the events in Lithuania in the summer of 1941, including the massacres of thousands of Lithuanian Jews committed by their Lithuanian neighbours even before the entry of the Wehrmacht, as a decisive stepping stone in the so-called final solution. At the end of autumn of 1941, nearly 180,000 Jews had perished, whether in Ponary near Vilnius, in Kuziai Forest near Shavli, or in the Ninth Fort near Kovno.

Christoph Dieckmann (Keele University), in his account of Lithuanian involvement in the Holocaust, came to the conclusion that "Lithuanians had a choice" - that is to say, not to participate in the mass killings, and illustrated this with the very significant degree to which the German occupation could rely and in fact did rely on local, Lithuanian support. At the end of the German occupation in 1944, nine out of ten Lithuanian Jews had been killed, and continued to be killed by Lithuanian partisans fighting the return of Soviet rule. In his discussion of how the Lithuanian population perceived the horrors of the Holocaust, Saulius Suziedelis (Professor Emeritus of History, Millersville University of Pennsylvania) insisted on the need for intense reflection of this involvement, and stated significant shortcomings in the Lithuanian public debate of these issues and the insufficient way these years are reflected in Lithuanian collective memory and historical museums in Lithuania today.

The workshop was attended by over two hundred people - not least due to the criticism voiced ahead of the event on the internet and in the press of the fact that the Institute of Jewish Studies had invited the cultural department of the Lithuanian Embassy to collaborate on the event. What is standard practice on such occasions seemed to the critics unacceptable in the case of the Lithuanian government, which they hold responsible not only for abusing the memory of the Holocaust by equating it with Lithuanian sufferings under Soviet occupation, but also as intent on oppressing the present day Jewish community in Lithuania.

This point of view is not shared by the convenors of the workshop, by the Institute of Jewish Studies, or by members of the Lithuanian Jewish community, at least not according to an article published in the Economist (print edition of 10 February 2011).

Finally, the broader context of these issues was further elaborated by Timothy Snyder, professor of history at Yale University, who, passing through London on February 11, gave a summary of his most recent book Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin, London 2010, to an audience of c. 150 people at UCL. The event, organized in cooperation with the LSE, reflected on the interdependence (not identity) of totalitarian Soviet and Nazi rule in Eastern Europe, and the immensity of both their respective crimes. The lively response to these successful events suggests that this should continue.

François Guesnet is the Corob Lecturer in Modern Jewish History at UCL.
A major part of the experience of students, obviously, is sitting through lessons and lectures. The amount of discussion, and other forms of presentations, varies considerably. So why should students think about attending even more lectures?

We have, as a component of, and complement to the Department of Hebrew & Jewish Studies, the Institute of Jewish Studies (IJS). Probably most of you reading this newsletter have been to one, or a few, or many IJS events. Generally speaking, however, students, and undergraduates in particular, are in the decided minority.

This is an appeal to try it. Go to a lecture or two. At least two. Make a point of attending something roughly within your main area of interest, and also try something totally distinct. What's the worse that can happen?

To be honest, there are quite a few events, mainly in the form of lectures, on Jewish Studies subjects throughout London on almost any given day. So why the IJS?

We have a tremendous range of subjects on offer, from a number of different academic perspectives. OK, there's a catch. We never have anything primarily for the sake of entertainment, politics, money-making, promotion of a particular variety of Judaism, or any of the many reasons why others hold lectures. We are here to give academics and academic research in Jewish Studies a forum. Period. There is another reason, however, why we are and remain quite special. We are always free and open to the general public.

I have heard the argument that by charging for events people 'value' the experience more than they might if was at no cost. Perhaps I'm missing something, but I believe that our events are well appreciated even though we don't charge.

In my opinion, if we simply take this recent spring term as an example, we have (or else will be presenting) a programme which is unmatched--anywhere. Yes, we even compare favorably to the most illustrious Jewish Studies units in the United States in this regard. On 12th January, we heard from Robert Ericksen of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma Washington. Those who follow the historiography of the Holocaust know that Pacific Lutheran was long the home of Christopher Browning, arguably the greatest of the current generation of Holocaust scholars. The book about which he spoke, which will appear in the next year with Cambridge University Press, deals with the complicity of churches and universities in anti-Jewish persecution. The next lecture was by Paul Knepper, sociologist from Sheffield University, who spoke about 'Perceptions of "Jewish Criminality" and the Emergence of Crime as an International Issue, 1881-1939.' A number of people commented afterwards that they had never heard anything like it. And our crowd gets around! "Talmudic Passages and Sorcery" was the subject of a deeply learned talk by Shamma Friedman of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (24 January).
We also regularly host superb colleagues from Israel. We were treated to fascinating presentations by Avraham Gross, of Ben Gurion University, on responses to the massacres that accompanied the Crusade of 1096. Dvora Bregman, also of Ben Gurion, enlightened us with something akin to a detective story about an Italian-Jewish manuscript of the 15th century. Extending even further back, Yoram Cohen of Tel Aviv University dealt with the Late Bronze Age in unraveling the connections between politics, diplomacy, the exchange of gifts, and marriages, delivered as the Raymond Westbrook Memorial Lecture. Tuesday, 1 March, Judith Schlanger of Paris will expertly guide us through notable Hebrew documents from medieval England. The next week, Tuesday 8 March, Eva-Maria Ziege, currently resident at the Centre for Jewish/Christian Relations in Cambridge, addresses the issue of "The Frankfurt School and Antisemitism."

These were the 'regular scheduled' IJS events. We also have a tendency to improvise. We had at least three such events this term: an exciting conference (6-7 February) organized by Dr Francois Guesnet on the Holocaust in Lithuania, which included Professor Antony Polonsky (Brandeis University) among the presenters. We also heard Tim Synder, of Yale, talk about his book Blood Lands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin, which has kicked up quite a storm. That lecture, co-sponsored by the LSE, drew a hall of hundreds in the UCL Union. As a final event, Monday 21 March, we'll have Professor Steven Aschheim of the Hebrew University speaking about "The Entangled Web of Orientalism and European Jewry."

Call me jaded, but along with having the chance to occasionally hear my fabulous colleagues, it doesn't get any better than this.

And before each lecture we usually have a modest reception with wine and snacks. Milton Friedman, who was wrong about so many things, famously said that 'there's no such thing as a free lunch.' On some level, of course, somebody is paying something. But from the perspective of you, the prospective audience of these events, this is indeed a moveable feast. I encourage you to partake as often as you can.

Michael Berkowitz is the Professor of Modern Jewish History at UCL
Summer Conference
June 2011
Monday 20th (evening),
Tuesday 21st and Wednesday 22nd (all day)

The Jews of Morocco

Jews have lived in Morocco for nearly two thousand years, in desert
and mountain regions, in the imperial cities of central Morocco and
in towns along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, with Berber
and with Arab neighbours. This conference is a rare opportunity to
find out more about the rich and varied culture of Moroccan Jews
and their history.

PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:
Joseph CHETRIT (University of Haifa), Emily GOTTREICH (UC Berkeley), Paul FENTON
(Sorbonne), Henry GREEN (University of Miami), Oren KOSANSKY (Lewis and Clarke College,
Portland, Oregon), Michael LASKIER (Bar-Ilan University), Jessica MARGLIN (Princeton
University), Hilary POMEROY (University College London), Moises ORFALI (Bar-Ilan
University), Vanessa PALOMA (Casablanca), Norman STILLMAN (University of Oklahoma),
Susana WEICH-SHAHAK (Hebrew University of Jerusalem),

Venue:
University College London, Gower Street W.C.1.

PROGRAMME DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED

E-mail: ijs@ucl.ac.uk (preferred contact)
The Main Library's Arnold Mishcon reading room, where the Jewish Studies collections are located, was refurbished in the summer of 2010. As well as redecorating, this involved installing new furniture, with each reader place now equipped with a power point for laptops. The librarian's office was also relocated to the other end of the reading room, which created space for more reader places and also means that I can now have meetings and telephone conversations without disturbing readers. A few minor details still need to be sorted out, but I hope that the reading room now offers an environment more conducive to study.

At the suggestion of the Departmental Library Committee I now have 'office hours' between 1 and 2 pm on Thursdays. This does not mean that this is the only time I am available, just that readers will always be able to find me in my office at this time (unless I am on leave).

UCL Special Collections is moving home. The lease on its present facility at 140 Hampstead Road ends in Summer 2011. UCL has therefore entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with The National Archives at Kew, whereby UCL's collections of rare books, manuscripts and archives will be stored in The National Archives (see www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), and made available to UCL users in a dedicated reading room for 2 years from September 2011. Ultimately, the plan is to bring Special Collections back to UCL to a refurbished facility in central London. To allow for the move of the facilities and collections, the Hampstead Road reading room will be closed from 28th March 2011 and there will be no access to the collections until the facility at the National Archives opens in September. The Enquiry Service will continue to operate throughout. For further information see www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/special-coll.
Apart from the fact that my UCL partner-in-crime, I mean my job-share colleague (and friend), Lia Kahn-Zajtmann, is Belgian, one of my favourite overseas destinations is Belgium and has been for many years! Please don’t stop reading… The number of people who fail to understand why I enjoy visiting Belgium (and more specifically Brussels) is quite incredible. Apart from the great food, friendly people, and good shopping, the country has much to offer the one-time (or, in my case, frequent) visitor. This article is not, however, a travel guide, although if anyone is interested, do email me at emma.harris@ucl.ac.uk. What I hope is that this brief snippet of Jewish Belgium will show that there is more to this country than just chocolate, beer and mussels (not that I have ever tried the latter, although I hear that they are really good)!

The Jewish Museum of Belgium (www.jewishmuseum.be) is located on the rue des Minimes, which runs parallel to the rue de la Régence and is west of the Grand Sablon. On the rue de la Régence, you will see the “stately Romanesque” Great Synagogue, which was designed by the Christian architect, Désiré DeKeyser. Completed in 1878, the façade features a three-storied gabled midsection flanked by four-storey towers. The rue de la Régence is a major thoroughfare, and whilst there are incredible-looking buildings, the synagogue certainly stands out. The Grand Sablon is a beautiful area. At the weekend, it hosts an antique market (in front of the church, which gives the area its name), where collectors and tourists wander round, viewing all sorts of antiques and collectables. In recent years, I have seen several pieces of Judaica; on one occasion, I remember seeing three or four yads (pointers used in synagogue to read from the Scroll of the Law). It always makes me wonder about their history. To whom did they belong? Did the owners perish in the Holocaust? Had there been no-one to save these precious items? Why doesn’t the Jewish community (or even the Jewish Museum) buy them and keep them safe? Many questions arise each time I see them and yet no answers are available.

Anyway, back to the museum. The Jewish Museum houses temporary and permanent exhibitions in a nineteenth century residence, providing visitors with an insight into traditional Jewish home life. Objects on display include a number of pieces made in Belgium. Interestingly, this museum does not address the fate of Belgium’s Jewish population during World War II.

The National Monument to the Jewish Martyrs of Belgium (see pictures below) is located in Anderlecht (a residential district of Brussels), on the corner of rue Emilie Carpentier and rue Goujond.
The monument depicts a menorah made of chains and a wall bearing the names of 23,838 Belgian Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. The gardens surrounding the monument include a flowerbed in the shape of a Star of David. This memorial was host to a ceremony back in April 2009, where Belgian organisations paid homage to thousands of Jews who had been deported during World War II.

Take a stroll down the broad Avenue Louise (Brussels), licking the steam off the windows of the expensive, smart boutiques! Continue walking until you arrive at number 453, where an uninteresting-looking apartment building hides a dark past. During World War II, this building was converted into the headquarters of the Gestapo. Locals could do nothing about this facility that included a detention centre, but one Belgian changed that. This was Baron Jean-Michel de Selys Longchamp, who fled Belgium following the arrival of German troops in 1940. In England, he joined the Belgian air force squadron which was attached to the Royal Air Force. Following a successful mission in north Belgium, he defied the RAF authorities and turned towards Brussels. He set off his guns at the Gestapo headquarters, destroying great lumps of the façade. For his subordination and bravery, de Selys Longchamp was demoted and, respectively, awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Take a few moments to stand quietly at the commemorative plaque (below), which is just a short distance from the Central Station in Brussels. At the inauguration of this plaque in 2007, it was stressed that it paid homage to those who came to the rescue of the persecuted Jews during the Nazi occupation. The plaque quotes from the Babylonian Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 37a), ‘Whoever saves a life it is considered as if he saved an entire world’. It is something for us all to take a moment to contemplate.
Outside of Brussels, in the city of Mechelen, there is the Museum of Deportation and Resistance (www.cicb.be). The museum is housed in the building which, in 1942, became the SS-Sammellager Mecheln (SS-Collection Camp Mechelen). Between 1942 and 1944, almost 25,000 Jews were transported from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The story of the 20th Train is portrayed in Marion Schreiber’s moving work, *The Twentieth Train: The True Story of The Ambush of The Death Train To Auschwitz*. The museum covers this dark period in history, and allows visitors the chance to remember those who perished. There are very poignant parts of this museum; videos show distressing stories; walls are covered with pictures of children who were not given the chance to reach adulthood.

My interest in the country has also spread to my research in Jewish education - specifically the Jewish schools established in the mid to late nineteenth century in Brussels. During my doctoral research, I was drawn into the world of the *Jewish Chronicle* and more specifically to the advertisements detailing available educational facilities. As private establishments in London and elsewhere became a regular feature on these pages, so too did similar institutions in Brussels. I am trying to locate archival material that may assist in my research, and would be interested to hear from anyone who has information on Anglo-Jewish children who attended these schools in Brussels between 1855 and 1900. Do you have any details on the school attended? Is anyone related to or has any data on Lewis Jackson (Brussels Jewish Academy), Professor L. Kahn (Jewish Commercial Institution), Madame Godchaux (Jewish Boarding School for Young Ladies) or Bernhard Barczinsky, to name but a few. Please email me at emma.harris@ucl.ac.uk.

*Emma Harris*
*HJS Alumna: BA 1997, MA 1998, PhD 2007*

It would be great to hear from my undergraduate cohort 1993-1997. Do get in touch at emma.harris@ucl.ac.uk.
The Grammar of the Early Modern Hasidic Hebrew Tale

Lily Kahn

In October 2010 I began a three-year British Academy-funded postdoctoral research project on the grammar of the Hasidic Hebrew tales produced in Eastern Europe between 1864 and 1914. I was delighted to start this project because I have been interested in early modern Hasidic Hebrew for several years and, after doing a pilot study on the grammar of early Hasidic Hebrew texts, was excited at the prospect of conducting a more in-depth investigation of this fascinating form of Hebrew.

The language used in Hasidic tales is noteworthy because it is one of the only sources of traditional, rabbinic-based, narrative Hebrew from early modern Eastern Europe, in contrast to the ideologically non-traditional and consciously biblicizing narrative prose of the contemporaneous Maskilim (adherents of the Jewish Enlightenment). The bulk of this Hasidic literature most likely derives from tales transmitted orally in Yiddish, and the authors of the written versions were native Yiddish speakers as well. The first two published collections of Hasidic Hebrew tales were Shivhe haBesht (In Praise of the Ba’al Shem Tov), an anthology of legends relating to the founder of Hasidism and his circle of associates first published at the end of 1814, and Sippure ma’asiyot (The Tales of Nahman of Braslav), a compilation of thirteen allegorical tales published in 1815. These two collections served as the literary model for subsequent works in the genre. Interestingly, no further Hasidic Hebrew tales were published between 1815 and 1864, and the reasons for this hiatus are unclear. The interval ended in 1864 with the publication of Michael Levi Rodkinson’s Shivhe haRav, which included tales about the Habad-Lubavitch spiritual leader, Shneur Zalman of Liady. In subsequent years the Hasidic narrative tale genre flourished and grew into a substantial corpus of hundreds of texts. It continued to proliferate into the 20th century; however, with the First World War its centres of production shifted from Eastern Europe to Palestine and North America, and its language became increasingly integrated with vernacularized Israeli Hebrew.

For my pilot study I analyzed selected grammatical features exhibited in the two early formative collections Shivhe haBesht and Sippure ma’asiyot. This study serves as the methodological basis for my current grammatical investigation of the later tales. While the project is still in the early stages (I have just completed an analysis of the first text to be included in my corpus, Shivhe haRav), I have already found numerous intriguing phenomena.

Firstly, it is interesting to note that, in contrast to the commonly held view that Hasidic Hebrew is little more than a blend of ungrammatical Rabbinic Hebrew and Yiddish, its grammar is actually much more of a complex mosaic.
For example, it contains a large number of biblical elements and, despite drawing on Rabbinic Hebrew, is in fact very far removed from the language of the Mishna and other rabbinic texts. Similarly, although Yiddish influence is evident within the Hebrew text, it is much less extensive than one might expect.

A particularly noteworthy characteristic of Shivhe haRav is that, although its language resembles that of Shivhe haBesht and Sippure ma’asiyot to a reasonable extent, it is actually even more strikingly similar to the language of contemporaneous Maskilic (Jewish Enlightenment) Hebrew prose fiction. This similarity is evident in shared grammatical features including typically biblical elements such as the wayyiqtol (a verb form used to convey past action in biblical narrative but unknown in Rabbinic Hebrew); characteristically post-biblical features such as the nitpa’el stem (the rabbinic equivalent of the biblical hitpa’el); and several phenomena lacking precedent in earlier canonical forms of Hebrew, including retention of the definite article after inseparable prepositions (e.g. לו הרב’ “to the Rebbe’ instead of the standard ל בין הרב’) and the use of the qatal conjugation in past habitual contexts (which is not typical of either Biblical or Rabbinic Hebrew). These similarities are fascinating because they challenge the commonly-held view that Hasidic and Maskilic Hebrew have little in common linguistically. Moreover, the findings belie the Maskilic authors’ overt contempt for Hasidic Hebrew and desire to distance their writing from it. However, it is less surprising when viewed in light of the many parallels between Hasidic and Maskilic authors: both groups were composed of native Yiddish speakers from similar geographical, cultural, and educational backgrounds; they were sometimes familiar with each others’ work; and certain Hasidic authors later became Maskilim.

As mentioned above, the Yiddish influence on Shivhe haRav is not overwhelming, but is nevertheless worthy of note. The most widespread Yiddish element is the occasional insertion of Yiddish words directly into the Hebrew text, usually in order to express a concept for which there was no recognized Hebrew equivalent at the time (e.g. ‘cigar’, ‘pipe’). There are also a few Yiddish-influenced syntactic features, including a phenomenon whereby the definite article in construct chains is prefixed to the construct noun rather than on the absolute one (e.g. בן מלך instead of the standard בן מלך). This latter convention is remarkable because it is not found in earlier canonical forms of Hebrew.

I am looking forward to starting my analysis of the next text in my corpus in order to ascertain how widespread these phenomena are in Hasidic Hebrew literature as a whole. The results of the final analysis will be a book-length grammar of the Hasidic Hebrew tale, including sections on orthography, morphology, syntax, and lexis.

Lily Kahn holds a permanent Lectureship in the HJS Department at UCL
The Jewish Museum Berlin (JMB) is Germany’s leading museum documenting the history and culture of German Jewry. It is especially famous for its postmodern architecture, designed by Daniel Libeskind. Libeskind’s design offers not only an intellectual, but also a sensual approach to German-Jewish history. An example of his symbolic architecture are the so-called Voids, five huge empty concrete spaces integrated into the building. They represent all that has been lost with the destruction of European Jewry. Black wall paint indicates the location of the Voids throughout the building. Small crenel-like windows open on to the empty dark spaces, repeatedly reminding the visitors on their way through the permanent exhibition of what cannot be shown anymore.

After graduating from UCL with a B.A. Jewish History and an M.A. Holocaust Studies, I was offered a job in an EU-sponsored interdisciplinary project at the JMB in 2007. I was thrilled to get a chance to work at this prestigious and exiting institution. But I was also a bit skeptical, as the project had a very technical focus: its goal was the “development of a Multimedia-Guide based on RFID-technology”. Multimedia-Guides - little hand-held computers equipped with a screen and headsets that guide visitors through exhibitions - I had seen before, but what was RFID? Luckily, the fog soon lifted. Working in a team of Jewish Studies graduates, IT-specialists and a designer, I learned that RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) is a technology that allows the wireless transmission of data. It can be used to locate the Multimedia-Guides in the exhibition, thus allowing to automatically provide the right content at the right time.

This was just the first in a long line of technical revelations. But the historians in the team were not the only ones learning stuff they had never dreamt of during their time at University. The computer-scientists arrived with virtually no knowledge about Judaism. Today they are proud to know who Glikl of Hamlin is or what kosher actually means.

As a member of the so-called content-team my main responsibility was the development of multimedia-stories for the Guide, offering interesting information about exhibition artifacts and their larger historical context. My favourite story evolved around an installation with excerpts from the Yiddish film “Der Dybbuk”. Not surprising, as the film was an old acquaintance: it had already impressed me when in my fourth year at the HJS department I wrote an essay on it for Prof. Hugh Denman’s Yiddish film class.
Working on the Multimedia-Guide was a real do-it-yourself experience: we were developing concepts, creating storyboards, writing audio-texts, digging for visual and audio material like photos or music to complement the texts, planning graphic animations, conducting interviews, making short films. I even went to a recording studio several times, as I had been picked as the female voice for our prototype.

Everything was great fun, although initially the writing of the audio texts was a real challenge! When doing the M.A. I had found it very hard to limit my dissertation to 10.000 words. Now I had to tell a story in 1200 characters without spaces! Equaling 90 seconds of spoken text, this meets the concentration span of the average listener, as we found out.

After 1 ½ years we presented a finished prototype of our Multimedia-Guide. If you should head to Berlin though and visit the JMB, don’t be surprised if it is not on loan. Despite very good feedback from visitor evaluations, the guide was not installed in the exhibition. Instead, our multimedia-stories will be shown on computer stations in the Museum’s Raphael Roth Learning Centre.

I am still at the JMB today, working for the follow-up project. This time, we are developing a Multimedia-Guide for children. It is a wholly new challenge to address 8-12 year olds and explain to them the intricacies of German-Jewish history. To make it easier, we are creating an audio play, bringing exhibition objects to life that lead children through the museum. Talking and singing Besamim-Boxes – when I left UCL, I never expected I would have to deal with something like that one day!
Tiyulim b’chutz

Ria Manwell

This piece is unashamedly intended to be a short promotional advert for the Hebrew and Jewish Studies Year Abroad. Not because I have a secret affiliation with those who run it but because I am convinced it is one the best parts about the HJS degree. There are no secret brainwashing techniques used here, I just hope that after learning a bit more about what the Year Abroad is like students in first and second year will be encouraged (to seriously) consider going abroad for their third year.

I am now a final year student here at UCL, studying Modern Languages: German and Hebrew. Doing a Combined Honours course, I was required to spend my year abroad split between Israel and a German speaking country. I chose to go to Austria, to study at the University of Vienna for a semester and went to the Rothberg International School at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem for 6 months.

Having never been to Israel before, I was a bit nervous about moving to Jerusalem but it didn’t take long to see that it was going to be a memorable time. I’m not sure if I can adequately express how worthwhile my time there was, without sounding cheesy and exaggerated.

Before leaving for the Ulpan, which started at the beginning of August, there was a lot to deal with regarding the Rothberg application, visa application and trying to find enough finance to get there. However, after a few months of preparing the administrative aspects, I flew to the Middle East, to where it all began (i.e. Genesis, and my year abroad).

Apart from the Alefbet, which a good friend taught me while I was at KD Liverpool for Sixth Form, my Hebrew learning began when I started at UCL. I struggled a lot with Hebrew during the first two years because I had little opportunity to hear or speak Hebrew but once I arrived at Ulpan, everything changed. We were in classes for five hours everyday and all other languages were banned during those hours. I quickly got to know the people in my class and it was a very encouraging atmosphere.

In the Student Village I was allocated an apartment with Israeli girls. This was a great opportunity to practise speaking and listening outside of classes. As well as my vocabulary and grammar quickly improving, my confidence increased and I began to see that slowly I was able to speak Hebrew!

One of the highlights of being at Rothberg was the opportunity to go on trips that they arranged. Because of a system whereby each student is ‘given’ (as part of the tuition fees) points to spend on trips and events, it was possible to do many extra curricular activities without having to spend more shekels. We got to see different parts of Israel by hiking
through the Negev, Mitzpe Ramon, the nature reserve and the ruins of Gamla in the Golan Heights, the Spring Trail near Jerusalem and the Eilat Mountains. There was a wide range of activities on offer and I also abseiled in the Qumran Caves, went paintballing near Tel Aviv, visited Druze Villages in the North, stayed on a Kibbutz in the Galilee, climbed Masada, learnt how to cook traditional Arab dishes in Abu Gosh, went to an Israeli basketball game (Hapoel 'Migdal' Jerusalem) and floated in the Dead Sea. On all of these trips were other people from the Rothberg programme from all over the world. It was a great environment to meet new people and I made many friends from mainly the USA and Canada but also from across Europe and even as far as Manchester and Korea. The trips were run by the Madrichim, slightly older Israeli students who are like guides and are there to help with any difficulties that students may encounter but who also become good friends with all of the students!

During the semester I continued to take Hebrew, and completed level Gimel. I got new flat mates, I lived with one Christian Arab girl from Nazareth for a short while and then four Jewish Israeli girls moved in. They were really warm towards me and helped me a lot with my Hebrew, would very patiently explain things and let me practise speaking Hebrew even though they all spoke almost perfect English. I took an internship class at Rothberg and worked one day a week at the Hand in Hand School for Jewish-Arab Education in Jerusalem. I had an incredible time there. In my class, of mostly 6 and 7 year olds, around a third of the pupils were Jewish, another third Muslim Arab and another third Christian Arab. They would flock around me and my friend Adina, who studied with me at Rothberg and was also an assistant in the class, as soon as we walked into the classroom, were very cute, and often corrected our Hebrew. Each class was taught in Hebrew and Arabic and so we were only able to be useful when something was taught in Hebrew, but I picked up a few words in Arabic. While the native Hebrew speakers had their Arabic lesson, we helped the native Arabic speakers with their Hebrew grammar lessons. Even though in most respects they were more advanced in their Hebrew, we could still help them with some of the technical sides of the language. It was a rewarding time and an opportunity to see a glimpse into life in an Israeli workplace.

My other classes at Rothberg were Issues in the Holocaust, taught by Dr David Silberklang of Yad Vashem and Archeology of Jerusalem taught by Marva Balouka. I really enjoyed both classes and learnt a lot. Both classes included trips, a visit to Yad Vashem and archaeology field trips every other week. It was great to walk around the Old City and finally understand a bit more of the layers of history on which Jerusalem is built.

As well as the life inside Rothberg, I also had time to visit Israeli friends that I met in the UK and to take other trips to the Galilee, Haifa, Eilat and Tsfat and of course Tel Aviv (and the beach!), which was just a short bus ride away. Living in Jerusalem was incredible. Walking through Mea Shearim during Hannukah and looking at all of the hannukiot lit down each street, gathering at the Kotel during the festivals, walking through the bustling Mehane Yehuda Market (the Shuk) while tasting halva, nuts, and the abundance of fruit that each merchant offers and then buying warm pitot straight out of the oven, feeling the cool of the faithful Jerusalem wind each evening, hanging out on Ben Yehuda in the centre of town, hearing children’s excitement at the sound of the first rain after summer. The best way to understand it is to be there!

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The amazing adventures of

THE HJS DEPARTMENT

and the mystery of time

by Rosa Speers

Everything seemed normal at first and the HJS Department appeared like any other at UCL....

Professorhood
vs.

Kingship

Students mostly studied...

The Professors lectured and marked essays, whilst pursuing their own research...

FEMALE
BODIES
MAL
SOULS

YIDDISH
CLASSICAL

WESTERN
JEWRY

BUT....

The Administrators kept the place running smoothly and efficiently.
I began to notice something very strange and suspicious.

On top of teaching and looking after the problems of the students...

The Professors were managing to submit suspiciously numerous publications as well as display an unbelievably immense amount of knowledge.

How did they manage to do all of this work in such a short amount of time? It was not humanly possible.

There was something strange going on and the whole department was in on it.

Using my critical thinking skills I had acquired during my degree, I realised this could only mean two things:

1. They were SUPERHUMAN
2. They could CONTROL TIME
The idea that the staff were superhuman was a ridiculous hypothesis, so I settled for the more realistic argument that they could control time.

Prof. Sacha Stern was particularly suspicious. Not only had he a deep interest in the concept of time but he’d done a lot of work with ancient calendars...

Had he discovered a way of adding a day or two onto his week?

Had Prof. Berkowitz in his research on criminality discovered a way to steal time?

What about Dr. Kahn and her Hasidic Hebrew Tales?

Seeing as Aramaic is “the official language of Heaven”

Had Dr. Smeltz visited there and returned immortal?

Had she managed to transport herself into an alternative narrative reality?

Is “Portico” a code word for a portal into another time dimension?

And the administrators, the partners-in-crime.
My investigation was leading nowhere. Promising trails turned up no conclusive results or hard-hitting evidence.

However, there was still a list of suspects to work through.

But one day, one of my no. 1 suspects called me in to see her.......

Come in. I've been expecting you.

What will she say to me? Will she tell me how they fit so much work into such little time? Or claim innocence?

It must be her! She's agencies on Kabbalah after all! I mean, how does Madame keep looking so young and healthy?

This is it! She's going to reveal the mystery of time!

Here's my article for the newsletter.

Oh... Oh!... Thanks.

That was it. That was my last chance to solve the mystery of time in the HJS department.

I've spent four years investigating how so much is done in so little a time— I graduate none the wiser. The case continues......