



News Update – Spring 2006

Exhibitions/Seminars/Lectures

In our annual **Mordechai and Nassia Narkiss Lecture Series** held in December 2005 researchers from the Center and elsewhere delivered interesting lectures at the beautiful Bet Shalom in Jerusalem:

- **Jewish Cemetery Buildings in Germany**, by Dr.-Ing. Des. Ulrich Knufinke from Fachgebiet Baugeschichte, Technische Universität Braunschweig; Ulrich was also the recipient of the Mordechai and Nessia Narkiss Prize, which is granted once a year. Ulrich had submitted recently his Ph.D. thesis on the above-mentioned subject, supervised by Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and Prof. Harmen Thies of Braunschweig University.
- **“All Roads Lead to Rome”? The Production of Illuminated Manuscripts in Rome at the End of the 13th Century**, by Ms. Anna Nizza from the Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts Section at the Center. Anna is a very talented young researcher, a new immigrant from Italy.
- **Angels and Satans on a Plate: Biblical Episodes in Middle Eastern Craft**, by Ariella Amar, head of the Synagogues and Ritual Objects Section at the Center.
- **Synagogue Mosaics: Inter-Community Dialogue or Discourse with the Other?**, by Dr. Rina Talgam of the Department of Art History at the Hebrew University.

Last March, Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin travelled to **Berlin** to participate in a ceremony in which three wooden models of ritual buildings were officially presented to the **Historical Museum of Berlin** – of a synagogue, a Protestant church and a Catholic church. Prof. Cohen-Mushlin and Prof. Harmen Thies from Braunschweig University delivered lectures in the presence of dignitaries from both Churches and the Jewish Community. The three wooden models are examples of buildings that played an important role in the

development of sacred architecture in the 1920s and show particular forms of contemporary design.

Also in March, Dr. Ruth Jacoby delivered a lecture on Ancient Synagogues in Beth Shean. It was preceded by a visit to the exhibition “From Scythopolis to Beisan” in the Small Gallery at the Hebrew University’s Mt. Scopus Campus. The lecture and visit to the exhibition were the initiative of the **Society for Jewish Art in cooperation with the Center**.

Spotlight on the Moroccan community was held in April at the L.A. Mayer Museum for Islamic Art in Jerusalem. The seminar included three lectures, among them Ariella Amar’s “Between Two Communities – Jews from Morocco and from Sepharad”, Berber dance and tastes from the Moroccan cuisine.

Rabbi Isaac Abuhab Synagogue Unravelled in Portugal?

During recent renovations on a house in the 15th-century Jewish quarter in Porto (Portugal), a two-tier built-in cabinet had been exposed in the eastern wall. Local experts consider it an Aron Kodesh and attribute the place to the synagogue in which Rabbi Isaac Abuhab may have prayed. A group of people from Porto calling themselves “The Sons of the Marranos” wish to preserve the building and turn it into a museum for the history of the Jews of Porto.

Among the experts was an educated monk who had studied Judaism and lived in Israel where he studied Hebrew and Jewish Studies. For the past few years he has been trying to draw the attention of the authorities for the preservation of the synagogue. The Center for Jewish Art has approached UNESCO and other organizations to help these efforts. We were notified that the building has been recognised by the appropriate Portuguese authorities as of historical interest.

This amazing story was brought to our attention by the Israeli journalist originating from Portugal, Inacio Steinhardt.

Guests at the Center

Prof. **Chris Vonck**, Rector of the Faculty for the Comparative Study of Religions (FVG) in Antwerp, Belgium visited the Center in November and agreed with Prof. Cohen-Mushlin on the exchange of students, programmes and publications between the two institutions.

Dr.-Ing. Des. **Ulrich Knufinke**, M.A. of the Fachgebiet Baugeschichte, Technische Universität Braunschweig was the guest of the Center last December 2005. During his stay in Israel he pursued his research on the German-Israeli architect, Zeev Haller, focusing on his projects in Israel. Dr. Knufinke also delivered a lecture on Haller's projects for Jewish Communities in Germany. Dr. Knufinke was the recipient of the Mordechai and Nassia Narkiss Prize (see details above).

In March we hosted a large **delegation from Lower Saxony headed by the Minister of Culture with the participation of presidents of seven universities in Germany**, who wished to learn more about Israeli universities. Each section of the Center presented its work, some of which is summarized in the paragraphs below. We also hosted **Dr. Eleonora Bergman, Deputy Director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw**, who had delivered a lecture on the Legal Status of Synagogues in Poland at the Polish Institute in Tel Aviv.

The Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts Section continued their intensive research on the 61 Hebrew illuminated manuscripts to be published as a catalogue by the Austrian National Library.

The Ritual Objects Section is about to publish a comprehensive study of *Shadai'ot* - a unique Greek Romaniot custom and a historical document, and the *Shadai'ot* collection in the Jewish Museum of Athens.

The Architecture Section has been engaged in the research and mapping of ritual structures (synagogues, *mikvaot* and cemetery chapels) worldwide, focusing their attention on buildings with no Jewish communities which are in danger of collapse, change or demolition.

They have also been conducting research following the invitation of the Schusev State Museum of Architecture in Moscow to participate (together with Bet Hatfutsoth in Tel Aviv) in the preparation of an exhibition on synagogues. The Center is to serve as the exhibition's scientific authority.

Digital reconstruction of the Turei Zahav (TAZ) synagogue in Lviv, Ukraine of 1582 and Pakruojis in Lithuania, built 1801 as well as drawing of architectural plans of the wooden synagogue in Žiežmariai, Lithuania are being carried out. The last expedition to Uzbekistan is being prepared before the Jewish quarters, which are undergoing tremendous changes, will be altered without recognition. Most Jews have left either to the USA or Israel, and we witness once again the disappearance of an old Jewish culture.