

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

CJH NEWS

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Center Launches New Series: 'Jews And Justice'

Inaugural Event Features Lecture on Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo
By Andrew Kaufman of Harvard Law School

With the generous support of the David Berg Foundation, the Center for Jewish History has launched a new series of lectures and colloquia that will explore "Jews and Justice," the Jewish contribution to the development and practice of law and legal institutions. Co-sponsored by the Louis Stein Center for Law and Ethics of Fordham University Law School, "Jews and Justice" was inaugurated May 2, 2002, with an address by Andrew L. Kaufman, Charles Stebbins Fairchild Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, speaking on "The Jewish Influence on Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo."

Professor Kaufman's address was followed by three responses from, respectively, Rabbi Marc Angel of Congregation Shearith Israel (the synagogue to which Justice Cardozo's family belonged); Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism; and Suzanne Stone, professor of law at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law of Yeshiva University. Additionally, New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, a former student of Professor Kaufman at Harvard, introduced the series, and David Rudenstine, dean of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, introduced Professor Kaufman.

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New York State Attorney General
Eliot Spitzer (left) and
Professor Andrew L. Kaufman
(right) prepare to address
"The Jewish Influence on
Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo."

Marty Heitner

Joshua Plaut Named Executive Director

Photographer, teacher, author, scholar, and soon to be Dr., Joshua Eli Plaut has been appointed executive director of the Center for Jewish History, effective September 1, 2002. Mr. Plaut succeeds Dr. Lois Cronholm, the Center's first executive director, and Joseph D. Becker, founder of a distinguished law firm in New York City and member of the Center's Board of Directors, who served as interim executive director during the search for Dr. Cronholm's replacement.

"I greatly admire all that has been accomplished to date by the Center supporters and the individual partner organizations,"

Continued on page 4

Save the Date!

"Jews and Justice" continues on Monday evening, September 9, 2002, with a lecture by Aharon Barak, President of the Supreme Court of Israel. Watch the mail for further details.

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'Jews and Justice'

While stating that Justice Cardozo, who once described himself as a heathen, "abhorred the notion that he, as a Jewish judge, should behave in a particular way," Professor Kaufman noted that "the notion of duty and honor are writ large in Cardozo's jurisprudence."

"Where did that come from?"

Professor Kaufman asked.

The first respondent, Rabbi Angel, took a somewhat different view. He believes that Justice Cardozo did not make a break with Judaism and that it influenced his work to a greater extent than Professor Kaufman allowed.

Rabbi Saperstein, in his response, posed the questions, "How do you prove one philosophical system affected another? One legal system affected another?" He went on to consider the difficulty of these questions in terms of Cardozo's work.

The final respondent, Professor Stone, claimed that "Jewish law may not have influenced Justice Cardozo, but Justice Cardozo influenced Jewish law and Jewish legal thinking."

"Judaism is a legal system as well as a religion," she noted. "A case can be made that Justice Cardozo's legal decisions had a strong affinity with Jewish law."

The evening was moderated by Russell G. Pearce, professor of law at Fordham, who serves as curator for the "Jews and Justice" series. The program on Justice Cardozo was presented in association with the American Sephardi Federation. ■



above and left: Professor Suzanne Stone and Rabbi David Saperstein respond to Professor Andrew L. Kaufman's presentation on Justice Cardozo.



Professor Russell G. Pearce (right), curator of the "Jews and Justice" series, talks with participant Rabbi Marc Angel of Congregation Shearith Israel (left).



The Center for Jewish History News

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15 West 16th Street
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212-294-8301
Fax: 212-294-8302
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Pittsburgh Artist Diane Samuels Awarded Great Hall Art Commission

Following a process of more than a year, the Center has awarded Diane Samuels, a prominent artist and sculptor, the commission to create an original, permanent artwork for the two-story-high wall in the Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Great Hall. Described as an artist “absorbed with the embodiment of language,” Ms. Samuels submitted a winning proposal that combines literal elements from the Center’s collections with a wall-size “mosaic tablet” of approximately 15,000 stone and glass tiles, suggestive of a page of the Talmud.

The Center’s Art Commission has been made possible by a grant from The Joseph S. and Diane H. Steinberg Charitable Trust. Ms. Samuels, who resides in Pittsburgh, was selected from an original pool of some 80 prominent artists, nominated by a distinguished selection committee composed of representatives of the Center as well as members of the museum and art communities. The Center’s Art Commission is coordinated by independent curator Dara Meyers-Kingsley.

“The heart, the soul of the Center,” Ms. Samuels noted, “are the collections, the archives, the libraries, and the people who use them. For visitors, the Great Hall is like a table of contents and preface. It is the beginning, the introduction to the Center and to its mission to preserve and illuminate history, culture and language.”

The Steinberg Great Hall is a familiar site to everyone visiting the Center, as all visitors must pass through this elegant, versatile space to gain access to the Lillian Goldman Reading Room, the Genealogy Institute, exhibition halls, the Leo and Julia Forchheimer Auditorium, and staff offices. It also frequently is used for dinners and receptions.

As described by Ms. Samuels in her proposal, the stone and glass tiles arranged on the wall will be rectangular in shape and in shades of white, off-white and cream, some polished, some matte. The background will be made of rubbed, polished plaster that is darker than the stones and glass.

“The dark floor of the Great Hall (inlaid terrazzo designed by artist Michele Oka Doner) glimmers like a night sky,” Ms. Samuels explained. “The wall will be like a day sky full of light and bright reflections. The visitor will get an overall impression of the image, but to read the details, the text, he or she will have to approach the wall.”

Each tile will bear one alphabet letter or will be blank. The source of the letters will be text Ms. Samuels plans to extract from manuscripts, diaries, letters, documents, and books in the collections of the Center and from work created by the many groups of children who visit the Center for art workshops.

Ms. Samuels hopes to include the entire variety of alphabets and writing systems found within the

Center’s collections, and will be visiting the Center throughout the summer and early fall to gather handwriting samples and other materials for possible inclusion on the wall.

“The arrangement of the text will be determined tile by tile before the artwork is built,” Ms. Samuels continued. “Assembling the thousands of small tiles in the correct pre-determined order will require care not unlike the care shown by the Center itself in ordering its collections.”

In addition to the actual artwork, Ms. Samuels also plans to prepare a “handbook” guide, cross-referencing locations in the artwork and the source for each element. Copies of the handbook will be placed in the Great Hall and on the balcony near the wall for use as reference books.

A resident of Pittsburgh for more than 30 years, Ms. Samuels was born in New York. She attended Carnegie Mellon University, where she received both a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in fine arts. She also holds a diploma from the Institute in Arts Administration at Harvard University.

In December 2000, she was awarded the Westmoreland Society’s Gold Medal in ceremonies at the Westmoreland Museum of American Art in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. The award, which was instituted in 1986, is given to a person who has made a “significant contribution to the arts.”

It is estimated that Ms. Samuels’ artwork will be completed and installed at the Center for Jewish History in 2003. ■

Artist Diane Samuels



Joshua Plaut

Mr. Plaut commented shortly before accepting the position of executive director. "I also appreciate that the financial health of the institution is foremost in the minds of the Center leadership."

"To that end," he continued, "I am eager to take on the multiple roles of acting as a public face for the institution, helping the Center Board of Directors with fundraising, identifying and participating in the cultivation of potential donors, and developing relationships with Jewish foundations."

Scion of a prominent rabbinic family, Mr. Plaut was born in Great Neck, New York, and spent much of his youth in Israel. He received his B.A. from Beloit College in Wisconsin in 1979, and an M.A. in folklore and mythology from UCLA in 1982. He will receive his Ph.D. in Judaic Studies from New York University later this year. Mr. Plaut was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and received the Master of Hebrew Letters degree in 1986.

Mr. Plaut also studied at the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, Oxford, England, and at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He speaks fluent Hebrew, can converse in Greek, and has a knowledge of Ladino, Spanish, and Yiddish.

Mr. Plaut's career has been particularly diverse. He interned as a rabbinic student at congregations in Selma, Alabama, Sydney, Australia, and Jonesboro, Arkansas. From 1986–1993, he served, simultaneously, as director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at

Joshua Plaut (right) with Lori Epstein Plaut and Jonas Jacob Plaut join the Center family. At left is Bruce Slovin, chairman of the Center's Board of Directors.



Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and as rabbi of Congregation Kol Haverim in Glastonbury, Connecticut. Prior to his appointment at the Center, Mr. Plaut was spiritual leader of Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center and Hillel director at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology from 1993–2001.

During his years in Massachusetts, Mr. Plaut served on the steering committee of the Martha Vineyard's satellite program of the Boston Jewish Film Festival and organized the Summer Rabbi's Symposium on such topics as "Fact and Fiction in Holocaust Literature," "Black-Jewish Relations," and "From Portnoy to Lieberman: The New American Jew." He also taught, together with Professor William B. Watson of the Department of History, MIT's first Jewish history course, "The Holocaust: The War Against European Jewry During World War II, 1939–1945."

Mr. Plaut is the author of *Greek Jewry in the Twentieth Century, 1913–1983: Patterns of Jewish Survival in the Greek Provinces Before and After the Holocaust*, which is in its third printing. He has photographed and is preparing *The*

Jews of Greece and Turkey Today, a book of 250 photographs with annotated oral histories, soon to be published. His Ph.D. dissertation, *Silent Night? Being Jewish at Christmas Time in the 1990s*, also is being prepared for publication.

An accomplished photographer, Mr. Plaut, together with his wife, established Gallery Plaut on Martha's Vineyard in the summer of 2000 to showcase the work of Jewish artists. His own photographic exhibitions have included *Spice of Life: Markets and Jewish Merchants the World Over*; *Farewell Samarkind: The Exodus of Jews from Central Asia*, filmed during extensive fieldwork from 1990–92; *The Star in the Crescent: Traditional Jewish Life in Modern Turkey*; *Fading Glory: Vestiges of Jewish Life in the American South*, which depicts commercial, civic, and religious life in Mississippi and Arkansas; and *Scattered Lights: The Remnant of Israel in Rural Greece*, an internationally displayed exhibition which has toured museums and galleries from Tel Aviv to Los Angeles to Salonika.

Mr. Plaut is married to Lori Epstein Plaut, an attorney. They are the parents of Jonas Jacob Plaut. ■

Your "Key" to the Center

CJH	=	Center for Jewish History	LBI	=	Leo Baeck Institute
CGI	=	Center Genealogy Institute	YIVO	=	YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
AJHS	=	American Jewish Historical Society	YUM	=	Yeshiva University Museum
ASF	=	American Sephardi Federation			

YIVO Marks 100th Anniversary Of Vilna's Strashun Library

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research hosted a special reception on April 16, 2002, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Strashun Library in Vilna. The story of the Strashun Library, perhaps the foremost Jewish library in

Europe before World War II, weaves together a great family legacy, the tragic destruction of Jewish life and culture during the Holocaust, and the efforts of one Jewish officer of the United States Army to see justice done.

The 100th anniversary celebration featured a talk by Colonel Seymour J. Pomrenze, who played a major role in the rescue of the Strashun Library and its restitution to the YIVO Institute. Speaking first in Yiddish and then English, Brad Sabin Hill, dean of the YIVO Library, provided an overview of the collection's history and importance. Guests were able to tour the current exhibition composed of holdings from the Strashun Library, "Mattityahu Strashun: Scholar, Leader, Book Collector." Several of the rare books in the exhibit have never before been on public display.

The current exhibition, as well as the preservation of the Strashun collection, was made possible by two descendants of Mattityahu Strashun, Tanya Corbin and Irwin Jacobs, and the Waber Fund. In December, 150 descendants of Mattityahu Strashun gathered at the Center for Jewish History for the opening of the exhibition.

Presently retired, Colonel Pomrenze spent 34 years in active and reserve service in the United States Army, and was a member of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's staff in Europe during World War II. Colonel Pomrenze was serving as director of the Offenbach Archival Depot in the

American Zone of Germany in 1945 when he discovered the looted Strashun Library, which had survived the Nazis' destruction of Vilna's Jewish community.

Colonel Pomrenze supervised the loading of the Strashun and YIVO Library collections—79,204 items in 420 cases in three freight cars—and accompanied the collections to the Bremen Port where they sailed for the Harborside Warehouse Co. in Jersey City, New Jersey. The collections arrived on July 1, 1947, and were transferred to YIVO headquarters in New York. The entire journey, plus the approval of the State Department for restitution of the libraries to YIVO, was arranged by Colonel Pomrenze.

Following the war, Colonel Pomrenze served as distinguished adjunct professor in records management at The American University in Washington, DC, until 1980 and, from 1950–76, as records manager/archivist for the Department of the Army. He received the Bronze Star

Medal for his work in Vietnam as a military archivist, the Legion of Merit, Asiatic-Pacific Medal with three Bronze Stars, and The Netherlands Government Silver Medal of Honor. He has been an Honorary Fellow of the Society of American Archivists for more than 50 years.

As a youth, Mattityahu Strashun received a traditional Jewish religious education, but also engaged in the private study of mathematics and science. A leading philanthropist and communal leader, he chaired, for many years, the Tsedakah Gedolah, the charity fund of the Vilna Jewish Community. He also served as a member of the Vilna City Council and a trustee of the Russian State Bank of Vilna.

In addition to his many public activities, he was a great book lover and a collector of rare Hebrew books. His library of about 6,000 volumes became a gathering place for the intellectual elite of his time. Shortly before his death he decided to bequeath his books and his home to the Vilna Community. In 1892, the Strashun library was opened to the public in Mattityahu's former home. It soon became clear that the

building was too small for its purpose and, in 1899, the trustees of the library decided to erect a new building. The document authorizing construction of the new building is displayed in the current exhibition.



Dr. Rimantas Morkėvėnas, consul general of the Republic of Lithuania, was one of the guests at the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the opening of the Strashun Library in Vilna, and spent some time viewing "Mattityahu Strashun: Scholar, Leader, Book Collector," a exhibition mounted by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Colonel Seymour J. Pomrenze (center), who played a major role in the rescue of the Strashun Library and its restitution to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, is joined by Dr. Carl J. Rheins (right), YIVO's executive director, and Brad Sabin Hill (left), dean of its library.



Marty Heitner

Marty Heitner

Genealogy Institute Inaugurates New Website

Family history research just got a lot easier—no matter where you reside!—thanks to the Center's Genealogy Institute. Visit the Center's website at www.cjh.org (The Jewish Agency for Israel recently named the Center for Jewish History website among the top ten Jewish websites in the world.) and click on "Family History." You will find new web pages that provide detailed information about the wealth of genealogical records and resources housed at the Center.

"Ancestral Traces: A Virtual Exhibit," displays some of the unique and unusual genealogical records at the Center, including a transcript from a trial conducted by the Inquisition in Mexico, a page of birth records from the Jewish community of Rangoon, HIAS arrival cards, a list of marriages in 1842 in Offenbach, Germany, a burial record from a *Landsmanschaft*, and more.

"Frequently Asked Questions" provides answers on how to do genealogy research at the Center. Plan your research in advance with the FAQs, as well as a complete listing of the Genealogy Institute's reference collection, including historical atlases and books on the Holocaust, travel, and Jewish history. The listings may also be found on the website.

The Genealogy Institute staff and volunteers have created a series of fact sheets that list the genealogical resources at the Center. All fact sheets now are available on the website as PDF files you can print at home. Was your ancestor a rabbi? Click on the rabbinic records fact sheet and find a listing of the books at the Center—in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English—with biographical information on rabbis. Want to know how to access records from Belarus or Lithuania? Print out the free fact sheets and learn. Wondering what Sephardic records are available at the Center? Read the fact sheets on Sephardic topics to learn that there is material in all the partner organizations, including records from Salonika in the archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research; records of the Curacao community in the holdings

of the American Jewish Historical Society; records of the Hamburg Sephardic community in the collections of the Leo Baeck Institute; and records of the Amsterdam Sephardic community, and much more, collected by the American Sephardi Federation.

The Center Genealogy Institute (which can be reached at 212-294-8324 or at gi@cjh.org) is open Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Institute also is open one Sunday a month from 12:30 to 2 p.m., when the Jewish Genealogical Society of New York hosts its monthly meeting at the Center. All basic services are provided free of charge.

The Center Genealogy Institute also has inaugurated a highly successful series of workshops, both for beginners and for more experienced family researchers. These workshops, priced at \$10 per person, will resume in the fall. Each workshop is limited to 12 participants. Please consult the Center's printed or website calendar for dates and further information. ■

NEWS ALERT!

***Family Tree Magazine*, an online publication, chose the Center for Jewish History website its "Site of the Day" for June 25, 2002. *Family Tree Magazine* is a leading genealogy publication about discovering, preserving and celebrating family history. The Center's website (www.cjh.org) was cited as "a wonderful online resource for our readers," by *Family Tree Magazine* managing editor, Susan Wenner Jackson.**

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100th Anniversary

In 1901, the library moved to its new building and formally opened to the public in 1902. The Strashun Library very soon became a popular place for study, attracting visitors from many parts of Europe. The average daily number of readers surpassed 200, mostly high school and seminary students, and there was always a line of readers outside the door. In the evenings the Library served as a Jewish

cultural center. The collection continued to grow, primarily through gifts and bequests. Starting in 1928, the Vilna University Library began to send all Hebrew and Yiddish books published in Poland to the Strashun collection. In the 1930s, the number of books was reported to be 35,000.

The Nazis occupied Vilna on June 23, 1941, and, soon thereafter, ordered the Jews into a ghetto. Both the YIVO Library and the Strashun Library were taken over by the *Einsatzstab Rosenberg*, a Nazi task force assigned the work of looting and disposing of

Jewish cultural treasures. The Nazis forced the librarians to select and crate hundreds of thousands of Jewish books and manuscripts. The wooden crates were shipped to Frankfurt-am-Main, where they were stored in a huge warehouse located in nearby Offenbach. In 1945, the American army discovered 3,000,000 Jewish books in the Offenbach warehouse, among them 25,000 books from the Strashun Library collection and 15,000 books from the YIVO collection. Colonel Pomrenze entered the saga at this point. ■

Theater Comes To The Center

To add to its successful film and concert series (please see sidebar, this page) the Center filled out its cultural calendar this spring with several theater presentations spanning different cultures and historical periods.

The Netela Theatre of Jerusalem, on its first tour to the United States, played three sold-out performances at the Center, presented by the American Sephardi Federation and Yemenite Federation of America. Established in 1994 by Ethiopian-born actors, Netela presented *Bavel*, a play within a play that explored the hardships of immigration and absorption into a different cultural milieu.

Each performance of *Bavel* was followed by a discussion between the actors and the audience. A group of 30 students from the Frederick Douglass High School in Harlem attended a matinee performance and engaged in a lively dialogue with Netela about Israel and Judaism.

The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research sponsored a staged reading of *Ghetto Cabaret*, a drama with music based on documents, diaries and chronicles of the Vilna Ghetto. A simultaneous English translation was read and transmitted to the audience via infrared earphones.

Ghetto Cabaret was written by Miriam Hoffman and Rena Berkowicz-Borow, who found all their source material in the YIVO Archives

and Library. The presentation included several skits and songs that actually were performed in the Vilna Ghetto, interspersed by passages from the Diaries of Herman Kruk (which will be published in English by Yale University Press in collaboration with YIVO in September 2002).

The audience journeyed to a different part of the Jewish world with *Aviya de Ser...* (Once Upon a Time)—An Evening of Sephardic Storytelling and Song, presented by the Ladino Players, the only Ladino theater company in the United States. Sponsored by the American Sephardi Federation and Sephardic House, *Aviya de Ser...* featured love stories and humorous sketches. The evening was presented entirely in Ladino, with brief English commentary.

The Jewish Repertory Theatre made its home at the Center for its spring season and presented concert versions of two well-known musicals: *Two by Two*, based loosely on the story of Noah and the flood, with music by Richard Rodgers, and *Vagabond Stars*, a revue about the immigration of Eastern European Jews to the United States in the early 1900s. *Vagabond Stars* consists entirely of songs and scenes that were originally performed in the Yiddish theaters of New York, translated into English. Much of the original material can be found in the archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. ■



Infrared earphones provided simultaneous English translation for the audience at *Ghetto Cabaret*, which was performed in Yiddish.



The singers of *Ghetto Cabaret*, written by Miriam Hoffman and Rena Berkowicz-Borow and sponsored by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

The Center hosted a spring season filled with a multitude of exciting film and musical presentations. Highlights included the live, world premiere of the Yiddish Radio Project, a major series on NPR; two sold-out performances of "The Lost Jewish Music of Transylvania" featuring Muzsikás with Márta Sebest'yen; Yale Strom and the Hot P'Stromi Ensemble in a concert bringing together Klezmer, Sephardic, Balkan, and Romanian music; and the New York premiere of *Concorrenza Sleale* (Unfair Competition), a major new film from Italian director Ettore Scola. This coming fall will bring four films on the Jewish experience in Poland, a series devoted to Jewish humor in film, and a variety of concerts. Watch the mail for your Music and Film Series brochure!

Six Outstanding Young Scholars Awarded First CJH Fellowships

Six outstanding young scholars in Jewish history from several prominent universities have been selected to receive the first Center for Jewish History Fellowships. Each of the students currently is engaged in research for his or her doctoral dissertation, using the rich archival and library resources at the Center.

The fellowships carry an award of \$10,000 for a 10-month period beginning in September 2002. Each fellow is expected to spend two full days per week conducting research in the Center's Lillian Goldman Reading Room, and will be required to deliver a one-hour presentation to the Center's professional staff. They also will be called upon to assist the Center and its partner institutions with various activities in archival research.

The six fellowship winners are:

- **Alisa Braun** of the **University of Michigan**. The title of Ms. Braun's dissertation is **"Becoming Authorities: Jews, Writing and the Dynamics of Literary Affiliation, 1890–1940."**

Ms. Braun, a New York City resident, earned her B.A. from Columbia University and spent her junior year abroad at Cambridge. She also has studied at the Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture at

the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and for the academic year 2002–03, is the recipient of the Rose and Isidore Drench Fellowship from YIVO.

Her dissertation will explore the relationship between four Jewish writers, Abraham Cahan, Morris Rosenfeld, Henry Roth, and Fannie Hurst, and their mentors/patrons. Her research efforts at the Center will focus on the Henry Roth papers in the collections of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Abraham Cahan papers, as well as the extensive newspaper and periodical collections, of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

- **Jessica Cooperman** of **New York University**. **"The Jewish Diaspora and the First World War: Germany and the United States."**

Ms. Cooperman received her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and also has studied at Columbia University, Middlebury College in Vermont, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Kings College, London. A resident of New York City, she is the recipient of a fellowship, for September 2001 to June 2003, from The Remarque Institute of New York University.

Ms. Cooperman primarily will conduct her research in the holdings of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Leo Baeck Institute. She will examine the challenges faced by the German and American



The recipients of the first Center for Jewish History Fellowships include (standing, left to right) Alisa Braun of the University of Michigan; Joshua Perelman of New York University; Avinoam Patt, also of NYU; and (seated) Michaela Raggam-Blesch of Karl-Franz University in Graz, Austria. Not pictured are Jessica Cooperman of New York University and James Loeffler of Columbia.

Jewish communities during what was a period of intense nationalism and global military conflict, studying what this conflict meant to Jews loyal to their diasporic homelands.

- **James Loeffler**, **Columbia University**. **"The Role of Music as a Means of Jewish Social and Cultural Modernization in Late Imperial Russia."**

Mr. Loeffler earned his B.A. from Harvard University and also studied at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Israel. He was the recipient of a research grant from the Ford Foundation to study Yiddish musical and comedy traditions, and served as acting sound archivist for the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in 1999.

Mr. Loeffler, who lives in New York City, will conduct research in the archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, the Leo Baeck Institute, and the American Jewish Archives as he pursues a social history of Jewish music and musicians in the later Imperial period of Russian history. He also will explore several interlocking cultural institutions and social structures that were central to the rise of Jewish musicians within the mainstream of Russian culture.

- **Avinoam Patt**, **New York University**. **"Jewish DP Youth and Zionism in Post-War Germany."**

A resident of West New York, New Jersey, Mr. Patt received his B.A. from

Continued

Emory University in Atlanta. He also spent a year of study in Israel under the auspices of Young Judea, and attended classes at the Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature and Culture at YIVO, and at Deutsches Haus at New York University.

The unique collections housed at YIVO, including the newspapers and periodicals published by the Jewish DPs in Germany and the files of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, will prove of central importance to the completion of his dissertation. He also plans to use material at the American Jewish Historical Society on American Jewish chaplains serving in the DP camps in Germany, as well as autobiographies found in the Leo Baeck Institute collections.

■ **Joshua Perelman, New York University. "Choreographing Identity: Modern Dance and American Jewish Identity, 1924–1964."**

Mr. Perelman, who resides in Brooklyn, earned his B.A. at Macalester College in St. Paul, and was a summer research fellow at the Jewish Women's Archive. He also served for two years as the national director of the University Student Department of the World Zionist Organization.

His dissertation will deal with such dancers/choreographers as Sophie Maslow, Anna Sokolow, Edith Segal, Lily Mehlman, Helen Tamiris, Nadia Chilkovsky, Miriam Blecher, Anna Halprin, and Dorothy Bird. What historical events led to American Jewish modern dancers' exploration of Judaism? What impact did their experiences during the

Depression have on their reconstruction of Jewish identities onstage? How does the history of these dancers help to reformulate the history of American Jewish identity? Mr. Perelman hopes to find some of the answers to his questions in the holdings of the American Jewish Historical Society and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

■ **Michaela Raggam-Blesch, Karl-Franz University in Graz, Austria. "Jewish Women during Turn-of-the-Century Vienna."**

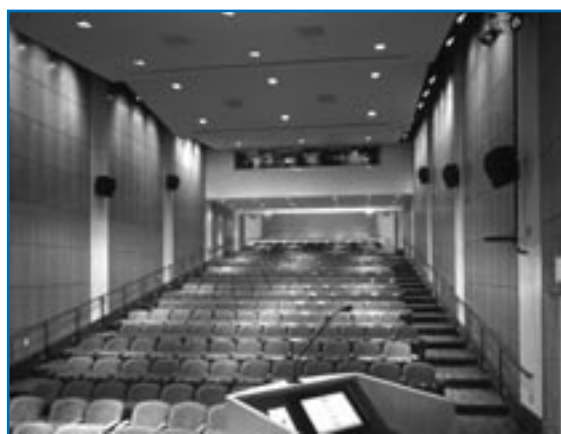
A native of Austria, Ms. Raggam-Blesch currently resides in Staten Island, New York, and is a part-time archivist at the Leo Baeck Institute. She received her undergraduate degree at the Karl-Franz University in Graz and also studied at the Austrian Academy of Science in Vienna. She was

the recipient of a Fritz Halbers Fellowship for research at the Leo Baeck Institute for the 1999–2000 academic year.

Her dissertation will focus on the lives of Jewish women at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century in Vienna, a melting pot of different cultural influences within Hapsburg Austria. It will investigate the impact of an anti-Semitic and partially misogynist environment on the lives of these women. She will conduct her research largely within the collections of the Leo Baeck Institute, particularly the Austrian Heritage Collection, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

The first Center for Jewish History Fellowships have been made possible by grants from the Bookhalter and Rich Foundations. ■

Have a Seat... In the Forchheimer Auditorium



Fred Charles/F. Charles Photography

Events in the Forchheimer Auditorium have attracted thousands of participants since the Center's opening in October 2000, and it is occupied almost every day—and evening—of the week. It has become known as the "Jewel in the Crown" of the Center.

For those wishing to make a commitment to the preservation of Jewish scholarship, culture and art, endowing a seat in the

Forchheimer Auditorium is an outstanding gift opportunity. Donations are acknowledged on a plaque placed on a seat of your choice, and may be inscribed with your name, in memory of a loved one, in tribute to a friend or family member, or with another designation of your choosing. Seats may be

endowed for gifts ranging from \$1,800 to \$10,500.

The current list of donors to the Forchheimer Auditorium Seat Campaign includes:

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Please call the Center's Development Office at 212-294-8310 to discuss endowing your seat in the Forchheimer Auditorium. ■

The elegant Leo and Julia Forchheimer Auditorium is the setting for the Center's extensive program of films, concerts, theater, lectures, symposiums, conferences, and meetings. The auditorium seats 247 and is equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

Current Exhibitions

The spring and summer have brought an extremely varied group of exhibitions to the Center, featuring unique and unusual installations, cutting-edge audio-visual techniques, and stirring historical context.



“Persecuting Grandfathers, Interviewing Grandsons?” opened May 23 in the Clifford and Katherine Goldsmith Gallery of the Leo Baeck Institute, co-sponsored by the Jewish Museum of Vienna. With panoramic photographs, historical documents, and audio-visual viewing stations to listen and study taped interviews, the exhibition is the gateway to one of the most significant oral history projects on modern Austrian history.

In 1995, the Leo Baeck Institute forged a relationship with the Austrian *Gedenkdienst*, an organization that fosters mutual understanding between young Austrians and Jewish refugees who were forced to flee from the National Socialist regime that came to power in 1938. Each year, *Gedenkdienst* sends two young Austrian conscientious objectors (in lieu of military service) to work for the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. They conduct interviews with Austrian Jewish émigrés, listen to their life stories, and collect important documents and other memorabilia for permanent safekeeping in the library and archives of the Leo Baeck Institute. These encounters have gradually evolved into LBI’s Austrian Heritage Collection, encompassing numerous documents as well as more than 2,200 biographical entries.



The Yeshiva University Museum opened three major exhibitions, each of which will remain on view into the fall.

“Journey to No End of the World: Judaica from the Gross Family Collection, Tel Aviv,” takes the viewer to 33 different Jewish communities. Architecturally and conceptually innovative, the exhibit features spectacular ceremonial objects, literary testimony, and photographs exploring the traditions of Jewish travelers who, since the 9th century, have journeyed throughout the world and documented their travels. The

exhibition can be found in the Museum’s Winnick and Rosenberg Galleries on the Center’s mezzanine level.



Another outstanding collector of Judaica was Kathryn Yochelson. In the 1950s, Ms. Yochelson began collecting works by Israeli artists as an outgrowth of her interest in the “artistic roots of the Jewish people,” a search on which she had earlier embarked as a young college student in New Haven. From the time of her first visit to Israel, in 1958, and for the next 40 years, she corresponded with and met Israeli painters and art historians, amassing a significant personal collection of artworks. In 2002, Ms. Yochelson gave this collection to the Yeshiva University Museum. Visit the Museum’s Betty and Walter L. Popper Gallery on the main floor for “Fruits of a Lifetime: The Kathryn Yochelson Collection of Israeli Art” and enjoy this rare glimpse at a collector and the art she loved and treasured.



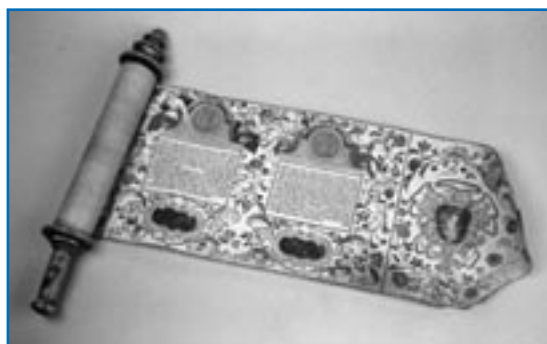
Leonard Meiselman’s paintings are stark and powerful, and in “Art Against Forgetting,” his expressionist images depict prayer shawls and flags that appear to have been shredded by catastrophic events. Mr. Meiselman has been described as portraying the two sides of his identity—a Jew and an American. As he paints, the events of the past century—most notably the Holocaust—still resonate, while new terrors confront Jews the world over. The artist grapples with these tensions, yet emerges victorious in his forceful affirmation of life. “Art Against Forgetting” can be viewed in the Museum’s mezzanine level gallery.



On July 8, the American Sephardi Federation opened “Photographs from the Jewish Cemeteries of the Saints, Morocco,” by Gary Beeber, a tribute to a Jewish community that once numbered more than a quarter-million members, including revered scholars and sages.



Visitors have registered an emotional response to “A Particular Responsibility: The U.S. Army and the Creation of the Survivors Talmud,” an exhibition mounted by the



Artifacts featured in “Journey to No End of the World.”
Photos courtesy of the Yeshiva University Museum.

left: *Mizrah/Kaddish reminder*, Krenetz/Ukraine,
1925/26, wool, colored cotton thread, embroidered.
above: *Esther Scroll*, in Renaissance style,
Rome(?)/Italy, c. 1750, parchment, ink, paint.

right: *Rimmonim/Torah Finials* (hand-shaped), Iran, c. 1920, silver.





General Dwight D. Eisenhower exits the synagogue during an official tour of the Neu Freimann Displaced Persons Camp.

American Jewish Historical Society that will run through August 30th. With historical documents, photographs and artifacts, the exhibit tells the story of the involvement of the United States Army in the printing of the *Survivors' Talmud*, the only time in world history that a government has published an edition of this work.

The United States Army published the Talmud in Heidelberg, Germany, between 1948 and 1950 in response to requests by Jewish community representatives, including Rabbi Samuel Jakob Rose, a survivor of Dachau, and rabbis serving as chaplains in the U.S. Army, on behalf of the survivors of the Shoah. (In 1945, not one complete set of the Talmud could be found in Europe.) The U.S. military in the post-World War II years evolved into a humanitarian force to shelter Jewish survivors and reconstitute Jewish life in Europe. President Harry S. Truman called caring for the Jewish survivors America's "particular responsibility" and



Chrisoph Thun-Hohenstein, director of the Austrian Cultural Institute of New York, addresses the opening of "Persecuting Grandfathers, Interviewing Grandsons?"

Ruth Altmann, born in Vienna, pictured at her home in New York in 2002. Ms. Altmann is among those whose stories are told in "Persecuting Grandfathers, Interviewing Grandsons?"



asked General Dwight D. Eisenhower to assure that the survivors' material and spiritual needs were met. Under Eisenhower's leadership the U.S. Army responded with exemplary compassion. Publishing the 19-volume *Survivors' Talmud* exemplified this caring.

The dedication on the first page of the *Survivors' Talmud*, its only English words, reads as follows:

This edition of the Talmud is dedicated to the United States Army. The army played a major role in the rescue of the Jewish people from total annihilation and after the defeat of Hitler bore the major burden of sustaining the DPs of the Jewish faith. This special edition of the Talmud published in the very land where, but a short time ago, everything Jewish and of Jewish inspiration was anathema, will remain a symbol of the indestructibility of the Torah. The Jewish DPs will never forget the generous impulses and the unprecedented humanitarianism of the American forces, to whom they owe so much.

—Rabbi Samuel A. Snieg
Chief Rabbi of the U.S. Zone



The American Jewish Historical Society also opened an exhibition featuring Harry Houdini's world-famous water torture cell. The exhibition was scheduled to coincide with the Centennial Convention of the Society of American Magicians, which met in New York from July 3 to 6, 2002. This is the first "appearance" by the water torture cell in New York, and is accompanied by historic Houdini posters and other archival material.

Perhaps the world's most famous magician and escape artist, Harry Houdini was born Ehrich Weiss in what is now Budapest, Hungary. He grew up in Appleton, Wisconsin, where his father was the city's first rabbi.

Scene of Houdini's most famous escape, the water torture cell was said to have been built in England and cost more than \$10,000. Packed with extra glass panels, it weighed about three-quarters of a ton.

Houdini introduced the water torture cell at the Circus Busch in Berlin in 1912. He freed himself in less than two minutes, and continued to perform this escape throughout his career. Today, only a few people know the secret of the water torture cell. ■

Center Shorts

Electronic Resources

Receive Boost From Schapiro Fund

With two generous grants from the Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund, the Center has acquired important electronic resources for its reference, research and cataloging services. Using these funds, internet-licensed subscription services and CD-ROM databases, recommended by the Center's Collection Development Committee, have been purchased or leased.

Visitors to the Center for Jewish History now can use the electronic versions of important Jewish studies reference tools such as the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, the *Soncino Classics Collection* and *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, or read full-text articles from scholarly journals such as *American Jewish History*, *Jewish Social Studies* and *Modern Judaism*.

These resources are provided as a free service for users of the Center's public computers.

ASF And Sephardic House Are One

The merger of Sephardic House with the American Sephardi Federation was announced June 6, 2002. Sephardic House has become the cultural, programming, publishing, and distribution division of the American Sephardi Federation.

Gathered together at the Emma Lazarus Statue of Liberty Award Dinner of the American Jewish Historical Society are (left to right) Kenneth Bialkin, AJHS president, Honoree Elie Wiesel, Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Ted Koppel, and Mrs. Marion Wiesel.



On the Dinner Circuit

The Archive of American Jews in Sports, a division of the American Jewish Historical Society, presented its second annual Hank Greenberg Sportsmanship Award to David Stern, commissioner of the National Basketball Association, at a dinner in New York. "We are happy to honor Commissioner Stern and the role basketball has played in the integration of Jews into America's mainstream and the continuing role the game plays in assimilating other ethnic minorities over time," commented Dr. Michael Feldberg, executive director of the American Jewish Historical Society.

Later this year, the American Jewish Historical Society presented its Emma Lazarus Statue of Liberty Award to Elie Wiesel. The Emma Lazarus Award has been given only nine times since the Society's founding 110 years ago. The award honored Professor Wiesel for his exemplary moral, intellectual and literary leadership. Co-chairing the event were Edgar M. Bronfman, Dr.

Henry A. Kissinger, Ambassador Felix G. Rohatyn, Beverly Sills and Sanford I. Weill. Presidents Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, Jimmy Carter and Gerald R. Ford served as honorary chairs. The event was hosted by journalist Ted Koppel.

On May 2, the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research honored Congresswoman Nita Lowey and architect Frank Owen Gehry at its annual dinner. Dr. Leon Botstein, president of Bard College, was the featured speaker.

Spielmann Receives Achievement Award

Dr. Diane Spielmann, public services coordinator at the Center for Jewish History—and a familiar figure to researchers and scholars in the Lillian Goldman Reading Room—was the recipient of the 2002 Alumni Achievement Award of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Dr. Spielmann, who received her doctorate in German from the Graduate Center, was one of seven

right: Congresswoman Nita Lowey addresses the Annual YIVO Institute for Jewish Research Dinner.



bottom right: Bruce Slovin (center), chairman of the YIVO Board, presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to guest of honor Frank Owen Gehry (left), while President Leon Botstein of Bard College, guest speaker, looks on.



individuals chosen by the City University's Ph.D. Alumni Association for this award.

Blessings of Freedom Published by AJHS

Since January 1997, the American Jewish Historical Society has published a weekly feature, edited by Executive Director Michael Feldberg, entitled "Blessings of Freedom: Chapters in American Jewish History" in the English-language edition of *The Forward* and other newspapers. This past March, the Society published *Blessings of Freedom*, which comprises 120 of the best columns, organized according to subject and period.

Blessings of Freedom is not a complete history of American Jewry, but rather a collection of vignettes and episodes that, taken together, illuminate the overriding directions and tendencies of the much larger tapestry that comprises the American Jewish experience.

Speakers Round-Up

The American Sephardi Federation hosted a briefing at the Center on May 10th with **Israeli Minister of Justice Meir Sheetrit**, who addressed the issue of compensation for the 850,000 Jews

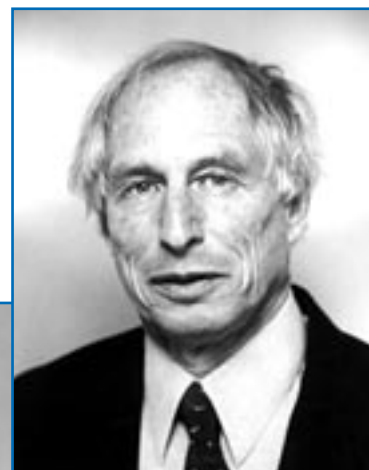
who were expelled or forced to flee from Muslim countries after 1948. The Justice Minister announced a new worldwide effort by his office, in which ASF is taking part, to quickly gather and save on computer files information about communal and private Jewish assets that were confiscated or otherwise lost in a host of Arab countries.

Prominent **author and translator Hillel Halkin** spent a week at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research as a visiting scholar and presented a public lecture entitled, "The Relationship between Modern Yiddish and Hebrew Literature" in April. He spoke on topics such as the history of modern Jewish literature in Eastern Europe and Israel, the identities of the writers and political movements behind this literature, and the proposed canon of modern Jewish literature recently propounded by the National Yiddish Book Center.

The Leo Baeck Institute presented several distinguished speakers this past spring. **Sheila Isenberg**, author of *A Hero of our Own: The Story of Varian Fry*, provided a detailed portrait of the young Harvard-educated American who rescued hundreds of individuals from the Holocaust, including Marc Chagall, Max Ernst, Hannah Arendt

and other artists and intellectuals. **Dr. Jay Winter, professor of history at Yale University**, presented the 3rd Annual George Mosse Memorial Lecture, speaking on "Shell Shock, Memory and Identity in the First World War." And, on May 8th, **Bryan Mark Rigg** delivered a most provocative talk based on his recently published book, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers*. Mr. Rigg described the more than 2000 soldiers of Jewish origin who served in the German military during World War II. Mr. Rigg's work also was featured on NBC's *Dateline* on June 9th.

The American Jewish Historical Society marked the 50th anniversary of its Dialogue Forum with a series of "conversations" with four notables, each moderated by Rabbi William Berkowitz who founded the series in 1951. Rabbi Berkowitz interviewed, respectively, **Dr. Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University; Rabbi Harold Kushner, best-selling author of When Bad Things Happen to Good People; Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice-chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations;** and **singer and actor, Theodore Bikel.** ■



left to right:
Bryan Mark Rigg,
Meir Sheetrit, Israel's
Minister of Justice,
Dr. Jay Winter,
Hillel Halkin

Program Of Guided Tours Attracts Groups From Across the USA And Beyond

Tour groups from cities as far-flung as Caracas, Venezuela, Marseilles, France, Seattle, Portland, Berkeley, Brookline, Danbury,

Dresher, Pennsylvania, and, most recently, Roanoke, as well as the greater New York City area, have been converging on the Center for Jewish History for guided tours of its many exhibitions and facilities. The Center is pleased to accommodate group tours at any time during its regular hours of operation; arrangements may be made by calling 917-606-8226.

The Center also offers open public tours every Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m. Individual reservations in advance are not required.

On April 11, 2002, a delegation from the Union Israelita de Caracas, comprising teachers, architects, former politicians, and other community leaders, visited the Center as part of their tour of various Jewish organizations

throughout the United States. The delegation was on a fact-finding mission to further plans for the establishment of a museum and cultural center in Caracas. Several members of the professional staff of the Center, as well as Sylvia Herkowitz, director of the Yeshiva University Museum, addressed the group.

The Center also hosted, on May 28th, a group from the Jewish Genealogical Society of Maryland. In addition to a tour, these 40 enthusiastic researchers made extensive use of the resources in the Center's Genealogy Institute and Reading Room. And, on May 29th, Dr. Helen Light, director of the Jewish Museum of Australia, came by

for a private tour and to share experiences and ideas with Center staff.

Tours, which are led by trained docents, cover all areas of the Center dedicated to public service and the major exhibitions of the American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardi Federation, Leo Baeck Institute, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Visitors also tour the areas available for special events, including the Leo and Julia Forchheimer Auditorium and Steinberg Great Hall, and are welcome to browse in the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center Shop, eat in the Date Palm Café, and take advantage of the Center's services in tracing family histories. ■

The delegation from
Union Israelita de Caracas, Venezuela,
on tour at the Center.



Barbara Goldberg

What's New... At the Center Shop

The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center Shop presents visitors to the Center with an ever-changing selection of books, Judaica, jewelry, stationery, CD's and other items. Newest additions to the shop's inventory include:

- *Swimming Across* by Andrew S. Grove. The founder and chairman of Intel was born Andras Grof in Hungary and, together with his family, survived the Nazi occupation and the 1956 revolution before emigrating to the United States. This charming memoir spans the period of his early years, in which chilling events are seen through the eyes of a child, to his emergence as an American college student known as "Andy."

- *Jewish Travel Guide 2002*, edited by Michael Zaidner. Published in association with London's *Jewish Chronicle*, this is the indispensable resource for the Jewish traveler.
- Jewelry by new Israeli artist Neta Eyal has been added to the shop's already extensive selection of earrings, bracelets, necklaces, and pins.
- Sports memorabilia. A unique collection of signed baseball cards, photos, and other mementos of Jewish sports notables.

The Center Shop is open Monday to Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ■

Sharing Our Commitment

The Center for Jewish History proudly recognizes the following donors for their most generous support of its undertaking to preserve the Jewish past and ensure the Jewish future. In addition to many anonymous gifts, this roster includes major benefactions received through June 30, 2002. Many significant gift opportunities remain available at the Center, including the naming of outstanding facilities. Please call our Development Office at 212-294-8310.

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Did You Know?

Visitors to the Center for Jewish History often notice the intricate structure of the facility once past the doors of the 16th Street Lobby. The explanation is that the Center, now one building, was originally six.

When construction began on the Center, there were four existing buildings, 11 West 16 Street, 15 West 16 Street, 20 West 17 Street and a four-story courtyard building, built at different times from 1909 to 1953. Two new buildings were erected at 18 West 17 Street and 22 West 17 Street. The six were then merged into a new steel structure.

Today's Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Great Hall divides the Center and is the bridge between 16th and 17th Streets. The 16th Street side of the Center houses, among other components, the Yeshiva University Museum's Betty and Walter L. Popper Gallery, the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center Shop, the Diane and Mark Goldman American Jewish Historical Society Board Room, the Center's two-story Lillian Goldman Reading Room, the Genealogy Center, the Jonas Mendel Rennert Chapel, the Selma L. Batkin Mezzanine Gallery, and the Rosenberg Gallery and Winnick Gallery of the Yeshiva University Museum. Across the Great Hall, on the 17th Street side, are the

Center's Leo and Julia Forchheimer Auditorium, the Date Palm Café, the Children's Discovery Center, and the administrative offices. The original 20 West 17 Street, a 12-story building, houses the Center's archival storage areas.

The Center contains many additional public spaces and areas of interest. Guests are invited to explore the buildings, or join one of the public tours, offered every Tuesday and Thursday at 2 p.m. ■

CENTER
FOR JEWISH
HISTORY

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