

*History and  
Literature:  
New Readings of  
Jewish Texts in Honor  
of Arnold J. Band*

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*Dr. William Cutter and Professor Arnold J. Band*

Unless you are Roger Angell, *The New Yorker* writer, you might not think of a sports figure in connection with a prominent scholar of Hebrew literature. But at a large university, many different kinds of teachers leave magnificent legacies. It is for that reason that Professor Arnold Band, an honorary alumnus of HUC-JIR, was heralded recently by the UCLA campus newspaper along with John Wooden, the legendary coach of UCLA's dynamite basketball teams of days past. Both were considered among the twenty great teachers of the past century. And even more recently, a group of Professor Band's friends and students collaborated to honor him in another way: with the publication of a *Festschrift* – a volume of essays devoted to his favorite subjects. University.

If the editors of such a volume are fortunate, the *festschrift* emerges – not as a dull, heavy document – but with coherence and a central theme. It can point the direction for future scholarship, and it may contain a few essays that teachers in the future will recommend to students. One of the dangers in editing such a volume is that the scholarly contributions will be “all over the map,” and another is that a scholar in some distant city will simply contribute something already underway and not related to the honoree.

As editors, David Jacobson and I were fortunate in that the authors of our articles stepped up to the line and wrote exciting fresh articles from their fields. They also kept their eyes on the basket by responding to our wish that the articles would reflect Professor Band's wily temperament and prodigious achievements. We didn't receive one article that did not fit our scheme and every one of the forty articles was written with exquisite care and belief in the task at hand. Our authors from throughout the world included in the range of their themes subjects related to either Classic Texts, Diaspora Literatures, or Zionism, the Holocaust and Israel. The essays were well conceived, and beautifully executed. And they honored

Professor Band by doing precisely what he achieved in his career: they read documents in entirely new ways that added freshness to the well-known canons of Jewish literature.

I was proud that the Hebrew Union College Press was one of the sponsors of the book, along with many of Band's friends and, particularly, the family of Lloyd Cotzen. Prominent among our authors were HUC-JIR faculty: Stanley Nash, Ezra Spicehandler, David Ellenson, Michael Meyer and William Cutter. In addition, several of our honorary degree recipients are represented: Ruth Kartun Blum, David Patterson, Glenda Abrahamson, Aharon Appelfeld, Gershon Shaked, and Joseph Dan. Appelfeld is one of Israel's prominent authors, often translated

into English through his amazing laconic tales of life surrounding the Holocaust; Shaked is the dean of Israel's literary historians and critics; Josef Dan holds the Gershom Scholem Chair in Jewish Mysticism. This distinguished array of senior scholars joined with younger scholars who had actually been Band's students.

One article dealt at length with a remarkable short story of 5 lines written in the early twentieth century about the pogrom in a major town in Russia. Another undertook a rereading of one of Yehuda Amichai's latest poems. Michael Meyer translated and rendered brilliant commentary on Heinrich Heine's “Princess Sabbath.” David Ellenson contributed a long and seminal article on the way in which “double consciousness” and living in two worlds has affected Jewish communal and individual behavior and legal decisions. Nearly forty more articles on different subjects flood this rich expression of thinking, research and innovation. It was a pleasure for me, as it was for Professors Shideler, Komar and Signer, to reminisce personally about the honoree and to link all of our memories to his massive contribution to Jewish Studies.

Arnold Band is one of the pioneers in Jewish Studies in the United States. His over one hundred articles and books have created a field within a field and represent the best of creative scholarly inquiry. Band's own articles are like perfect string quartets—tending towards the concise twenty to thirty page length, gem-like in brilliance, architectural in design, all devoted to the field he helped invent. It was our hope to present him with a volume of articles that reflect his method and that approach the quality of his life's work.

The readers will tell us if we have achieved our goal.

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