



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies

# SCHOLION News

SCHOLION - INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTER IN JEWISH STUDIES

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## “Knowledge and Pain” Concluding Conference



Scholion's 2008-2010 group, “Knowledge and Pain,” held its concluding conference at the end of May 2010, over three tightly scheduled days. The conference was mainly devoted to the voice of the sufferer, but it also examined the relationship of this voice with the agencies which it addresses.

On the eve of the conference, May 23, the group held a reception for the participants who came from Israeli universities as well as from the USA, Finland, Italy, Luxemburg, Germany, and Spain.

In his greetings the following morning, Prof. Israel Yuval, the academic head of Scholion, noted that in contrast with other groups of the center, the focus of the Knowledge and Pain group was not in the field of Jewish Studies, yet Jewish studies constituted an important part of this more general research. The group presented an example of how the Jewish studies component can be integrated into research projects in different fields.

Indeed, the first panel of the conference, “Pain and Faith,” was immediately pertinent to Jewish studies – the expressions of pain following the destruction of the Second Temple, Agnon's Holocaust related critique of “Holy Pain,” and the way pain raised problems of theodicy in concentration camps. Other panels also included issues pertinent for Jewish culture and history (e.g., rabbinical attitudes to the despair of deserted women and the work of the Holocaust survivor Primo Levi).

The second panel of the conference, “Pain and the Limits of Knowledge,” held philosophical and literary-critical discussions concerning the ineffability of pain, epistemological difficulties presented by the concept itself as well as by the human experience that it denotes, and the ethical relevance of such difficulties. By way of response to these difficulties, two other panels discussed the ways in which pain is signaled or represented in literature and in the visual arts.

Attitudes to pain in the humanities fall into two main classes: one approach views pain in a totally negative light and implies a demand for a struggle against the causes and the infliction of pain on the medical, cultural, and political arenas; the other approach regards pain as a potentially formative experience, leading to self-transcendence. Practically all the conference papers dealing with the history of medicine and the history of secular ideas endorsed the former way of thinking, whereas the papers dealing with European medieval history explored the relationship between pain and spiritual experience, without necessarily making value judgments about that relationship.

A theme that ran through almost all the papers was that of the signaling of pain: how people in pain make others register that they are suffering, how such signals are received, acknowledged, responded to, or ignored; what are the dynamics of the situation created by the knowledge of the presence of pain, if not of pain itself. It is expected that the collection of essays based on the conference, on which the group is working presently, will shed further light on these questions.

In conclusion, we feel that the conference was a double success: it summarized many of the insights we have reached throughout three years of close cooperation. More importantly, it opened up for all participants new options for further exploration of the connection between the sufferer's voice and society's manner of coping with it.





# Arriving: A new group at Scholion

## “Archaeologies of Memory”



On January 7th 2010, Scholion's academic committee convened in order to choose the new research group for the years 2010-2013. Out of five applicant groups the committee finally chose the group “Archaeologies of Memory: Founding, Decline and Destruction” whose members are Prof. Ronnie Ellenblum from the department of Geography, Dr. Nili Wazana of the department of Bible studies, Dr. Sharon Zuckerman of the institute of Archeology and Prof. Gideon Shelach from the Department of East Asian Studies.

The group will explore the ways in which events of destruction and processes of decline and collapse affect the collective memory of complex societies. They will discuss the different effects of long-term gradual processes caused by social, economic or cultural decline, or global climate changes, and those following dramatic events such as human or natural disasters.

The group aims to analyze the connection between the evidence of such events in textual sources and the archaeological record on the one hand, and their reflection in founding myths of past societies in different periods and geographic areas on the other. Cases of destruction and collapse, marking the profound change or final annihilation of a society, are very influential in terms of the historiography of processes of construction and decline alike. They will also attempt to understand how the perception of such events changed throughout time and how cases of destruction acquired moral and political value and, consequently, affected the academic communities studying them.

From left: Guy Rak, Prof. Ronnie Ellenblum, Dr. Sharon Zuckerman, Dr. Nili Wazana, Michal Kimhi Bitton, Osnat Suwed, Prof. Gideon Shelach, Uri Davidovich

# Leaving: Summing up

## by Dr. Amos Goldberg, Mandel Scholar 2007-2010

When Professor Israel Yuval informed me, after the Scholion marathon day of lectures and interviews, that I had been awarded the Mandel fellowship, I was overwhelmed with emotions. First, there was a sense of relief, I knew that I would be able to make a living as a researcher for the next three years. But I also understood immediately, even if only vaguely at the time, that I had been given a gift that only few in the academic world ever receive: three years of study, research and publishing, with total peace of mind.

In retrospect I can say that I was right, but only now do I realize how much so. Not only did the years I spent at Scholion allow me to work and carry out research in the most favorable environment that the University can offer; not only does this environment provide researchers with phenomenal administrative support; and not

only are the Mandel fellows required to teach only one seminar per year; but up until then I had no idea how enriching the atmosphere at Scholion could be, and that this atmosphere is the program's most valuable and cherished feature.

Not that this place lacks tensions and frictions like any other human environment, but the fundamental ‘organizational culture’ at Scholion is one of scholarly cooperation, intellectual curiosity, and sharing. It is an atmosphere of encouragement and appreciation, one of broad-minded interdisciplinary thinking, which is rare on campus. There is a friendly atmosphere and companionship that develops among all Scholion members – academic and administrative directors, groups members, and fellows. But beyond this, the friendly atmosphere allows one to develop and learn through informal conversations in the corridor, and

at the famous 10-o'clock coffee break. I had the good fortune of having my office located at the heart of Scholion - facing the offices, near the kitchenette and the photocopying machine. Besides for making me an expert in fixing the overly stacked photocopying machine, this location increased the opportunities for informal interactions and cross-fertilization, and contributed significantly to my productivity. I completed my book, which will be published next year (in 2011). I began a new research project which was very much inspired by the morning meetings and casual conversations in the corridor, and I was also able to publish a good amount. I can say with certainty that more than any other academic framework, Scholion is the intellectual alma mater whose imprint will accompany me in every future phase of my career.

## Research field trip

22-23 April, 2010

# to the Western Galilee and Beth Shean Valley



With the coming of spring, Scholion once again set out on its annual field trip. Towards the end of April, 25 members of the center took two days off to visit three important archeological sites – Sepphoris, Scythopolis, and Jotapata – each representing a unique example of a Roman and/or Byzantine settlement in the Galilee. The trip was once again led by Prof. Ze'ev Weiss, head of the Institute of Archeology and a former

member of Scholion, whose mastery of the archeological findings and their intricate historical context made him a captivating guide.

The first day began at Sepphoris, the capital of the Jewish Galilee for a certain period and the home ground for Prof. Weiss' work for over 25 years. The unique topography of the city, situated on a plateau, allowed it to develop in a classical Roman grid layout. Moreover, Prof. Weiss demonstrated how the city was dominated by pagan structures – a temple on the decumanus (west-east main street) and a monument overlooking the city. The complex picture of Jewish-Pagan relations at Sepphoris was further demonstrated by a visit to the Dionysus house, a Roman villa with sumptuous mosaics, that some have ventured to suggest was the home of Rabbi Judah haNasi.

The day continued at Jotapata, a small agricultural Jewish village, made famous for its involvement in the Great Revolt when the village was led by none other than Josephus. Evidence of a large-scale battle was found at the site, as well as a mass grave containing human remains, but Josephus' account of a Masada-like mass suicide at

Jotapata is still contended by scholars. By the end of the visit to Jotapata the group was caught unprepared by pouring rain, and promptly returned to the hotel. After freshening up and dining, the group convened to hear Prof. Israel Yuval's lecture on competing prophecies circulating Roman Judea about the dominion of the world.

The second day of the trip was devoted entirely to Beth Shean, or the Roman city of Scythopolis – one of the biggest metropolises of the province. Prof. Weiss took the pains of leading us into the city through the original western gate, rather than the official entry to the present-day site. The group then had the chance to observe the city from its northern ancient tell, before exploring its streets. Scythopolis exhibits a unique attempt to overcome a hilly topography in order to create visual and urban order. Thus, different angular streets end with a monument in a corresponding angle, creating a vista and a sense of equilibrium. The trip continued to different urban settings, such as the bath-house, public lavatories, and theater, making the picture of public and private life in Roman times more complete.





# An Insight into Jaffa

The Exhibition

Jaffa port

and their communities to remote mixed cities because of housing prices. Others moved to smaller houses and some spent their only savings on legal procedures. This continuous severe gentrification process is posing a serious challenge to residents, NGOs, and state and municipal institutions.

After surveying various living and building styles in the neighborhood the group crossed the city and arrived at the Midron Yaffo Park. The dirt road, which is one of the park's three north-south axes, actually delineates the historic coast line before it disappeared under piles of debris that were dumped there for almost three decades and as far as 200 meters into the ocean. A big part of this debris belonged to thousands of vacant Jaffan-Palestinian houses, which were destroyed during the 60's and 70's, while the rest belonged to many other construction activities throughout the Tel Aviv Metropolis. This area was known as the "Mountain of Garbage" and the debris rose to a staggering height of 15 meters. A few years ago the municipality decided to construct a sewage pipe that was supposed to cross this area of environmental hazard, no longer active after the residences' appeal to court. This plan gradually developed into a full-scale site rejuvenation. Masses of debris were recycled while some were transported out of the area. Although many residents use the park frequently, it is also perceived as undesirable as it contributes to the rise in property values and thus to the pushing out of Arabs.

The tour continued with a walk along the present shore line, the western north-south axis, and then with a climb to a hill where tiles from local houses, which prior to the removal and covering of the debris were visible to all, were integrated into the pavements as a sort of debatable manifestation of the process that has occurred in this area.

The park's northern border is the Jaffa port, next to the final spot of the tour. Naama took the group to the exhibition "Ten Gazes from Yaffa/Yaffo to the 100 Anniversary Celebrations of Tel Aviv," of which she was one of the curators. The exhibition is composed of interviews and portraits of ten Jaffans, taken by two photographers, that are presented on the walls of the gallery and on 9 different tables, one for each person (one of the interviewees is a refugee in Amman and his displacement is represented by the absence of his table). On every table was the written interview alongside photos that the photographers took, as their own interpretations of the interviews. It was an appropriate way to end this thought-provoking tour.



Midron Yaffo Park plan

On a late December day, the "Jews and Cities" research group went on a tour to the city of Jaffa, under the guidance of one of its members, landscape architect Naama Meishar. They left Mount-Scopus at noon, took a short drive through the streets of Jaffa, and left the minibus next to an olive-tree lot — the late Ha'Eitrog Market — which is one of many examples of the disturbing situation caused by the land marketing policy of the Israel Land Administration (ILA) — both at Jaffa and at other mixed cities. A religious Jewish purchasing-group, that refused to admit Arabs, won the ILA bid for the grounds of the Etrog market. Their win brought the many different Arab and Jewish civil groups in Jaffa together into a joint battle against such future bids and state policy, and in support of sustainable and affordable housing solutions for Jaffans.

The group started exploring the roads and alleys of the city. In the neighborhood of Ajami, we learned from Naama's experience as an activist about the different aspects of living in Jaffa and especially the housing distress of Jaffans. Approximately 40% of the Arab population of Jaffa lives in "absentee ownership" properties — about 2,000 homes — as protected tenants. The ILA changed its policy at the late 90's and it is now determined not to maintain the protected tenancy and thus to sell the properties to the highest bidder. The majority of the Arab population of Jaffa is too poor to purchase the homes they live in. Prices in the Ajami neighborhood soared since the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality announced in the early 90's its plan to reformat it as a regenerated low-density housing area, while preserving its architectural texture. In the process of planning, not enough thought was devoted to the preservation of local Arab communities within the renewed neighborhood when demands would increase — as expected. Thus, since 2007 about a quarter of the protected tenants (497 homes) face eviction and demolition by the ILA in order to facilitate the selling of the property. Tenants and organizations had expected a settlement over the question of their occupancy but instead were faced with eviction. State property sales were intensive and Ajami changed from an almost exclusively Arab neighborhood, in the late 80's, to one with a majority of Jews. Many Arabs were forced to leave the city, their families,

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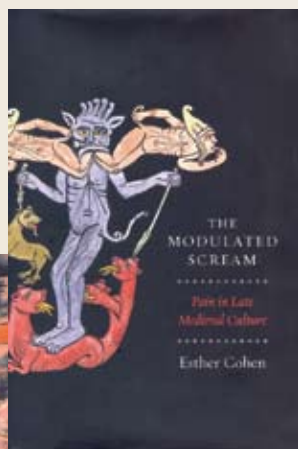
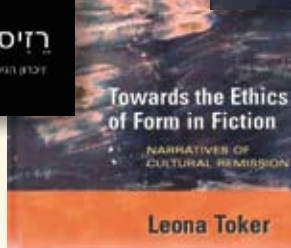
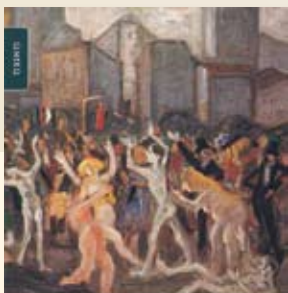
**Prof. David Ruderman**  
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Scholon members

Scholon – Interdisciplinary Research Center in  
Jewish Studies  
The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies  
Faculty of Humanities  
The Hebrew University  
Jerusalem, 91905  
Tel: 02 – 5881279 Fax: 02 – 5881196  
Scholon@savion.huji.ac.il

[www.scholon.huji.ac.il](http://www.scholon.huji.ac.il)

## NEWS



Dr. Scott Ury



Dr. Amos Goldberg

» A fruitful year for the "Knowledge and Pain" research group — three of its senior scholars have published new books: *Towards the Ethics of Form in Fiction*, by Prof. Leona Toker, *The Modulated Scream*, by Prof. Esther Cohen, and *Resistenza or Shoah*, by Dr. Manuela Consonni.



Dr. Manuela Consonni

» Four of Scholon's alumni have left us to pursue their academic careers. Two former Mandel Scholars, Dr. Manuela Consonni and Dr. Amos Goldberg, received a position at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Dr. Scott Ury of the "Jews and Cities" research group received a position at Tel-Aviv University and Yonatan Benarroch of the "The Exegetic Imagination" research group has left for Princeton, after receiving the Tikvah Foundation fellowship.

» Congratulations to Zohar Marcovich, the former administrative director of Scholon, on her appointment as the new administrative director of the Rachel and Selim Benin School of Engineering and Computer Science at the Hebrew University. Maya Sherman was appointed in her stead at Scholon. We wish them both the best of luck in their new positions.