

EPISTLE FROM ISRAEL

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Exhibitions

A number of exhibitions were held in Israel's university libraries in the Spring of 1990, paying homage to both celebrated and neglected Jewish individuals, and highlighting the accomplishments of Jewish ethnic and cultural communities.

By far the most publicized of these recent exhibitions was "Reflections from Einstein's Archives," a first-time display of 70 items from the 45,000-item Einstein Archive acquired by Hebrew University's Jewish National and University Library in 1983. Held in April and early May 1990, the exhibit was timed to coincide with "Einstein: Issues, and Contexts," an international conclave on the history and philosophy of science, sponsored by the Hebrew University, Tel-Aviv University, and the Van Leer Institute. The two events marked the 85th anniversary of the publication of Einstein's three revolutionary articles on Brownian motion, the photoelectric effect, and the special theory of relativity. Mounted in the entrance hall of the JNUL, the exhibition presented Einstein from five perspectives: his contributions to theoretical physics; his involvement in Jewish affairs and political issues; his hobbies; his correspondence with children; and "curiosities," a category which includes some of the strange proposals he received. One, from a plumber named R. Stanley Murray, who had once read that Einstein's ambition was to be a plumber, offered him a partnership in his plumbing firm and agreed to change the name to Einstein and Stanley Plumbing Company. A brochure describing the exhibition was published by the JNUL ("Reflections...", 1990).

On the 19th anniversary of the death of the poet Leah Goldberg in February 1990, the JNUL received a surprise gift of 61 of her drawings, 13 of them colored, along with 33 of her letters in German. The gift arrived in an envelope from Frau Ilisabe von Podewills of West Germany, and included a letter describ-

ing her friendship with Leah Goldberg, whom she first met in 1930 at the University of Berlin. Selected drawings from this collection were on display in the JNUL entrance hall during the entire month of March, as "Exhibit of the Month."

The last exhibition (in reverse chronological order) of an individual's work was held in December 1989, in the entrance hall of the Bloomfield Library, Hebrew University's central library on Mount Scopus. Posters, photographs, and manuscripts of the Austrian-Jewish writer Joseph Roth were exhibited under the auspices of the Austrian Embassy in Israel.

Two exhibitions of works of specific segments of the Jewish community were held in 1989, one in the library of Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba, and one in the JNUL. The JNUL exhibition, entitled *Wider das Vergessen* ("Lest We Forget"), displayed letters, manuscripts, photographs, and rare books of writers and poets who were persecuted during the Third Reich and forgotten after 1945. Mounted under the auspices of the Academy of Language and Literature of Darmstadt, Germany, and the Goethe Institute, in conjunction with the JNUL, the exhibition has appeared in several cities in Germany under the Darmstadt Academy's auspices, but made its first appearance in Israel with this exhibition at the JNUL. In each town where it was presented, local libraries added material from their collections. The JNUL also added documents from the collections of its Manuscripts Department, including letters to Professor Martin Buber written by several of the writers.

The second exhibition, held in November 1989 in Ben Gurion University's library, displayed books on Jews of Spain and the East, from the period of the exile from Spain to the present. Organized by the Elyashar Center for the Heritage of Spanish Jewry, and based on the collection of the library of

Ben Gurion University, the exhibition focused on several Jewish communities in the Middle East, through a selection of literary and scholarly works that emerged from these communities.

New Libraries

In August 1989 a new Hasidic library was opened in the heart of B'nei Berak, on Rabbi Akiva Street, at the corner of Yerushalayim Street. The new library is a center for the teachings of the pupils of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and includes books on Hasidism from all parts of the Hasidic spectrum. As far as is known, this is the first and only library in the world dedicated exclusively to the topic of Hasidism. The collection currently numbers approximately 1,500 books, classified by Hasidic dynasty, of which a large percentage are publications of the Lubavitch Hasidim.

Another new religious library was dedicated in Haifa, at the Institute for Research in the Writings of the Rambam. In addition to a large microfiche collection and photocopies of old and rare books, the new library has a computer with a dedicated line to the Responsa project of Bar Ilan University. Dr. Naphtali Eilati, Honorary Chairman of the Institute, spoke at the opening ceremony, pointing out the importance of the codification of Hebrew law and announcing that the Institute is making an effort to concentrate all materials connected with the Rambam, especially in the area of legislation.

And New Homes for Old Libraries

Two veteran Tel-Aviv libraries moved to more spacious quarters during the first half of 1990. The first, the Dance Library of Israel, moved from the cramped facilities that it had occupied since 1974 at the AMLI Music Library in Rehov Bialik, to new premises next to the Beit Ariella municipal library, adjacent to the Tel Aviv Museum. This relocated library is among the largest public dance libraries in the world, with a collection of Israeli

material on dance that does not exist anywhere else. The move was made possible by grants from the Tel Aviv municipality, the Education Ministry, and George and Sally Whyte. The Dance Library of Israel currently has about 4,000 books and 1,000 videotapes, as well as other documents and records.

The second library to move is the Wiener Library, home of thousands of books, journals, and documents on the history of antisemitism. The Library's new home is in a building attached to the main library of Tel Aviv University, designed by Tel Aviv architects to blend into and continue the architecture of the main library. Tel Aviv University Library Director, Dr. Dan Simon, remarked that the new building will help relieve the crowded conditions which had forced the Wiener library to operate on a closed-stack system, with its holdings housed in storerooms, while users had to order publications from the card catalog. The new three-story building includes an undergraduate library, a microfilm/microfiche reading room, and an institute for photocopying rare manuscripts. The improved facility was made possible by a contribution from Carolyn and Joseph S. Gruss.

Importing Collections

Significant and valuable items of Yiddish literature were acquired by the Tel Aviv University Library early this year, with the assistance of a fund set up by British businessman William Margoliot (Margules). One of the rare items, acquired in London, is a second edition (1837) of *The Book of Parodies, Poems and Stories*, written in a South German Yiddish dialect. These poems describe in great detail the life of the Jews in the area of Speyer at that time. Another book, entitled *To Our Friends, About Our Enemies*, and published in Moscow in 1939, includes antisemitic drawings in the style of the Nazi newspaper *Der Stuermer*. According to Library Director Dr. Simon, thousands of dollars were invested in the fund in order to expand and improve the University's Yiddish collection significantly.

Fourteen thousand books on Judaism, Torah, and archaeology were flown from Cincinnati in the spring of 1990, to the newly constructed library of the Jerusalem branch of Hebrew Union College. The huge collection imported

from the United States includes 3,000 rare volumes on the philosopher Baruch Spinoza. The fully computerized Hebrew Union College Library in Jerusalem, with the addition of the airlifted books, will house 100,000 volumes, including the private collection of Professor Yigael Yadin and the 6,200-volume collection of Fritz Bamberger – one of the world's largest collections on the life and works of Spinoza.

Finally, an agreement has been signed between the Lenin Library in Moscow and the JNUL to microfilm one of Moscow's important Judaica collections, the "Baron Günzburg Library," for the JNUL. The collection, whose value has been estimated at \$100 million, consists of 6,000 books and 2,000 manuscripts, some of them 1,500 years old and most of them dating from the Middle Ages. It includes a manuscript dated 914 C.E. and approximately 50 Jewish works printed before 1500.

And Exporting Technology

The Tel-Aviv-based company Ex Libris last year received an order for the installation of the ALEPH software system in the National Technical Library of Denmark. ALEPH will operate on the Digital VAX 6300 computer, with all the library's departments connected through 60 terminals, forming a local network. In addition, 50 communication lines will enable the system to serve the general public, who will be able to hook up to the system through personal computers, search for books in the library, and order them through a computerized circulation system. The 750,000-volume Danish National Technical Library has signed a contract for \$265,000, making this the largest and most expensive ALEPH system ever sold so far.

Gifts From Local Donors

Ezra P. Gorodesky, a Philadelphia-born collector who has been a Jerusalem resident for the last three decades, has been collecting Judaica since he was a child. His special interests are miniature Hebrew books, *alef-bet* books, placards for children, and synagogue dedication materials. Gorodesky, according to Prof. Malachi Beit-Arié (director of the JNUL until the end of 1990), is different from most collectors who donate their collections to libraries and museums: "He was never a wealthy man, but he possesses

the qualities essential for a collector of modest means: the right instinct, enthusiasm, and a lot of patience." To mark his 60th birthday, Gorodesky contributed a significant part of his collection to the JNUL, including a 16th-century letter written to the Ari (Isaac Luria, a renowned Kabbalist from Safed), while he was in Egypt, which Gorodesky rescued from oblivion in a book-binding. In addition, among the items donated are Hebrew items linking the Jews and Napoleon 200 years ago, woodcuts of playing cards from the 17th century, and a note dated 1785 in which Reverend Jacob Cohen of Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia asked a member to discharge his debt to the synagogue, so that Cohen's salary could be paid.

Two rare Old Yiddish books were recently donated to the JNUL by a young German brother from Dormition Abbey on Mount Zion. The books, from the private collection of Brother Claus Columben Lethen, are *Eyn gor sheyne tkhine*, an anthology of prayers for women from the late 16th century, and *Orah Hayim*, by Joseph Ben-Eliezer Chalfan of Posen, Poland. *Orah Hayim* was printed in Basel, Switzerland, in 1602, and is one of only four known copies. Brother Lethen, who is 27 years old and has been collecting for only two years, has nonetheless amassed some 50 old Hebrew and Yiddish books. His decision to place the two books on long-term loan to the JNUL was reached in connection with Israel's 40th year of statehood, which he felt was an appropriate time to "show that there are people interested in this country," and also because he felt that the two books were "part of Jewish history."

The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive

As the result of an agreement signed recently between Hebrew University's Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive – the world's largest collection of Jewish and Israeli documentary films – and the Harvard College Library, the holdings of the Spielberg collection will now be more readily accessible to American scholars and filmmakers.

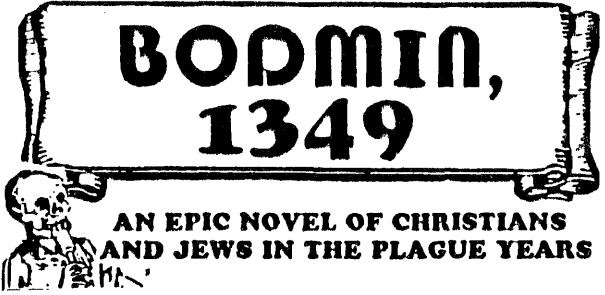
According to the agreement, Harvard is funding the videotaping of selected films from the Spielberg Archive, and has been designated as the official depository in the United States for the Spielberg

Archive. The agreement will enhance significantly the Judaica video resources at Harvard, providing convenient access for researchers as well as film and television producers who are interested in films on the Jewish and/or Israeli experience, many of which (until this agreement) could be found only in Israel. The Spielberg Archive, located on Hebrew University's Mount Scopus campus, was founded 20 years ago by the University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry and was recently named for the famous American filmmaker. It houses over 4,000 cans of film and videotapes, containing rare and unique footage, ranging from short film clips to full-length feature films. Part of the collection was recently documented in *Films of the Holocaust: An Annotated Filmography of Collections in Israel* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990). Compiled by Sheba F. Skirball, this filmography covers evidence for the Holocaust, recorded on film or videotape located in Israel, regardless of where the films were originally produced. The catalog is indexed by subject, language of soundtrack, and feature-film title. [See a related article by Roberta Newman in the MEDIA JUDAICA section of this issue – Ed.]

Reference

Reflections from Einstein's Archives: An Exhibition: The Jewish National and University Library, Weintraub Hall, Jerusalem, 23.4-3.5, 1990. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Jewish National and University Library, Albert Einstein Archives, 1990.

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