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Newsletter of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

## From the Director

## Dr. Zvi Bekerman



In my current role I am fortunate to follow in the footsteps of people for whom I have a great deal of respect and admiration. I am particularly grateful to Prof. Gabriel Horenczyk, who successfully managed the Melton Centre through the critical challenge created by the recent devastating economic crisis. With Gaby's guidance, not only did the Melton Centre survive, it also grew in a balanced and positive direction.

While I should be pleased with the honor of being elected director of the Melton Centre, I look toward the future with apprehension. We are entering a period of transition that necessitates a reimagining of the goals of the Melton Centre so that we will be able to carry its message of a vibrant Jewish culture into the future. In what follows I will outline what I mean by the "reimagining" of our purpose.

Reimagining the Melton Centre implies strengthening the Melton Centre as a vibrant academic community, characterized by intellectual effervescence, pluralistic approaches, and a commitment to the sustainability of Jewish culture and heritage through diverse forms of education, both formal and informal.

Reimagining the Melton Centre implies focusing our efforts in the development of cutting-edge research in order to educate future leaders and to nurture future generations of outstanding scholars and practitioners in all fields and forms of Jewish education.

Reimagining the Melton Centre implies developing an inclusive, diverse, and egalitarian academic body, where empirical and theoretical knowledge is developed and applied for the benefit of Jewish communities around the world.

Reimagining the Melton Centre implies being committed to encouraging ongoing interaction between diverse Jewish ideologies and religious streams, while at the same time supporting relations with other world religions and cultures.

Reimagining the Melton Centre implies securing the Melton Centre's position as a full participant in the international scientific and scholarly educational community. We must measure our academic work by international standards while striving to be counted among the best research educational centers worldwide. We must endeavor to contribute our particular knowledge to the benefit of the Jewish people and of other groups and societies who are concerned with the promotion and sustainability of their particular cultures.

Reimagining the Melton Centre implies ensuring that all Melton Centre activities are emblematic of the Hebrew University's aspiration to encourage excellence and to foster elite programs in order to enhance the Hebrew University's worldwide reputation and exposure in the academic world.

In short, reimagining the Melton Centre implies the re-conceptualization of Jewish education as a wider and more open sphere of interest in research, training, and implementation, and as a part of comparative international studies.

I look forward to reimagining the Melton Centre alongside our outstanding faculty and administration, assisted by the feedback and support of our many friends worldwide.



## Other Religions in Jewish Education

Michael Gillis

Jewish education around the world is conducted in societies where other religions predominate. Even when secularism is the dominant trend, as in Western Europe, or even the ideology of the state, as in France, Christianity remains a significant part of the culture. It is expressed in the architecture of nearly every European city in which Jews live. This is also true in the United States, which enshrines the separation of religion and state in its constitution. A significant Jewish community lives in Turkey, where Islam is the predominant religion, while smaller communities persist in Morocco and Tunisia. In Israel, while Judaism is the dominant religion, established by law in different spheres, other religions are a palpable and important presence. From my office window on Mount Scopus I look out upon the skyline of the Old City dominated by the Al Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The only Jewish structure that makes an impression is the dome of the recently reconstructed Hurvah synagogue.

Academic Jewish historians of this generation have placed great emphasis on the influence of the surrounding religious culture on Jews and Judaism over the centuries. The notion that Christianity and Islam are daughter religions of Judaism, both embodying and deviating from elements derived from Judaism, has been shown to be an oversimplification. Judaism, too, has been influenced by these "daughter religions." For example, the Jewish culture of the Gaonic period is heavily influenced by developments in Islamic culture, theology, and religion. With respect to Christianity, the influence is often a distorted one, shaped by centuries of mutual

hatred, as what began as rivalry descended into blood libel, expulsion, and persecution.

In the present, our students are exposed to many expressions of other religious cultures, whether through day-to-day exposure in the media or through the artifacts of religious cultures in architecture, art, and music. This exposure may also result from the expressions of our increasingly multicultural society, in which groups are encouraged to give voice to their group identity, including their religious identity. Finally, controversies such as that surrounding the Mel Gibson film "The Passion of the Christ" frequently confront students with the reality of other religious cultures. Recently we marked the tenth anniversary of 9.11. How is that event to be understood with respect to the religious motivation of its perpetrators?

Most of the young people in our Jewish schools are given little opportunity to understand these phenomena. To the extent that they learn about other religions, it is in the context of their general studies in history, literature, art, or social studies. These issues are too important to be left to the general studies curriculum. Particularly with respect to Christianity and Islam, there is a Jewish story to be told. This story needs to be told, however, with a new sophistication. For example, it is insufficient to teach about Christianity only in the context of the Crusades and the Inquisition. None of this history needs to be softened or ignored, but it is not all that needs to be known. The figure of Jesus should also be understood not as he is depicted in Jewish polemics and in the denigrating terms born of rivalry and persecution,

but as a Jewish figure understood on the basis of his Jewish background. This new look at other religions should include a closer examination of developments in Jewish-Christian relationships over the past sixty years and of those Jewish sources and traditions that represent a voice different from the polemical anti-Christian view. Teachers and students can learn much from those texts and sources that relate to other religions in diverse and sometimes surprising ways.

Contemporary Jewish thinkers such as Jonathan Sacks and David Hartman have addressed the opportunities and challenges of religious plurality in a world where the other may approach the Jew in a spirit other than hostility or missionary zeal. Their thought has yet to receive a satisfactory educational expression. This is not only a matter of defensive thinking, or even of improving relations with other religions. Rather, it touches on important questions of self-understanding, when being Jewish is not merely the negative of the other religion. The refusal to examine other religions may stem from a desire to avoid the risk of blurring identities, intellectual confusion and the reduction of genuine difference. The dangers of failing to respond to the challenge, however, are greater, and there are many enriching educational opportunities that would result from addressing them head on.

It has been rewarding for me to teach courses in this area at the Melton Centre. My experience has only confirmed my sense of the importance of this field and how much work still lies ahead.

## Melton Centre Welcomes Visiting Scholars

The Melton Centre is pleased to welcome two visiting scholars who will join us during the 2011-2012 academic year.

**Dr. David Gerwin** is Associate Professor in the Department of Secondary Education at Queens College/CUNY, where he has been teaching since 1997 and coordinates the social studies program. As a visiting professor at the Melton Centre for 2011-2012, he will develop curricula on the history of Israel and world Jewish communities for public schools in the United States that have a Hebrew language immersion program and that plan to continue that theme

across different parts of the school curriculum.

**Terence Gilheany** is a religion and philosophy teacher at St. Andrew's School, a boarding high school in Middletown, Delaware in the United States. He has been a teacher for over eighteen years and has taught classes in World Religions, the Abrahamic Religions, Jewish and Christian Bible, Ethics, and Middle East History. His main interest is in designing curricula in the academic study of religion to promote critical thinking and to deepen students' understanding of both their own belief backgrounds and those of others.

Terence is hosted by Zvi Bekerman at the Melton

Centre as part of the Distinguished Fulbright Awards in Teaching program. Throughout the year he will conduct interviews with teachers regarding how the study of religion is incorporated into the curricula of Israeli and Palestinian schools.

## Postdoctoral Fellow

Julia Eksner

Dr. Julia Eksner is a postdoctoral fellow working with Dr. Zvi Bekerman at the Melton Center. In her research, Dr. Eksner investigates how social context and the creation of cultural meaning influence the developmental pathways of minority youths. Her research is strongly interdisciplinary in nature, as she investigates this question at the intersection of socio-cultural anthropology, developmental psychology, and the learning sciences. Dr. Eksner's most recent research focuses on the ethnicization of urban marginality, and especially the relationship between individual experiences of marginalization and the emergence of new cultural meaning systems, which are tied to the conditions of urban marginality. More specifically she investigates how urban, minoritized youths, especially youths with Turkish and Arab backgrounds in marginalized zones of Berlin, create local meaning systems that manifest themselves as newly emerging cultural practices and in turn influence youths' individual actions and life paths.

## Recently Approved Doctorate

Aliza Segal

Congratulatio to Aliza Segal, who has completed her Ph.D. at the Melton Centre under the supervision of Zvi Bekerman and Menachem Hirshman, on her appointment as a Tikvah Scholar at New York University for the academic year 2011-2012. As a doctoral student at the Melton Centre, Dr. Segal conducted an ethnographic case study of a successful Talmud class in an Orthodox high school for boys in Israel, locating this success on the "authenticity" side of the authenticity-relevance divide. Based on this case study, Dr. Segal is currently analyzing this authenticity and the accompanying success, via two separate but related avenues. The first avenue is identity: the constructed identities of the students as Talmud learners, through analysis of thirteen interviews with students in the class. The second avenue is expertise: which learning practices are constructed by the participants as intrinsic to the Talmud-study endeavor? The goal of Dr. Segal's study is to construct a taxonomy of practices and expertise in Talmud study within the school setting, thereby making a valuable contribution to the field of Talmud education in particular, and cultural transmission via text study in general.

## Melton Fellows for Excellence in Jewish Education

### David Berger of Los Angeles, California

A graduate of both the Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College Cantorial School, David serves as the cantor of Congregation Tikvat Jacob in Manhattan Beach. He has been instrumental in leading and designing the curriculum for prayer in the local preschool and elementary religious school, and is involved extensively in adult education in Congregation Tikvat Jacob. He has won honors for his cantorial abilities, and has taught both laypeople and rabbinical students. David is an emerging leader with bold ideas that aim to enhance Jewish life in the Jewish community, particularly in terms of increasing energy and involvement.

### Carnie Rose of St. Louis, Missouri

In his capacity as rabbi of Congregation B'nai Amoona in St. Louis, Missouri, Carnie Rose combines academic credentials with practical rabbinic experience. During his tenure at B'nai Amoona, Rabbi Rose has shown an ability to innovate while still respecting the congregation's rich tradition. From the development of live webcast learning modules to the reinvigoration of the congregation itself, Rabbi Rose has impacted the Jewish lives of his congregants. He is spending his time at the Melton Centre considering ways in which re-imagined, renewed, and enhanced religious consciousness can be infused into the life of existing established institutions, including synagogues, day schools, supplemental schools, and summer camps.

### Bradley Solmsen of West Roxbury, Massachusetts

A graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Bradley Solmsen serves as the Director of the Brandeis University Office of High School Programs, including year-round and summer programs. At the center of his philosophy is a commitment to meaningful investment in the professional development of educators. Bradley plans to further explore the connection between the professional development of educators and the highest learning outcomes for students, an exploration that has begun in the course of his work at Brandeis.

## Online Program in Israel Education

The Melton Centre has recently added courses on Israel Education, designed by Alick Isaacs, to its online offerings. Central to this program is a course on "The Philosophy of Israel Education", which traces six pedagogical responses to problems of the field. The course then investigates three fundamental issues that pose philosophical challenges to contemporary Zionism and Zionist education (the negation of the Diaspora, the Ashkenazi/Mizrachi divide, and the circumstances of the Arab/Israeli conflict). This course provides an intelligent and thoughtful response to these issues and gives Israel educators from around the world easy access to recent approaches to these challenges.



## Seminar for Jewish Leadership in the Former Soviet Union

On November 6-12 the Melton Centre conducted a seminar for Jewish leadership in the former Soviet Union. The seminar is part of the "Look to the Future" Project, which aims to increase the importance given to Israel as part of Jewish identity among populations with Jewish origins in the former Soviet Union.

The project is intended for leaders with Jewish origins and a broad sphere of influence, professional or social, in post-Soviet states. The project gives its participants a deep familiarity with the State of Israel and with Israeli society, and improves their ability to present and teach about Israel. The "Look to the Future" project is an initiative of Netiv, a division within the Office of the Prime Minister that aims to forge strong connections between the State of Israel and the Jews of the former Soviet Union. This project is also sponsored by the Ministry for Public Diplomacy and the Diaspora, and is implemented as part of the Melton Centre's longstanding "Former Soviet Union Senior Educators Program."

The seminar in November brought 23 media representatives, lecturers, jurists, and senior hi-tech executives from Russia, the Ukraine, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan. These Jewish leaders attended lectures on Israeli society and culture and the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict from eminent lecturers

on these topics, from the Hebrew University and other institutions. Among the sites visited by participants were a hi-tech factory and the Weizmann Institute. At the end of the seminar, participants expressed how impressed they were with the program. Even those who had visited Israel many times before remarked that the seminar provided a much deeper understanding of Israeli society and the State

of Israel, and gave them important tools and knowledge that could be used to strengthen the significance of Israel as part of Jewish identity in their home countries. Shorter follow-up seminars are planned for countries within the former Soviet Union. The next seminar is scheduled to take place in Moscow.

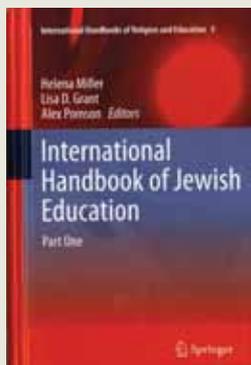


## New Canadian Program for Professional Growth in Israel Education

In a partnership with the Canada Israel Experience, the Melton Centre has launched a new pilot program: Israel Education as a Lever for Professional Growth. The program's participants from Toronto and Montreal are all Jewish educators specializing in informal education. They hold important positions in camps, congregations, Hillels, Birthright-related programs, and departments within the Jewish Federation. The program includes three separate "semester long graduate level" courses, an opening seminar in Canada, a five-day seminar in Israel, and tutorial supervision of participants while they work on projects. All participants who successfully complete the program will receive a Professional Certificate in Israel Education. The program is funded by the L.A. Pincus Fund, the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University, the Jewish Federations of Toronto and Montreal, and UIA Canada.

## New Handbook of Jewish Education

Co-edited by Alex Pomson



The *International Handbook of Jewish Education*, edited by Melton faculty member Alex Pomson together with Helena Miller and Lisa Grant, is a two-volume publication that brings together scholars and educators engaged in the field of Jewish Education and its related fields world-wide. Their submissions make a significant contribution to knowledge of the field of Jewish Education. These volumes include a wide range of articles, divided broadly into four areas: vision and practice, teaching and learning, applications, and geographical (including historical, demographic, and social) issues.

This comprehensive collection of articles constitutes a definitive statement on the state of Jewish Education worldwide. It is written in a style that is accessible to a global community of academics and professionals. Many members of the Melton Centre faculty contributed articles to the handbook.

## New Study by Dr. Marc Silverman

A new study, authored by Dr. Marc Silverman, a senior member of the Centre's academic faculty, will be published in Hebrew in the winter of 2012. *The Child Is a Person: Janusz Korczak's Educational Thought* will be published by Mofet, a prestigious Israeli publishing house for educational books.

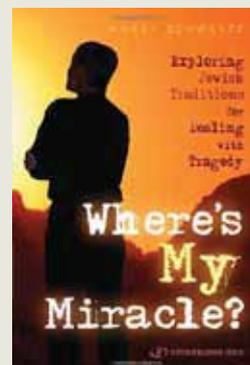


Dr. Silverman's study conceptualizes the innovative educational approaches and practices of the outstanding twentieth century Polish-Jewish humanist and social pedagogue, Dr. Janusz Korczak, as a distinct and coherent educational philosophy. In this book, Korczak's familiar reputation as an exceptionally gifted, original, and highly reflective educational practitioner is extended to include his importance as a world-class educational theorist.

The main inspiration underlying and informing the composition of this book is a strong sense and belief that Janusz Korczak's educational credo can shed light on major central educational questions of our times and can lend useful intellectual and practical tools to address them.

## Where's My Miracle

by Morey Schwartz



*Where's My Miracle* provides a look at the way Talmudic, medieval and modern Rabbinic scholars have dealt with the timeless challenges posed by the suffering of the innocent. The book provides the reader with easy-to-read translated Rabbinic texts, arranged in a text and counter-text format, for the purpose of presenting multiple Jewish approaches to difficult theological questions. In addition, the author offers a new, inspiring way of looking at the function of miracles within the Jewish tradition.

## Visit to Chile

In August 2011, Dr. Marc Silverman spent two weeks in Chile as a visiting Jewish academic educator from the Hebrew University at the invitation of Mr. Sergio Herskovits, the principal of the Dr. Chaim Weizmann Instituto Hebreo in Santiago, Chile, and of Ms. Sima Rezepka, the president of the Chilean branch of the worldwide Friends of the Hebrew University. The main purpose of Dr. Silverman's visit was to help the school and its community explore new ways to construct meaningful and compelling Jewish cultural experiences. During his visit, Dr. Marc (as he likes to be called) met with more than 250 students, teachers and parents. He addressed and held discussions with them on topics related to enhancing and revitalizing Jewish culture, such as the relationship between the present-day Jewish reader and classical Jewish texts and the challenges of constructing a pluralistic Jewish culture that is loyal to Jewish tradition and also open to and engaged in the contemporary world's problems and opportunities.

Dr. Silverman also served as the keynote speaker at the inauguration ceremony of the Chilean branch of the Seminario Rabinico Latino-Americano, whose objective is to educate the next generation of Hebrew and Jewish Studies teachers for the Chilean Jewish community. In his address to the leaders and active members of the local Jewish community, Dr. Silverman offered a vision of Jewish education inspired by the worldview and educational philosophy of Janusz Korczak, the outstanding humanist educator of Polish-Jewish origin.

Dr. Silverman's impressive knowledge and understanding of Jewish culture and education, his open, warm and dialogical style of sharing his ideas and discussing them with his audience, and his good humor gained the affection and admiration of the local community. His presentations and the discussions generated by them made a powerful impact on the diverse audiences he addressed, including students, parents, faculty, board members, rabbis, and other community members.

## The Melton Coalition 2011

The Melton Coalition is the result of a special endowment created by the late Sam Melton to enable cooperative projects that engage the three academic centers that bear his name, The Melton Center for Jewish Studies at Ohio State University, The Melton Research Center for Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, and The Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In 2011, these three centers conducted a symposium to address a pressing issue in Jewish studies with implications for Jewish education: "Insiders and Outsiders: The Construction of Jewish Identity and Culture." The purpose of the symposium was to explore the complex ways in which interaction between the Jewish community and outside cultures was conducted and expressed in different historical periods and circumstances, and its impact on Jewish identity.

In April 2011 the symposium met in New York and Columbus. It included participants from all three institutions. At the end of May 2011 the participants met again in Jerusalem. In the Jerusalem symposium, each speaker addressed the topic in the light of a different historical period. Professor Menachem (Marc) Hirshman explored patterns of inclusion and exclusion in rabbinic literature in a talk entitled, "'A House of Prayer for All Peoples' in Rabbinic Thought." Professor Benjamin Gampel of the Jewish Theological Seminary spoke on "The Construction of Insider and Outsider in Medieval Ashkenaz and Sepharad" and discussed how problematic it is to assume the existence of clear-cut boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish culture in the medieval period. In her talk, "Neither 'In' nor 'Out': Jewish War-brides and Integration Narratives, 1945-1950," Professor Robin Judd of Ohio State University used the case of war brides from Europe who married U.S. servicemen to explore complex issues of identity and belonging.

The following day an educational seminar was held at the Melton Centre, where faculty and research students had the opportunity to react and discuss the issues raised by the symposium. Professor Gabriel Horenczyk and Dr. Zvi Bekerman opened the session with their responses, and the lively discussion that followed demonstrated the potential of the interdisciplinary approach implemented in this seminar.

## Welcome

The Melton Centre welcomes **Prof. Steven Kaplan** as the new Chair of the Academic Committee. Prof. Kaplan is Professor of African Studies and Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and has held a number of senior administrative positions, including Director of the Institute for Asian and African Studies, Provost of the Rothberg International School, and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. We at the Melton Centre look forward to the benefit of his experience and guidance in the coming years.



## Thanks

**Professor Gabriel Horenczyk**, who completed his successful three year tenure as Director of the Melton Centre for Jewish Education, leaves a strong Melton Centre to his successor Dr. Zvi Bekerman. Gaby guided the Centre through a period of substantial cuts in the university budget with skill and sensitivity. He worked closely with Irit Harat, our executive administrator, in balancing the budget while allowing the Centre to continue to grow. His accomplishments while director include new initiatives in museum education in South America and in distance learning as well as a new unit for the evaluation of educational initiatives. His excellent teamwork with Dr. Michael Gillis led to a stronger academic program that resulted in impressive enrollment figures for this academic year.



The Melton Centre wishes him well as he returns to his research and thanks him for his wholehearted investment in the Melton Centre.

**Professor Menachem Hirshman** has served as Chair of the Academic Committee for two terms, from 2003 to 2011. Throughout this period Menachem has been of great assistance to the Directors of the Centre, particularly in facilitating our relationship with the President and the Rector of the University. Melton Centre Directors consulted with him frequently in a variety of matters, and benefited greatly from his wisdom and friendship.



**Dr. Michael Gillis** has completed his three-year term as Director of Academic Programs at the Melton Centre. His responsibilities included serving as Head of the School of Education's Division of Jewish Education as well as coordinating the program of Jewish Education at the Rothberg International School. His efforts and involvement, however, extended well beyond these functions, and the management of the Melton Centre has benefited greatly from his counsel and assistance.



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### kol hamercaz

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