

Winter 2017 e-newsletter



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Notes from the Director

Winter in Wisconsin can be dreary; in fact the last few weeks here have seemed incessantly grey. The weather can't seem to decide between sleet, rain or hail. It honestly leaves me a little enervated about the world as a whole, even politics aside.

And then a student walks into my office, someone like Hannah Klegon. Hannah is about to graduate in May, majoring in Jewish Studies. We had to make three appointments before we actually met because I kept cancelling our meetings at the last minute—once to substitute teach, another time to run home because my dog had somehow gotten out and was traipsing around the neighborhood, and a third time because I simply wrote down the wrong date. Each time, she was easy-going and kind-hearted, forgiving and happy to reschedule.

When we finally meet, she is as bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as any energetic badger. She tells me that she wanted to meet so I could advise her about the best route for becoming a teacher at a Jewish day school. I tell her about the great programs I'm familiar with, and after talking for a bit, it's clear that she's open to any opportunity in the whole world. I tell her about a few students whom I had recently met who worked on a kibbutz in Israel and a former student who landed a fellowship through the Jewish World Service and ended up living in India. Her enthusiasm is contagious and the endless possibilities for learning more and doing good are like a banquet spread out before her.

It is a privilege for professors like me to teach students like Hannah. Their excitement helps me remember to be optimistic, to know that the future will always involve change, and that educating for change is a powerful contribution. After meeting with Hannah, I felt like the sun was out again, even when Madison was still overcast.

From this dark point of mid-winter, I am wishing you the warmth of optimism, the satisfaction of hard work well done, and the joy of being open to the world that Hannah and all the students at UW embody. If you can make a donation to keep that work going, thank you in advance. If you can't, I still thank you for all that you do give in whatever form that takes.

Warmly,

Simone Schweber

Photographing Palmyra: UW's Research on the Inscriptions of the Ancient City

By Lauren Lauter



Associate Professor of Classical Hebrew Language and Biblical Literature, Jeremy Hutton, and graduate students from the Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies department—Catherine Bonesho, Nathaniel Greene, and Preston Atwood—have recently published an article in the journal *Maarav* on two funerary inscriptions from Roman Palmyra housed at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield, MA. The publication stems from a larger project chaired by Dr. Hutton called the Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project (WPAIP). The goal of the project is to collate and photograph Palmyrene Aramaic inscriptions found throughout the world.

The project's interest is primarily in the inscriptions of Roman-controlled Palmyra, which existed from the 1st century BCE until the 3rd century CE. These inscriptions are written in the Palmyrene dialect of Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew. In order to best analyze the artifacts, especially their inscriptions, Dr. Hutton and his team have photographed the reliefs using a technique known as Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI). RTI photography differs from conventional photography in that a series of photographs are taken of an inscription with a light source at a variety of angles. These photographs are then merged into a single file that allows its viewer to manipulate the light source of the photo in real time. This manipulation sheds light on the various contours of the artifact and has the power to illuminate parts of the artifact that would be unnoticeable to the naked eye or via conventional photography.

Catherine Bonesho and Nathaniel Greene were trained on RTI photography at the University of Southern California through the generous support of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies and the Charles and Gayle Mazursky Student Support Fund. In the summer of 2013, they used this training and traveled to the East Coast to photograph and collate over thirty Palmyrene reliefs, including those published in the recent *Maarav* publication. High-resolution images of these Palmyrene reliefs are available as part of an online open source archive. Here, scholars from around the world can access detailed photographs of inscriptions and reliefs that would be difficult to analyze through conventional photography.

Bonesho discusses the importance of Palmyrene inscriptions and reliefs; “the work of WPAIP not only helps in the understanding of Aramaic, but also provides details about the lives of ancient Palmyrenes and how they envisioned themselves in the wider Roman Empire.” Further, she claims that this work can help in understanding Jews in the Roman world: “knowledge of other Semitic cultures such as the Palmyrenes can help us to understand Jews of the same period.”

To look at these Palmyrene reliefs and inscriptions and to hear more about the project, visit the Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project at <https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/classicalstudies/wpaip/>.

Studying Abroad, Focusing Intently, and Learning Broadly

By Carly Cohen



I have studied the Holocaust since I was a child at the Milwaukee Jewish Day School. It has always been an important part of my life to remember the horrors that happened and to educate others in the hopes of preventing future genocides.

Last May, I was given the opportunity to travel to Poland and Lithuania as part of a study abroad program. I enrolled in the course that accompanied the trip, *Twentieth Century Eastern Europe and the Holocaust*. I knew that traveling to Europe would provide me with the opportunity to see what I had been learning about for the last 14 years; little did I know that this experience would also take me further into the Center for Jewish Studies at UW-Madison. I traveled with a group of students from all over the UW system. (The course was cosponsored by UW-Milwaukee and UW-Oshkosh.)

One of the most moving experiences I had was the day I spent at Auschwitz-Birkenau. When we arrived, the bus pulled into a parking lot and we began the tour. We walked in and around the iconic brick buildings of Auschwitz I, located behind the famous gate reading "Arbeit Macht Frei" (or in English, work sets you free). We saw where the prison inmates were held before execution, where the belongings of the prisoners were kept, and finally the gas chambers and crematoria buildings. I still have difficulty finding words to articulate the experience because it brought to life what I had only known from books and voices, but not actually seen or touched.

When we drove to Birkenau, I noticed the train tracks- the symbol and actual roadmap to death, a potent part in all the Holocaust memories I had read. We walked to the unloading platform where an original railcar sat. We saw the unchanged barracks, the dirt floors, wooden bunks, we breathed the cold air and smelled the unsettling of history. I felt like I was walking through a graveyard. It felt as though the camp went on forever and it seemed like I was walking on sacred ground. I experienced a range of feelings, from interested to confused, surprised to upset, and angry. And yet happiness was also present. I was one of 7,500 people who toured Auschwitz-Birkenau that day alone. I'm happy that this place won't let the world forget its horrors.

Before entering the camps, I was afraid. I wasn't sure what I could handle, but I also felt obligated to go. I felt I owed it to a beloved friend, Alfred Kahn, a Holocaust survivor with whom I had spent a great deal of time, to visit. I had promised him I would see and learn as much as I could. I would bear witness. I am now forever grateful that I had the opportunity to go. I learned so much about Poland, Lithuania, my family's history, and the countless stories of those who survived as well as those who did not. I left Auschwitz with a broken heart – but I also left with hope, a renewed sense of purpose, and an immense appreciation for my life.

When I returned to school, I was a Management and Human Resources major and I had been pursuing a certificate in Jewish Studies. But traveling to Poland made me feel the need to do more than I had. I talked with my Jewish Studies advisor, and together we came to the conclusion that based on my previous studies, the courses I had already taken and this trip, the ideal plan would be for me to become a major in Jewish Studies, expanding on what I had already learned. Now in my Junior year, I am excited to work with more Jewish Studies professors and continue to learn in an area I am already so passionate about.

Preview of the 18th Annual Greenfield Summer Institute: Jews and Science

Jews have been particularly important figures in the scientific world since the nineteenth century, but scientific inquiry – the investigation and understanding of the natural world and humans' place in it – has been a Jewish preoccupation since antiquity. This year's Greenfield Summer Institute will take up the Jewish world's relation to science and scientific understanding, and ask and answer such questions as whether there is such thing as a "Jewish" approach to scientific inquiry, how a Jewish ethics affects the way science is done, and whether the process of scientific method leaves a place for what could be called the divine. Speakers will address – among other topics – what science looked like in the ancient Jewish world and in the Talmud; Jews' role in the advancement of science in the modern period; how contemporary advancements in brain imaging and our understanding of memory matter for Jewish remembrance; and how racial "science" affected the Jewish world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Institute will conclude with a panel that will bring together themes from across the four days' discussions and give attendees a chance to ask some "big questions."

We have a fabulous line-up of speakers this year, including a New York Times bestselling author (Jordan Ellenberg) and a National Jewish Book Award winner (Stuart Rojstaczer). Our other speakers include Eric L. Goldstein of Emory University and our very own spectacular UW-Madison faculty members from the worlds of Jewish Studies and Science: Tony Michels, Amos Bitzan, Alice Mandell, Jordan D. Rosenblum, Steven Nadler, Sunny Yudkoff, Irwin Goldman, and Brad Postle. John Karl Scholz, Dean of the College of Letters and Science at UW-Madison, will welcome participants at the opening dinner. Please save the date for this summer highlight! We look forward to seeing you there for all or some of the events.

Registration will open in March. For more information and to register on line, please visit our website: jewishstudies.wisc.edu/greenfield

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In Memorium: Mildred “Babe” Conney



Mildred “Babe” Conney, of Madison, died on Sunday, Nov. 13, 2016, in Rochester, Minn. She was born on July 6, 1928, and grew up in Watertown, the daughter of David and Fannie (Pomerantz) Golper.

She is survived by her husband of 65 years, Marvin; a son, David Conney M.D. of Los Angeles; a daughter, Lisa (Rick) Rosenstock of Madison; and granddaughters, Jayme, Kylie, Lauren and Mara Rosenstock. She was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Sam; and a sister, Florence Burstein Sinaiko.

Below are Simone Schweber’s words:

It is with great sadness that I write to let you know of the death of Babe Conney, on November 13th. Babe and Marv were tremendous supporters of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies, funding the growth in understanding of Jewish arts on UW-Madison campus, in the local community, and across the U.S.

For those of you who didn’t get a chance to meet Babe, you should know that she was not only warm-hearted and incredibly generous, but she had an easy laugh and a very sharp mind. She was the kind of person who seemed to live with a twinkle in her eye. She was born in a small town in Wisconsin that had very few Jewish families; in fact, I think that in 1928, when she was born as Mildred Golper, there were only two Jewish

families in Watertown (and the other one was my mother's). She attended UW-Madison, earning both bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics. No slouch, she was awarded membership in Phi Beta Kappa, an elite organization recognizing intellectual prowess. She went on to work with Marv at Conney Safety Products, helping to make that business thrive.

For those who knew Babe, you know that she will be deeply missed, by Marv, by her children, David Conney and Lisa Rosenstock and by all with whom she came in contact.

May her memory be for a blessing.