



Fall 2005
No. 1

Judaic Studies Newsletter



Dr. Curt Leviant Lectures on the 'Golem' and on 350th Anniversary of Jews in America

Dr. Curt Leviant of Rutgers University will present a lecture on "The Golem: Myth and 'Fact'— Kabbalah: Mysticism, Mythology and Literature" on Monday, October 31, 2005, at 7:30 P.M. Selections from the 1920 silent film, "The Golem," directed by Paul Wegener, will be shown as part of the program. The lecture on the Golem will take place in the Pegasus Ballroom A.B.C., located in the Student Union.

A second lecture, "1654-2004: 350th Anniversary of Jews in America, Jewish Contribution to American Civilization," will be presented on Tuesday, November 1, 2005, at 10:30 A.M. in the Key West room 218D, in

the Student Union.

Dr. Curt Leviant is a Professor of Hebrew and Yiddish at Rutgers University. He is the author and translator of several books. His book on Isaac Bashevis Singer, *More Stories From My Father's Court*, was published in 2000. Selections of this book appeared in *The New Yorker*, and the book was listed as "A Best Book of the Year" by the *New York Times*. Dr. Leviant won a National Jewish Book Award for his translation of Chaim Grade's *The Yeshiva*.

(Continued on page 6 / Leviant)

JST Director on Mission to Russia

UCF director of the Judaic Studies Program, Prof. Moshe Pelli, participated in a professional visit to major Judaic Studies programs in Russia sponsored by the People to People Ambassador Program. A delegation of eight persons, mostly directors of Jewish Studies programs in the USA, met their counterparts in Moscow and St. Petersburg to discuss professional cooperation and the growing needs of programs and centers of

(Continued on page 3 / Delegation)

Spring Semester Courses

Members of the community are invited to enroll in our upcoming courses for the Spring semester, 2006.

(See page 4 for details)

UCF Faculty at World Congress of Jewish Studies

Three U.C.F. faculty members attended the 14th World Congress of Jewish Studies held in Jerusalem at the Mt. Scopus campus of the Hebrew University from July 31 through August 4, 2005.

Prof. Moshe Pelli, Director of the UCF Judaic Studies Program, who is a member of the World Union of Jewish Studies, which sponsors the congress, presented a research paper at the conference and chaired a session. His paper, titled "An Unknown, Unpublished 'Measef' Emulating the Journal *Hameasef*," dealt with a manuscript which he found at the Rosenthaliana Library in Amster-

(Continued on page 6 / Congress)

In This Issue:

- **Judaic Studies Lecturer Series**
- **Delegation to Russia**
- **Upcoming Courses for Spring 2006 Semester**

How to reach us:

Prof. Moshe Pelli, Director
Judaic Studies Program
POB 161992

Orlando, FL 32816-1992

Director: (407) 823-5039

Jeff Golub, Program Ass't:

(407) 823-5129

Office: (407) 823-2296

Fax: (407) 823-3603 or 823-5156

Email: judaicst@pegasus.cc.ucf.edu

Visit our website:

http://www.cas.ucf.edu/judaic_studies/

Editors: Avi Locke and Shayna Udell



Image from Paul Wegener's *The Golem*



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
College of Arts and Sciences
Interdisciplinary Program in Judaic Studies
In Cooperation with the Honors College, Liberal Studies
and Central Florida Hillel

ANNOUNCE
A PUBLIC LECTURE

in
THE JUDAIC STUDIES DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS SERIES

Dr. Curt Leviant

Professor of Hebrew and Yiddish at Rutgers University
Will speak on

The Golem: Myth and 'Fact'

Kabbalah: Mysticism, Mythology & Literature

Monday, October 31, 2005, at 7:30 PM

Selections from the 1920 silent film, "The Golem", directed by Paul Wegener, will be shown
In the Pegasus Ballroom A, B, C, located in the Student Union.

•
He will also conduct a seminar on

1654-2004:

350th Anniversary of Jews in America

Jewish Contribution to American Civilization

Tuesday, November 1, 2005, at 10:30 AM
Student Union Key West room, 218D

Dr. Curt Leviant is a Professor of Hebrew and Yiddish at Rutgers University. He is the author and translator of several books. His book on Isaac Bashevis Singer, *More Stories From My Father's Court*, was published in 2000. Selections of this book appeared in *The New Yorker* and the book was listed as "A Best Book of the Year" by the *New York Times*. Dr. Leviant won a National Jewish Book Award for his translation of Chaim Grade's *The Yeshiva*. He has also translated Sholom Aleichem's only love story, *The Song of Songs*, which was adapted into a successful off-Broadway musical. He has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Jerusalem Foundation. Dr. Leviant is also an award-winning writer of fiction. On NPR's "All Things Considered," a critic compared Leviant to Kafka. His fiction has been praised by two Nobel Laureates, Saul Bellow and Elie Wiesel. His anthology, *Masterpieces of Hebrew Literature*, is used as a text in many universities, including U.C.F.

**THE LECTURE AND SEMINAR ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
AND ARE FREE OF CHARGE**

Parking is free; permits should be secured through the
Campus Visitors Booth prior to both the lecture and seminar

For further information, please contact:

Dr. Moshe Pelli

Director, Judaic Studies, UCF
(407)823-5039 or 823-5129

Judaic Studies Program, University of Central Florida, P.O. Box 161992, Orlando, FL 32816-1992
Colbourn Hall 201E; Phone (407) 823-5039

Visit our web site at www.cas.ucf.edu/judaic_studies

Funded by grants from Friends of Judaic Studies



UCF JUDAIC STUDIES DIRECTOR PARTICIPATES IN JEWISH STUDIES DELEGATION TO RUSSIA, SEPTEMBER

(Continued from page 1 / Delegation)

Jewish Studies in Russia.

“Sefer” — the Moscow Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization

In Moscow, the delegation conducted two professional meetings. The first took place on Monday, September 12, 2005, at “Sefer,” Moscow Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization. The center was founded in 1994 and is affiliated with the International Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

“Sefer” coordinates the teaching of Judaica at different institutions of higher Jewish learning including state and private universities and colleges, as well as various Judaica departments, chairs or sub-faculty within them.

The Center incorporates more than 300 faculty and scholars from all over the former Soviet Union who are conducting research or teaching in the field of Jewish Studies. The professional discussion between the delegates and their hosts focused on the topics: How Jewish Studies fits into the Russian university system; and interdisciplinary contacts with other fields of academic research.

On Tuesday, September 13, the delegates attended a professional meeting at the Russian-American Judaic and Bible Educational and Research Center of the Russian State University for Humanities. The University prepares specialists in the Humanities. The Judaic Center’s curriculum is based on the curriculum of The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, which has a similar joint program with Columbia University.

The graduates with majors in the following subjects receive a diploma in their basic specialty (Historical Archives Studies, History, Philology,

Cultural Studies, and Sociology), indicating their specialization (Jewish languages, culture, texts and archives, Jewish languages, literature, history, the Jewish civilization, the sociology and social history of Jews). They also get a certificate from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. The students do practical work in the archives and libraries in Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Ukraine, and Lithuania.

The professional discussion focused on accessibility and availability of archival resources for scholarly research; use of cultural resources in Jewish Studies research in Russia; and library resources for Jewish Studies research.

St. Petersburg: National State Library

Following a flight from Moscow to St. Petersburg, on Thursday, September 15, the delegates visited the St. Petersburg branch of the National Li-

brary of Russia where the librarian, Dr. Yuri Vartanov, discussed their Hebrew and Jewish book collection.

On Friday, September 16, the delegates had a professional meeting at the European University at St. Petersburg for advanced professional education — a graduate school training specialists in social sciences and humanities. The aim of their specialized educational program “Petersburg Judaica” is to support students interested in Jewish culture, literature, and art. Individual plans are worked out for students of the program on the basis of the students’ needs in Judaica. Scholarly supervision is executed by the professor of the Interdepartmental center “Petersburg Judaica,” as well as by scholars from other organizations specializing in Judaic Studies.

The professional discussion between the delegates and their Russian

(Continued on page 5/ Delegation)



US and Russian Judaic Studies Scholars Meet at the Sefer Center in Moscow.



(Continued from page 3 / Delegation)

counterparts focused on graduate areas of concentration and research methods; resources available for graduate study and the role of international study, conferences and contacts in enhancing Jewish Studies scholarship opportunities for Russian faculty and advanced students.

The Great Choral Synagogue

As part of the cultural program, the delegates visited the synagogue at Poklonnaya Gora and the Memorial complex and Holocaust Museum in Moscow, and the Great Choral Synagogue in St. Petersburg, as well as the Kremlin, Red Square, the Moscow Metro, Tretyakov Gallery – the home of masterpieces of Russian art, and in St. Petersburg, the Hermitage Museum, and various other palaces and museums.

Research in Russian Libraries

Prof. Pelli used this visit to Russia to do some of his research in two major Judaica libraries – the Russian State libraries in Moscow and in St. Petersburg, covering mostly 18th- and 19th-century Hebrew books and periodicals.

At the Oriental Center of the Russian State Library in Moscow, Prof. Pelli met the head, Dr. Meri E. Trifonenko, and her deputy head, Mr. Sergey V. Kukushkin, who prepared the Hebrew books, as requested. Prof. Pelli examined the periodicals, made copies of rare material, and will include them and the listing of the library in his forthcoming book in the series of monographs and indices of 18th- and 19th-century Hebrew periodicals.

The second scheduled visit was to the Russian State Library in St. Petersburg. Prof. Pelli corresponded with Dr. Yuri P. Vartanov, Dept. head of Asian and African Literature, at the Russian National Library, who prepared the Hebrew books and periodicals from their Judaica collection.

An unscheduled visit to the library



Prof. Pelli examines 18th- and 19th-Century Hebrew Books at the Friedland Collection in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science in St. Petersburg. The Hebrew Collection is on the floor in disarray.

of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science at St. Petersburg also took place. That library holds the well-known Friedland collection of classical Hebrew books, which is catalogued in *Bibliotheca Friedlandiana*, by Shmuel Wiener (Petrograd, 1898-1918). Prof. Pelli was looking for *Besamim Rosh*, responsa collection published in Berlin in 1793, and written by Rabbi Saul Berlin (Lewin). Several chapters in Pelli's scholarly books are devoted to this author and to his writings. This particular copy contains hand-written annotations by the author on the margins, which Pelli wanted to examine. He communicated for some time with several librarians as well as with the director, Igor N. Wojewodski, and for years Pelli was told that the library was inaccessible. Finally, Pelli was able to access the room where the books are stored. The condition of that collection is appalling: books are on the floor in disarray, and indeed, it is impossible to find specific books.

Even though he did not find the book that he was looking for, Pelli said that he has made some progress by just being there, and by having first-hand information about the status of this collection. He hopes that an occasion will arise in the future to come back to that library and to find what he was looking for. In addition, he is exploring ways to help the library place the books on shelves and make them accessible to scholars.

The People to People Ambassador Program, which planned and organized the visit, was founded in 1956 for the purpose of fostering communication between individuals of various nationalities, aiming to promote better understanding, cooperation, and respect between people of different cultures.

Prof. Pelli's participation was funded by the UCF office of International Studies, the Eastern European Linkage Institute, and the office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.



Dr. Curt Leviant/ Cont'd

(Continued from page 1 / Leviant)

Dr. Leviant has also translated Sholom Aleichem's only love story, *The Song of Songs*, which was adapted into a successful off-Broadway musical. He has been awarded fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Jerusalem Foundation. Dr. Leviant is also an award-winning writer of fiction. On NPR's "All Things Considered," a critic compared Leviant to Kafka. His fiction has been praised by two Nobel Laureates, Saul Bellow and Elie Wiesel. His anthology, *Masterpieces of Hebrew Literature*, is used as a text in many universities, including U.C.F.

As part of the first lecture Dr. Curt Leviant will also present selections from "The Golem," a silent film made in 1920 by Paul Wegener, which provides an in-depth study of the relationship between Jews and Christians in 16th-century Prague. The most famous Golem allegedly was created by Rabbi Yehuda Loew, the famous 'Maharal' of Prague, by invoking the name of God. After using the Golem to prevent a blood libel, he is said to have hidden him in the attic of the famed synagogue of Prague. The film "The Golem" is a retelling of the Golem legend set in the 16th century.

The history of the Golem goes back to the time of the Talmud, which mentions several instances of rabbis creating a manlike creature and using him to conduct errands. The word Golem comes from the Hebrew word *gelem*, meaning raw material. The Golem is outwardly a real person, yet he lacks the human dimension of personality and intellect. Life is in-

jected into him through a mystical process using God's name known only to a few Kabbalists. He is created from the earth, as was the first man. When his mission is over, the name of God is removed from him and he returns to the ground. Many trace the Golem to the mystical teaching of the *Kabbalistic* book called *Sefer Yetzirah*, the book of formation, or creation. This ancient book is still in print today and is studied by Jewish mystics.

These lectures are sponsored by the Judaic Studies Program at UCF, with the cooperation of Liberal Studies, the Honors College and Central Florida Hillel. They are funded by grants from Friends of Judaic Studies. The two lectures are open to the public and are free of charge. Parking is free; permits should be secured through the Campus Visitors Booth prior to both the evening and day lectures.



Jewish Studies Delegation to Russia at Red Square in Moscow. From right: Professors Michael Galchinsky, Georgia State University; Moshe Pelli, UCF; Gladys Koranek, Guest; Peter Haas, Case Western Reserve University; Judith Sobre, University of Texas, San Antonio; Judith Baskin, University of Oregon; Nancy Sinkoff, Rutgers University; Leah Bauer, University of Chicago.

World Congress/ Cont'd

(Continued from page 1 / Congress)

dam. Written by a Hebrew teacher, Meier Wulft, in 1815, it is an attempt to follow up on a published Hebrew Enlightenment journal, *Hameasef*, which was published in Germany from 1783 to 1811. He also chaired a session on the Haskalah, the Hebrew Enlightenment.

Dr. Kenneth Hanson of the UCF Judaic Studies delivered a paper titled "Witness Requirement in Property Cases: Qumranic Evidence of Ancient Halakhah." It deals with the Qumranic *Halakha* and what it tells us about the religious and legal context of Jewish society as a whole in late antiquity. It suggests the existence of a "pre-rabbinic *halakha*" – relating to jurisprudence – reflected in the Dead Seas Scrolls.

Dr. Deborah Sipin, of the UCF Foreign Language Department, lectured on the topic "Assimilation and Desperation: Jewish Women in Teresa Porzecanski's Writings." It deals with literary themes within the works of Uruguayan Jewish author Teresa Porzecanski. Sipin believes that the most poignant of these themes is of the Jewish immigrant living the painful process of assimilation and loss of original culture in Latin America. She used a sociological approach to observe states of desperation and turmoil in a process that they cannot avoid.

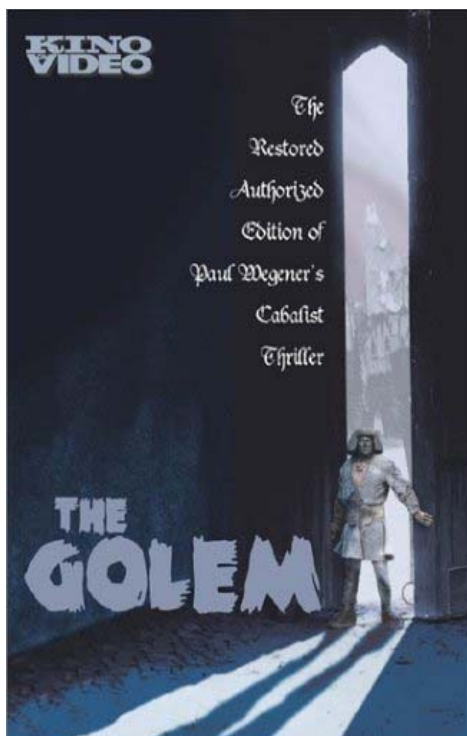
The international congress, which convenes every four years, showcased over 1,000 lectures from academics and researchers in Israel and around the world. The congress sessions were devoted to all fields of Jewish Studies including Jewish thought, Jewish folklore, the Bible, and subjects as diverse as art, theatre, and Jewish Music.



Notes About Wegener's Film 'The Golem'

"The Golem," a silent film made in 1920 provides an in-depth study of the relationship between the Jews and Christians of Prague. This version of the Golem legend is set in 16th-century Prague, the era in which Rabbi Loew, who is portrayed as a wise and heroic leader of the Jewish community, has created the giant Golem from clay in order to save the Jews from persecution by the despot Rudolf II. Rabbi Loew's assistant, Famaulus, has different plans, however, as he takes control of the Golem and orders it to perform criminal acts, among which is the kidnapping of Miriam, the Rabbi's daughter. Rebelling against the sordid tasks set for him, the Golem flees and goes on a murderous rampage.

To his credit, the director of the film, Paul Wegener, refuses to impose stereotypes on either party, instead concentrating on individual characters



Paul Wegener's *The Golem* (1920)

and using mass characterizations only to highlight the themes of the film. Unlike prior stereotypes of Jews, the Jews of Prague are decidedly poor. It is interesting to note that the Jews are all dressed in black and with very few exceptions appear to be bent with age, a tribute to an aging and dying religion. However, they are also portrayed to be earnest and hard-working, with strong communal instincts.

The Christians, by contrast, appear bright, shiny, and new. They are dressed in light colors and are young and wealthy, and appear to be God's new chosen people. However, they are also portrayed as foolish bohemians who do not take God seriously. In the end, Christian innocents are able to stop the Golem's rampage, but only because he allows it.

The final shot in the film shows the Star of David lying in the dust as the Jews come to carry their fallen champion back into the ghetto, closing the great door behind them and leaving the viewer with a feeling that they are gone forever. However, it should be noted that the Golem is not only a champion to the Jews, but a symbol of revival.

The depth and attention to detail that Wegener shows as a director (and writer) in this film helps to place it among the great films in the brief history of cinema. Its message is particularly haunting considering the events of the next 25 years after its 1920 release.

From UCF Hillel

One of the challenges Hillel faces at the University of Central Florida is creating, nurturing, and growing the Jewish student community. It is widely known that UCF is host to one of the largest and fastest-growing Jewish student populations in the nation. Through exciting programs, creative initiatives, religious activities, and unique outreach efforts, Hillel attempts to connect Jewish students to one another and to their heritage.

One of the largest reasons Hillel is successful in this endeavor is the positive relationship with the Judaic Studies Program and their wonderful faculty and staff. Several events each year highlight this partnership to showcase a vibrant and healthy Jewish life. Some of

previous successes have included renowned speakers like Max Weinberg and challenging educational programs like the Interfaith Dialogue that have attracted hundreds of students to learn more about Judaism and connect to their own Jewish identities. The faculty and staff of Judaic Studies continue to serve as teachers, counselors, and friends to our students and are always available to guide us when needed. We have been very grateful for our relationship and look forward to the positive outcomes of the future.

For more information call us at (407)362-3317, visit www.centralfloridahillel.com, or email us at info@centralfloridahillel.com.

Congratulations to our Spring and Summer 2005 Graduates with a Judaic Studies Minor!

Crista Cohen; Aislinn Reichert; Rebecca Risser; Danielle Rubinstein; Noah Saposnik; Jessica Weitman.



Judaic Studies Program
 Office of Liberal and Interdisciplinary Studies
 College of Arts and Sciences
 Orlando, Florida 32816-1992

NON-PROFIT ORG.
 U.S. POSTAGE
 PAID
 PERMIT NO. 3575
 ORLANDO, FL

**Join Friends of
 Judaic Studies**



- I am interested in a Minor or a Certificate in Judaic Studies
- I would like to take a course this coming semester
- Please put me on your mailing list
- I wish to contribute \$25 \$50 \$75 \$100
 or \$_____ to help Judaic Studies in its cultural and
 educational activities
- Enclosed is a check made payable to UCF Foundation-Judaic
 Studies [Please mail it to the Judaic Studies office listed above]

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____