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Epistle from Israel (2003)

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Epistle from Israel

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Abstract: This column covers noteworthy publications, exhibitions, and activities of the Jewish National and University Library and other Judaica Libraries in Israel during 1997-2001. It highlights papers presented at the International Judaica Librarians' Convention in Jerusalem held concurrently with the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) annual conference held in Israel in 2000. Also reported is a summary of a symposium held at Bar Ilan University sponsored by the Israel Society of Special Libraries and Information Centers (ISLIC), significant scholarly Judaica publications at the Jerusalem Book Fair in 2001, and notable additions to the Bar Ilan University's Wurzweiler Central Library.

May 2001

Since the last issue of *Judaica Librarianship*, a new Director has taken over at the Jewish National and University Library (JNUL). Professor Sara Yefet of the Hebrew University's Bible Department assumed the position in 1997 and has had an important impact on streamlining the operations of JNUL. One outstanding example is the elimination of all arrears in the Hebrew Cataloging Department. Professor Yefet has also served as Chairman of the Center for Digital Information Services (MALMAD), the national consortium of Israeli university libraries, and in that capacity has exerted a positive influence on the university library scene nationwide.

As mentioned in the last "Epistle from Israel", JNUL's publication *Books and People* started appearing irregularly because of manpower cuts. Professor Yefet decided to discontinue this publication, published in Hebrew and English editions and distributed worldwide, and initiated an internal newsletter entitled, *The House of Books: News from the Jewish National and University Library* (Hebrew), v. 1, March, 1999 - v. 9, April 2001. Significant events recorded in the publication since its inception include:

RAMBI, the index to articles in Jewish studies produced by JNUL is currently

completing the conversion of all its back issues to computerized form. All non-Hebrew material is now accessible in the online version and the Hebrew entries will probably be available when this column is published. (<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/rambi>)

JNUL's Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts has received a grant for computerizing its catalog. About 90% of the catalog has already been converted and the entire catalog should be available by the end of 2001. Access is via JNUL's ALEPH catalog. An additional grant is speeding up the retrospective conversion of JNUL's Hebrew and Judaica holdings.

A very ambitious multi-year project to digitize important collections in JNUL has been made possible by a generous donation from the Shapell family of the United States. The first stage, already completed, involved JNUL's entire collection of 1200 ketubot. The images are available in three sizes and accompanied by full cataloging. Included are such interesting items as the ketuba of Alfred Dreyfus and one from Philadelphia bearing the signature of the Revolutionary War figure Haym Salomon as a witness. In addition, over 100 ketubot from two private collections have been added. (<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/ketubbot>) [For a more detailed description of the project see Adler, E. and Simon, O. "900 Years of Jewish Marriage Contracts at the Jewish National and University Library", *Cultivate Interactive*, issue 4, May 2001 (<http://www.cultivate-int.org/issue4/ketubbot/>)]

The second project now underway is the digitization of JNUL's collection of ethnic music. Before Pesach 5761 (2001) ten versions of the Pesach Seder song, Ehad mi yode'a, from different Jewish communities were made available to the public at the URL <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/music/passover>. This project will eventually include the entire 7000 hours contained in the music collection (ca. 500,000 gb), but only part of it will be available via the Internet.

Thousands of Hebrew manuscripts "discovered" in Italy have been added to the collection of the Institute for Microfilmed

Hebrew Manuscripts. These manuscripts were used as bindings for volumes of notary records and have been located in archives throughout the country. Included are hundreds of pages of an 800 year old Talmud manuscript. Also located were pages from early printed Hebrew books. At the end of 1999 an exhibition of selected items from these finds opened at JNUL, jointly sponsored by JNUL, the Municipality of Bologna and the Committee for the Preservation of Mediterranean Culture of the Italian Ministry of Culture ("Ancient...", 1999).

During the celebration of the Hebrew University's 75th anniversary in 2000, JNUL mounted an exhibition entitled "Treasures Revealed". Fifty-six of the library's choicest possessions in thirteen categories were placed on display in JNUL's exhibition hall. Subjects ranged from a Torah scroll written in Barcelona before 1336 by Rabbi Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi to Naphtali Herz Imber's manuscript of Hatikvah. The original items were on display during the months of April-June and then replaced by mock-ups so the originals wouldn't be damaged by excessive exposure to harmful conditions. The exhibition wasn't closed until after the IFLA conference at the end of the summer [see below] and was very highly rated by IFLA visitors. A fully illustrated catalog edited by Rafael Weiser, Director of JNUL's Department of Manuscripts and Archives and Rivka Plessner, a senior member of the Manuscript and Archives Department staff, was issued (Weiser, 2000).

Research is constantly being undertaken to better understand items in library collections and in many cases to identify figures connected with these publications, or in the case of manuscripts, identify the scribe or illustrator. In 1970, JNUL received a manuscript referred to as Mahzor Benei Roma. Only recently did Shlomo Zucker of JNUL's Manuscript Department definitely identify the scribe as Yoel ben Simon, known for his illustrated Haggadah manuscripts, among which is the Washington Haggadah in the Library of Congress, which was issued in a facsimile edition in 1991.

The Judaica Reading Room's staff has added two special subject indices based on the Reading Room's collection to those already available. An index to minor aggadic midrashim was compiled by Elona Avinezer, the Reading Room's new Director. The second index, prepared by Zipora Ben-Abou, dealt with material on the neighborhoods of Western Jerusalem. Work is now underway on an index to works about the Old City of Jerusalem.

As indicated above, JNUL is going through a period of change, including the retirement of a number of its internationally known, veteran librarians. Among them are Libby Kahane, Director of the Bibliographic Service and long time editor of JL's "Reference Works from Israel" feature; Dr. Michael Riegler, Head of the Judaica Reading Room, whose thesis *Colophons of Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts as Historical Sources* (Riegler, 1995), and *Bibliography of the Five Scrolls* (Riegler, 1996) are important reference tools; Rabbi Meir Wunder, Head of the Legal Depository Unit, author of numerous bibliographic items and rabbinical biographies, the most noted being the five volume *Encyclopedia of Galician Rabbis and Scholars* (Vunder, 1978-1987), and recipient in 1997 of an award given by the Minister of Education and Culture for creativity in the field of Jewish culture ("Dr. Elitsur...", 1997); and Dr. Zion Shorer, Head of the Hebrew Cataloging Department, who trained generations of catalogers as a lecturer in the Hebrew University's School of Librarianship, Archive and Information Studies.

During the Summer of 2000 Israel was the site of the annual conference of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA). Over 1800 librarians took part despite a boycott declared by Arab nations. Some tension was felt during the conference, for example when the government's representative at the opening session not only spoke in Hebrew, not an official language of IFLA, but talked about Israel's eternal and undivided capital Jerusalem; but in general the conference took place in a relaxed atmosphere.

At the 1997 and 1998 IFLA conferences modest programs on aspects of Judaica librarianship were sponsored by AJL. In 1997 in Copenhagen Rosalie Katchen ob"m of Brandeis University prepared a poster presentation on "Non-Roman databases: Hebrew at Brandeis University" and Dr. Nanette Stahl of Yale University presented a paper at the 1998 conference in Amsterdam entitled "The Early Printed

Passover Haggadah: a Tale of Four Cities – Prague, Mantua, Venice, Amsterdam". At the Jerusalem conference it was decided to prepare a more ambitious program and arrangements were made within the framework of IFLA's Library History Roundtable to present a full day's programming on Judaica themes. Enlisted as partners in the undertaking were the Judaica Librarians' Group, Israel, and the European Hebrew Libraries Group.

An organizing committee composed of Professor Edith Lubetski of Yeshiva University's Stern College, Chair, Rosalie Katchen ob"m of Brandeis University, and Ya'akov Aronson of Bar Ilan University, invested two years in planning the program. Fifteen speakers from the USA, Israel and Europe were enlisted in a program divided into five sessions. This Judaica "mini-seminar", as it was termed by Professor Donald Davis of the University of Texas, Chair of the Library History Round Table (LHRT), took place at Jerusalem's International Convention Center (Binyane ha'Umah). Prof Davis opened the day, greeting the participants on behalf of the LHRT and expressed the Round Table's pleasure at having the opportunity to host the program.

The overall theme of the presentations was "Historical Threads of Judaica and Hebraica Librarianship". Opening the first session, "How to Find the Jewel in the Crown: Judaica Cataloging and Classification" chaired by Dr. Michael Grunberger of the Library of Congress, was David Elazar, an Israeli librarian working in a library in the industrial sector. He, together with his recently deceased brother Daniel ob"m, a noted political scientist who authored many works dealing with aspects of political science as relating to the United States or to Jewish themes, produced the Elazar Classification System for use by libraries of Judaica. The first edition was produced by Daniel when David was only 9, but even at that young age David was involved in the work. The lecture described the overall approach to developing this system and how it is responsive to user feedback. Mr. Elazar related that one of the greatest compliments the system received was that it deals with subjects in the manner a Jew naturally thinks about them, an approach not found in the Judaica sections of general classification systems. The responsiveness of the author(s) is seen in a section on Daniel Elazar's website (<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/6527/class.html>) where expansions of schedules as suggested by users and approved by the author are published.

Meira Harroch of JNUL spoke about the importance of leaflets for garnering historical knowledge about community activities, personalities and communal disputes, to mention just a few of the topics about which these sources provide information, and described some of the problems encountered when cataloging them.

Completing the session was a presentation by Gita Hoffman of Bar Ilan University who talked about the ongoing project of preparing Hebrew subject headings similar to the Library of Congress Subject Headings and the challenges faced in making this compilation reflective of Jewish/Israeli thought patterns. A lecture entitled "Problems in the Use of Library of Congress Subject Headings as the Basis for Hebrew Subject Headings in the Bar-Ilan University Library", using the same subject heading project as a basis, was presented in a Classification and Indexing Workshop by David Wilk of Bar Ilan.

In the second session, chaired by Nira Ilisar of JNUL and entitled "The Written Word: Manuscripts and Archives", Dr. Roger Kohn of Oberlin College discussed recent trends in describing Hebrew manuscripts. This was based on a comparison of two manuscript catalogs published in the last decade: that of Cambridge University's Hebrew manuscripts prepared by Professor Stefan Reif of Cambridge (*Hebrew Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library: a Description and Introduction*, 1997), with a supplement to Neubauer's Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in Oxford's Bodleian Library prepared by a team headed by Professor Malachi Beit-Arie of the Hebrew University (*Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Supplement of addenda and corrigenda to vol. 1*, 1994).

Yael Okun of the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of JNUL explained how she recreated the manuscript inventory of the private library of Abraham Joseph Graziano, a 17th century Italian rabbi, by searching through the Institute's microfilm copies of manuscripts. One hundred and ninety manuscripts in twenty-four locations have been identified. Based upon notations on the manuscripts, she discussed how he acquired items in his collection and what happened to the collection after his death.

Dr. Silvia Schenkolewski-Kroll of Bar Ilan University reported on the results of a survey taken of the importance of libraries as adjuncts to archives. Such libraries assist and support scholars of archival material.

By collecting studies written and published on the basis of documents deposited in the archive they provide proof of their use and a means for determining what topics have already been researched.

Session three was chaired by Ya'akov Aronson of Bar Ilan University and dealt with "Who, Where and When? Special Types of Judaica Reference Materials". Dr. Avraham Greenbaum of the Dinur Center for the Study of Jewish History of the Hebrew University surveyed rabbinical biographical dictionaries published since 1950, highlighting the method by which the material was gathered and its accuracy and usefulness.

Professor Bella Hass Weinberg of St. John's University in New York City presented a very original paper entitled, "Who Invented the Index? An Agenda for Research on Information Access Features of Hebrew and Latin Manuscripts". As the result of a claim that concordances and subject indices were first developed in France in the thirteenth century, Professor Weinberg undertook a study of early Hebrew citation indices and found that they date back nearly six centuries earlier than those authored in France. She hopes that this initial study will lead to more detailed studies of various aspects of the question, thus facilitating accurate tracing of the origins of indices.

In session four, entitled "Special Interest Collections" and chaired by Zvi Muskal of the United Nations Library in New York, Harriet Kasow of the Bloomfield Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences of the Hebrew University talked about her "moonlighting" job at the Israel Genealogical Society Library. She discussed types of sources available for genealogical research and how the specialized library she heads goes about collecting materials and making them available to researchers. She also presented information about the IGS publication *Sharsheret ha-Dorot*. (URL of IGS web site: <http://www.isragen.org.il>)

European Judaica librarians were represented by Dr. Ulf Haxen of the Danish Royal Library. That library's major Judaica collection is the Simonseniana Collection, the collection of the Danish Chief Rabbi, David Simonsen, who died in 1932. Dr. Haxen described the collection's history and talked about priorities and strategies in opening the collection to network communication.

Three Judaica collections in publicly sup-

ported institutions in the Washington, D.C. area were described by Ann Masnik of the University of Maryland in College Park. The libraries chosen were the Hebraic Section of the Library of Congress, the library of the Holocaust Museum, a specialized library with material in a variety of languages, and that of the University of Maryland, catering primarily to an English language oriented student body.

Completing this section was the presentation by Gloria Mound of Casa Shalom—The Institute for Marrano-Anusim Studies in Israel. She reported on the discovery of a community of anusim (secret Jews) in the Spanish Balearic Islands and how this led to the establishment of a center for the study of anusim scattered in various parts of the world. (URL to the Institute's web site: <http://www.casa-shalom.com>)

The day's closing session, entitled "Bibliographic Milestones: The Old and the New", was chaired by Cheryl Jaffee of the Canadian National Library. Tamar Leiter of the Friedberg Geniza project described the project's goal and method of operation. Envisioned is a union catalog of all Geniza fragments regardless of location, an accomplishment that will greatly simplify the task of scholars using Geniza materials. Generous funding has been obtained for this project and a staff of 50 is employed worldwide in coordinating the material.

"Publishing and the Ultra-Orthodox" was the subject dealt with by Chaim Seymour of Bar Ilan University. He reported that as many manifestations of the general culture are inappropriate for the orthodox public, members of that community have begun producing alternatives by using traditional as well as recently developed publishing techniques. Some of the areas in which orthodox alternatives have been developed are children's literature, the production of "novella" on the Babylonian Talmud through the use of desk top publishing, CD-ROMs with children's games as well as databases of Hebrew texts and the creation of Internet sites providing materials appropriate for the community.

Closing the day was a lecture by Dr. Barry Walfish of the University of Toronto about the Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion) Tribute Album presented to Moses Montefiore on his 100th birthday. This album was composed of twenty tributes to Moses Montefiore honoring his contributions to the settling of Palestine from local branches of Hovevei Zion in eastern Europe. The album disappeared when Montefiore

died. It recently appeared on the market and was purchased by a Canadian benefactor of the University of Toronto who presented it to the university's library. The album's importance as a primary source for the history of the Hovevei Zion movement was described.

In 1998 the Israel Judaica Librarian's Group (JLG) was involved in two seminars. In March, 60 participants from all over the country came to the Diaspora Museum on the Tel Aviv University campus to hear lectures about the Vilna Gaon. Represented were universities, yeshivot, teachers' seminars, Ulpanot and Bet Ya'akov schools. The subject was so attractive that a number of the participating librarians brought their spouses. In honor of the 200th anniversary of the death of the Gaon, an exhibition had been organized by the Diaspora Museum and the Judaica Librarians' Group took advantage of this to organize its seminar, which included a guided tour of the exhibition.

Lectures dealt with subjects connected with the Gaon, Vilna and its environs and the historical period. The noted bibliographer Yeshayahu Vinograd, author of the two volume *Thesaurus of the Hebrew Book . . . through 1863* (Vinograd, 1993), presented the printing history of the Gaon's books, none of which were published during his lifetime. Many of these works were included in the Diaspora Museum exhibition, most of which were from the private collection of Mr. Vinograd.

A second lecture dealt with the 19th century institutions of family and community in Lithuania based upon archival material. Delivering this presentation was Dr. Moti Zalkin of Ben Gurion University, a specialist in East European history and the Haskalah period. A final lecture was presented by Dr. Aryeh Morgenstern, an independent researcher on the Gr" a in the light of new historical sources.

A tour of the exhibition concluded the day. Two of the museum's staff, including the curator of the exhibition, gave detailed explanations of the items on display. The exhibition's four sections covered the Gaon's life; the work of his students; artistic conceptions of the appearance of the Gaon; and the face of present day Vilna. One of the most interesting items was a copy of the work *Ateret Tsevi*, 1722, with an inscription indicating that it was presented to the Gr" a on the occasion of his bar mitzvah. This book, displayed in

Israel for the first time, was found in the geniza of a Safed synagogue and passed through a number of hands until it entered the collection of Mr. Vinograd ("La-rishonah...", 1998).

In June, more than 100 librarians attended a symposium held at Bar Ilan University entitled "Cataloging: Toward the Next Decade". The day was sponsored by the Israel Society of Special Libraries and Information Centers (ISLIC). Though not specifically sponsored by the Judaica Librarians' Group, officially a sub-group of ISLIC, a big percentage of those in attendance were members of the JLG.

In her opening remarks, Shoshana Langerman, then Chair of the ISLIC Continuing Education Program, and presently Chair of ISLIC, said that the organization, through sponsorship of this symposium, was proud to honor Professor Elhanan Adler, Coordinator of the Israel Inter-University Library Network and Director of the Israel Center for Digital Information Services and Lecturer both at the Hebrew University's Graduate School of Librarianship, Archive and Information Studies and Bar Ilan's Department of Information and Library Science, and Dr. Susan Lazinger, Lecturer in the Graduate School of Librarianship, on the publication of their new book *Cataloging Hebrew Materials in the Online Environment: a Comparative Study of American and Israeli Approaches* (Lazinger, 1998). Providing impetus to attendance at the symposium was the planned transition of Israeli cataloging to the MARC format with the introduction of the new version of ALEPH (500).

Opening the day, Professor Adler gave an explanation of the MARC format, a format which to date had not been used by the majority of Israeli libraries. Next, Chaim Seymour, Chairman of the Foreign Languages Classification and Cataloging Department at Bar Ilan's Wurzweiler Central Library and Lecturer in the Department of Information and Library Science at Bar Ilan, spoke about the outsourcing of library functions, especially cataloging, vs work done inhouse. The department he heads is presently doing retrospective cataloging of foreign language material (material in Latin characters) using OCLC's RetroCon program. Mr. Seymour pointed out that although outsourcing is considered a recent development, in actuality it is a very old phenomenon, going back at least to LC's supplying of catalog cards which began around the turn of the previous century.

At the afternoon session Rachel Kedar, Lecturer in the Information and Library Science Department at Bar Ilan and at Beit Berel College, talked about problems in the teaching of cataloging. The day was concluded by a panel discussion of "Different Approaches to the Development of an International Standard for Cataloging Hebrew Material". Participating in the panel were Professor Adler, Dr. Lazinger and Chaim Seymour.

As elsewhere, Israeli libraries are plagued by understaffing which causes very heavy work loads being placed on the librarians. An unfortunate result of this is that activities of the Israel Judaica Librarians' Group have almost ground to a halt but at present a move is underway to rejuvenate the group

Since the last issue of Judaica Librarianship, the Bar Ilan University Press has published additional volumes in its *Mikra'ot Gedolot ha-Keter*. To date, seven volumes have been published covering six biblical books, the latest being the second volume of Genesis (1999) and Ezekiel (2000). In honor of the appearance of Ezekiel, a special program was held at Bar Ilan in May 2001. As part of the program, the editor of the edition, Professor Menachem Cohen, spoke about a special computer program developed by the project's staff which assists in the reconstruction of the vowel-ing and musical notation of missing parts of *Keter Aram Tsova*, the manuscript upon which the edition is based.

A new edition of the complete Biblical text based upon the same manuscript as Bar Ilan's *Mikr'aot Gedolot ha-Keter*, called *Keter Yerushalayim* (The Jerusalem Crown) was published to coincide with the Jerusalem Book Fair in May 2001 ("Shuvo...", 2000). The publisher prides himself on having been able to develop a computer program which provides for the publication of the text in three columns, thus allowing reproduction in the original layout of the manuscript. Another computer program, developed specifically for this publication, has resulted, according to the publisher, in the most accurate Biblical text ever published. *Keter Yerushalayim* is available in three editions: a 35 cm. volume bound either in leather or cloth, and a 23? cm. edition. All will be accompanied by a volume with a glossary of people and concepts connected with the manuscript, and essays on the importance and history of the manuscript, the history of the production of *Keter Yerushalayim* and a survey of biblical manuscripts. The authors include Professor Menachem Ben Sasson

and Dr. Morechai Glatzer of the Hebrew University, Dr. Yossi Ofer, whose dissertation was on *Keter Aram Tsova* and the edition's publisher Nachum Ben-Zvi. This companion volume will appear in a number of languages.

Also on display at the Book Fair was a mockup of Facsimile Editions' latest project, the British Library's *North French Hebrew Miscellany* (Add. Ms. 11639). The manuscript, containing 84 works, ranging from the Pentateuch to the first known edition of *Sefer Mitsvot Katan*, was written in the late 1200's. The illumination is characteristic of the high Gothic period. A companion volume will include six articles about different aspects of the manuscript, including the history of the Jews in France at the time the manuscript was written. Among the authors are Professor Malachi Beit-Arie of JNUL, Professor Raphael Loewe of John Rylands Library and Diana Rowland-Smith of the British Library. Of special interest to Judaica librarians was an exhibition at the Czech pavillion featuring panels tracing the history of Jewish literature and Jewish authors in Bohemia. [For more on the Jerusalem Book Fair see "Special Book Fair Section", *Jerusalem Post Magazine*, May 4, 2001, p. 20-31.]

Bar Ilan University's Wurzweiler Central Library became the recipient of a collection of over 200 manuscripts, mainly kabbalistic, at the end of the year 2000. The manuscripts were part of a gift by Dr. Shlomo Mossaieff of London which established a chair in Kabbalistic studies. Dr. Mossaieff, a noted collector of archaeological artifacts [for information about Dr. Mossaieff see *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1996], had acted as custodian of the manuscripts, collected by his grandfather, also named Shlomo, one of the founders of the Bukharin Quarter in Jerusalem. A catalogue of the collection, *Ohel Shem*, edited by Yosef Avivi, was printed in a limited edition in 1992 (Avivi, 1992). A provisional catalogue of the entire collection can be accessed on the Bar Ilan University Library System's Internet site (<http://www.biu.ac.il/lib> under "Online Catalogs"). A fully annotated catalog of the collection will be issued upon completion of the cataloging process. Work on the collection is being undertaken in the framework of the library's Rare Book and Manuscript Unit directed by Dr. Sara Fraenkel, with paleographical and codicological work being done by Tamar Leiter of the Hebrew Paleography Project located at JNUL.

Also available on the same Internet site is access to the library's publication *Index to*

Articles in the *Literary Supplements of the Daily Hebrew Newspapers*. This publication was previously available only as part of Haifa University's *Index to Hebrew Periodicals* or in printed form via subscription. Free access to the full index is now available on the Bar Ilan Library System web catalog, accessible via the library system's home page.

The Rambam Library in Tel Aviv, part of the city's public library system, prides itself on bringing interesting publications to its readers' attention through exhibitions. In 1997, the library mounted an exhibition of prayers for the well being of the state, something Jews have always included in their service. The prayers ranged from one found in a mahzor printed in France in 1759, to those for the State of Israel in contemporary prayer books. The 1759 prayer interestingly names the Pope as the ruler for whom a blessing is requested. ("Ta'arukhah...", 1997)

In 2000, an exhibition of books whose printing was initiated by Holocaust survivors in Germany shortly after World War II was prepared. The "Survivor's Talmud", printed in Germany in 1947 with the assistance from the Joint Distribution Committee and the US Army, is widely known [see *Judaica Librarianship* v. 8. No. 1-2 (Spring 1993- Winter 1994) p. 134], but it is not general knowledge that more than 140 Hebrew books were printed in Germany during this period, ranging from prayer books to Mishna and Talmud editions and including books of Jewish law and hasidut and even a periodical. Selected examples of these works were displayed at the exhibition.

Rabbi Avishai Elboim, Director of the Library, is responsible for these exhibitions, and as an outgrowth of the latter exhibition, Rabbi Elboim prepared an article comparing titles printed by the survivors in Germany after World War II with titles printed in Shanghai by the Jewish refugees stranded there during the war (Elboim, 2000).

The latest exhibition, entitled "Aliyat Gag" (loosely translated as "attic", referring to a place where old things are stored), was mounted late in 2000. Fifteen items found in the bindings of other books in the library were displayed. In order to save on expenses, binders would use discarded pages from earlier publications as padding in newer bindings, just as in Italy old manuscripts were used as file folders. One example on display was a page from the

1616 publication of *Hanukat ha-Bayit* found in the binding of the 1673 work *Yalkut Hadash*. Not only were printed pages found, but original colored illustrations turned up along with pages from a calendar for 5431 (1671) and a page from a 1659 publication in the binding of *Yismah Mosheh* (1675).

The Rambam library is now filling reference requests from Israeli addresses received by e-mail, if the item requested is no longer than 4 pages. (rambam1@hotmail.co.il) [At the AJL convention in Washington in 2000 a paper on the Rambam Library was delivered, and a summary of it appeared in the convention's proceedings.]

Each year at the ceremony opening Israel Independence Day celebrations, people who have made significant contributions to the State's development are honored by being asked to light branches of a gigantic menorah at the Mount Herzl Military Cemetery. In 1998 Moshe Moskovitz of Moshav Massuot Yitzhak near Ashkelon was so honored ("Moshko'...", 1998). Among the contributions he was cited for was the establishment in 1984 of the organization "Menorah" to save Jewish artifacts in the diaspora. One of Menorah's main projects has been the "rescue" of Hebrew books, and many volumes in the Yeshivat Har Etzion Library in Alon Shevut were obtained through Moskovitz's efforts. [On the Har Etzion Yeshiva Library see *Judaica Librarianship* v. 8, no. 1-2 (April 1993-Winter 1994), pp. 132-138.]

Not only is the yeshiva's collection being constantly enlarged, but much effort is invested in improving its accessibility. In 1997 a grant was received from the Ministry of Education for upgrading the library's computer system. The new system enabled the yeshiva's library to be linked to the nationwide ALEPH network and provided resources for computerized loan of works in the collection. In addition, work is continuing on adding topical subject headings to the records in the library catalog and the indexing of articles in Hebrew Torah periodicals which have appeared over the past 50 years. This index presently includes 14,000 entries.

Though studies have shown that yearly per capita publication of new books is higher in other countries, in Israel, the "People of the Book" still seem to find unique ways of honoring books and emphasizing their importance. After the Israel Defense Forces withdrew from the buffer zone in

South Lebanon late in 2000, and incidentally just before national elections, the Ministry of Science and Sport (ministries in Israel are created according to political necessity—not logic or need) decided to provide support for settlements near the Lebanese border by establishing 14 new libraries and gyms ("ha-Behirot...", 2001).

As elsewhere, it is an accepted practice in Israel to name libraries in memory of departed relatives or people who have made significant contributions to important causes. Upon the death of Dr. Yosef Burg, a major figure in the Mizrahi movement and the National Religious Party for close to 70 years during which he served in numerous cabinet positions in the Israeli government, the Torah library at Heichal Shlomo in Jerusalem was renamed in his honor ("ha-Sifriyah...", 1999). The official name of the library is the "Yosef Burg Central Torah Library and Archive in Memory of Holocaust Martyrs", reflecting the dual purpose served by the institution. The library contains 55,000 titles, many of which were saved from the Holocaust, and the catalog is presently being computerized.

The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* is recognized worldwide as an indispensable Judaica reference tool. Therefore, the appearance of a CD-ROM version was considered of major importance. The launching of this edition in 1997 took place at the Israeli Presidential Residence when then President Ezer Weizmann was presented with a copy ("ha-Olam...", 1997). A public presentation of the CD-ROM edition was also made to the then Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu ("Yudeikah...", 1997). Both events merited newspaper coverage in Israel, which brought to the public's attention the importance attributed to materials basic to our profession.

To mark the completion of a 23 volume edition of Maimonides' work, *Mishneh Torah*, based upon a Yemenite manuscript and prepared by Rabbi Yosef Kafah (Moses ben Maimon, 1984-1996), a festive celebration was held at the Eretz Yisrael Museum in Tel Aviv. The edition is accompanied by a commentary composed by Rabbi Kafah. Over 600 people participated in the event, including the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, a former Transportation Minister and the Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv-Yaffo ("Me'ot...", 1997).

ArtScroll editions of classical Jewish works published by Mesorah Publications have long been known to the English speaking public. Testifying to the important

role occupied by English speaking Jewry on the contemporary Jewish scene is the translation of a number of ArtScroll's original English commentaries into Hebrew. The latest translation is of volumes in the Schottenstein edition of the Babylonian Talmud. To date 17 volumes covering all or part of 12 tractates have appeared. The first Hebrew volume, Berakhot, the first tractate of the Talmud, appeared in 1997, timed to coincide with the beginning of a new cycle of the daf yomi program. ("Hofi'a...", 1997).

A very useful volume for librarians dealing with the history of Hebrew printing is *Chapters in the History of the Hebrew Book: Scholars and their Annotations*, 1996 (Hebrew) by Professor Ya'akov Spiegel of Bar Ilan University, mentioned in the last "Epistle from Israel" column. [*Judaica Librarianship*, v. 10, n. 1-2 (Spring 1999-Winter 2000)] In recognition of the important contribution made by this work it was awarded the City of Tel Aviv-Yaffo's Rabbi Kook Prize, given annually to works of original Rabbinic thought, Torah research and/or reference works in the field ("Hayom...", 1998).

The proliferation of Holocaust survivor testimony archives is sometimes faulted as resulting in an unwarranted repetition of memoirs. But when considering that each person's experience was unique and that each testimony sheds an additional bit of light on that horrendous period, the opening of a new archive of this nature assumes special importance. In 1999, Haifa University decided to provide the resources for such an archive in the framework of its Center for the Study of Psychological Pressure. Specifically, researchers will be investigating the long term psychological and medical impact of the Holocaust experience. The archive contains materials collected over a 20 year period and is being maintained in conjunction with the Fortunoff Archive of Yale University ("Arkhiyon...", 1999).

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