

IN·SITES



A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY ADULT JEWISH EDUCATION

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THE MELTON CENTRE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION • THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

AFHU HONORS FLORENCE MELTON

Florence Zacks Melton celebrated her 90th birthday at a gala evening, which also marked 15 years since the founding of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School. The black tie affair was organized by the **American Friends of the Hebrew University** and hosted by FMAMS Institute Board of Directors Vice-Chairman **Don Katz** and his wife, **Phyllis**, at the Boca Club in Boca Raton, Florida, on the last night of Chanukah.

The highlight of the evening was Florence's address, in which she thanked her guests for flying in from all points in the United States, England and Israel despite "all of the negative forces that could have understandably kept you at home. It truly speaks to the spirit of our Jewish inheritance through the ages, as it does even today on the last day of Chanukah, that 'Evil will not triumph.'

"After 90 years of active engagement in this game of life, I know that everything changes, and I believe that all change is part of the big plan. Hope is what Judaism is all about... We are here to make the world a better place, and we had no assurance that it

would be easy. I do believe that each of us individually represents the power of one, and together we represent those forces that can impact change."

Chairman of the FMAMS Institute Board of Directors **Gordon Zacks** paid a moving tribute to his mother, Florence. Gordon, the driving force behind the Mini-School for the last four years, is a past president and chairman of the **Jewish Federation of Columbus, OH**.

Prof. Haim Rabinowitch, rector of the **Hebrew University of Jerusalem**, presented Florence with an edition of the recently published *Jerusalem Crown – Keter Yerushalaim* – the Hebrew University's Bible. "You have toiled to make the Jewish people the People of the Book," he said. "It is thus fitting that tonight we present you with the book of the Jewish people."



Board Chairman Gordon Zacks, AFHU President Ira Sorkin, Florence Melton, Dinner Co-Chair Phyllis Katz, Board Vice-Chairman Don Katz, Hebrew University Rector Prof. Haim Rabinowitch Photo: Jerry Mink

This festive evening was a milestone for the FMAMS Institute Endowment Campaign. Distinguished guests included AFHU President **Ira Sorkin** and Associate Vice-President of the South Florida Region **Deborah Chodrow**.

This is the third time that Florence has been honored by the Hebrew University. She received an Honorary Doctorate in 1991 and the AFHU's prestigious Scopus Award in 1997. ♦

NEW RESEARCH DEMONSTRATES MINI-SCHOOL IMPACT

In a recent research study of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School's impact on its graduates, two-thirds of the participants reported a strengthening or enhancement of different facets of Jewish life.

The more pronounced areas of change included:

♦ Enhanced appreciation for Jewish learning and greater competence in text study

- ♦ Greater support for enrolling children in Jewish day schools
 - ♦ Enriched meaning and purpose associated with ritual observance, prayer, holiday celebration and organized communal involvement
 - ♦ Expanded engagement in the family as Jewish teachers and role models
 - ♦ Broader sensitivity to ethical implications in everyday life
 - ♦ Increased attachment to the Jewish community and Jewish People
- These, and other positive outcomes,

emerged in a social scientific study of FMAMS learners conducted by **Lisa Grant, Meredith Woocher** and **Diane T. Schuster**, under the leadership of **Prof. Steven M. Cohen**.

The study combined a quantitative sample survey of 346 students completing the two-year Mini-School in 16 cities across the United States with over 30 personal qualitative interviews of students and staff.

The full interim report is available at www.fmams.org.il/FMAMS-research-summary.doc. ♦

"AREAS OF CHANGE INCLUDED... BROADER SENSITIVITY TO ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS"

FROM THE
INTERNATIONAL
DIRECTOR



SUSTAINING
SOLIDARITY

Since Pesach we have witnessed rallies and demonstrations in support of Israel throughout the Diaspora. These gatherings have once again shown that Jewish peoplehood is alive and strong. Feelings of solidarity brought many people to abandon their daily routines and personally show their support in our present time of crisis.

While these outpourings of support are inspiring, they are built upon momentary feelings of solidarity. Thus, there is a risk that once the danger to Israel subsides (may this happen as quickly as possible), Jewish peoplehood will once more fade into the background.

The key to sustaining this sense of peoplehood is, among other things, a deep knowledge of the Jewish people and Judaism, and the acquisition of insights that constantly challenge the Jewish identity of every individual. This knowledge that the Mini-School strives to provide enables you, our students, to grapple with Jewish issues in a comprehensive manner on multiple levels.

As we know from our Mini-School studies, the tensions and dangers faced today by the Jewish people are not new. Throughout Jewish history we have constantly faced the threats of anti-Semitism and assimilation. The fact that we have grown up as Jews is a result of our ancestors' victory in these constant battles. A critical weapon in our fight for survival has always been our understanding and appreciation of classical Jewish texts and our commitment to study. In light of this, your studying in the Mini-School should be evaluated not only for its personal impact on you and your local Jewish community, but

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STUDENTS AND
STAFF SUPPORT
ISRAEL AT
WASHINGTON RALLY

FMAMS students, staff and faculty from Chicago, IL; Raleigh, NC; Memphis, TN; West Orange and Bergen County, NJ; New York City and Washington, DC, joined more than 100,000 protesters of all ages and backgrounds who streamed to Washington's Capitol Hill on April 15 to express their solidarity with Israel. The rally was the largest in support of Israel ever held in the United States.

"The crisis in Israel is very real for Americans, who are still recovering from the shock and losses sustained at the World Trade Center," says **Carol Backman**, a student at the Washington, DC, Mini-School.

"We just studied Lesson 22 of the *Purposes of Jewish Living* course, which discusses the 'Theology of Prayer.' The text by Yehudah HaLevi really hit home for many students," says New York City Mini-School Director **Jennifer Mohl**. "While the idea was based on the opinion that we all benefit from common prayer over personal prayer, our students took that to the next step. There are so many ways that the community benefits from being united, from simple Shabbat dinners, to the unbelievable rally in Washington. The sense of community adds to the confidence in our beliefs and often to our spiritual growth."

"It was quite moving to be part of such a mass demonstration of solidarity," says West Orange Mini-School Director **Aryeh Meir**. "I was proud to be a Jew and an American."

"The Washington rally was a powerful antidote to the expressions of hostility we, as a people, have faced in recent weeks," says FMAMS Director of Teacher Education **Judy Kupchan**. "Standing shoulder to shoulder with thousands of Jews created a sense of shared values, shared purpose, and shared fate. The crowd was a reflection of diverse Jewish America. As Meltonians, it looked like a macrocosm of the pluralism we emphasize in our own schools. The sight of



Photo: **Sam Backman, Student Washington, DC**

the Capitol looming in the background was symbolic of our freedom to speak out as Americans, but I believe our most significant message was to our brothers and sisters in Israel: despite our geographic separation, we stand together and we will be strong together." ♦

DIRECTORS CONFERENCE

LEARNING, CREATIVITY
AND PROFESSIONAL
GROWTH

In January, 26 participants from the United States, Canada and Australia journeyed to Jerusalem for seven days of intensive professional development at the FMAMS Eighth International Directors Conference.

The fact that the conference took place at the **Hebrew University of Jerusalem**, dur-

ing such a difficult time for Israel, heightened the sense of purpose, camaraderie and spirituality that permeated the gathering. Those who came were highly motivated and their energy took the conference to great levels of learning, creativity and professional growth.

"The conference was a wonderful week of learning, networking and problem solving together," says FMAMS North American Director **Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz**. "But just as important, it gave us an opportunity to be in Israel at a time when

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expressing our support and commitment is essential.”

The focus of the conference was educational leadership, theory and practice. Taking advantage of resources available exclusively in Israel, the conference struck a balance between the study of *Torah Lishmah* (study for its own sake), professional development and spiritual enrichment.

“Being in Israel gave us the chance to study with Hebrew University scholars and use sites as texts. Nowhere else can you do this,” says **Debby Malissa** of Philadelphia, PA, who received the Distinguished Directors Award at the concluding ceremony.

Another factor that made this conference unique was the participation of two Mini-School advisory board members – **Stephanie Odle** of Houston, TX, and **Jan Shulkind** of Overland Park, KS – and Chief Financial Officer of the Jewish Community Center in Austin, TX, **Laurence Statman**. Their insights and enthusiasm highlighted the importance of support from lay leadership and professional staff in the success of local Mini-Schools.

The global nature of the FMAMS network was felt strongly throughout the conference. “I got the sense of this as an interna-

tional project, with a strong degree of commitment,” says **Peta Pellach Jones** of Sydney, Australia.

The Ninth International Directors Conference is scheduled for October 6-9, 2002, in Chicago. It will focus on the Mini-School director as educational leader. Sessions will address educational, research and business issues. ♦

“BEING IN ISRAEL GAVE US THE CHANCE TO STUDY WITH HEBREW UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS AND USE SITES AS TEXTS. NOWHERE ELSE CAN YOU DO THIS.”

FACULTY SEMINAR

10 DAYS OF INSPIRATION IN JERUSALEM

How can assumptions be challenged within a Jewish framework? How can new educational paradigms be created? How are Jews really Jews in all times and all

places? These questions and more were raised at the Third International Faculty Seminar, held in January.

Through interaction and confrontation with classical Jewish texts, 14 members of Mini-School faculty from the United States and England met at the **Hebrew University of Jerusalem** to hone their skills in teaching adults. For 10 intensive days they studied, discussed, crafted, facilitated, argued and engaged each other so as to better learn con-

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FMAMS Director of Israel Seminars Haim Aronowitz leads a session at the Eighth International Directors Conference in Jerusalem

FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN DIRECTOR



TEXTS TO APPROACH

I recently sat in on a conversation between a husband and wife about a subject that many of us have contemplated. The question that opened the conversation came from the husband, who is not enrolled in the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School. “How did we get from ‘Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother’s milk’ to the fact that I can’t have ice cream for dessert after I’ve had a hamburger for dinner? Couldn’t it be a fact that generation after generation have been so intent on ‘building a fence around the Torah’ that they have obscured the real meaning and intent of the statement?”

His wife, who is completing her first year of the Mini-School, said, “Cool it! It really doesn’t matter.” She explained that in her class one of the emphases is on the accumulated generations of knowledge. What is important is how each group of scholars and teachers took what was passed on to them, wrestled with it, questioned it, talked about it, and then added their own interpretation, insights, and wisdom.

Her husband objected. “Who gave these men the authority to make these laws? Who are they to dictate what I have to do?”

“That doesn’t matter to me either because now it’s our generation’s turn to study, raise questions, wrestle with problems,” she responded. “What we see as law and custom was and will always be dynamic, changing with time. It helps me see not only what has happened and is happening to shape Jewish tradition, but also what is happening in a particular generation. We are going to leave our imprint. The genius, the common sense, the human sensitivity of

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FACULTY SEMINAR – CONTINUED FROM P.3

tent and method in adult education.

“The tradition has always deemed Mt. Scopus a place for vision. This Seminar illustrated just how clearly some may see – how powerful a perspective one gets sitting with scholars and looking out on a city of eternal beauty and eternal struggle,” says **Avi West** of Washington, DC. “The collected wisdom of this year’s *chevre* will give me enrichment for future teaching.”

“THE SEMINAR ILLUSTRATED JUST HOW POWERFUL A PERSPECTIVE ONE GETS SITTING WITH SCHOLARS AND LOOKING OUT ON A CITY OF ETERNAL BEAUTY AND ETERNAL STRUGGLE.”

Participants studied with Hebrew University scholars – leading experts in Jewish education, Jewish thought and Hebrew literature.

rof **Simon Myerson**, a lawyer

who teaches at the Leeds Mini-School for enjoyment, this was his first professional seminar in Jewish education. “It was nice to be able to learn. The Seminar helped me with the teaching side of things. Through the learning I gained something important to bring back to the Jewish community in Leeds.”

The Faculty Seminar is an important part of the Mini-School’s ongoing investment in professional development and quality – factors that have contributed to its prominence as the largest international network of pluralist Jewish adult education.

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR – CONTINUED FROM P.2

for its contribution to our national struggle as well.

May the battles of the Jewish people in the near future be converted from *seifa* to *safra* – from swords to study, with the “battleground” being alternative interpretations of text rather than the streets, restaurants and shopping malls of Israel.

Dr. Yonatan Mirvis

There are currently 284 faculty members teaching in 63 Mini-Schools. Participants came from Richmond, VA; Washington, DC; Louisville, KY; Memphis and Nashville, TN; Dayton, OH; Denver, CO; Springfield, MA; Phoenix, AZ; St. Paul, MN; Houston, TX; Milwaukee, WI; and Leeds, England.

“The Faculty Seminar is a wonderful opportunity to experience adult Jewish learning and the approach of the FMAMS,” says Director of Faculty Development **Rabbi**

Michael Balinsky. “Through study, professional development, faculty feedback and reflective practice, the seminar gives the faculty a model and tools to take back to their communities of the ‘best practices’ in adult Jewish education.”

The Fourth International Faculty Seminar will take place December 16-26, 2002, at the Hebrew University. Faculty members interested in participating should contact Michael: mbalinsky@fmams.org.il.

The Faculty Seminar is made possible in part by a grant from the **Joint Program for Jewish Education**. ♦

NEW ADDITIONS

PIONEERING IN KANSAS VIA VIDEO LINK

The FMAMS has pioneered yet another new dimension in Jewish adult learning. Under the guidance of Overland Park Mini-School Director **Rabbi Amy Wallk Katz**, the first video link Mini-School opened this fall, bridging the distance between experienced faculty in Overland Park, KS, and students seeking Jewish knowledge in the outlying city of Wichita.

The project started as the vision of **Adam Beren**, president of the **Mid-Kansas Jewish Federation**, who wanted to bring serious adult Jewish education to Wichita.

Wichita is a three-hour drive from Kansas City, where the **Central Agency for Jewish Education and Jewish Community**



Students in Wichita – the first Mini-School video class

Center host the nearest Mini-School, and too far for faculty to come teach on a regular basis. Amy and Adam came up with video conferencing as an alternative. **Howard and Rose Marcus**, from Wichita, generously agreed to underwrite the initiative for a period of five years. Since the Kansas City Jewish community was already using distance learning technology in their program of Jewish teacher education, the idea had been tried and tested.

As soon as the Wichita Mini-School opened as a satellite of Overland Park it was oversubscribed. Each week, Amy and two other members of the Overland Park Mini-School faculty teach courses to a total of 32 Wichita students in two classes. Wichita has a Jewish population of about 1,000, and **Judy Press**, director of the Wichita Mini-School and executive director of the Mid-Kansas Jewish Federation, speculates that Wichita may boast the highest per capita Mini-School enrolment in the world.

Classes are limited in size so that the faculty in Kansas City can see all the students on the video screen. Another class will be added next year to help meet the demand.

According to Amy, video conferencing overcomes the problems of distance and allows for live, interactive learning to which

“I AM THRILLED TO ENABLE JEWS LIVING IN OUTLYING AREAS ACCESS TO CUTTING EDGE JEWISH EDUCATION.”

the students would not otherwise have access. However, there are some difficulties with the system. She says, “It’s frustrating not to be in the room with the students. I miss some of the eye contact and I don’t have the opportunity to get to know the students in other settings.”

Still, the video project is meeting initial expectations. “Despite its limitations, the Wichita students love having access to the Melton curriculum and are learning a lot and enjoying the classes,” says Amy. “I am thrilled to enable Jews living in outlying areas access to cutting edge Jewish education. This is a rare opportunity.”

Judy agrees and believes that the FMAMS video link pilot has tremendous potential. “It’s an excellent solution for smaller communities,” she says. ♦

ON SITES

ANNE FRANK’S CLOSEST FRIEND VISITS ROCHESTER

Hannah Pick-Goslar, known as ‘Hanneli’ or ‘Lies’ to the readers of *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, spent an evening in April with students and guests of the Mini-School in Rochester, NY. Hannah shared her personal account of the Holocaust – how she and her parents fled Nazi Germany in 1933 to the Netherlands, where she became next

door neighbors and best friends with Anne Frank.

Anne wrote in her diary on November 27, 1943 about her friend Hannah: “Why should I be chosen to live and she probably to die?” Ironically the opposite was true. Anne died of disease and starvation at age 15 as a prisoner in Bergen-Belsen where, a month or so earlier, the girls had a tearful reunion, communicating across a solid wall separating the camp. Because of this irony, Hannah chooses to tell her story and Anne’s at functions throughout the world. Hannah, who now lives in Israel, related her life story to our modern experience: “Once we were victims who could not fight back. Today we have our own country and can and *must* defend ourselves.” ♦

MILITARY PERSPECTIVE

This spring, Mini-School graduates in Pittsburgh, PA, participated in a course on *Israel at War*, taught by an Israeli Defense Forces captain currently on leave to teach at **Carnegie Mellon University**. According to Mini-School Director **Amy Karp**, the course provided an overview of Israel’s major wars to give students an historical understanding of the current situation. ♦

ON THE MAP

To drive home the dimensions of borders and land, **Judy Rosenberg** conducted her Yom Ha’Atzmaut class for the *Rhythms of Jewish Living* on a giant map of Israel – literally. She also used the map for her *Dramas of Jewish Living* class, both taught at the Mini-School for Teachers in Chicago, IL. ♦

BEN YEHUDA IN DENVER

Mini-School students from Denver, CO, helped bring the spirit of Jerusalem’s Ben Yehuda Mall to the **Denver Jewish Community Center** on February 3. Some 4,000 people flocked to buy Israeli Judaica and artwork, eat and express solidarity with their fellow Jews in Israel. In addition, a community drive was held to raise

money towards an ambulance for Magen David Adom. The cross-section of people from all denominations and segments of the Jewish community experienced the satisfaction that comes from doing something that makes a difference. “After all,” says **Ellyn Hutt**, who teaches the *Rhythms of Jewish Living* and *Ethics of Jewish Living* courses in Denver, “How often do we have the chance to make shopping a *mitzvah*?” ♦

WOMEN AND PRAYER

On May 6, the New York City Mini-School was scheduled to hold a panel session on “Women and *Tefillah*.” Panelists **Rabbi Jill Hammer**, **Rabbi Regina Sandler-Phillips**, and **Devorah Zlochower** planned to present three new perspectives on prayer. “Our students always become animated when the topic of women comes up during a Melton class,” says Director **Jennifer Mohl**. ♦

FROM THE NORTH AMERICAN DIRECTOR – CONTINUED FROM P.3

each generation is what is remarkable about the evolution of the ideas. The thought that it all started in some way with God is what makes it holy. It is a true partnership between God and human beings in the unfolding of truth. It’s what helps me to find my place and my practice.”

I could focus on the family dynamics that occur when one spouse attends the Mini-School and the other does not (that’s why so many sites offer a discount for couples), but what is more essential here is the student’s perspective on Jewish texts. Other learners may come to different conclusions. Other teachers may guide their students in other directions in the process of studying Jewish texts.

What impresses me, as I observe classes and speak with teachers and students, is that Jewish text becomes approachable. Texts are not remote, impersonal writings that one looks at from a distance, criticizes and dismisses. They belong to each one of us.

Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz



Students in Chicago’s Mini-School for Teachers study on a giant map of Israel

NIZANIM IN BLOOM

The Hebrew University's **Melton Centre for Jewish Education** has experienced unprecedented growth this year, with over 130 graduate students studying Jewish education. We recently completed our new curriculum *Nizanim* for teaching Hebrew to kindergarten through 2nd grade, comprising 21 handsome booklets, teachers guides and audio tapes. Project Director **Nava Nevo** reports its successful entry into classrooms with training sessions taking place throughout the Jewish world, including Latin America, the United States and the Former Soviet Union.

More than 30 candidates have applied to spend next year here in Jerusalem on our **Senior Educators Program**. This is a thrilling testimony to these educators' commitment to Israel and an appreciation of the vitality of the Senior Educators Program.

Our international Advisory Board met in London in February, and we look forward to this dedicated lay group's advise and support. Only a clear understanding and vision of Jewish education will help the Jewish People meet the diverse challenges facing us in Europe, South America, North America and Israel.

For more information about the Melton Centre, contact us at msmelton@mscc.huji.ac.il or visit our website: www.sites.huji.ac.il/melton

Prof. Marc Hirshman
Director

The Melton Centre for Jewish Education

HOME STUDY

SUMMER READING

Between that last Mini-School class in the spring and that first class in the fall are all those wonderful summer days to catch up on the reading you didn't get to during the busy school year. (Unless, of course, you're attending the FMAMS Israel Seminar, June 24 – July 4.) Even if you only have a little extra time, we hope this recommended reading list will add to your summer pleasure.

◆ Fiction ◆

- Alcalay, Ammiel. *Keys to the Garden: New Israeli Writing*
- Almog, Ruth (editor), et al. *Six Israeli Novellas* (Verba Mundi)
- Blocker, Joel (editor); Alter, Robert (introduction). *Israeli Stories: A Selection of the Best Contemporary Hebrew Writing*
- Domb, Risa (editor). *New Women's Writing from Israel*
- Glazer, Miriam (editor). *Dreaming the Actual: Contemporary Fiction and Poetry by Israeli Women Writers*
- Gluzman, Michael (editor), et al. *Israel: A Traveler's Literary Companion*
- Michener, James. *The Source*
- Ramras-Rauch, Gila (editor), et al. *Facing the Holocaust: Selected Israeli Fiction*
- Steinberg, Milton. *As a Driven Leaf*
- Yehoshua, A.B. *Journey to the End of the Millenium*

◆ Jewish History ◆

- Bard, Mitchell Geoffrey. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Middle East Conflict*
- Dimont, Max. *Jews, God and History*
- Elon, Amos. *The Israelis*
- Hare, William. *The Struggle for the Holy Land: Arabs, Jews, and the Emergence of Israel*
- Hertzberg, Arthur. *The Zionist Idea*
- Johnson, Paul. *A History of the Jews*
- Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong*
- Morris, Benny. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-1999*
- Wiesel, Elie. *Night*
- Wiesel, Elie. *Sages and Dreamers*
- Video. *In Our Own Hands: The Hidden Story of the Jewish Brigade in World War II*
- Video: *The Long Way Home*

◆ Jewish Family Life ◆

and

◆ Jewish Women ◆

- Blumenfeld, Laura. *Revenge: A Story of Hope*
- Diner, Hasia R.; Benderly, Beryl Lief. *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America from Colonial Times to the Present*
- Donin, Rabbi Hayim haLevy. *To Raise a Jewish Child* and *To Be a Jew*

- Ehrlich, Elizabeth. *Miriam's Kitchen*
- Greenberg, Blu. *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household*
- Umansky, Ellen and Ashton, D. (editors). *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality*
- Wishkind-Elper, Ora (editor), et al. *Torah of the Mothers: Contemporary Jewish Women Read Classical Jewish Texts*
- Music. *Eshet Hayil: A Tribute to Jewish Women*

◆ Jewish Sources and Spirituality ◆

- Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*
- Cowan, Paul. *An Orphan in History*
- Donin, Rabbi Hayim haLevy. *To Pray as A Jew*
- Dorff Elliot; Newman Louis (editors). *Contemporary Jewish Theology*
- Green, Arthur and Cousins, Ewert (editors). *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*
- Greenberg, Irving. *The Jewish Way*
- Haberman, Joshua (editor). *The God I Believe In*
- Hammer, Reuven (translator); Goldin, Judah. *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible*
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Sabbath*
- Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* and *How Good Do We Have To Be?*
- Matlins, Stuart M. (editor). *The Jewish Lights Spirituality Handbook: A Guide to Understanding, Exploring and Living a Spiritual Life*
- Kushner, Lawrence. *Honey from the Rock: An Introduction to Jewish Mysticism*
- Lamm, Norman. *The Shema: Spirituality and Law in Judaism*
- Matt, Daniel Chana (compiler). *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism*
- Morins, E. Alan (editor). *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: One Man's Rediscovery of a Jewish Spiritual Tradition*
- Rubenstein, Jeffrey L. (introduction); Cohen, Shaye J.D. (preface). *Rabbinic Stories*
- Telushkin, Joseph. *Book of Jewish Values*
- Telushkin, Joseph. *Jewish Literacy*
- Compiled by Associate North American Director Jane Shapiro and Director of Teacher Education Judy Kupchan. ◆*

ALUMNI PROFILE



Amy Katz – Inspired by the Israel Seminar

SHE'S NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE

Amy Katz, a graduate of the Mini-School in Overland Park, KS, quit her job, sold her house and in February embarked on the experience of a lifetime – in Israel. “The Mini-School and the Israel Seminar gave me my history. They showed me where I came from,” says Amy. In connecting her with her history, they also guided her to where she is now.

Amy intends to stay in Israel for two to three years to work and live as an Israeli. A student at the WUJS (World Union of Jewish Students) Institute in Arad, she is studying Hebrew and Jewish Studies for six months before moving on to complete the work experience component of the year-long program for college graduates. People often ask her the obvious questions: Why now? Why come to Israel at such a difficult time? Amy’s answer is to the point: “Why not? If we don’t support Israel now, when are we going to?”

Her family is actually very supportive of her decision to spend time in Israel; her grandmother even plans to visit her next year in celebration of her 80th birthday.

Amy says she feels much safer in Israel than in most cities in the US. “In Israel there is no random violence. On Yom Ha’atzmaut

“THE MINI-SCHOOL AND THE ISRAEL SEMINAR GAVE ME MY HISTORY. THEY SHOWED ME WHERE I COME FROM.”

I walked around at 3:00 am and felt perfectly safe. I couldn’t do that in the US. Maybe I’m a fatalist, but if I’m in the wrong place I’m in the wrong place. I’m not going to let that stop me from living.”

Amy’s road to Israel started at the Mini-School and continued with her participation in the Israel Seminar last July.

Amy was initially motivated to delve deeper into Jewish studies when she realized that she couldn’t answer even simple questions about Judaism posed by some of her non-Jewish friends. “I never knew the answer to ‘Why?’,” she says.

After years of Junior Congregation and Hebrew school as a child, she was comfortable with Jewish rituals but clueless about their meaning or the philosophy behind them. After her Bat Mitzvah she left Hebrew School without looking back and her formal Jewish education came to an abrupt end.

After graduating from the University of Missouri in Columbia with a BJ in Journalism, Amy settled in Austin, TX, before moving to Kansas City. One of the first things she did after arriving was get in touch with the Jewish community. Some of her new found friends were studying at the Mini-School and Amy decided to join them, after completing her MBA at night school.

“The Mini-School was such a great program because it gave me enough knowledge to start asking the right questions. Before Melton I didn’t even know how much I didn’t know,” she explains.

Amy was so enthusiastic about her Mini-School experience that she enrolled her mother. “I told her, ‘You made me go to Hebrew School, so I’m making you go to Melton!’” Her mother graduates this spring from the Mini-School in Overland Park, too.

Jewish studies have far more relevance to Amy now, as an adult, than they did as a child. “Philosophy is so beyond what a child can comprehend. It’s much more meaningful today,” she says.

The Israel Seminar was a natural progression after graduating from the Mini-School and proved to be a formative experience for Amy. “I had no idea what to expect,” she

says. “All I knew was that everyone loves Haim [Aronovitz, director of Israel Seminars] and it’s true.”

As part of the Israel Seminar, the group was asked to randomly knock on apartment doors to meet “real Israelis.” The exercise made a deep impression. The first family that agreed to talk to Amy had lost a son in a terrorist bombing in 1996. The father in the second family was a new immigrant from Russia who was washing dishes while waiting for his PhD to be accepted in Israel.

The Israel Seminar also gave Amy the impetus to finally realize her long-held dream of studying abroad and she decided to enroll in the WUJS Institute. “The only way to break out was to do something radical. I’m having a ball,” she says. ♦

MEET THE BOARD



Wendy Platt Newberger

A JUMP START ON JEWISH LIVING

Wendy Platt Newberger, who joined the Board of Directors of the FMAMS Institute last year, has a passion for Jewish education and other important causes. She actively volunteers in a wide range of leadership roles for organizations including the United Jewish Communities, Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, National Jewish Coalition for Literacy, Hillel Commission of Illinois and Mt. Sinai Hospital. She is also founding president of the Board of Directors of the Chicago Jewish Day School,

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MEET THE BOARD – CONTINUED FROM P.7

a multi-denominational Jewish elementary school, which is in the planning stages.

Having been brought up in a home that stressed the value of communal responsibility, Wendy says, “Our family didn’t end at our front door.” Volunteering was handed down as a strong family tradition. “I’ve been very lucky with what I have in life,” she says, “and I want to give something back.”

Wendy, age 39, is a graduate of the Mini-School’s **Jewish Leaders Institute** in Chicago and the **Wexner Heritage Program**. She holds a BA from the **University of Pennsylvania** and an MBA from **Northwestern University’s Kellogg Graduate School of Management**. She has extensive experience in finance and marketing.

According to FMAMS Associate North American Director **Jane Shapiro**, Wendy knows how to translate Jewish learning into action. “I can see her thinking about the lessons she learned in the *Ethics of Jewish Living* and thinking through how to apply them in her communal work and personal Jewish

life. We are privileged to have her on our Board of Directors.”

Why did you decide to join the FMAMS Institute’s Board of Directors?

WN: I firmly believe in the value of adult Jewish education. I’m watching my peers search for ways to create the kind of Jewish home environment for their children that they never had. The Mini-School is of such high quality and I would love to help it succeed.

I also believe that the Mini-School has enormous strategic importance. When I heard about plans towards opening Mini-Schools in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and Israel, I began to realize the international impact the project could achieve. The Mini-School is a critical tool for Jewish continuity worldwide. I value Jewish living and this is one of the best ways to help adults, both young and old, get a jump start.

What is your vision for the Mini-School?

WN: I would love to see Mini-Schools in

the US partner with Jewish day schools so that parents and secular teachers could also benefit from Melton’s approach to Jewish learning. It’s not enough to let our schools educate our children. The best lessons are often learned at home and we need to provide learning opportunities to help that happen.

There are all kinds of possibilities for Melton to partner with other programs. In

Chicago, I participated in the first Mini-School course to partner with the Jewish Leaders Institute of the JUF. The regular Mini-School classes were supplemented with leadership issues that were particularly relevant to the students. It’s important to see learning in context, too. For instance,

studying about the elderly can include learning from the sources while visiting a home for the elderly.

We also have a critical window of opportunity right now to expand the Mini-School to the FSU to help Jewish people there connect to their heritage.

What do you think the Mini School’s priorities should be?

WN: That’s a tough question. The need for a multi-generational appreciation for Judaism is everywhere. As funding grows, it will be possible to expand the Mini-School and encourage creative growth. There is an enormous need, both internationally and in the US, for this to happen.

What do you think you can contribute to the Board of Directors?

WN: I think my addition to the Board of Directors reinforces the perspective of younger adults and families. Having worked on Jewish issues in Israel and the Former Soviet Union with the UJC, I can also offer my experience in a global context. In addition, I hope to bring my business background into play to help market the Mini-School to institutions.

Originally from Baltimore, Wendy now lives in Chicago with her husband, Scott Newberger, and their three children. “Scott and I studied at the Mini-School together and he shares my passion for Jewish education. Our partnership makes it possible for me to be as involved as I am today,” she says. ♦

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