



## News Update

### Autumn 2005

#### Seminars / Exhibitions

The Society for Jewish Art's 37<sup>th</sup> annual conference held in May was entitled: "Art during the Holocaust – Is It Possible?" The conference was organised by Ms. Amia Boasson, Director of the Society, and Ms. Batia Brutin of Beit Berl College. After Prof. Bezalel Narkiss' opening words, lectures were delivered by Dr. Irit Salmon, Ms. Anita Tarsi, Prof. Yeshaayahu Nir, Prof. David Bloch, Ms. Eliad Moreh, Dr. Pnina Rosenberg, Mr. Kobbi Lurie, Dr. Gila Flamm, Prof. Ziva Amishai-Maisles and Ms. Batia Brutin.

Mrs. Michal Sternthal, Section Head of Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts (HIM) at the Center, delivered a lecture at a seminar held in honour of Mr. Benjamin Richler on the occasion of his retirement from the Jewish National & University Library. Mrs. Sternthal's lecture dealt with one of the manuscripts housed at the Austrian National Library in Vienna: "**The Mysterious Origin of the Physician Nezer Zahav and his Illuminated Medical Book**" (see also below).

The Italian Friends of the Hebrew University held a meeting at the beginning of November 2005 to discuss academic research cooperation between Israel and Italy. Ms. Ariella Amar, Head of the Synagogues and Ritual Objects Section told the audience about new discoveries regarding the **Synagogue of Salozzo**, while Anna Nizza of the

HIM Section spoke about a Hebrew Italian manuscript housed in the Austrian National Library in Vienna.

## **Expeditions**

Architect Mrs. Zoya Arshavsky has just returned from **Uzbekistan** where she surveyed more than twenty Jewish houses in Bukhara and Samarkand and documented eleven of them; she also discovered in archives of Tashkent twenty-six files on documentation carried out in 1946 (including architectural plans) of Jewish houses in Bukhara. Mrs. Arshavsky was assisted by Prof. Mavlyuda Yusupova of the Institute of Fine Art and Design in Tashkent and by local architects.

Prof. Cohen Mushlin spent three weeks at the **Austrian National Library in Vienna** examining the sixty-one manuscripts already researched by the Library and Center researchers in preparation for the publication of a catalogue. The research encompassed placing the manuscripts in a wider historical context and comparing them to other Hebrew and non-Hebrew manuscripts. One important manuscript in this collection is an astronomical manuscript comprising six of Ibn Ezra's astronomical and astrological essays, several astronomical tables and an illuminated catalogue of stars, produced probably in Spain between 1391 and 1450.

During our expeditions in the countries of **former Yugoslavia**, we noted the sad state of parts of our Jewish heritage:

In **Dubrovnik (Croatia)**, fragments of medieval Jewish tombstones were used in the construction of streets and staircases in the historic city, and in spite of our efforts, the municipality has not removed them nor placed them in a safe place.

On the Jewish cemetery in **Novi Pazar (Serbia & Montenegro)**, a relative of a local politician built a house, leveling part of the cemetery.

The historic cemetery in **Niš (Serbia & Montenegro)**, is under attack from private entrepreneurs who had destroyed about one third of the cemetery erecting small factories and storage space. On the other third of the site Roma (Gypsies) settled thirty years ago and built their dwellings over the graves and vandalized the remaining part of the cemetery. Recently the Joint (USA) financed a rescue operation on the site, which has been cleaned, exposing the extent of damage to the 900 graves.

In **Belgrade and Novi Sad (Serbia & Montenegro)**, several monuments and memorial plaques relating to the Holocaust victims have been destroyed or damaged by anti-Semitic graffiti.

The synagogue of **Apatin in Vojvodina (Serbia & Montenegro)** is now under protection of the authorities following our intervention after threat of sale and destruction. On the ceiling of the synagogue is a depiction of the Tablets of the Law with mirror image inscriptions in Hebrew.

## **Guests at the Center**

- Mrs. Sibylle Sörg, Cultural attaché at the German Embassy in Tel Aviv, visited the Center in April and discussed with Prof. Cohen-Mushlin ways of helping the Center and Braunschweig University in their joint projects of documenting ritual buildings in Germany.

- Last May, the Center hosted Mr. Ralph Goldman, Honorary Executive Vice President of the Joint. Prof. Narkiss, in his capacity as Head of the Jerusalem Index of Jewish Art, introduced the Center and the Index, while Mrs. Michal Sternthal, Head of the Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts Section, Ariella Amar, Head of the Synagogues and Ritual Objects Section, Mr. Ivan Ceresnjes and Dr. Sergey Kravtsov, of the Architectural Section, each introduced their Section assisted by a digitalized presentation. The guest was very impressed by the Center's work and promised to do his utmost to help continue our important work.
- Mrs. Vera A. Kuznetsova from the Kazan State Academy of Architecture and Civil Engineering visited the Center in July. The Academy and the Center signed an agreement to cooperate in the project of "Architecture of Synagogues of the Russian Inner Provinces, Late 19<sup>th</sup> – Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century", mainly in the Volga Region, where about 20 extant monuments are listed.
- Mr. David Glasser of the Ben Uri Galleries in London was hosted by the Center's historian Mr. Vladimir Levin. They discussed ways of cooperation and the exchange of books.