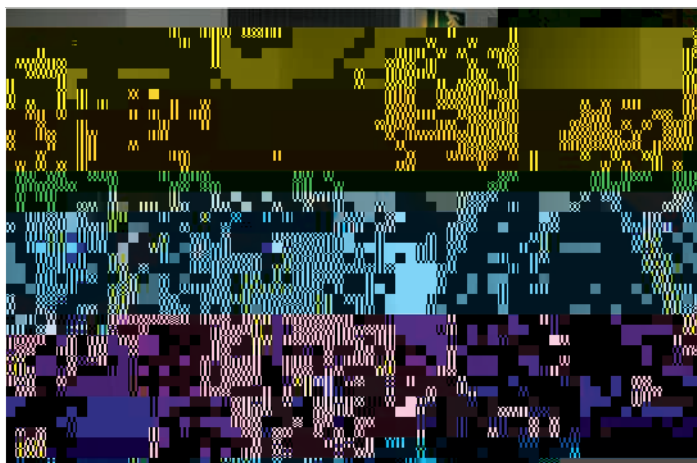

Chair in Modern Israel Studies

A Chair in Modern Israel Studies has been created at the University of Sussex with generous support from major philanthropists. With this new appointment, based in the School of History, Art History and Philosophy, the University will significantly extend its research in modern Middle Eastern History. This initiative has been welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing. 'In this period of huge social and political change in the region,' he said, 'the development of our teaching and research is timely. At Sussex it is part of our tradition to engage with urgent and complex issues, and we are grateful to the donors who have made this possible.'

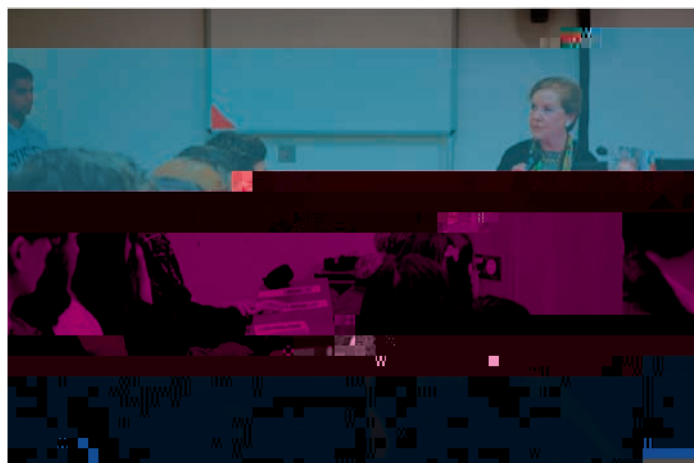
The University already has leading research in related areas within the School and its History department, including the Centre for German-Jewish Studies. The new Chair will contribute to the Middle East studies programme, and its remit will embrace all aspects of the politics, history and society of contemporary Israel. The Chair will also promote links between British and Israeli academics. Two further lecturer posts are proposed, dealing with the history and culture of the Middle East more broadly.

At the wish of one of the donors, the Chair will be named after Yossi Harel, a founding figure in the history of modern Israel. Harel, who died in 2008 at the age of ninety, commanded the 'Exodus', which in 1947 carried more than 4,500 displaced European Jews to Palestine (see illustration). The ship was prevented from landing by the British administration, which forced it to return to Europe, whawitthishussangors,

Speak up – speak out: Holocaust Memorial Day



Prof Michael Farthing VC, Prof Christian Wiese, Dame Julia Neuberger and Dr Gideon Reuveni (photo by kind permission of Peter Phillips)



Marion Blumenthal Lazan speaking to students at the Holocaust Memorial Day event at Sussex University (photo by kind permission of Peter Phillips)

On Wednesday 25 January the Chown Lecture Theatre was packed for the visit of Marion Blumenthal Lazan, a Jewish woman born in the northern German town of Hoya who endured Nazi persecution with other members of her family and survived to tell the tale. 'Four Perfect Pebbles: A Holocaust Story', the book she co-authored with Lila Perl, records the impact that the Westerborg and Bergen-Belsen internment and concentration camps made on her as a vulnerable child. The family was spared the ultimate horror of the Holocaust by the fact that they were being held as exchange prisoners, with visas for the USA. But those childhood ordeals were compellingly brought back to life in the moving personal address that Marion delivered at Sussex, supplemented by a documentary film. Her undiminished idealism struck a particularly strong chord with younger members of the audience.

Equally impressive on a different plane was the address by Rabbi Julia Neuberger on 'Holocaust Remembrance and why it is Important for Everyone'. Reviewing more recent examples of genocide, she asked: What is it in the human psyche that makes civilized people murder their neighbours? And why indeed does the British press demonize asylum seekers? The stories she shared with us suggested that even small gestures of human solidarity can make a difference, in Britain now as they did in Nazi Germany at the time when her parents fled into exile. We must still speak up – speak out! Political democracy also comes into the picture. After her talk Julia Neuberger caught the train back to London in order to vote in the House of Lords on amendments designed to protect the National Health Service.

The discussions were chaired by Christian Wiese and Gideon Reuveni, who thanked the Association of Jewish Refugees for supporting this event and Diana Franklin for coordinating it. A memorable afternoon was introduced by the Vice Chancellor, Michael Farthing, who described Jewish studies as an important growth area for Sussex.

Diana Franklin, the Centre's Manager, has made it her mission to extend the outreach of the events we organize, particularly through her contacts with schools. Several institutions responded to her initiative by inviting Marion Blumenthal Lazan to address their pupils. The feedback has been so remarkable that we would like to share with our readers some of the comments received.

Responses from schools and colleges

From Rochele Abraham, teacher at Hasmonean High School for Girls:

Dear Diana Franklin,
I just want to thank you so much for arranging for Marion Blumenthal Lazan to come to speak at Hasmonean. She was phenomenal – the girls were obsessed with her!! Everyone asked me how on earth I got hold of her and I explained how you facilitated it - and that she just 'fell into our laps'! We were so lucky and privileged to have her – I can't thank you enough for arranging it.

From Fleur Shorthouse, Varndean College:

Dear Marion Lazan,
Thank you so much for coming to college. The students were truly

enriched by your talk. They were incredibly inspired. I have had so many positive reports. One teacher told me they went back to their classroom with their students and they all had a little cry, then the students said they just wanted to do good works! How sweet is that!!!

From Benjamin Dabby, History Teacher, Highgate School:

Dear Mrs Lazan,
Thank you very much for talking to the pupils at Highgate School. I know they found your talk moving and important, and I am glad to say that some pupils who listened to you have now given talks to other pupils in the school, explaining why they were affected by your talk and what messages they took from listening to you.

From Olivia Camillo, Camden School:

Dear Marion,
Thank-you for the wonderful assembly you gave; students and staff were talking about it all day. It was really a moving and memorable talk, with a very important message about tolerance and respect for others, which I will reiterate in subsequent assemblies. And you are such a lovely, warm person, as is your husband Nathaniel.

From Tamar Tatz, Teacher of Jewish Studies, Hasmonean High School for Girls:

Dear Marion,
As a teacher at Hasmonean High School I want to personally thank you for the most inspirational talk you gave to our students last Friday. I know how much the girls appreciated your talk and what a great impact it had on every single one of them. The way you presented your story was perfectly pitched for the age and level of our girls; and I believe there was not one person in the room who could not relate personally to your story and find practical applications for themselves in their own lives. The messages you imparted to the girls were invaluable and so very powerful. As for myself, I felt it was a real privilege to be sitting in that room hearing you speak. Your tremendous positivity and wonderful sense of humour had a huge impact on both myself and my students, and I know they will stay with us forever.

From a pupil at Hasmonean High School:

Dear Mrs Lazan,
My name is Daniella Sperling and I attend Hasmonean High School. I was present when you spoke about your story of the Holocaust. Your story moved me deeply, and I wanted to tell you what an inspirational woman you are. From the moment you spoke with such emotion, I was touched. I'm sure it wasn't easy to retell your difficult story but I appreciated it so much. I don't know so much about the Holocaust, but I know that my grandpa was sent to another family from Belgium to France when he was seven years old and was put to work there continuously. They treated him worse than the animals they kept, but B'H he was spared the concentration camps. I wanted to know more about it, so listening to you really helped me get a better understanding.

Editor's Note: We are grateful to all concerned for allowing us to reproduce the above excerpts from letters and email messages.

Obituary: Peter Straus

Reports on Events

Is there a Jewish Political Tradition?

The Shtadlan as a Case Study

François Guesnet (Sidney and Elizabeth Corob Reader in Modern Jewish History at University College London) addressed this question on Monday 27 February at the Centre research seminar. In contrast to the widespread view that associates Jewish politics with the emergence of mass political movements in the late nineteenth century, notably Zionism and the Bund, Guesnet argued that Jewish activism has a much longer and more illustrious history. Going back to the late Middle Ages, he traced the origins and activities of the Jewish intercessor (Hebrew: Shtadlan). Working as a 'lobbyist' representing the interests of the local Jewish communities, and negotiating for the safety and benefit of Jews with the authorities holding power, the Shtadlan, according to Guesnet, exemplify forms of political agitation that have received scant attention from historians. Scrutinizing the life and work of such intercessors, from Menasseh ben Israel through Barukh ben David Yavan to Moses Montefiore, Guesnet provided a rich and illuminating narrative of European Jewish political history from the early to the late modern periods. The talk, attended mainly by faculty members and postgraduate students, provoked a lively discussion on the nature of Jewish politics both past and present.

Moses Hess between Socialism and Zionism

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Moses Hess (1812-1875) and the 150th anniversary of his famous book *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question* (1862), the first large international conference devoted to this

German-Jewish socialist thinker and early Zionist took place in Jerusalem from 18-20 March, 2012.

Christian Wiese, who continues to serve as visiting research professor at Sussex, co-organized this event on behalf of the Centre for German-Jewish Studies and the Martin Buber Chair in Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main, in cooperation with the Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem, and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Israel.

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Forthcoming Events

12 April 2012

Gideon Reuveni

(University of Sussex)

Work in Progress Seminar,

'The Bridge, the Door, and the Cultural-Economy Approach to History'

Instead of viewing the economy as an ontological 'other' to culture, this paper will suggest that seeing the economy as a form of culture practice offers new ways to read [Jewish] history. The paper will be divided into two parts. It will start with a brief overview of some recent discussions of the relationship between culture and the economy, focusing on the work of the British school of cultural economy. The second section of the talk will seek to illustrate the potential of this so-called cultural economy approach to history by discussing some aspects of Gideon's current research on Jewish economic history

16:00 Arts A, A155

University of Sussex

grains and was thus not kosher for Passover. According to the company's in-house newspaper, HAG-PostHAG advertised its "Coffee for Passover" in special advertisements placed in a range of Jewish newspapers every year.

The attention devoted to the Jewish public by HAG Coffee's

23-26 July 2012

European Association for Jewish Studies Workshop on 'Jewish Studies in Europe: Comparative Perspectives' at Oxford, Yarnton Manor (co-organized with the Martin Buber Chair in Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main)

'Buy Jewish': Hag Coffee and Antisemitism

In Germany, a special advertising campaign for HAG coffee was aimed at the Jewish public ahead of the Passover holiday, and it apparently derived from the company's competition with Korinthen, a rival decaffeinated coffee that, unlike HAG, was produced from