



News Update, Spring 2005

Events / Symposia / Exhibitions

- Our long collaboration with the Department of Architectural History at the Braunschweig University (DAH-BU) has yielded not only the documentation of 100 ritual buildings in Germany, but also a traveling exhibition of twenty wooden models of synagogues (scale 1:50) shown in Berlin, Goettingen, Rostock, Hannover and Osnabrück. The exhibition has gained the interest and awareness of a wide public in Germany, especially school children, and will travel in the near future to Dessau, Dresden, Recklinghausen and Braunschweig. A society, *Bet Tfila*, was established by the Center and the DAH-BU in order to raise funds for further documentation of the Jewish heritage in Germany and Europe.
- Recently, Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin and the head of DAH-BU, Prof. Harmen Thies, were honoured by the *Stiftung Bibel und Kultur* (headed by the former President of Germany, Mr. Rau) for their outstanding mutual research in a ceremony held in the new synagogue in Dresden.
- In honour of Aliza, on the occasion of her forthcoming retirement from the Art History Department, a symposium was held last January at the Hebrew University on “Tradition and Innovation in Iconography and Style.” It was most exciting to listen to the many lectures by scholars from Israel and abroad, and most rewarding for Aliza to see her young students deliver scholarly lectures to an audience of friends and colleagues. The symposium was followed by a festive dinner.
- Also in January, the Vancouver Friends of the Hebrew University held a Soiree in honour of the Center, in which local Jewish artists exhibited and sold their works prepared especially for the event. The proceeds of the event are donated to the Hebrew University, earmarked for the Center.
- In October 2004 a group from the Canadian Friends of the Hebrew University gathered at the Israel Museum to listen to a lecture delivered by Aliza on the Center’s activities in preserving our Jewish visual culture. It was followed by a tour in the museum guided by Ariella.
- Last March, Ariella Amar, Head of Ritual Objects Section, gave a lecture “Prague and Greek Communities: A Living Memory” in a course entitled “The Memory is Still Fresh - Sho'ah: Past and Present of Jewish Communities in Europe” organized by the Diaspora Museum in Tel Aviv. In April, Michal Sternthal, Head of Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts Section, delivered a lecture for Ministry of Education teachers: “Shavuot as Represented in Jewish Art.”

Seminars Held in Cooperation with the Society for Jewish Art Organized by Mrs. Amia Boasson, Director of the Society

- “Spotlight on Jewish Communities”:
 - The Iraqi community in Israel, in May 2004. Lectures were delivered by Ariella and other scholars from the Center of Jewish Iraqi Heritage in Orr Yehuda, where the seminar took place.
 - East European Jewry, in November 2004, with a lecture by Ariella and *Tisch* with Zvi Zalevsky and his musicians.
 - The Bukharan community, at the Museum of Islamic Art in Jerusalem in December 2004. It included a lecture by Ariella, "Tastes from the Bukharan Kitchen" and a tour of the exhibition on Ikat – silk cloths from Central Asia.
 - The Argentinean community, in March 2005, with lecturers from the Hebrew University and the Association for Research of Latin American Jewry.
 - The Egyptian community, planned for June.
- “Between Queen Helene and Hanukkah Lamps” was the subject of a seminar held in Jerusalem in December 2004. It included a tour and lecture by Dr. Ruth Jacoby on kings’ tombs in Jerusalem and a lecture on Hanukkah Lamps at the Ticho House.
- “Tombs of the Rich and of the Poor”, a tour and lecture by Ruthie, was held in March 2005.
- A seminar on “A Local Wedding“ was held in March 2005 at the Eretz-Israel Museum in Tel Aviv on the occasion of their exhibition “Local Wedding – Eretz-Israel *Ketubbot*, 1800-1960.” Prof. Bezalel Narkiss opened the seminar, Prof. Shalom Sabar and others delivered lectures on a variety of related subjects.
- The Society’s annual conference will be held on **May 18, 2005** focusing on: Art and Music – Sho’ah and Sixty Years After.

Architecture Section: Expeditions

- During our expedition to **Lithuania** last year we found thirteen wooden synagogues (the last of this kind remaining in Europe) and documented eight of them.
- In **Uzbekistan** we documented seven synagogues, four private homes, five cemeteries and four cemetery chapels in five towns in the Fergana Valley: Kokand, Fergana, Margilan, Andijan and Namangan. This documentation was carried out in cooperation with the Academy of Art and Design in Tashkent.
- A team from the Center together with a team from the Department of Architectural History at the University of Braunschweig documented ritual buildings in Brandenburg: twelve synagogues, twelve cemetery chapels and two *mikvaot*. In the past there were 143 Jewish ritual structures, 54 of which were synagogues.



*The Wooden Synagogue in Pakruojis,
Lithuania, ca. 1800.*

The Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts Section



continues its research on the sixty-one Hebrew illuminated manuscripts housed at the Austrian National Library in Vienna in preparation for the publication of a catalogue. The research includes 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 1391-1450.

"Vienna Siddur SeMak," Lake Constance, first quarter of the 14th century, Vienna National Library, Cod. Hebr. 75, fol.1v

The Synagogues and Ritual Objects Section researched and computerized during the last year the synagogues and ritual objects of the following communities: Djerba and southern Tunisia; Kerala, south west India; the Romaniot community in Greece; Bulgaria, and Piedmont in north Italy. One of the most significant results is the dating of most synagogues in the two Jewish neighborhoods in Djerba, and the reconstruction of the origins of the "southern architectural type" and its evolution. Some results will be published shortly.



Torah case, Djerba, Tunisia, 1780-1784

Guests at the Center

- On a visit to the Center last February, Prof. Cohen-Mushlin and the Ambassador of Romania, Dr. Valeria Mariana Stoica, discussed ways to raise funds to document the rich Jewish visual heritage in Romania, which is mostly well preserved. The intention is to integrate local architectural students in the project and encourage them to build wooden models, as the German students do.
- In February we hosted Prof. Emeritus Kurt Schubert from the University of Vienna. Prof. Schubert dedicated the "Ursula and Kurt Schubert (Vienna) Archive of Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts" which he and his late wife had donated to the Center a few years ago. Prof. Schubert delivered a lecture in Hebrew on "Jewish Art in the Period of the Talmud: An Example of Jewish Mission."
- Last month Prof. Cohen-Mushlin hosted Dr. Henning Eikenberg, former Director General of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and at present Representative of the Hebrew University for EU Research Framework Programmes.

International Relations

- Archeologist Yair Kamaisky with the support of the Joint Distribution Committee is interested in collaboration with the Center regarding excavations in Kojron, Kraoro and Stobi in Macedonia.
- The Department of Cultural Values at the Ministry of Culture of Lithuania is interested in our documentation in order to develop tourism initiatives in Lithuania.
- Following our letter to various Israeli embassies around the world, we have received reports on the state of Jewish cultural heritage in their respective countries.

Book Fairs

- In February 2005 the International Book Fair was held in the National Convention Center in Jerusalem, where we exposed our books to a wide audience from Israel and abroad. We also succeeded to establish some book exchange agreements with international publishing houses.
- Later in February we participated in the annual book fair organized by the Dinnur Center for Jewish History at the Hebrew University.

Publications

- A series of fourteen posters, "The Synagogue as the Center of the Community," was published recently for educational purposes on the Ukrainian, Polish, Bukharan, Balkan, Indian, Libyan, Tunisian, Egyptian, Ethiopian and Yemenite communities.