

OCHJS NEWS BULLETIN NO 32 : MARCH 2007

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VISITING ACADEMICS

Academics in residence this term include Professor Shmuel Feiner (Samuel Braun Chair for the History of the Jews in Prussia at Bar-Ilan University) as a Kennedy Leigh Visiting Fellow. Professor Feiner is the author of *Haskalah and History, the Emergence of a Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (2002), *The Jewish Enlightenment* (2004, winner of the Koret Jewish Book Award), *Moses Mendelssohn* (Hebrew, 2005), as well as articles on the Haskalah in Germany and Eastern Europe. Professor Feiner is currently working on secularization trends in 18th Century European Jewish Society (especially Germany). His DP Seminar in February was enticingly titled "Pleasures among 18th century Jews and their cultural meaning."

Visiting Fellow supported by the Skirball Foundation is Dr Daniela Mantovan, of the Hochschule für Jüdische Studien, Heidelberg. Her field is Yiddish Studies, at present specifically the poetry of the leading Soviet-Yiddish writers who came to prominence during the first three decades of the 20th century. She views their work as a phenomenon of rupture and experimentation in the process of developing a modernist conception of Yiddish literature. Dr Mantovan will be giving the annual Stencl Lecture in Trinity Term, as well as a DP Seminar in March.

Our Visiting Scholars include Professor Orit Ichilov, of Tel Aviv University, investigating citizenship and the retreat from public education in Israel; Dr Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, lecturer in New Testament at the University of Wales in Bangor, working on Jewish aspects of readings in the book of Acts in a Greek manuscript, Codex Bezae; and Eyal Ben Eliyahu from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, who is researching the relationship between national identity and territory.

TALKS AND BOOK LAUNCHES

The latest Isaiah Berlin Public Lecture in Middle East Dialogue was delivered on 1 March at St Antony's College by Dr Robert Satloff, himself an old Antonian and Executive Director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. His subject was "The Arab Experience during The Holocaust: a Hopeful Antidote to Holocaust Denial in the Arab World." His book on the subject, just published, is entitled *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories of the Holocaust's Long Reach into Arab Lands*. Dr Satloff has written and spoken widely - not least in the Arab world - on the Arab-Israeli peace process and the Islamist challenge to the growth of democracy in the region.

This term's David Patterson Seminars have likewise encompassed two book launches. Martin Goodman's *Rome and Jerusalem: the Clash of Ancient Civilizations*, published by Penguin/Allen Lane, outlines the struggle between the

ancient Roman and Jewish worlds, examining beliefs and attitudes on both sides. In the process it illuminates the origins of antisemitism, a matter of deep consequence right up to the present day. Martin's book has attracted wide attention, not least at London's Jewish Book Week (24 February–4 March) and on the Amazon website.

Dr Jeremy Schonfield's book *Undercurrents of Jewish Prayer*, published by the Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, was our other launch of the term. The author analyses the dense texts of the Jewish Prayer-book and exposes the messages and hidden concerns implicit in the underlying narrative. The book was a finalist in the American National Jewish Book Awards, in the Modern Jewish Thought section.

COPPENHAGEN RECEPTION

Members of the Copenhagen family (from as far afield as Australia!) came to Yarnton on 23 January to launch the Copenhagen Collection. The library of the late J H Copenhagen was transferred to the Centre in August 2005, and moved into our new library annexe at Manor Farm a year later. It is now accessible and constitutes a leading resource for all scholars of the history of European Jewry.

Highlights of the event on 23 January were an address by Mr Willy Lindwer, a Copenhagen family friend and spokesperson. Mr Lindwer explained that although the ideal home for the collection would arguably have been in Jerusalem, this had not proved practicable and the Oxford Centre was unquestionably a worthy alternative. The late Jacob Copenhagen would have approved! Dr van Boxel gave a spirited presentation on the Collection itself, referring both to its overall significance and to precious individual items (which were on display in the Long Gallery). A musical interlude was provided by Mr Oron Copenhagen playing Chopin in memory of his grandfather. Mr David Lewis, Chairman of the Centre's Library Committee, concluded proceedings by assuring the family that the library would be cherished and promoted by the Centre as widely as possible. Co-operation with the Research Centre for Dutch Jewry in Jerusalem would be a priority.

APPOINTMENTS

And there is further important Library news by way of appointments. César Merchán Hamann joined the Centre from Leo Baeck College as Deputy Librarian on 22 February. Piet van Boxel took on major new responsibilities with his appointment from 1 March as Hebraica Librarian at the Bodleian. He will henceforth spend half his time at the Centre and half at the Bodleian. This exciting development represents yet a further linkage of the greatest importance between the Centre and the main structures of Oxford University. More detailed reflections on all this will appear in the forthcoming Centre Newsletter later in the spring. Meanwhile, welcome and congratulations all round!

Peter Oppenheimer - President
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