



News Update – Summer 2009

**We would like to wish all our friends
a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year**

It is our pleasure to share with you information about the Center's activities in recent months.

Research at the Center

Synagogues and Ritual Objects Section; Architectural Section

The computerisation of the Jewish cemetery in Karnobat, Bulgaria has been completed and will constitute part of a comprehensive conclusion written by Ms. Einat Ron and Ms. Ariella Amar of the Ritual Objects Section. The conclusion will be based on the documentation and research of three cemeteries in Bulgaria: Karnobat, Shumen and Provadia.

An expedition consisting of researchers from both Sections documented synagogues and ritual objects in Moldavia, Romania in August 2009, and we hope to share with you some results in our next News Update.

The Architectural Section conducted the second expedition to Latvia in May-June and will send the third one in September. This will probably be the last in that country, with a report to be written in due course.

Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts Section

Our project of documenting Hebrew illuminated manuscripts at the Bavarian State Library in Munich is well on its way. Headed by Prof. Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, the project has so far yielded some remarkable results among which are, for example, a beautiful two volume mahzor (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 3/I, II) being studied by Michal Sternthal. Both volumes, for the Day of Atonement (vol. I) and Sukkot (vol. II), were copied during 1459/61 for R. Mattathias son of Isaac from Ulm. The first volume concludes with a colophon extending on three successive leaves, informing that the scribe Isaac - known in

Ashkenaz as Izak - copied the mahzor "at the age of 61 years ...without glass apparatus which lightens the eyes, for Jacob Mattathias son of Isaac, in the city of Ulm" (Cod. Hebr. 3/I, fols. 487-488). The second volume was written by another Ashkenazi scribe, who did not sign his name. He concludes the mahzor with a blessing indicating the year of completion: 1460/1 (Cod. Hebr. 3/II, fol. 370v). However, a clue to the identity of the patron can be discerned from the blessings for *Chatan-Torah* (groom of the Torah) and *Chatan-Bereshit* (groom of Genesis) where the names of Jacob Matathiah and his sons, Abraham and Moses, appear.

The two volumes of the Ulm Mahzor were not only copied by two different scribes, but were also decorated by different artists. The decoration in both parts consists mainly of elaborate, decorative initial word panels in colours, ink and gold leaf. Several of these illustrate the text, such as the illustrations for the twelve signs of the Zodiac which adorn the *piyyut* for rain recited during the festival of Sukkot. The illumination of the second volume has been previously identified as the work of the German-Christian artist Johannes Bämle or his atelier. Typical to his style of decoration are the use of vivid colours, large fleshy flowers, undulating acanthus leaves, a lace frame for the panels and the use of both colours and ink in his work.



Initial word panel opening the yozer for Simhat Torah, Ulm Mahzor of Munich, Ulm, 1459/60 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 3/II, fol. 315v)

Other manuscripts are equally interesting. A large Book of Psalms (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 473) is being studied by Anna Nizza. It was copied in 1706 for the Klaus synagogue in Prague by the scribe Shabetai (Sheftel) son of Zalman Auerbach, the judge of Nickolsburg. The manuscript, one of the earliest amongst Hebrew illuminated manuscripts of the 18th century, is decorated with a beautiful painted frontispiece enclosing a depiction of Jews approaching the synagogue at the bottom of the page.

Book of Psalms, Prague, 1706 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 473, fol. 1)

An illuminated Sephardi Bible containing the *massora magna* and the *massora parva*, probably produced in the 14th century in Castile, is being researched by Estherlee Kanon. The Bible (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr. 392) is decorated by many *massoratic* tables surrounded by colour frames formed by foliate motifs, interlaced running geometrical motifs and filigree.



Bible, Spain, Castile(?), 14th century (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Hebr.392, fol. 9)

Of particular interest is a group of about 50 manuscripts produced between 1548 and 1553 in Venice by several Jewish scribes for the private collection of Augsburg Patrician Hans Jacob Fugger. Ilona Steimann, who is currently working on this collection, points out to its paramount importance in view of the dramatic decline of Hebrew book production in Venice at that time. In 1548 the largest Venetian printing house of Daniel Bomberg which printed Hebrew books was shut down, in



1553 the Talmud was publicly burnt and at the same time the printing of Hebrew books was prohibited by the Venetian government.

Under these circumstances it is quite amazing that Fugger's Hebrew manuscripts were produced by Jewish scribes, with the involvement of Christian humanists and converts, against the adversity of time.

Seminars Organised by the Society for Jewish Art in Cooperation with the Center

A seminar on the Egyptian Jewish Community in Israel (in December 2008); lecturers: Arch. Prof. David Cassuto, Ms. Rachel Tzarfati, Prof. David Ohana, Mr. Ezra Barnea, Lea Lagziel, Ms. Levana Zamir and Mr. Arie Avigur.

A seminar *From the Levites to the Paytanim: Liturgical Music in Ancient East and in Judaism* (in December 2008); lecturers: Dr. Uri Gabai, Dr. Rina Talgam, Prof. Eliyaho Schleifer and Prof. Eitan Avitzur.

A seminar *In Memory of Shim'on Bermatz of A.L. Monson Bermatz Print*, with an exhibition *From Lithography to Offset 1892-1992* (in April 2009); lecturers: Ms. Nirit Shalev-Khalifa, Dr. Kobi Cohen-Hattab and Dr. Avi Sasson.

Last May the Society for Jewish Art celebrated its 40th anniversary and foundation by the late Prof. Bezalel Narkiss who was also its life-long chairman. The occasion was commemorated by a conference entitled *Night of Vigil and a Day: Conservation in Art*. Among its lecturers were Dr. Gideon Ofrat, Ms. Ezra Barnea, Mr. Itzik Shweiki, Dr. Adolfo Ruetman, Mr. Bill Gross, Mr. Michael Magen, Ms. Rachel Tzarfati, Ms. Nirit Shalev-Khalifa, Dr. Haim Ben-David, Prof. David Cassuto, Ms. Tania Cohen, Mr. Doron Herzog, Mr. Shai Farkash and Dr. Doron Luria.

Scholars and Researchers of the Center Present their Research

Dr. Ruth Jacoby and Architect Zoya Arshavsky delivered lectures on the Bukharan Jewish Community in a seminar organized by Yad Ben-Zvi in February 2009. Dr. Jacoby spoke about their ritual objects as reflecting the cultural surrounding and the communal ties with the outside world. Mrs. Arshavsky discussed the unique architectural aspects of houses in Bukhara and Samarkand.

Ms. Nizza, Ms. Steimann and Mrs. Kanon participated in the *First Junior Scholars Conference on Jewish Art* held in March 2009 at the Tel Aviv University. Ms. Nizza discussed the Nuremberg Mahzor; Ms. Steimann spoke about two Romaniot Haggadot from Venetian Candia, and Ms. Kanon discussed a Medieval Ashkenazi Mahzor and an Italian 18th century Haggadah.

Two seminars, dedicated to Prof. Rudolph Klein's book *The Great Synagogue of Budapest* were held during the month of May; one at Bar-Ilan University and another at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In Bar Ilan, Dr. Sergey Kravtsov spoke about: "Romantic Historicism in Habsburg Empire: Meaning and Function", and Architect Ivan Ceresnjes discussed "Bosnian Synagogues at the turn of the Century: A Few Examples of Neo-Oriental Imperialism in Architecture". At the Hebrew University seminar, Ms. Ariella Amar delivered a lecture on "Sacred Objects: A Mirror to the Jewish Hungarian Society."

Ms. Amar also lectured about "Tradition and Innovation in the Moldavian Synagogues – Structure and Decoration" at the Annual International Conference *Jewish Heritage - Part of the World and National Heritage*. The conference was held at the Tel Aviv University in May 2009 under the auspices of the University of Bucharest and the Goldstein Goren Center for Hebrew Studies.

Mr. Ceresnjes participated in March in the *Jewish Heritage Seminar* held in Bratislava, Slovakia, in which he delivered a lecture: "Care, Conservation and Management and Use of Historic Jewish Properties"; he also headed a panel and gave a lecture on: "Documentation and Protection of Judaica Collections, and Preservation Planning of Building and Sites"

In another conference, *Holocaust Era Assets*, held in June in Terezin, the Czech Republic, Mr. Ceresnjes spoke about "The Fate of Jewish Communal Property in the Former Yugoslavia"

Our scholars and researchers participated in the 15th World Congress of Jewish Studies which took place at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in August. In the session *Iconographical Problems in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts*, Dr. Simona Gronemann lectured on "The Dichotomous Attitude to Medieval Jewish Women and its Visual Expressions". In the session *Jewish Motifs from the Early Renaissance to the Eighteenth Century* Ms. Steiman spoke about "Hebrew Manuscripts from the Collection of Hartmann Schedel (1440–1514)" and in the session *Synagogue architecture* Dr. Kravzov discussed "Architecture of the Tsori Gil'ad Synagogue in L'viv: Historicist Expression in the Changing World".

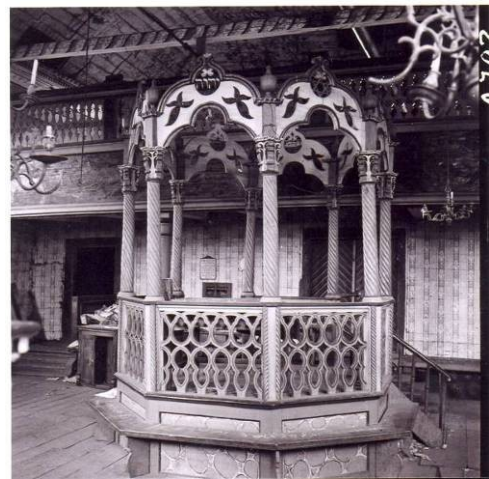
The session *Envisioning Past and Present: The Relevance of Tradition in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts* was dedicated to the memory of Prof. Bezalel Narkiss. That session and other similar ones hosted many of his former students.

Prof. Narkiss was also commemorated in a conference held by the Israeli Association of Byzantine Studies at the Hebrew University, where a whole section was dedicated to his memory. The speakers in that section were: Dr. Rina Talgam, Dr. Shulamit Lederman, Dr. Tamar Avner and Dr. Mati Meyer.

The Synagogue in Pakruojis, Lithuania Was Struck by Fire



Exterior



Bimah

Wooden synagogue in Pakruojis, photos 1930s

From our Lithuanian sources we heard that a fire destroyed parts of the historic wooden synagogue of Pakruojis at the beginning of May 2009. The synagogue, built in 1801, is the oldest of 13 wooden synagogues our Center has documented in 2004. This incident, like others before it, demonstrates again the enormous importance of the documentation and research work done by Center for Jewish Art. If you have access to the Internet, we invite you to visit an animated DVD presentation of the site at <http://cja.huji.ac.il/architecture-Presentation-Pakruojis.html>

The Center is dedicated to the rescue of the Jewish heritage by documentation, and more expeditions should be sent to regions where this heritage is endangered. We appeal to your good will and understanding and urge you to help us in our endeavours.

For contributions, please choose one of the following:

(1) A cheque made out to **Klil, International Society for Jewish Art**, to be sent to:
Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 91905, Israel

(2) A direct bank transfer to
Bank HaPoalim
38 HaPalmach St. (Branch 574), Jerusalem 92542, Israel
IBAN number: IL12-0125-7400-0000-0234-039
Swift code (for international transfers): POALILIT
Account number 12-574-234039 in the name of **Klil, International Society for Jewish Art**

(3) For a tax deduction, contributions in the USA should be sent to:
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