

Reflections on Yad Vashem



by Julia R. Olson, Ph.D. Student

The seven PSGS students who participated in the Summer in Israel program this year visited Yad Vashem, The World Holocaust Remembrance Center, as part of their studies about modern Israel before joining the archaeological dig at Tel Dan.

Julia R. Olson

We began our day at Yad Vashem by walking through the Children's Memorial. The memorial is quite simple, but its impact is deep. Before one enters the building, a voice can be heard slowly reading the names of the one million children who perished in the Holocaust. The four of us who entered the building together had already become emotionally engaged. Inside, the building is filled with the reflections of one million lights, each representing the life of a child who was lost. There are no other lights in the building, meaning the path that visitors take through the building is illuminated solely by these million tiny lights.

We left this memorial and entered the museum proper. I found that the ordering of the exhibits was very well done. The museum takes visitors through the horrors of the Holocaust chronologically. One of the most striking parts at the beginning of our tour was the propaganda used to turn the people of Germany against its Jewish citizens. We are often inclined to view this time as something that is far distant in the past and impossible to be repeated, yet the rhetoric used by those in power in Germany at the time was, sadly, not unfamiliar to any of us. Hitler and his supporters spoke of the Jewish population as "dirty and dangerous," not unlike the words being used to describe the migrants who attempt to enter the United States daily in 2019. It was my opinion that this part of the exhibit was intended to illustrate not only that the German people allowed such rhetoric to be weaponized, but also that it can be done again and that it can just as easily happen to anyone who visits the museum today.

We progressed through the exhibits very slowly.



Children's Memorial at Yad Vashem

Interspersed throughout the material items were videos of survivors describing their experiences of capture, internment, and, for some, release. Toward the entrance of the museum there was a video I found terribly striking. A screen, located amongst images of Jews being hauled away by Nazi officers, featured a woman discussing the day her mother was taken. Her mother knew the Nazis were coming, so she hid her children in a closet. When the officers moved to take her from the house, she asked if she could take her jacket. As she opened the closet, she very quietly said goodbye to her children who remained hidden. They never saw her again. This story has been embedded in my consciousness since I heard the woman tell it. The fear and panic experienced at that time by European Jews is unimaginable for most of us.

Another compelling aspect of the layout of the museum was how infrequently Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders were mentioned. While they are absolutely the people responsible for the genocide that occurred, it seemed that the focus of Yad Vashem's overall message was not about the Nazi leadership, but about the victims (and survivors) of the Holocaust as well as *the people who ignored this great evil*. I believe the museum's message was that of conviction: we are complicit if we let things like this happen. Adolf Hitler's name was mentioned perhaps one time. But the people

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 words, we are almost halfway through the spring semester with much good news to relate. Most exciting, of course, is that Dr. Andrew Rehfeld will be assuming the presidency of HUC-JIR on April 1. Dr. Rehfeld was on campus briefly at the end of

January to meet mostly with faculty and administrators. He will be back for the Central Conference of American Rabbis Convention and Founders' Day exercises in late March/early April and will preside at this year's graduation and ordination at the end of May. Dr. Rehfeld strategically appreciates the larger educational mission of the College-Institute through all its programs and its significance as a fountainhead for higher Jewish learning in North America and Israel. He is accessible and eager to interact with, and learn from, all constituencies of the College-Institute. Please regard that as an invitation!

We were pleased to welcome Dr. Tarsee Li ('99) as our visiting Alumnus-in-Residence on March 11-12. Tarsee is Professor of Hebrew Bible and Biblical Languages in the School of Religion at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. He delivered an academic lecture on "The Prefix Conjugation in the Aramaic of Daniel," and conducted two professional workshops for our graduate students, one on "Teaching a New Course on a New Campus as a New Faculty Member"; the other, "The Challenge of Research and Writing." Our students had ample opportunity to interact with Tarsee and to benefit from his professional and academic experience.

As part of our ongoing series of professional workshops for our students, Dr. Angela Erisman ('08) conducted a fall session on "Ten Writing Problems and How to Solve Them," and will conduct a spring half-day, hands-on workshop on "How to Revise Your Writing."

As of this writing, we are still in the process of making admissions decisions for next year. I am pleased to share with you that this year's candidate pool is particularly strong, partly due to the active role you, our alumni, play in encouraging your most promising students to apply to us. Thank you and keep up the good work! We currently



Dr. Tarsee Li, visiting Alumnus-in-Residence, presents a workshop to PSGS students.

anticipate awarding one Ph.D. and two M.A.J.S. degrees this year at graduation exercises in May.

We greeted sixty guests in November at our alumni luncheon at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) in Denver. This annual event provides a wonderful opportunity for our alums, some current and potential students, and friends of the PSGS to get together over food and conversation each year. I am always impressed by the closeness and enthusiasm of colleagues at this event—so often people who do not have to rush off at the end to a session will stay around just to talk with each other.

Please know how much we value the ongoing contact and support of each one of you. Keep in touch!

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 that the Pine School of Graduate Studies pays to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion 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.

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

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who watched the deportations, the imprisonment, and, eventually, the smoke rising from the camps were featured heavily. This was a reminder for all of us today. We want to look at those images and ask, “How could they?” But Yad Vashem instead answers, “It could be you.” The horror of complicity in genocide follows a visitor throughout the entire museum.

The horrors depicted in the material objects and the photographs at Yad Vashem can never really be expressed in words. There is only the visceral reaction you feel in the pit of your stomach that remains even after you exit the building and look out on the gorgeous landscape of Israel. I wanted originally to focus on the burned jacket of a female resistance fighter who was killed (accidentally) by Allies when she was helping to liberate the Jews. It was amazing to see evidence of the number of women who constituted the resistance during the time of the Nazi regime.

I felt proud to be a woman but, again, I felt convicted. What would I do? Who would I be, should the world take such a horrible turn again? One always assumes that he or she would help people in need. But Yad Vashem illustrates how easy it was for people to stay silent. Yad Vashem turns our expectations of ourselves in the face of evil upside down. That is perhaps one of the most striking and painful feelings one experiences upon exiting the building. The four of us sat in the sunlit courtyard for at least an hour after we left the building. We tried to articulate all the things we had experienced as we navigated physical evidence of the vilest hatred we could imagine. For the most part, however, we wept.



Janusz Korczak Memorial at Yad Vashem

Presentations, Publications, Promotions & More

Presentations

American Academy of Religion (AAR) Annual Meeting

Vadim Putzu | “Transhuman Esotericism in the Ozarks: Thomas Moore Johnson’s ‘Platonism’ and the Prophets of H+”

American Academy of Religion (AAR) Midwest Conference

Ari Ballaban | “Identifying Humor in the Babylonian Talmud”

Vadim Putzu continues to chair the Study of Judaism Section.

Inaugural Conference of the European Network for the Study of Islam and Esotericism

Vadim Putzu | “Ozarkian Kabbalah: Preliminary Notes on the Place of Jewish Esotericism in Thomas Moore Johnson’s ‘Platonism’” and “Common and Comparative Esotericisms: Western, Islamic, and Jewish”

Rice University Conference on Kabbalah in America

Vadim Putzu | “Kabbalah in the Ozarks: Thomas Moore Johnson, the Platonist, and the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor”

Publications

Seymour (Sy) Gitin | “Philistia in the Late Iron Age II: The Development of the Ceramic Assemblage” in *Archaeology and History of Eighth-Century Judah* (Festschrift for Oded Borowski). Edited by Z.I. Farber and J.L. Wright. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature.

Vadim Putzu | “Two Hebrew Amulets from the Klau Library: Jewish Magic in the Modern Mediterranean” in *L’eredità di Salomone: La magia ebraica in Italia e nel Mediterraneo*. Edited by Emma Abate, Saverio Campanini, and Mauro Perani. Ferrara: MEIS.

“Mystical Techniques, Mental Processes, and Altered States of Consciousness in Abraham Abulafia’s Kabbalah: A Reassessment,” *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 41/2 (2018).

Promotions

John Crutchfield was promoted from Associate Professor of Bible to Professor of Bible at Columbia International University in Columbia, SC.

Birth

Andrew and Kati Higginbotham announce the birth of their son, Louis William Higginbotham, on March 1, 2019.

A Message from the Alumni Association

by Hélène M. Dallaire, Ph.D., President, PSGS Alumni Association



Dr. Hélène M. Dallaire

Greetings from your PSGS Alumni Association representative. HUC-JIR is experiencing exciting changes, from the arrival of a new President—Dr. Andrew Rehfeld—to the development of new PSGS programs. During the “Join the Meet and Greet” meeting on January 18, Dr. Rehfeld expressed his interest in engaging with graduates of the various schools of HUC-JIR. You

can access the recorded interview at <http://tinyurl.com/rehfeld2019>.

I look forward to meeting Dr. Rehfeld at the gathering of the HUC-JIR Alumni Council in New York on April 8-9. Questions for Dr. Rehfeld? Feel free to send to me any question you may have for Dr. Rehfeld regarding the Pines School of Graduate Studies. I will gladly address them to our new president at the Alumni Council meeting.

PSGS Representatives on Working Groups

The HUC-JIR Alumni Council is looking for volunteers to serve on special working groups. These working groups are comprised of alumni from all HUC-JIR programs. I want to thank Nancy Erickson, David Turner, Michael Graves, Charles Halton, Karla Suomala, Joel Allen, and other alumni from the PSGS who are currently serving or have served faithfully on these working groups in the past.

The following working groups are inviting the participation of alumni from the PSGS. Follow the links to read about the background, mission, commitment, and membership of each working group. Please contact me at Helene.dallaire@denverseminary.edu if you wish to volunteer for any of these working groups.

- Continued Learning Working Group – <http://tinyurl.com/HUC-JIR-ContinuedLearning>
- Recruitment Working Group – <http://tinyurl.com/HUC-JIR-Recruitment>
- Communications Working Group – <http://tinyurl.com/HUC-JIR-Communications>



Friends and colleagues reconnect at a PSGS alumni-sponsored reception at the Evangelical Theological Society annual meeting on November 14 in Denver. From left: Drs. Brian Byer, John Walton, Blake Hearson, Hélène Dallaire, Jordan Jones, Brian Gault, and Lee Fields.

PSGS Alumni Connect at ETS

A small group of PSGS alumni were able to connect at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) in Denver. We plan on having a similar event at the ETS conference in November in San Diego. We will provide more information as we approach the date of the conference.

PSGS Alumni Resources

As President of the PSGS Alumni Association, I would like to create two resources that will benefit you and the scholarly community at large: (1) a database of PSGS alumni CVs, and (2) a database of PSGS alumni publications. If you would like to submit your CV and/or your list of publications for inclusion in the databases, send them to me at Helene.dallaire@denverseminary.edu until our webpage is ready.

PSGS Alumni Connect

Are there HUC-JIR alumni in your area? If so, I encourage you to create opportunities for networking and engagement (e.g., breakfast meeting, luncheon, special event). Shelly Goldfarb (sgoldfarb@huc.edu) can provide you with a list of alumni in your city. Feel free to contact her if you wish to organize an event for PSGS alumni in your area. She will gladly send to you a list of alumni and advertise your event.

From the Desk to the Display Case

by Ryan M. Replogle

Vice-President, Graduate Student Association



Ryan M. Replogle

The task of a graduate student involves sharpening both critical thinking and teaching skills, but it is no secret that the academy has historically valued the former over the latter. Tales abound among students and professors about their experiences sitting through impenetrable presentations or reading undecipherable papers. However, many graduate students have been

involved in a challenging but rewarding project over the past several semesters that has required the integration of both critical thinking and popular communication skills. Led by Professor Nili Fox, we have been working with the Cincinnati Art Museum and students and professors from the University of Cincinnati Classics Department to update the Museum's Near Eastern Art gallery.

Over the past year, we have met with our colleagues from the Museum and the University to review the artifacts in the collection and place them into geographical and thematic groupings. Needless to say, the extent of the collective knowledge from these brilliant minds has truly been breathtaking.

But, ultimately, the goal of this unique, collaborative learning experience will be to distill knowledge about the artifacts into concise item labels in order to teach and explain them to museum visitors of all ages and educational backgrounds. This promises to be challenging—since most of us come in with less background in popular writing—but also rewarding. Perhaps more than any other learning opportunity thus far as graduate students, our labors can directly enrich the community.

In the midst of perpetual and intensive research, the project has been a refreshing reminder to view our work as intersecting with the fabric of our communities and to cultivate the skills necessary to fruitfully engage that intersection.

PSGS Scholarship Fund

The PSGS wishes to be generous in its assignment of scholarships and stipends to Ph.D. and M.A. students. Scholarship funds have benefited all of us in the past, so it is now time for us to think about providing opportunities to other young scholars to study at HUC-JIR. I extend an invitation to all PSGS alumni to support the PSGS Scholarship Fund either with a one-time gift or a recurring contribution. Gifts can be made directly to the PSGS Scholarship Fund here: <https://donate.huc.edu/cngrad>.

PSGS Alumni Travels and Fun Facts

Are you traveling to fascinating places this year? For conferences or for personal reasons? Please send the where, why, when, and any other detail you think your alumni colleagues would enjoy knowing to me at Helene.dallaire@denverseminary.edu. You all have interesting and busy lives, so share a few fun facts with us in one to three sentences! We will gather them and publish them in our next *Kol Hadash*. Let me be the first to start the conversation: I look forward to a trip to Cambridge in the United Kingdom in July where I will present a paper at the Hebrew Language and Linguistics Conference. The paper will be on "Atypical Negative Volitives: Scribal Errors or Scribal Conventions?" After the conference, I hope to visit a few friends and do a bit of sightseeing!

Hélène M. Dallaire, Ph.D. ('02), is Professor of Old Testament at Denver Seminary in Denver, CO.



The annual PSGS alumni luncheon at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Denver on November 18: an opportunity for friends and colleagues to renew friendships!

Governor's Report by James E. Bowley, Ph.D., Governor, HUC-JIR



Dr. James E. Bowley

The Board of Governors met on the Los Angeles campus February 10-11. To me the most exciting aspect of the meeting was the inauguration of the first Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Professorship, held by Dr. Dvora E. Weisberg, Professor of Rabbinics and Director of the School of Rabbinical Studies in Los Angeles. (You might

know her book, *Levirate Marriage and the Family in Ancient Judaism*, 2009.) We look forward to the inaugural dedication of the Rabbi Aaron D. Panken Professorship in Cincinnati, to be held by Dr. Jennifer Grayson, with whom some of our current PSGS students have already had the privilege of studying. If you can come and help celebrate on April 14 at noon, I urge you to do so. It will be so enjoyable!

One "take away" from this is that our gifts matter. Many of you contributed to the Panken Memorial Fund, and I'm glad to say that 100% of the Board of Governors also gave. I finally want to put out there two other opportunities to give, this time for student scholarships, and I think many of you will be delighted at what I can announce. As student enrollment and the need for scholarships continues to

increase, two new ways to help students are available:

- The Rabbi Aaron D. Panken, Ph. D., Endowed Student Scholarship for Cincinnati
- The Rabbi Richard S. Sarason, Ph.D., Endowed Scholarship Fund for Students of the Pines School of Graduate Studies

Yes, that's right, in addition to a new Panken Scholarship for Cincinnati campus students, there is now a new Sarason Scholarship fund, in honor of our beloved and esteemed teacher and director, Dr. Sarason. I can't begin to express all the things I learned from him while a student, much less state my appreciation for his scholarship and leadership on the Cincinnati campus and in the Graduate School since I graduated. I hope we all rise to the occasion and show our appreciation in these ways that we know really do matter for PSGS students. Let's celebrate!

To learn more about these exciting new efforts to strengthen the student scholarship program in Cincinnati, contact Phyllis Volan, Director of Development, Central Region, pvolan@huc.edu or 513.487.3032.

James E. Bowley, Ph.D. ('92), is Professor of Religious Studies and chair of the department at Millsaps College in Jackson, MS.