

The mission of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life is to preserve and document the practice, culture and legacy of Judaism in the South. The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience operates under the auspices of the Institute.

SHOW UP FOR THE MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR!

ISJL Welcomes Leading Scholars in Celebration of 350 Years of Jewish Life in America

In celebration of the 350th anniversary of Jewish settlement in America, the Institute of Southern Jewish Life is pleased to announce a series of programs by two of the leading historians of the American Jewish experience. Under the auspices of the ISJL's Southern States Literary Series, noted scholar Deborah Dash Moore will speak in three different communities about her new book, *G.I. Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation*. Dr. Moore,

the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Religion and Director of the Jewish Studies Program at Vassar College, is the author of several influential books and articles about 20th century urban Jewish history. *G.I. Jews* looks at the profound effect wartime service had not only on Jewish soldiers, but also on America's Jewish community in general.

Based on memoirs, letters, and oral histories, Moore traces the lives of fifteen young Jewish soldiers, including her father, serving in World War II and offers an unprecedented view of their struggles against not only the Axis

Powers but also the prejudices of their fellow soldiers. She describes many of these soldiers' first experiences with the South during basic training and follows their story through, in some cases, their harrowing encounters with death camp survivors. Through their first-hand accounts, we come to understand how these soldiers wrestled with what it meant to be an American and a Jew. Moore argues that military service strengthened Jews' identification with American democratic ideals, even as it confirmed the importance of their Jewish identity.

Dr. Moore will be discussing her work on the experience of Jewish soldiers at the National D-Day Museum in New Orleans on March 8th, the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg on March 9th, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gulfport on March 10th. All programs will start at 7 pm and are free and open to the public. Dr. Moore's tour has been partially underwritten by the Mississippi Humanities Council and the Jewish Endowment Fund of New

Orleans. Co-sponsors include the Jewish Studies Program at Tulane University, the D-Day Museum, Congregation B'nai Israel in Hattiesburg, the USM History Department, the Mississippi Military Museum at Camp Shelby, Unit #1957 of B'nai B'rith, and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

In addition, the ISJL is pleased to co-sponsor a fascinating presentation by Dr. Jenna Weissman Joselit in Mobile, Alabama as part of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture's "Key Documents in American Jewish History" project. Dr. Joselit, a professor of religion at Princeton University and the author of several books and articles on the American Jewish experience, will examine the cultural significance of the Ten Commandments in Jewish and American life. She will discuss the Tablets of the Law in a variety of cultural forms, including synagogue architecture, Cecil B. DeMille's classic movie, school pageants, and surveys of ritual practice.

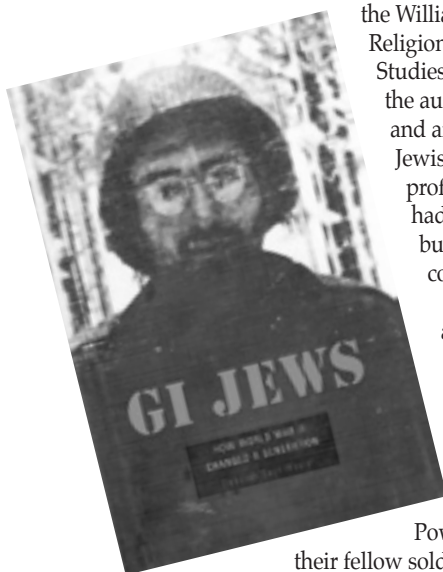
Dr. Joselit will speak at the Gulf Coast Exploreum in Mobile, Alabama on April 3rd at 3 pm in conjunction with the museum's exhibit of the Dead Sea Scrolls. One of the scrolls on display is a fragment of Deuteronomy that contains the Ten Commandments. Dr. Joselit's lecture will put this central religious text into a modern cultural context. The program is free and attendees will not be required to pay admission for the exhibit.

The NFJC's "Key Documents" program is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project offers 44 leading scholars, each discussing a key text in American Jewish history. The ISJL is one of 10 partner institutions working to bring these scholars to the public. The NEH and the Gulf Coast Exploreum have graciously underwritten Dr. Joselit's talk. The Mobile Jewish Welfare Fund is co-sponsoring. The ISJL is working on several other "Key Documents" events and is looking for interested communities.

The ISJL is planning on bringing more leading historians to the South later in 2005 as the "Magical History Tour" rolls on. For information about scheduling a stop in your city, please contact ISJL Historian Dr. Stuart Rockoff at (601) 362-6357; rockoff@msje.org.



Joselit



Dash Moore

Message From the Institute Board Chair



Without a doubt 2004 was an impressive year for the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. It was a year in which our many ideas moved from concept to reality. It was a year where we did much less thinking about what we could do, and more working on what we can do. It was a year that proved to our stakeholders (both present and future), that an investment in the ISJL could provide returns beyond expectations.

For the first time over a full calendar year, the Institute delivered all of its key programs. Rabbi Kassoff traveled the South, providing ritual and spiritual leadership to a different community almost every week. Her weekly "Taste of Torah" message touched many of you by email. Our education program and curriculum enabled parent/teachers to engage our youth as fully prepared instructors with lessons designed to build Jewish knowledge, not just week-to-week, but year-to-year. The hard work of our education staff, including ISJL fellows Amanda Abrams and Beth Kander, allowed us to follow up our training workshops with congregational visits and ongoing support. With these two programs alone, Jewish communities without a resident Jewish professional suddenly benefited from the latest in Jewish thought and the encouraging hands of professionals dedicated to Jewish communal care.

ISJL historian Stuart Rockoff led our efforts to document Southern Jewish history, building our archives, and delivering research that documents the impact that our forbearers had on the Southern economy and culture. The ISJL's impact is felt across the region with the success of our cultural programming, from Jewish Cinema South to our Southern States Literary Series. We continued to build the collection of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience. We made important commitments this year toward additional museum locations in Meridian and Selma. By participating in economic redevelopment in these cities, the ISJL continues the 200 year-old legacy of Jewish contribution to the region's economic vitality.

During the two years I have spent as chairman, I have observed an ethic of accomplishment and excellence from the entire staff of the Institute. What this small but dedicated group delivers is beyond my expectation. They work as a team, supporting each other as they do what many could not. I salute our team and credit Macy Hart with the leadership and the vision that brings them all together.

However, the most important part of our team is YOU. In this issue of *Circa* we recognize the supporters of our annual Friends campaign. The work of the Institute has gained national recognition as a winning model for the efficient delivery of Jewish services to underserved communities. Inside you will see a list of institutional supporters whose endorsement is fundamental to our success. This year over 800 individuals and families are listed as Friends, totaling over \$430,000 of support. Both sums represent new records for the ISJL Friends campaign. Our appreciation will be demonstrated through the efforts of our work. We want each supporter to know that our obligation is to deliver on your trust.

This *Circa* will reach 11,000 readers, so only one in fourteen of you have joined our cause. I hope that if you are not yet supporting us, that you will respond now by pledging your support during 2005.

Recently the ISJL lost a great friend and benefactor with the passing of Fred King. Fred served as board member and Treasurer of the Institute for many years. He represented the very essence of kindness, wisdom, and selflessness that we celebrate. He is missed but his work and his legacy are indelibly imprinted in our future.

B'shalom,


Jay Tanenbaum

Message from the Institute President



Our Chairman, Jay Tanenbaum, has devoted his column in this edition to the many accomplishments of the ISJL while stressing our financial dependence on grassroots support from Friends. I add my endorsement to his request and hope that many of you who have watched us grow from concept to reality will add your own support by contributing to the Institute.

But this is not what I am writing about in this *Circa*.

February 13th marks just the 5th anniversary of the ISJL's existence in its full time role. What we have accomplished during the last five years is truly amazing. Our board, staff, and longtime supporters are all committed to raising the bar of what can be expected by Jewish communities regardless of their size or location. Since we are now in the planning stages of expanding our services to a new group of Southern states, I think it's important for me to lay out some of the guiding principles behind the Institute's work.

Since our founding, we have promoted the idea that *K'lal Yisrael* means all Jews wherever they are, not just in the former Soviet Union or Israel, but also in places like Alabama, Oklahoma, and North Dakota. We must care for and nurture Jewish life wherever it exists. We are pleased to see that this culture change is beginning to have an effect on other organizations in the Jewish world.

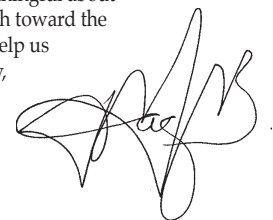
One of our central goals is to see hope return to the underserved and isolated: hope for a future filled with programs that not only enhance Jewish life but also the larger community that we share as neighbors. Long have we instilled the sense of *Tikkun Olam* in our religious practice. The ISJL intends to reintroduce *Tikkun Olam* through our regional approach of efficient planning and execution of interesting gathering moments. Wouldn't it be thrilling to create a bold new tradition of smaller communities sharing resources to both strengthen Jewishness

and transform the world around them? Large urban Jewish communities can learn much from the dedication of small town Jews, where they simply can't afford complacency.

So many in the halls of leadership, funders, and foundations focus exclusively on the numbers served. But these numbers can be misleading. For example, congregations with 1000 or more families still, for the most part, will only have 10 to 15% of their actual members in attendance on a typical Shabbat. We are so accustomed to that range, that we use the size of the audience as a measure. As a Jewish community we have lowered our expectation so that the "high" is actually very low, yet we continue to fund the programs that preach to the "choir." Using this metaphor, the ISJL is striving to increase the size of the "choir" by starting very early. This true outreach seeks to develop new voices, wherever they may be, so as they move to larger cities, their voices have already been trained and they are ready to join the "choir."

The mission of the ISJL, paraphrased, is to raise the level of participation in Jewish life regardless of a community's size and location. By achieving this goal, we are demonstrating a new model for the Jewish organizational world. You know, it's not about what is working, as that will continue. It's about what isn't and we can all do something meaningful about that. The Institute begins its march toward the next five years. I hope you will help us create the impact for as you know, change requires much work. But here at the ISJL, we like the work.

Macy B. Hart



JEWISH CINEMA SOUTH 2004 Breaks Records!



Rabbi Valerie Cohen, ISJL Board Member Elaine Crystal, and Dana Larkin enjoy the Opening Gala of the Jackson Jewish Film Festival.
Photo by Lynda Yule.



Mississippi Supreme Court Justice James Graves makes a point during his talk following the film "Taking Sides."
Photo by Lynda Yule.



Jan Davidson (left), the executive director of the Mobile Jewish Welfare Fund, chats with Larry Voit and guest speaker Sandy Roberts at Mobile's opening gala.
Photo courtesy of Ricki Voit.



(l to r): Henry Cohen, Allen Stern, and film festival steering committee member Sandi Stern at the L'Chaim League luncheon preceding the screening of "Paper Clips" in Montgomery.
Photo courtesy of Jo Anne Rouso.

By all accounts, the fourth year of Jewish Cinema South was a smashing success. The Jewish Film Festivals of Jackson, Montgomery, and Mobile all set attendance records as large crowds flocked to the entertaining and meaningful films that were presented. Filmgoers also enjoyed the special guests who spoke after the films. What was especially gratifying was the success of "Paper Clips," which documented a Tennessee middle school's unique project to come to grips with the size and meaning of the Holocaust. In each community, school groups were specially invited to screenings of the film. These "Paper Clips" showings were wonderfully successful community outreach programs.

Jewish Cinema South 2005 is already in high gear, as we seek to expand the number of participating communities. Representatives from interested communities will be gathering in Jackson February 28th - March 2nd to screen films. If your community is interested in taking part, contact Lynda Yule at (601) 362-6357; yule@msje.org.

Children from Jackson's APAC Middle School attend a screening of the film "Paper Clips." Photo by Lynda Yule.

Filmgoers in Montgomery line up outside of the Capri Theater.
Photo courtesy of Jo Anne Rouso.



Message from ISJL Rabbi Debra Kassoff:

A man asked the Baal Shem Tov: Why do I sometimes feel that God is absent or too far away to reach, however hard I try?

He answered: When you set out to teach your little children to walk, didn't you stand in front of them and, as they walked toward you, held your two hands on either side of them to keep them from falling? Then, when they came near, didn't you move away a little, holding your hands farther apart? After a while, your children learned to walk on their own, didn't they?

--Hasidic Tale



Photo by Alec Kassoff.

At the start of 2005, amidst a landscape of genocide in Darfur, Sudan; an ongoing war in Iraq; great uncertainty and continued violence in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank; and the tsunami-devastated coastlines of South Asia; we might be forgiven for wondering whether God has finally (as it were) thrown up God's hands, walked away, and left us to fight our demons, and each other, alone.

And yet, the wisdom of the Baal Shem Tov directs us to seek God not in misfortunes averted, or in visions or heavenly portents, but rather in our human ability to learn, to grow, and to respond to the world's challenges.

The truth of this teaching might strike some of us as dispiriting, like a cold draft insinuating itself under our bedclothes at night, disrupting a happy dream. It's hard to learn to walk on our own. It's frightening to go out into the world by ourselves, without the protection of a loving parent nearby. Every once in a while we might prefer a God who would hold us by the hand and show us a way out of our troubles.

Ultimately, though, I find comfort in the words of the Baal Shem Tov. Like any good parent, God has equipped us with tools to smooth our own paths, to ease the way of others—perhaps, even the way of God. The Baal Shem Tov himself taught that God needs us, needs our acts of *tikkun olam*—literally “repair of the world.” God shines through every aspect of creation; at the heart of the miracle of existence burns a divine spark. Just as the world is broken, in need of healing, God too is broken, and only we—also broken, divinely created—possess the potential to bring wholeness to ourselves, the world, and God.

Still, from somewhere come our amazing abilities to learn and grow and understand and even solve many of the world's problems. Doctors and teachers, scientists and artists, architects and law makers and sanitation workers and every single one of us face on a daily basis a new

opportunity and a new responsibility to contribute to *tikkun olam*, the world's healing. In this, we are truly God's partners.

This issue of *Circa* celebrates 350 years of American Jewish history. As we look back over our history, we see that it is largely a story of Jews pulling together to help one another. First on a local level, then on a national and international level, Jews created societies and organizations to help one another. Over the last twenty years, a new constellation of agencies has sprung up—including the American Jewish World Service, Mazon: a Jewish Response to Hunger, the Jewish Fund for Justice, and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life—with the express purpose of improving the wider world we live in and helping all people, regardless of religion or race. We have not only learned to walk on our own, but to fly.

In my travels over the last year and a half I have visited some two dozen communities, and I have found that nothing energizes a community so much as doing the work of *tikkun olam*. From the annual Delta Jewish Golf Open organized by Hebrew Union Congregation in Greenville, Mississippi, which raises funds for the Henry S. Jacobs Camp and the ISJL; to the donation of a Torah scroll to a community in the former Soviet Union from Temple Beth El in Helena, Arkansas; to Temple Shalom's fall holidays food drive that recently collected 900 pounds of food for the food pantry in Lafayette, Louisiana; giving to others makes a congregation stronger. It makes our people stronger. More than that, it gives us a glimpse of God at work in the world.

When we fly, sometimes we will fall. Misfortune continues to sprout wherever we look. But God has not left us, and we are not helpless. Even the most impoverished among us is not free from the obligation of *tzedakah*. Even the smallest of our communities is not exempt from works of *tikkun olam*. Why? Because through such acts we see God in the world. Through doing for others we fulfill the divine potential of our humanity. When we fail to turn outward, to look for how to serve others, we stumble. When we fail, communally, to walk on our own, then God is truly absent.

May the next 350 years of American Jewish history be marked in all of our communities and in every Jewish home with continued strength, success, and ever stronger, bolder steps along the path of *tikkun olam*.

ISJL Receives Prestigious Covenant Grant

In January, the Covenant Foundation awarded the ISJL a grant of \$163,623 to support the Institute's education project. According to the foundation's press release, the grant is to help the ISJL “implement a comprehensive approach to Jewish education for small, geographically isolated Jewish communities in the South.” The Covenant Foundation was established in 1990 by the Crown Family Foundation in partnership with the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA). The purpose of the Foundation is to improve the field of Jewish education in North America across all denominations. The foundation recognized the ISJL education project as an innovative initiative that not

only provided essential services to small and medium-sized congregations across the South, but also created a potential model for other regions and communities.

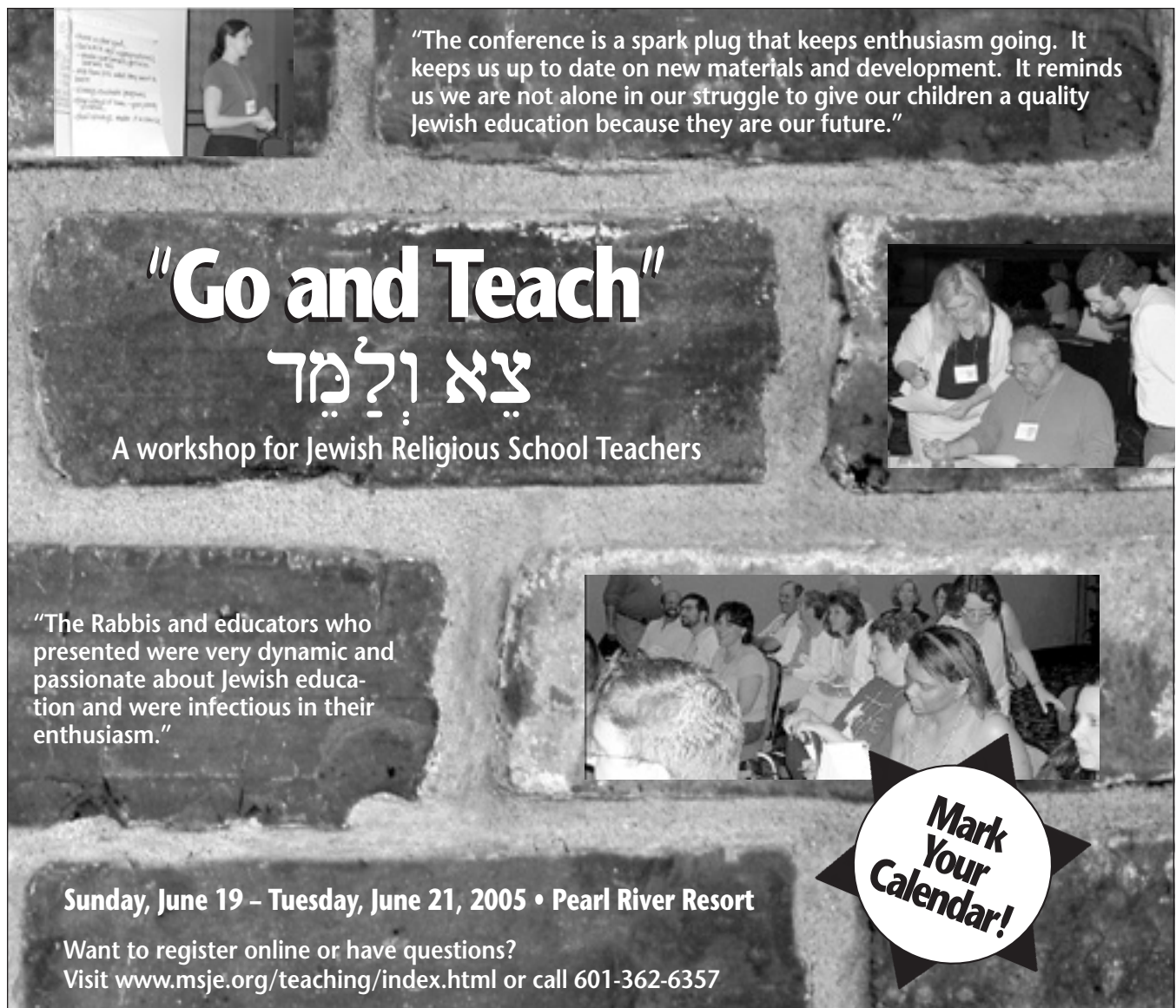
The Covenant Foundation is known throughout the United States for being committed to innovation and excellence in the field of Jewish education. According to ISJL President Macy Hart, “to get one of these grants is a strong endorsement of the Institute's work and a statement from the Covenant Foundation acknowledging the significance of the Institute's mission.”

Hart himself received an award from the Covenant Foundation as an outstanding Jewish educator in 1999.

ISJL Education Department Partners with CAJE

Since its launch in June 2003, the ISJL's education department has made tremendous advances. The curriculum is now being used in twenty-three religious schools in the pilot territory of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The Education Fellows continue to offer vital programs and services such as liturgical assistance, teacher training, classroom observation, and holiday events. Most of the religious schools with whom the ISJL works have experienced renewed commitment and enthusiasm from teachers, students, and parents. With this success have come numerous opportunities, most notably the Institute's new partnership with the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE). CAJE is a leading international organization devoted to advancing Jewish education across all denominations. Their annual conferences attract thousands of Jewish educators from around the world.

After listening to feedback from the participating religious schools, our Education Fellows recognized the need for a pre-school, or "early childhood," curriculum that would serve as a precursor to the Institute's current Kindergarten through 10th grade curriculum. The Institute initiated discussions with CAJE about the development of such an initiative, and after much conversation, the partnership is now underway. CAJE will be working with ISJL education staff to create an early childhood program for children and their parents. The curriculum will concentrate on Jewish values, living a Jewish life, and Jewish holidays and will include both classroom and at-home enrichment opportunities. The ISJL and CAJE look forward to unveiling the new Early Childhood Curriculum at the Institute's annual Education Conference, scheduled for June 19th – 21st 2005.



"The conference is a spark plug that keeps enthusiasm going. It keeps us up to date on new materials and development. It reminds us we are not alone in our struggle to give our children a quality Jewish education because they are our future."

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Correction: In last *Circa's* feature "A Brookhaven Portrait," the store "Abrams Mercantile" was mistakenly identified as belonging to Harold Samuels' grandfather. Mr. Samuels' grandfather opened the store "Sam Abrams." Abrams Mercantile was owned by another family. We deeply regret the error.

Southern Jewish Mayors Reflect Social Acceptance

by
Dr. Stuart Rockoff,
ISJL Historian

About a year ago, I began collecting the names of communities in the South that have had a Jewish mayor. This new hobby came as a response to an academic debate in the field of Southern Jewish history and a common question from museum visitors and groups of Northerners whom I speak to. The basic question is: how have Jews been treated in the South? This seemingly simple question has no easy answer. We all have heard or experienced remarkable stories in which Southern gentiles have expressed deep caring for their Jewish neighbors. I recall the stories about how when Dr. Joe Rosenzweig would go to the grocery store in Hot Springs, Arkansas with his wife Suzi late in his life, people would literally line up to say hello to "Dr. Joe" and see how he was doing. As Hot Springs' first pediatrician, he helped to raise a generation of kids, of all religions and races. Of course, this reception had little to do with Rosenzweig's Jewishness. But that's precisely the point.



I.A. Rosenbaum, who served as mayor of Meridian, Mississippi, is just one of many Southern Jews to hold the office of mayor. Photo by Bill Aron.

We have also heard of, or experienced, the opposite phenomenon: Jewish kids being taunted at school, temples being bombed during the civil rights era, and of course, the lynching of Leo Frank. Indeed, the answer to the question of how Jews were received in the South is quite complex.

And so I began thinking of ways of documenting the acceptance of Jews in the South, beyond anecdotes. Being elected to public office is a clear sign of social and political acceptance, far more than business success. And what better office than mayor of a community, where in many small cities and towns most voters knew the candidates personally. A mayor represented the entire community as its most public representative.

Over the last several months, I have gotten more serious about the list, and worked to compile as many Southern Jewish mayors as I could. Currently, I have listed 122 Jewish mayors of 85 different cities or towns in 12 Southern states. This is a remarkable number,



Mayor Ben Holzman

especially when you consider that Jews have never been more than 1% of the South's population. They have spanned the history of Jewish presence in the South, from Mordecai De Leon, who was elected mayor of Columbia, South Carolina in 1833 to Heidi Davidson, who is the current mayor of Athens, Georgia.

This list is very much a work in progress, and I invite additions and editions from the readers of *Circa*. You can access the list at our website, www.isjl.org. If you have someone to add, or any personal information about a particular mayor, please email me at rockoff@msje.org.

The ISJL History Department would like to collect as much information about the men and women on this list as we can. Periodically, we will profile some of them. We begin this issue with a portrait of a Jewish immigrant who was an eyewitness to several major historical events, before making some history himself as Shreveport's second Jewish mayor.

Ben Holzman: Shreveport's Progressive Mayor

Ben Holzman served as mayor of Shreveport, Louisiana from 1900 to 1902. From his arrival in the United States in 1857, as a 13-year old immigrant from Germany, Holzman had a knack for being in the right place when history was being made. Living in Washington D.C. at the outbreak of the Civil War, Holzman chose to join the Confederate Navy, and ended up serving as a gunner on the *CSS Virginia*. This ship is more popularly known as the *Merrimack*, the famous ironclad boat that took part in the legendary battle with the Union's own ironclad, the *Monitor*. Holzman reportedly was the last surviving sailor from the *Merrimack* when he died in 1922.

After the Civil War, Holzman returned to Washington, and found work with a dry goods company. According to his obituary in the *Shreveport Times*, President Abraham Lincoln was one of his customers. Holzman was also reportedly in the audience at Ford's Theater the night Lincoln was assassinated.

Holzman continued his civic involvement after his term as mayor, serving on the parish school board.



Holzman moved to Shreveport later in 1865, marrying Stella Barr a few years later. They had two daughters. One of Holzman's granddaughters was the actress, singer, and longtime panelist on the TV show *To Tell the Truth*, Kitty Carlisle Hart. Holzman wasted no time becoming active in Shreveport's Jewish community. He was a founder and president of B'nai Zion Temple, the local B'nai B'rith lodge, and the Columbia Club. He was the first president of the Hebrew Relief Society of Shreveport and one of the charter members of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Association.

Though he was extremely active in the local Jewish community, Holzman was also involved in Shreveport's civic affairs. Holzman was a respected businessman in Shreveport, owning a Dry Goods Store for several years. He was president of the Shreveport Mutual Building Association and served on the city council and the Caddo Parish School Board. He was elected mayor in 1899. Holzman's life represented the experience of so many Southern Jews, who worked to integrate themselves into the leadership class of their towns while remaining true to their faith and the Jewish community.

I have found no evidence of his Jewishness becoming an issue in his campaign for mayor. Clearly, since only 700 or so Jews lived in Shreveport at the time of his election, he won the votes of many gentiles. By all accounts, he was a successful mayor, bringing improvements in sanitation, water, fire safety, and street paving. During his inaugural speech, Holzman outlined the problems the city was facing due to its recent growth into a city of 30,000 residents, calling for new schools and parks and a central fire station to be built. He associated himself with the growing Progressive Reform movement then sweeping through America's cities, and promised an honest and efficient government. He achieved many of his goals during his two years in office, including extensive public improvements in sewage and public health, a significant achievement for a city that had been crippled by recent outbreaks of smallpox and yellow fever.

Holzman wasn't the first or the last Jewish mayor of Shreveport. His friend Ernest Bernstein, a fellow member of B'nai Zion, was elected mayor in 1906. Often, it was their prominence in the local merchant class that paved the way for Jews to enter local politics. Yet their success reflects a surprising degree of acceptance, and shows that Southern Jews have long been committed to making a contribution to civic life in their communities.

Editor's Note:

We note with sadness the passing of ISJL Treasurer Fred King. There is much to say about Fred and his loyal and long-standing support of the ISJL since its beginning.



Fred came to us years ago with a sincere desire to make Jewish life more available not only to his own Monroe, Louisiana, but to the rest of the South as well. Fred was a leader within this organization. His commitment to the ideals of the Institute is exemplified by his endowment five years ago. He knew that the Institute and its Board were doing significant, cutting-edge work. He wanted to be a part of it while he was alive and his generosity has ensured that his influence will continue to shape the ISJL.

Fred endeared himself to all those lucky enough to get to know him. Each year we couldn't wait to receive Fred's New Year card. It always reflected his great sense of humor. Our favorite was last year's, which pictured him at the southernmost tip of Argentina, and asked "what's a nice Jewish boy like me doing in a place like this?" The answer, of course, was exploring and seeing the world, something that Fred had a real passion for. We will miss him.

Fred King

ISJL Rabbi Helps Organize Interfaith Thanksgiving Service

Much of Southern Jewish history can be told as a story of relations between Jews and the gentile friends and neighbors whose lives have unfolded alongside and within our own. A new telling of an old chapter of this story unfolded in Vicksburg, Mississippi on November 22nd when ISJL Rabbi Debra Kassoff helped organize and lead an interfaith Thanksgiving Service at Anshe Chesed Congregation with Father Michael Nation of the Church of the Holy Trinity.

The interfaith Thanksgiving service is a common custom in many communities throughout the United States, and it was practiced annually in Vicksburg, Mississippi from 1941 up until some 20 years ago. According to Vicksburg resident and historian Julius Herscovici, the Temple hosted the first service in 1941. Five Christian congregations participated, representing Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist

denominations, including Holy Trinity. "It moved each year to a different church," recalls Vicksburg native Betty England, who remembers the service from her childhood. No one can say for certain when the tradition ended, but some think it died out after the retirement of Vicksburg's last full-time rabbi in the late 1980's.

Years later, residents still maintain fond associations with this service. When Rabbi Kassoff contacted Father Nation last fall to inquire on behalf of Anshe Chesed into any current practice of an interfaith Thanksgiving service in Vicksburg, he acknowledged that there was none, and immediately suggested that the two congregations revive the old custom.

Once again, Anshe Chesed played host to the service and to a beautiful dessert reception following. Holy Trinity members attended in enthusiastic numbers, filling pews that often stretch out empty behind the Temple's dozen or so regular worshippers. The service began with a psalm, performed in a beautiful musical setting by Mrs. Dorothy Kenna Brasfield, the organist at Holy Trinity, and Mrs. Kim Matthews, a member of the Holy Trinity choir. It continued with hymns from the Episcopal and Union (Reform Jewish) Hymnals, prayers of thanksgiving from Jewish and Christian tradition, scriptural readings, and brief remarks by Father Nation and Rabbi Kassoff. The service concluded with rabbi and priest standing side by side on the bima to bless the congregation in the words of the Priestly Benediction: Father Nation reciting the Hebrew and Rabbi Kassoff translating to English.

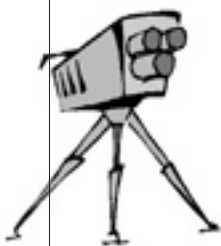
The evening was a great success, with many remarking on the wonderful opportunity it gave Jewish and Christian neighbors to acknowledge Thanksgiving in their respective faith communities while simultaneously celebrating the universal core values that they share with one another. The goodwill and warm hearts generated by the service gave all involved one more thing for which to give thanks.

Next year's service has already gone into the calendar for both congregations, with plans to invite other Vicksburg congregations to participate and to incorporate an opportunity for *tzedakah*.

Interested in holding a similar event in your community? Contact Rabbi Kassoff with any questions at kassoff@isjl.org



*Father Michael Nation and Rabbi Debra Kassoff stand before the ark at Anshe Chesed in Vicksburg.
Photo by Richard Marcus.*



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your ancestors for your family and helping the Institute to continue to capture the history of our southern Jewish heritage before it is lost forever. For more information, contact us at 601-362-6357 or information@msje.org

ISJL Building Interfaith Bridges

Since its inception as the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience, the ISJL has been a source of education, culture, and enrichment for both Southern Jews and the community at large. The Institute is committed to fostering interfaith, interracial, and intergenerational dialogue and understanding. While the ISJL staff spends

much of their time working in the Jewish communities of the South, they also maintain a vital presence in the larger community, working with interfaith groups, churches, and other local organizations.

A key example of the ISJL's impact on the community is the programs that have been brought to Mississippi schools. Working in the field, ISJL Historian Stuart Rockoff, Education Fellows Amanda Abrams and Beth Kander, and Rabbi Debra Kassoff have brought lessons of history, tolerance, and culture directly into classrooms and lecture halls throughout Jackson and the surrounding area.

In the past year, staff members have visited more than a dozen schools in the metro-Jackson area: elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges. Students at Jackson's Murrah High School read "The Chosen" and then spent a morning with ISJL staff learning about Jewish culture. Both Dr. Rockoff and Rabbi Kassoff have spoken to 8th graders at Clinton Middle School about the tragedy of the Holocaust and the importance of tolerance. In many cases, the ISJL staff member is the first Jewish person these children have met, and much of our time is spent explaining the basic tenets and practices of Judaism.

After ISJL Education Fellows Amanda Abrams and Beth Kander visited her classroom in Canton, Mississippi, one 8th grade student wrote: "I learned that as humans we all have to treat each other as equals, not separate because of the color of skin or because of culture. I really learned a lot – thanks." This note reflects sentiments expressed in many letters, emails, and phone calls to the ISJL staff following their visits. Clearly, educating young people about the importance of history and tolerance is some of the most crucial work to be done – and just as clearly, the ISJL staff visits have made and will continue to make lasting impressions on hundreds of students.



(left top) ISJL Historian Dr. Stuart Rockoff poses with students from Clinton Middle School. Photo courtesy of Janie Fields.

(left) Rabbi Debra Kassoff with 8th grade English teacher Mrs. Janie Fields, and Clinton Middle School Principal Anthony Goins. Photo courtesy of Janie Fields.

The Institute is indebted to the following foundations and individuals whose generous investment, past and present, have enabled us to move our vision forward with confidence:

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Affordable Poster Series Commemorates and Teaches American Jewish History



A series of fifteen educational posters, developed in commemoration of this year's 350th anniversary celebration of Jewish Life in America, is now available for purchase. The series consists of fifteen, high-quality posters, each detailing a thought-provoking theme characterizing the American Jewish experience. The set costs only \$50, including postage. The posters were developed collaboratively by designer/writer Scott-Martin Kosofsky, historian Professor Jonathan D. Sarna and artist Lance Hidy.

Poster topics include: *Refuge; Religious Liberty; Service; American Judaism; Tzedakah; Labor and Social Justice; Civic Participation; Language;*

Learning; Business and Commerce; Creative Expression; Sports; Intolerance; Zion and Renewal. Each poster succinctly, yet powerfully, explains these topics by highlighting important events, people and ideas through a chronological framework, punctuated by arresting images



Celebrate 350
Jewish Life in America
1654 - 2004

of historical documents and artifacts.

The posters were commissioned by **Celebrate 350: Jewish Life in America 1654 - 2004**, the organization that facilitates celebratory and commemorative activities taking place across the nation during this 350th year of continuous Jewish communal life in America. The poster series was made possible by a generous grant from the Deanne and Arnold Kaplan Foundation. Additional support was provided by Peachy and Mark Levy.

"The poster series enables Jews all over the country to mount an exciting educational exhibit for the 350th anniversary in their schools, synagogues and homes," said Alice Herman, the Executive Director of **Celebrate 350**. "The knowledge these posters impart serves as part of the lasting legacy of this anniversary year, educating the next generation about American Jewry's rich heritage," she added.

Each poster is 24" x 36" and finely printed on heavy stock to facilitate framing or mounting. They can be purchased by check or credit card through the **Celebrate 350** website, <http://www.celebrate350.org/poster.htm>. Direct all purchasing questions to posters@celebrate350.org. Or, call Rachael Diment at 212-629-0500 x 213.

Henry S. Jacobs Camp Celebrates **Double Chai Anniversary** *"Together We Hold The Flame"*

Henry S. Jacobs Camp will begin the summer of 2005 with a Double Chai anniversary celebration, commemorating 36 years of providing a unique cultural and spiritual experience for Jewish children in the South. The event, organized by Camp Director Jonathan Cohen, the Jacobs Camp Committee and the Double Chai Planning Committee, will be held on Memorial Day Weekend, May 27-29, 2005. Organizers hope to attract hundreds of alumni from all of the last 36 summers, as well as current campers, staff members, supporters, and their families, to participate in this special occasion.



First session campers and staff during Jacobs Camp's first summer of 1970. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Cohen.

Beginning with a vision to provide a community experience for Southern Jewish children in the early 1950s, the Henry S. Jacobs Camp opened its gates in Utica, Mississippi for the summer of 1970. During the past 36 summers, Jacobs Camp has touched the heart of thousands of campers and staff members by providing a fun and rewarding experience dedicated to making everyone who enters the gates feel like they have come home. ISJL President Macy B. Hart, director of the camp from its founding until 2000 and one of the honorary chairs of the reunion, marks this event as "an affirmation of the vision of the founders who built the camp against all odds. The fact that the reunion will bring together so many who have been touched by that vision is extraordinarily gratifying." Other honorary chairs include: Rabbi David Ostrich, representing the 1970's; Linda Orlansky Posner, the 1980's; Michael Danziger, the 1990's, and Joel Yuspeh Ashner, Chair of the Jacobs Camp Committee.

The celebration begins Friday, May 27 at 6:15 pm with Shabbat Services at Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson. Saturday, entitled Family Fun Day, will take place at the camp from 10:00 am until 9:00 pm, and will include Shabbat services and numerous recreational activities including decade vs. decade alumni softball games. The evening will conclude with a concert by Steve Dropkin and Yom Hadash, a Jewish rock band. The Founders Luncheon will be Sunday and will include speakers and presentations by alumni about the history and significance of the camp.

For more information on the anniversary celebration, visit www.hsjacobscamp.org or call (601) 885-6042.

ISJL Co-Sponsors “An Evening with Madame F”

Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, in conjunction with the Institute of Southern Jewish Life and Congregation Beth Israel, will be hosting pianist, vocalist, and dancer Claudia Stevens on February 24. Her one-woman show, “An Evening with Madame F,” depicts the struggle and ethical dilemma of Nazi concentration camp inmates who survived by performing music for the enemy. The story focuses on Fania Fenelon, a French cabaret singer who was imprisoned at Auschwitz. Dr. Stevens, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, intersperses pieces of music actually played in concentration camps with the compositions of Fred Cohen. With more than one hundred national presentations, “An Evening with Madame F” is among the most distinguished Holocaust-related performance programs.

Holding various music degrees, Dr. Stevens is an accomplished concert pianist and composer. Her work has been praised nationally for its enduring lesson of memory and self-discovery. Dr. Stevens will be appearing at Millsaps College on February 24, 7:30 pm at the Gertrude Ford Academic Complex recital hall. The event will be followed by a dessert reception in the Lewis Art Gallery. Extending her stay at Millsaps, Stevens will also participate in the college’s weekly Millsaps Forum program at 12:30 the following Friday, February 25. At the forum, she will speak on “Identity, Expression, Vocation,” and will reflect on her journey as an artist and a Jewish woman. If you have any questions about



the program or if you are interested in attending, please contact the ISJL at (601)-362-6357 or email Neola Young at nyoung@msje.org.

Internship & Fellowship Opportunities at ISJL

The ISJL is now looking for new Education Fellows to serve for two years in one of the most unique and innovative programs available in Jewish education today. ISJL Education Fellows

work with participating communities to implement the Institute’s religious school curriculum. Fellows provide teacher training, conduct services, and lead adult education and youth programs. Fellows also help to organize and run the annual education conference designed to train the region’s religious school teachers. They also serve as birthright israel’s “Southern Alumni Coordinators.” Qualifications include a college degree and active involvement in Jewish life or organizations. The fellowship includes salary, expenses, and benefits. For more information, contact Nonnie Campbell at (601) 362-6357 or information@msje.org.

The Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience is looking for interns to work at its Utica branch.

These museum interns will be involved in all aspects of the MSJE’s programs, including cataloging new acquisitions, leading group tours, developing museum-related youth educational programs, and assisting with the museum’s traveling exhibits. Museum interns receive free room and board at the Henry S. Jacobs Camp as well as a stipend.

The ISJL History Department offers research internships. History interns will engage in historical research and writing while compiling documentation of Jewish communities throughout the region. In addition, history interns will work with the Institute’s oral historian, interviewing subjects and transcribing and indexing tapes. History interns will reside in Jackson and receive a stipend. Interested students should send a resume and cover letter to Dr. Stuart Rockoff at the ISJL, Box 16528, Jackson, MS 39236. For information, contact Stuart at rockoff@msje.org.

The ISJL is now looking for a rabbinic student intern to assist its Director of Rabbinic Services in a broad range of areas, including congregational, educational, and organizational work. Responsibilities of the Rabbinic Intern include: traveling to underserved congregations to lead Shabbat services, teach, and provide pastoral care; addressing church, civic, and interfaith groups as a representative of the ISJL and the Jewish community; and assisting ISJL Rabbi Debra Kassoff in establishing a regional network of rabbinic services and programming. Send resume and references with a letter of interest to kassoff@isjl.org. For more information, call 601.362.6357.

Birthright Israel Southern Alumni Reunion in Atlanta

In January, over 100 young Southern Jews came to Atlanta, Georgia for the second annual birthright israel Southern Alumni Reunion. Alumni of the birthright trip, as well as their twenty-something peers, came together for a weekend of learning, socializing, and exploring their Jewish identity. The reunion participants took part in a myriad of activities – everything from exploring Jewish career opportunities to partying the night away at an Israeli-style disco ball.

Several ISJL staff members were featured presenters. ISJL President Macy Hart gave a talk on “Empowering Young Adults to Make A Meaningful Impact on the Jewish Community.” ISJL Education Fellows Amanda Abrams

and Beth Kander were featured on a career panel to help participants explore Jewish job opportunities. ISJL Historian Dr. Stuart Rockoff led a program examining the topic of Southern Jews and the civil rights movement.

Since 2003, birthright israel and the Institute of Southern Jewish Life have been partner organizations, working to reach out to young Southern Jews. In the past year and a half, the ISJL Education Fellows have served as adjunct birthright staff, promoting birthright trips, assisting with alumni programming, and participating in staff development. Birthright staff members have served as faculty at the ISJL education conferences, and served as resource consultants throughout the school year.

Wish List

ISJL really needs a variety of equipment and sponsorships as it strives to meet the demands for its services. If you would like to help, please contact Macy Hart, President or Nonnie Campbell, Administrative Director.

Programs

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 4 Education Fellowships @ \$25,000 | \$100,000 |
| Lecture/Literary Series for one year | \$ 15,000 |
| 3 Circa editions per year @ \$15,000 | \$ 45,000 |
| 2 Digital Cameras @ \$500 | \$ 1,000 |
| 2 DVD/VHS Players @ \$200 | \$ 400 |
| 2 Sony Digital Video Cameras @ \$2,000 | \$ 4,000 |

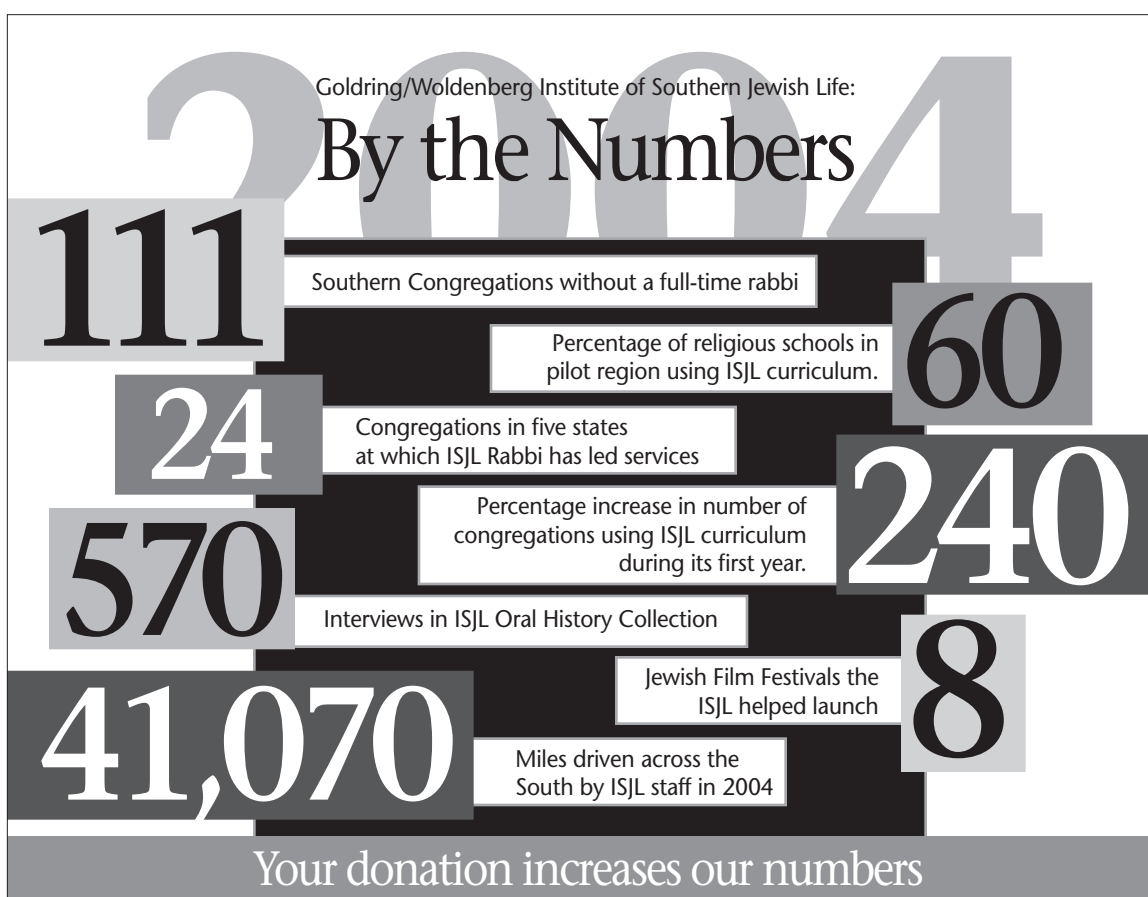
Office Needs

| | |
|---|----------|
| 4 (like new) Laptop Computers @ \$1,500 | \$ 6,000 |
| 6 P.D.A.'s @ \$400 | \$ 2,400 |

Travel

| |
|---|
| Frequent flyer miles |
| 2 automobiles/vans (still under warranty) |

If you see something you are interested in, please let us know. These gifts would help the Institute in allocating the resources required for expanding programs and services.



Sababa! - It's Tu B'shvat



Hey parents, students and teachers!
We just finished celebrating Tu B'shvat,
a Jewish holiday that celebrates trees. In honor
of Tu B'shvat, try a few of the activities below. After
all, it's never too late to care
for the environment or to enjoy the
beauty of nature. Have fun!

Take a walk
outside.

Attend a
Tu B'shvat
Seder

Pick up
trash
in a park.

Plant
an herb
garden.

Purchase
a tree through the
Jewish National
Fund.

Nap in
a tree's
shade.

Eat
some
fruits
or nuts.

Blessing for the trees:

"Blessed are you, Adonai,
Sovereign of the universe,
who has not withheld
anything from the world,
who created in it wonderful
creatures and good trees for
people to enjoy.

ברוך שלא חיסר בעולמו
כלום וברא בו בריות
טובות ואילנות טובות
להתנאות בהן בני אדם

Berakhot 43b

ISJL Annual Campaign Underway

The ISJL Annual Campaign is in full swing. We are pleased to report that gifts to the campaign are at an all time high. In the pages of this newsletter you can see our success and feel the positive impact that we are having across the South. Your contribution will ensure that we can continue to move forward with these exciting programs. *Please take a moment today to make your gift to the ISJL with the enclosed envelope.*

With great appreciation, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life extends gracious thanks to all those who have made contributions between January 1, 2004 and December 31, 2004 to support the ISJL.

\$100,000+

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-Susan & Macy B. Hart

Stephen & Zachary Breslauer's B'nai
Mitzvah
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-Harrylyn & Charles Sallis

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-Mollie & Jimmy Fried

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-Laurie & Alan Diamond

Deep South Jewish Voice
-Adrienne & Julian Brook

Jack Elgart's Bar Mitzvah
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-C. G. Goldsmith
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-Yves Andre Istel
-The Levin Family
-Daniel Reich
-The Rosenberg Family
-The Silverman Family
-The Smul Family
-The Landberg Family
-The Levitt Family
-Barbara Goldsmith
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-The Nass Family
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-Ana & Shaw Thompson
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-Susan & Macy Hart

Corinne & Sidney Goodman's anniversary
-Celia & Bennett Leventhal

Jonathan Greenberg-inspiring student
Rabbi
-Rebecca Goodman

Ms. Carol Hart's birthday
-Susan & Macy B. Hart
-Betty Rimalover

Susan & Macy B. Hart
-Carol B. Nemo
-Miryam & Samuel Tarica
-Linda & David Altshuler
-Linda & Bruce Beeber

Reva Hart's birthday
-Minette & Charles Cooper
-Thelma Mitchell
-Susan & Macy Hart
-Don Mitchell

Reva & Ellis Hart
-Carson Hughes

Rhoda Herzog
-Rickie B. Voit

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Bernard Insler
-Amy & Jordan Estra

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-Ahavath Rayim Congregation,
Greenwood, MS
-Beth Israel Sisterhood, Clarksdale, MS
-B'nai Israel Congregation, Jackson, TN
-Congregation Beth-El, Anniston, AL
-Congregation Beth Israel, Meridian,
MS
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-Gabrielle & Billy Mimes

Erica Seager & Chris Myers' wedding
-Jennifer & Gregg Costa

Morris Mintz's birthday
-Susan & Lou Good

Ida & Max Mushlin
-Michael Mushlin

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-Dianne O. Footlick

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-Philippa Newfield & Phillip Gordon

Leann & Alan Silverblatt
-Woods Eastland

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-Edward Grauman

Phyllis Stern's birthday
-Susan & Macy Hart

Shirley & Bruce Stein's anniversary
-Micky & Stanley Rubenstein

Jerry Tanenbaum's birthday
-Susan & Macy B. Hart

Rachel & Megan Weiss
-Gayl & Arthur Weiss

Cantor Steven Weiss' installation
-Paul Cooper

Diane Wruble's birthday
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The Peddler's Cart

The Ultimate Southern Jewish Shopping Experience

New Books in Honor of 350 Years of American Jewish History:

GI Jews, by Deborah Dash Moore

Over ½ million Jews entered the US armed forces during WWII. This book offers an unprecedented view of the struggles these GI Jews faced, having to battle not only the enemy but also the prejudices of their fellow soldiers. Through memoirs, oral histories, and letters, the author charts the lives of fifteen young Jewish men as they faced military service and tried to make sense of its demands.

GI Jews is a powerful, intimate portrayal of the costs of a conflict that was at once physical, emotional, and spiritual, as well as its profound consequences for this hitherto overlooked members of the "greatest generation."

Hardcover: \$26.00

Chicken Dreaming Corn, by Roy Hoffman

In 1916, on the immigrant blocks of the Southern port city of Mobile, Alabama, a Romanian Jewish shopkeeper, Morris Kleinman, is sweeping his walk in preparation for the Confederate veterans parade about to pass by. "Daddy?" his son asks, "are we Rebels?" "Today?" muses Morris. "Yes, we are Rebels." Thus opens a novel set, like many, in a languid Southern town. But, in a rarity for Southern novels, this one centers on a character who mixes Yiddish with his Southern and has for his neighbors small merchants from Poland, Lebanon, and Greece.

At turns lyrical, comic, and melancholy, this tale takes inspiration from its title. This Romanian expression with an Alabama twist is symbolic of the strivings of ordinary folks for sustenance, for the realization of their hopes and dreams. Set largely on a few humble blocks yet engaging many parts of the world, this Southern Jewish novel is, ultimately, richly American.

Hardcover: \$25.00

From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America, edited by Michael W. Grunberger

Marking the 350th anniversary of the first Jewish settlement in America. *From Haven to Home* celebrates this important occasion by bringing together an eminent group of Judaic scholars who take stock of American Jewish life, from the arrival of the first small group in Manhattan in 1654 to the present.

The contributors examine a wide range of topics, including the early history of the American Jewish community and the various significant phases of Jewish immigration, which saw the initial group of twenty-three burgeon into a thriving community of several million by the early twentieth century. Also addressed is the role of Jews in the Civil War and in World War II, anti-Semitism in America, the daily life and struggles of American Jewish women, and American Jews and politics. The essays are amply illustrated with items from the collection of the Library of Congress's Hebraic Section, among them the first Hebrew bible printed in America and the first Yiddish American cookbook, as well as selections of photographs, prints, diaries, maps, and sheet music.

Central to the Jewish experience in America is this country's commitment to ideals of freedom, opportunity, religious liberty, equality, and pluralism. The continuity of the faith, in fact, depends on it. *From Haven to Home*—the story of Jews in America—is therefore also the story of America and American ideals. 100 color illustrations.

Hardcover: \$50.00

American Judaism, by Jonathan D. Sarna

This magisterial work chronicles the 350-year history of the Jewish religion in America. Tracing American Judaism from its origins in the colonial era through the present day, Jonathan Sarna explores the ways in which Judaism adapted in this new context. How did American culture, predominantly Protestant and overwhelmingly capitalist, affect Jewish religion and culture? And how did American Jews shape their own communities and faith in the new world? Jonathan Sarna, a preeminent scholar of American Judaism, tells the story of individuals struggling to remain Jewish while also becoming American. He offers a dynamic and timely history of assimilation and revitalization, of faith lost and faith regained. The first comprehensive history of American Judaism in over fifty years, this book is both a celebration of 350 years of Jewish life in America and essential reading for anyone interested in American religion and life.

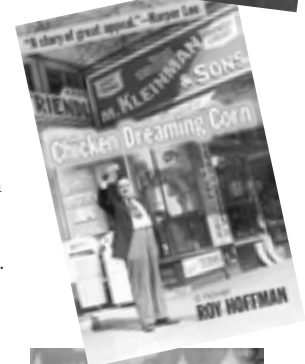
Hardcover: \$35.00

The Jews of the United States, by Hasia R. Diner

Since Peter Stuyvesant greeted with enmity the first group of Jews to arrive on the docks of New Amsterdam in 1654, Jews have entwined their fate and fortunes with that of the United States, a project marked by great struggle and great promise. What this interconnected destiny has meant for American Jews and how it has defined their experience among the world's Jews is fully chronicled in this work, a comprehensive and finely nuanced history of Jews in the United States from 1654 through the end of the past century. Hasia R. Diner traces Jewish participation in American history, from the communities that sent formal letters of greeting to George Washington, to the three thousand Jewish men who fought for the Confederacy and the ten thousand who fought in the Union army, to the Jewish activists who devoted themselves to the labor movement and the civil rights movement. Diner portrays this history as a constant process of negotiation, undertaken by ordinary Jews who wanted at one and the same time to be Jews and full Americans.

Accordingly, Diner draws on both American and Jewish sources to explain the chronology of American Jewish history, the structure of its communal institutions, and the inner dynamism that propelled it. Illustrations: 35 b/w photographs, 15 line illustrations

Hardcover: \$30.00



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Exhibit Highlights Jewish History in St. Francisville, Louisiana

A new exhibit by the West Feliciana Historical Society Museum in St Francisville, Louisiana displays the history and contributions the one-time Jewish population of St. Francisville made to its community. Using old records from the St. Francisville *True Democrat* newspaper, legal and court records, and volumes of the local historical society's vintage photographs, this exhibit pays tribute to a once thriving Jewish community now dwindled to one surviving member.

The exhibit features several panels which focus on Julius Freyhan, a German Jewish immigrant who arrived in Louisiana in 1851 penniless and died one of the richest men in the South. He funded the construction of the first brick public school in St. Francisville, which recently has fallen into poor condition. Continuing the family tradition, Freyhan's granddaughter, who recently passed away at age 94, left money to restore the building and donated several family photographs to the West Feliciana Historical society for the exhibit.

Along with the Freyhan panels and old records, the exhibit also features remnants from local businesses owned by Jewish immigrants, a marble cornerstone from the local synagogue, Temple Sinai, Jewish family objects, and other historical artifacts signifying the contribution of Jewish immigrants to St. Francisville. In addition to being



Julius Freyhan High School in St. Francisville was named for its benefactor, who was one of the prominent Jews in the community. Photo courtesy of the West Feliciana Historical Society.

contributing members of worldwide Jewish societies, Jews in St. Francisville became involved in several local organizations and contributed generously to civic and public improvement projects. This exhibit acknowledges their contributions and gracefully displays their history.

The West Feliciana Historical Society museum and tourist information center is located in St. Francisville on Ferdinand St. and is open daily, free of charge. For information call 225-635-6330.

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