



The Hall of Names at Yad Vashem

A Reflection from Yad Vashem: The Ponary Massacre

by Chelsea Simon



Chelsea Simon

This summer I visited Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, for the second time—my first experience at the museum was in June 2012. Having grown up in an interfaith household with extensive Jewish interaction, memory, and stories, the Holocaust is far from a foreign concept to me. Fortunately, my family had already migrated (from Russia,

Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland—Galicia and the Pale) to the United States during the time of the Eastern European pogroms. Besides Yad Vashem, I have visited the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and the permanent exhibit about the Holocaust at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. Each experience expands my previous knowledge of the far-reaching effects of the Holocaust.

A few days after my visit to Yad Vashem, an article was published in the *New York Times* about the escape tunnel archaeologists found at the Ponary concentration

camp, located 10 km. south of the city of Vilna, Lithuania, which had been a thriving center of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe for over 400 years (<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/29/science/holocaust-ponar-tunnel-lithuania.html>). Yad Vashem displays artifacts and stories from Ponary extensively because of the mass murders that occurred there. I took notes on the exhibit's layout and displays as I made my way through the zig-zagging halls and rooms. After seeing the article, I was struck by my recollection of the museum's glimpses of Ponary.

The fourth exhibition room is dedicated to teaching visitors about the mass murders carried out during the Holocaust. In order to educate and create a connection with people, the curators have included pictures, letters, video, maps, and specific details about places. Ponary, the first place featured in the exhibition, was the setting for the mass murder and burial of

70,000 Jews (and 30,000 other people) between July 1941 and July 1944 by “about 150 Lithuanian collaborators.”

The visual display before the visitor includes a large pit with stones, pictures of the place and of the people who were killed there, and videos of survivor stories. In all, twelve burial pits—believed to be all there are—have been discovered. The last pit to be identified was probably used for 7,000-10,000 people and likely is the largest of those in Ponary.

The *Times* article opens with the news that “a forgotten tunnel that 80 Jews dug largely by hand as they tried to escape from a Nazi extermination site in Lithuania” had been found. My reaction was complicated: surprise and sadness that such an atrocity led to this tunnel; pride that Jews continually fought to escape oppression and genocide; anger that events of the Holocaust are forgotten or left

The Yad Vashem museum complex



News from the Director

by Richard S. Sarason, Ph.D.,
Director, Pines School of Graduate Studies



Dr. Richard S. Sarason

Dear Students, Faculty, Alumni, and Friends of the Pines School of Graduate Studies,

As I write these lines, we have just completed the highly successful visit of this year's alumnus-in-residence, Dr. Jeffrey L. Cooley ('06), Professor of Hebrew Bible in the theology department at Boston College. Jeff

gave a fascinating lunchtime academic presentation to our community at the College-Institute on "Onomastic Epistemology in the Ancient Near East: How Judean and Babylonian Scribes Used Names to Craft Meaningful Knowledge," discussing instances in which the specific professional culture and practice of scribes affected the ways in which they configured and, literally, "inscribed" reality. Over the next day and a half, he gave two very valuable and practical professional workshops to our students, one on the intriguing topic, "Your Students as People" (i.e., how non-academic challenges and pressures such as mental health issues, substance use and abuse, social pressures, etc., impact on undergraduate student performance and presentation of self in the classroom),



Dr. Jeffrey Cooley (center) met with graduate students and Dr. Richard Sarason (far right) while serving as alumnus-in-residence earlier this year.

and the other on "Tenured: Reflections on an Endangered Professorial Species," about challenges facing newly-minted Ph.D.'s in the current academic employment market, with practical suggestions for navigating its shoals. Jeff very kindly volunteered to offer the first workshop a second time to accommodate student schedule conflicts. This is a program that we hold annually. It is an opportunity for our students to bond with, and learn from, their predecessors in the Graduate School. It also gives us an opportunity to honor our valued alumni and to engage them, on yet another level, in the ongoing work of the PSGS.

This year, our students are also benefitting from two professional programs offered by our alumna Dr. Angela R. Erisman ('08). In the fall, Angie offered a lunchtime presentation dealing with project management. This semester, she will offer a three-hour workshop on revising written work, to which each student is asked to bring a term paper, dissertation section, or article on which they are currently working. We are very grateful for Angie's willingness to share her professional expertise with our current students.

SBL Alumni Luncheon

The annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature took place this past November in San Antonio. Close to sixty people—alumni, current students and faculty, and invited guests—attended this year's PSGS alumni luncheon there. Dean Jonathan Cohen spoke with us about what is new and developing on campus. Dr. Nancy Erickson ('11), the president of the Alumni Association, spoke about ways in which alumni can connect with and help to foster the ongoing work of the PSGS, including serving as a mentor for a current student and making an annual contribution



HUC-JIR students, faculty, alumni, and guests enjoyed visiting during the annual PSGS alumni luncheon at the SBL conference in November.

of whatever amount to the Graduate School's scholarship fund. Nancy also continues to help organize an annual reception for PSGS alumni at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), together with Dr. J. Michael Thigpen ('14), the Society's executive director.

Although the formal program at the annual SBL alumni luncheon is purposely kept compact in recognition of the needs of some of our colleagues to leave in a timely fashion for the next program session, it was particularly gratifying this year to witness the number of alumni who lingered afterwards to converse with their colleagues—yet another purpose of this luncheon.

The annual meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) also took place in San Antonio this year, overlapping with the SBL annual meeting. An afternoon session on the final day of ASOR was devoted to observing the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of excavations at Tel Dan by considering some of the new insights that have been gained in recent years. Three of our faculty colleagues from the Nelson Glueck School of Archaeology at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem made presentations at that session—Dr. David Ilan, Dr. Yifat Thareani, and Ms. Levana Zias. The session was co-chaired by Dr. Ilan and Dr. Jonathan Greer, who co-led the excavations at Dan this past summer in which four of our graduate students participated. Attending the session, and participating in the dig, was also one of our Cincinnati Overseers, Mr. Joe Pryzant. A group of us went out to dinner afterwards for what proved to be a HUC-JIR Tel Dan dig reunion.

Three of our current graduate students made academic presentations at the SBL annual meeting. One also made a presentation at the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies in San Diego the following month, and four more are making presentations this spring at regional academic meetings (most at the Eastern Great Lakes SBL regional meeting). The Pines School helps to defray the travel and lodging costs of our students who present papers at academic meetings; this is an important part of their professional training.

Recruitment, Admissions, and Graduation

Throughout the academic year (and a lot so far this month!), I speak on the phone and exchange emails with prospective students for all of our graduate programs—the Ph.D., the M.A. in Jewish Studies, and the Doctor of Hebrew Letters (D.H.L.), which is offered to alumni of our Rabbinical School. There continues to be interest

out there in our programs. You, our alumni, are our best recruiters. We have just extended offers of admission to our Ph.D. program (with financial support) and our M.A. program. Students have until mid-April to respond, so we will not know the size of our incoming classes until that time. Graduation will take place this year on May 21. We anticipate awarding four M.A.'s and three M.Phil.'s. The final stages of dissertation work continue apace for a number of our students, such that we anticipate awarding a good number of Ph.D.'s next year, but none this year.

Founders' Day will be observed on campus on March 30, and all of our graduate students are invited for lunch with Mrs. Joan Pines the next day. We eagerly anticipate that get-together and appreciate Joan's deep concern for, and interest in, all of our students.

Finally, we want to offer congratulations and an expression of our ongoing gratitude to Dr. John Kampen ('85), who has agreed to serve as a member-at-large on the (National) Alumni Leadership Council.

Your Support is Needed

Alumni support is vital for funding student fellowships. Our spendable annual endowment income does not fully cover the aggregate cost of tuition (which is rising) that the PSGS pays to the College-Institute each year. Additionally, student stipends are funded entirely out of annual fundraising and contributions. Our goal is to accept more qualified students to the PSGS, but without generous alumni support the number of students that we can fund remains limited.

As you know, we no longer ask you for annual dues. Please consider a gift specifically designated to the PSGS Scholarship Fund. Help us to invest in our current and future students, just as we have invested in each one of you. Every dollar that you contribute goes *directly* to student financial support. You can donate by mail or online at <https://donate.huc.edu/cngrad>. Please consider becoming a sustaining donor. You may now make a monthly contribution with your credit card.

For questions contact Shelly Goldfarb, PSGS Administrative Assistant, at 513.487.3230 or sgoldfarb@huc.edu. *We need your support!*

The Time is Short, The Work is Much

by Caleb Gilmore, Vice President, Graduate Student Association



Caleb Gilmore

In Mishnah Avot 2:15, the following statement is attributed to Rabbi Tarfon: *The day is short, the work is much, the workers are idle, the wages are great, and the Master of the house is pressing.* This axiom (minus the lazy workers) is true of the Pines School of Graduate Studies. Abstractly, it was also the theme of the two professional development workshops

presented by our most recent alumnus-in-residence, Dr. Jeff Cooley, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible in the theology department at Boston College.

Dr. Cooley's two workshops provided invaluable guild-knowledge for graduate students seeking employment in a university (basically all of us). In the first, "Your Students Are People," Dr. Cooley candidly enlightened us about the various experiences, issues, and struggles that students bring with them into the classroom—in addition to the assigned textbooks. Among their many obstacles, mental health issues, substance abuse, and socio-economic factors represent the top challenges to students and the professors charged with facilitating their education. These issues add a serious ethical imperative to the responsibilities of teaching. The work, indeed, is much.

Regarding rewards and wages, Dr. Cooley's second workshop, "Tenured: Reflections on an Endangered Professional Species," was about the present state of the job market in universities. Teaching can bring about the

rewards of personal fulfillment, but monetary compensation and the security of tenure are declining. Quite simply, tenured teaching positions are an "endangered species." Though many alternative options are available, the situation is, indeed, dire.

Dr. Cooley, however, happily shared with us that at one of the institutions to which he had applied, two of the three finalists (including himself) had earned their doctoral degree from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. The name on the degree counts for something and, at least in Dr. Cooley's experience, that name still bears significant weight. The students who receive their degrees from the graduate program of HUC-JIR are of the highest caliber. Their critical thinking in research and their pedagogical passion in the classroom will be enough to propel them to the fore in their respective fields—and, who knows, perhaps before a tenure committee.

Mishnah Avot 2:15 highlights the stakes, rewards, and urgency of teaching our respective "torahs." At least in the case of HUC-JIR graduates, the workers are not idle—they are very busy. Seven of us students will have presented papers at conferences this year: Kurt Backlund, Eric Barrios, Andrew Higginbotham, Sharon Love, Guy Ridge, and Jared Saltz, as well as myself. The PSGS must continue to uphold its good reputation both within the scholarly community and in the classrooms where its graduates teach. The time is short, the work is much, the (ethical) wages are great, and the task is urgent.

Publications, Presentations, Promotions, Births

Publications

Edmon L. Gallagher (Ezra-Nehemiah and 1-2 Chronicles), **Michael Graves** (Daniel), **Justin Rogers** (Psalms and Proverbs), and **Jason Soenksen** (Job) have all supplied primary translations of Vulgate texts for Volume 1C (2016) of the multi-volume work, *Textual History of the Bible*, edited by Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, Matthias Henze, Russell E. Fuller, and Hanna Tervanotko, and published by Brill.

Reinhard Neudecker published "Rabbinic Literature—A Rich Source for the Interpretation and Implementation of the Old and New Testaments: Selected Essays" in *Analecta Biblica – Studia 7*. Gregorian & Biblical Press, Roma 2016, pp. 256.

Rabbi Barton Lee (DHL) announces the publication of *My Prayers*, a book of prayers for everyday occasions in a child's life, which he co-authored with Rabbi Roy Walter. *My Prayers* comes in two subtitled formats, *A Jewish child's book of prayers for every day*, and *A child's book of prayers for every day*.

Presentations

Vadim Putzu lectured at the University of Rome ("La Sapienza") on wine symbolism in early modern Kabbalah (May 2016). He has chaired the Study of Judaism section of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), Midwest region, since early 2016 and co-organized and hosted the 2016 Conference of the Midwest Jewish Studies Association.

Promotions

Andrew Riley accepted a new position in Arts & Humanities Advising at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Births

Kristi and **Caleb Gilmore** announce the birth of their daughter, Harvie Rose, on December 13, 2016.

Treasure for Treasure

by David Turner, Ph.D., PSGS Alumni Association



Dr. David Turner

I am honored to serve the Pines School of Graduate Studies Alumni Association with Drs. Nancy Erickson and Christine Palmer. My time at the Cincinnati campus was eye-opening in many ways. Studying the Hebrew Bible and key texts in a collegial interfaith setting yielded much more than top notch academic knowledge. Studying the New Testament with Dr. Michael J. Cook provided me with a much-needed understanding of Jewish-Christian relations. The word treasure comes to mind as an appropriate way to describe my view of the PSGS. One comes to treasure the diversity of the student body, the expertise and dedication of the professors, the library, and other academic resources. One learns to treasure the seminal text around which it all centers.

That text teaches us to treasure our relationship with God and with our fellow humans. As alumni of the PSGS, we should want others to share in the treasured education we have received. We should help the Graduate School financially to whatever extent we are able—the percentage of alumni support is an incentive for major donors and foundations to also give. As Vice President for Recruiting and Mentoring, I invite you to encourage your students to consider graduate studies in Cincinnati. Undergraduate students may be interested in the M.A. in Jewish studies, which offers a generalized M.A. program, as well as concentrations in Hebrew Bible and its Interpretation, Jewish and Christian Studies in the Greco-Roman Period, Rabbinic Literature, Jewish Thought, and the American Jewish Experience. Students may pursue a Ph.D. with more specialized studies in all these areas. The academic excellence of the Ph.D. program is enhanced by an excellent fellowship package that includes a full tuition scholarship with a generous stipend (\$10,000 annually). Up to two students annually are also awarded the Pines Fellowship, a \$20,000 stipend for up to four years. Other benefits include the option of taking courses in Greco-Roman studies at the University of Cincinnati and in the Summer-in-Israel Program.

Another way for us to show that we treasure the PSGS is to mentor a current graduate student. Our vocational and life experiences bring wisdom that is valuable for students planning their careers. Sharing with a student is a rewarding way to show appreciation for what we have received at the PSGS and is an opportunity to shape the future. If

you have interest in mentoring a graduate student, please contact Shelly Goldfarb, PSGS Administrative Assistant, at 513.487.3230 or sgoldfarb@huc.edu.

Dr. David Turner ('09), Professor of New Testament at Cornerstone University, is Vice President for Recruiting and Mentoring of the PSGS Alumni Association.

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untaught so that memory might be lost.

First investigated in 2004, only the opening of the escape tunnel reported by survivors had been found. Although the tunnel had been unmarked, this year's team employed radio waves and radar to trace it over its entire length.

Prior to the Soviet seizure of Lithuania, 80 Jews were selected in 1943 to literally send the evidence of the murders that occurred at Ponary up in smoke—by digging up the corpses to be burned and burying the ashes. Knowing that they would no longer be needed after the task, the Jews plotted their escape. Half of them began to dig a tunnel out of their “holding pit” using spoons and their hands.

On April 15, 1944 (also the end of Passover), the Jews made their escape attempt. Soldiers heard them as they fled, chasing after them and overtaking all but twelve, eleven of whom were alive after the war to preserve this riveting tale of resistance. Their intelligence informed the team where to look for the tunnel this year, a search carefully undertaken in order to leave remains of victims undisturbed.

Perhaps the most meaningful reflection about my visit to Yad Vashem this year was the realization of the vast reaches, large and small, of the Holocaust. Each ghetto, camp, story, and person matters; their array of experiences must be remembered and retold, not forgotten. I think the art exhibit offered one expression of this initiative. Paintings and other works, representing the events of the Holocaust and created by those who suffered this terrible tragedy, remind visitors of the insane hatred that took the lives of countless souls, stifling their potential achievements and cutting short their years on earth. The over 100,000 lives lost at Ponary belong among those souls. The legacy left by the eleven survivors from the escape route are not limited to their own achievements or to their contribution to perpetuating memory or historical discoveries; they also remind us to consider the lives lost during the Holocaust and those lost to injustices every day.

A Unique Learning Environment *by Christine Palmer, Ph.D., PSGS Alumni Association*



Dr. Christine Palmer

I was delighted when asked to serve on the Pines School of Graduate Studies Alumni Association. The Graduate School has given me so much more than an education; it has invited me into a lifelong “unique and treasured fellowship of learning,” in the words of professor emeritus, Dr. Samuel Greengus. My time at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

has shaped who I have become as a person and scholar. I have found that HUC-JIR's reputation has opened unexpected doors of opportunity for teaching and publishing. The rigor of our academics, the scholarship of our professors, and the work and publications of alumni in the field have all paved the way for how I am received as an HUC-JIR graduate.

HUC-JIR is a unique learning environment. We are given access to the original texts of Judaism and early Christianity. Our training in the languages and history of the ancient Near East opens up worlds of understanding for our interpretation of the biblical text. We are introduced to interpretive traditions of scholars who have studied the text for millennia, and whose insights often illuminate the blind spots of our own time. All this happens in an environment where Jewish and Christian students study the text side by side in mutual

respect. This brings integrity to our inquiry and the rare gift of seeing ourselves through the eyes of one another.

Such a remarkable place calls forth our grateful response. As Vice President of Fundraising, I invite your support of the PSGS in several ways: (1) Please keep us informed of your progress and current research. We take genuine pride in your accomplishments. (2) Graduates make the best referrals of quality students to apply to the program. Let us know about gifted students who might flourish at HUC-JIR by contacting Shelly Goldfarb, PSGS Administrative Assistant, at 513.487.3230 or sgoldfarb@huc.edu. (3) Finally, your financial support will help to ensure the future success of the PSGS. You can make an online contribution at <https://donate.huc.edu/cngrad>. Every gift matters. Plus, the percentage of alumni engagement has a compounding effect on our relationship with foundations and donors. The author of Proverbs wisely reflects that “*a good name is to be chosen rather than great riches*” (22:1). I invite you to treasure the gift of the Graduate School's good name and to further its reputation by your commitment to its success.

Dr. Christine Palmer ('15), adjunct professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is Vice President for Fundraising and member-at-large of the PSGS Alumni Association.