



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies

SCHOLION

News

SCHOLION - INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTER IN JEWISH STUDIES

Volume 8 • 2008-09

Scholion Travels North: Between Christianity and Islam (Spring 2008)

Research Field Trip

As spring 2008 came about, the Scholion Research Center went on a journey to discover ancient life in communities around the Sea of Galilee. Members of Scholion took two days off to cover, or uncover, a variety of archeological sites around the sea and the nearby region. Through these sites, the group acquired some insight into the life-style, social interaction and political structure of those who populated these cities and villages between the 1st and the 6th Centuries C.E. The great range of scholars from different disciplines created a deep and creative learning atmosphere. Yet, in addition to the enriching learning experience, the research fellows had the opportunity to enjoy each other's company in a refreshing environment. As stated so aptly by Prof. Esther Cohen from the "Knowledge and Pain" Research Group: "It was a learning field trip with social benefits in the best possible meaning of the word". The trip began with an early bus ride from the ancient city of Jerusalem to the ancient city of Tiberias. The exploration commenced with the *Cardo*, built by Herod Antipas in the 1st Century C.E. Under the meticulous and knowledgeable guidance of Prof. Zeev Weiss, the group continued to explore the city through the different periods, including the ancient *Sanhedrin* Structure from the 4th Century C.E. Still in Tiberias, the scholars visited the public bath house and

the presumed site of the unexcavated amphitheatre. Another outstanding feature of the city was the well preserved wall and gate of the city. These date back to the 1st Century C.E., but still stand impressively firm. Next the group ascended Mount Berenice overlooking the city, and saw the ruins of an ancient monastery and church from around the 6th Century C.E. While enjoying the sea view from above, the group discussed trade routes of the ancient cities adjacent to the sea. From there, the group met up with Dr. Uzi Leibner, a fellow scholar in the Scholion Center and head of an excavation currently taking place on the slopes of Mount Arbel, called *Khirbet Wadi Hamam*. The Group got a close-up and personal briefing of the site and key findings. At the site, the scholars were shown the supposed place of the ancient synagogue of the village, at the time of the great revolt. Among these, were a sword, a menorah and a fascinating Mosaic. The site left stirred great enthusiasm within the group, as well put by Adam Klin Oron from the research group "Ascending and Descending": "Finally I understand the appeal of archaeologists to this tedious and hard work; it's like being Indiana Jones". In spite of these outstanding findings, the group was told of the anticipated financial hardships of the upcoming season and the possibility that the project may have to come to an end.

The group's next stop was the village of *Magdala*, where they were welcomed by the Father of the Monastery, who serves as head excavator of the site. He presented his work on the site and general theories of the structure and social life of the inhabitants. Especially impressive was the complex water system found at the site that served the city and its surroundings. Last stop of the day was the enchanting visit to the cemetery of the well-known *Kinneret* Kibbutz. Here, under the direction of Prof.

Yoram Bilu, the group had an insight into this fascinating endeavor through its cultural artifacts - the tombstones and their inscriptions. In the words of Prof. Bilu: "This is a unique cemetery, which has become a sacred pantheon, a site of pilgrimage and 'collective memory' of the socialist-pioneering settlement in Israel. On these grounds, the first Jewish settlers of the country lie beside great cultural and ideological symbols.

Alongside these, we find the graves of the prophets of the Socialist Zionist movement whose remains were brought from Europe to be buried here". The first station on the second day was Hippos. There the group climbed up the hill using the same pathway that was used centuries earlier. As Prof.

Weiss pointed out, it is still possible to see the ruins of the gate to the city and it is intriguing to imagine that these are the very same floor tiles that were trodden on in the Roman Period. The city was part of the Decapolis, a group of ten cities in Roman Palestine that were culturally tied more closely to Greece and Rome than to the Middle East. During the visit, the

scholars walked along the Decumanus Maximus to the Forum and saw relics of monuments donated to the city by the rich and famous of the time, and then continued to the very impressive church, where a well preserved partition was found with a cross engraved on it. As related by the Academic Head of the center, Prof. Israel Yuval: "this was one of the highlights of the trip. The trip shifted between two poles: On the one hand, Tiberias, the main Jewish city in the Galilee; and on the other, Hippos, the pagan and later rich Christian city. The two cities are situated on the two opposite banks of the Sea of Galilee and great hostility existed between them. The physical and geographic proximity of the two cities emphasized and illustrated the religious tension that was the bitter fate of the Jewish people in the early years of the Common Era". For a final treat, the group traveled on to the synagogue of *Um El-Kanatir*, an ancient village in *Ramat Hagolan*. This site is unique for its reconstructive attempts, which enables to appreciate the structure as it existed originally. The exploration to the village culminated in a visit to the water reservoir which was used by the villagers for some sort of industrial facility.



LECTURE MARATHONS

'08



Dr. Ehud Krinis



Prof. Israel J. Yuval



Dr. Uri Gabbay

process eight finalists, out of forty eight, were chosen to participate in the annual lecture marathon, held on January 2008. The topics varied from interreligious and intercultural influences between Judaism and surrounding societies, through cultural perceptions of Jews in early modern Europe, to acculturation processes in Mandatory Palestine. Each lecture was followed by questions posed by members of the academic committee and the audience.

The committee decided on two future fellows – Dr. Ehud Krinis and Dr. Uri Gabbay. Krinis had lectured in the Department of Jewish Thought at Ben-Gurion University on Jewish medieval thought. His PhD dissertation, under the guidance of Prof. Daniel J. Lasker, was titled “The Idea of the Chosen People in Judah Halevi’s al-Kitab al-Khazari and its origins in Shi’i Imam Doctrine”. Krinis plans

two research projects – the first would focus on the early Shi’i Hadith (oral tradition) and its affinity to the ancient Jewish Mystical literature, while the second would focus on the influence of Shi’i-Ismailic literature on Jewish texts of the 10th-13th centuries. On top of these two projects Krinis plans a third – exploring the subject of religious authority, its sources and dynamics, in both religions. Krinis wishes to create a typology that would compare the different attitudes toward this subject, from the predominant system of a monopolistic ruling elite (the Rabbis and the Ulema), to alternative systems of religious authority, such as divine inspiration, manifested in prophets and Imams, or an emphasis of scriptural authority on the expense of oral tradition. Dr. Uri Gabbay is a specialist in the history and language of ancient Mesopotamia. He wrote his dissertation, titled “The Sumerian-Akkadian Prayer ‘Ershema’: A Philological and Religious Analysis”, under the

supervision of Dr. Nathan Wasserman from the Hebrew University and Prof. Dr. Stefan Maul from the University of Heidelberg. Gabbay wishes to examine the affinity between the Jewish Midrash and the Mesopotamian texts, through three main aspects – collection and analysis of idiosyncratic expressions used by both corpora, comparison of their different interpretative techniques and the study of similar approaches towards the holy text that put the emphasis on specific linguistic elements as a mean of overcoming the obvious literal meaning. Gabbay believes this would help to shed light on the many contact points that existed between ancient Mesopotamia and the world from which stemmed the Jewish Midrash.

Several years after its inception, the Mandel scholarship program in Scholion centre is now being held as one of the best opportunities for young scholars in Judaic studies to enter the academic world. The program consistently attracts some of the brightest minds from around the world, in various fields of research. This year was no different. After a long screening

Prof. Menachem Magidor, President and Prof. Haim Rabinowitch, Rector



From left to right: Dr. Daniel Stein Kokin, Dr. Amos Geula, Dr. Ehud Krinis, Dr. Dafna Hirsch, Dr. David Sorotzkin, Dr. Federica Francesconi, Dr. Uri Gabbay and Dr. Hannan Birenboim



Mandel Scholars candidates and Academic Committee members



Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson



From left to right: Prof. Israel J. Yuval, Dr. Rebekka Voss, Dr. Noam Mizrahi, Dr. Brian Ogren, Dr. Orit Peleg-Barkat, Dr. Samuel Secunda, Dr. Dalit Assouline, Dr. Micha Perry, Dr. Dana Olmert, Dr. Tzahi Weiss and Zohar Marcovitch



Mandel Scholars candidates and Academic Committee members



Prof. Menachem Magidor, President and Prof. Sarah Stroumsa, Rector

The annual Mandel Scholarship lecture marathon, Scholion's flagship event, took place in the beginning of January 2009. After a long screening process, during which only nine candidates were chosen from a total of fifty one, the finalists gave their lecture of choice in front of the Scholion academic committee and a large audience. All lectures showed great academic excellence and promise, and the academic committee chose, as usual, only two scholars. After a session of personal interviews with the candidates, and serious deliberation, the committee chose Dr. Dalit Assouline and Dr. Samuel Secunda, to join Scholion in October 2009.

Assouline wrote her dissertation, titled "Linguistic Maintenance and Change in Israeli Haredi Yiddish", under the direction of Prof. Chava Turniansky and Prof. Moshe Taube.

Lecture Synopsis: Haredi Yiddish in the Shadow of Israeli Hebrew

Israeli Haredi Yiddish is a language spoken by a small and isolated community, all of whose members are bilingual speakers of both Yiddish and the majority language, Israeli Hebrew. The community struggles to maintain Yiddish as a spoken language despite the prevalence of Hebrew. However, Hebrew is not only used as a daily language among Yiddish speakers, but also as the main language of written communication, while Yiddish is mainly used for oral communication. As a result, Haredi Yiddish has eroded linguistically and many of its speakers are abandoning it in favor of Hebrew.

In the lecture, several of the distinctive linguistic and sociolinguistic features of Israeli Haredi Yiddish influenced by Israeli Hebrew were discussed, based on examples collected through field work in Haredi neighborhoods in Israel. The double role of Hebrew, speeding up the erosion of Yiddish on the one hand, and contributing to its preservation as a spoken language on the other, was discussed as well.



Dr. Dalit Assouline



Dr. Samuel Secunda

Secunda wrote his dissertation, titled "Dashtana 'Ki Derekh Nashim Li': A Study of the Babylonian Rabbinic Laws of Menstruation in Relation to Corresponding Zoroastrian Texts", under the direction of Prof. Yaakov Elman and Prof. P. Oktor Skjaervo.

Lecture Synopsis: Reading the Bavli in Iran

Despite significant advances in the understanding of Mishnah, Midrash and the Yerushalmi Talmud in light of Greek and Latin literature, Talmudists have rarely glanced beyond the Bavli's folios to consult Middle Iranian texts. Only in the past few years have Talmudists begun to learn and read the texts of the communities surrounding the Jews in Mesopotamia in the Talmudic period. Investigating specifically Zoroastrian works revealed many parallels with the Bavli Talmud – for instance in Halacha, Theology, narrative and the oral character of both communities. In light of the new research, the Bavli can no longer be seen as a creation shut out of its context. Nowadays Talmudists have to examine how and where we might find the Iranian culture within the Talmud issues.





From left to right: Yonatan Benarroch, Anat Danziger, Irina Chernetsky and Vered Madar

NEW RESEARCH GROUPS

The Exegetic Imagination: Connections Between Religion and Art in Jewish Culture in its Contexts (2008-II)

Scholion's new research group joined the Center in October 2008. This group focuses on an integrated examination of the religious and the artistic, and their aesthetic, experiential and interpretive aspects. These two areas - religion and art - exist in culture, and are perceived by research both as interconnected and separate fields. The group intends to examine the system of connections between them, posing questions both from an historic perspective and

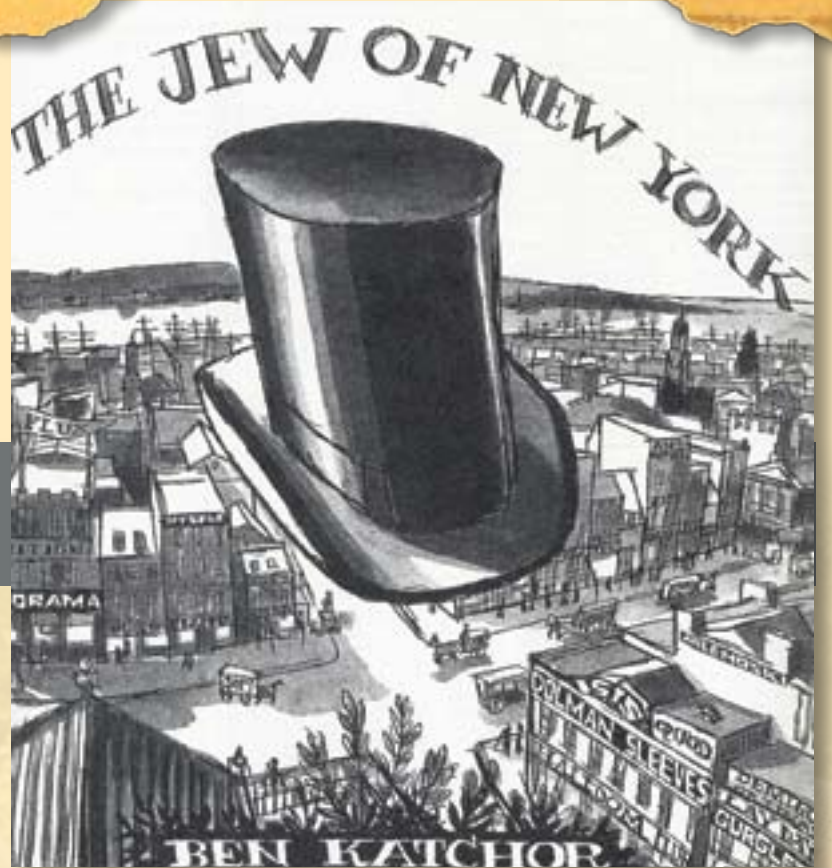
a phenomenological aspect, in accordance to their areas of interest. Thus, they hope to understand the ways in which artistic traditions and genres contribute to religious (or, alternatively, secularized) consciousness and experience, and the manner in which these generate new artistic approaches. The interdisciplinary integration of the group, which covers the principal expressive channels of the arts - music, literature and visual art - will allow a unique and productive devising of new methodologies for the investigation of Jewish culture. The reciprocal relations between the arts and the history of commentary on the Holy Scriptures, and all its traditional and innovative aspects, comprise an integral part of our thinking. The group believes that the commentary work of writers, poets, artists and musicians is worthy of extensive examination of the type devoted to the writings of the principal philosophers, such as Herder, Mendelssohn and Buber. Their research work includes an equating angle, particularly in relation to Christian societies. They ask to what degree were artistic designs in the Jewish world influenced by artistic approaches of the Christian (or Muslim) environment, and to what extent was there explicit awareness of these influences? How were the Jewish designs methods perceived by the surrounding cultures, and how

did they contribute to the Jewish self-image and external image? They endeavor to indicate ways of understanding the manner in which the religious phenomenon generates change and artistic revolution on the one hand, and artistic continuity and conservatism on the other hand and how, alternatively, artistic creation allows a subversive process within existing traditions. The group looks to examine the thought about these issues as developed by historians and thinkers, religious figures and philosophers, artists and writers in the periods relevant to our research. In historical terms, their areas of interest include the latter part of ancient times, as well as the beginning of the modern era, focusing jointly on the 19th century and early 20th centuries. With regard to this era they will relate both to the religious and artistic work of the actual period and to the formation of principal research approaches in the field of religion, literature, music, art, ethnography and folklore, approaches and thought processes whose influence is valid to this very day. The group believes that Scholion's shared framework offers a rare opportunity for them to join forces in promoting general research of the connections between art and religion, in the wider Jewish context and beyond, and to thus mutually reinforce their individual research work.

From left to right: Prof. Richard Cohen, Prof. Ruth Hachohen, Prof. Galit Hasan-Rokem and Prof. Ilana Pardes



Title page from *The Jew of New York* by Ben Katchor



Urban Space, a Jewish Place? (2009-12)

Jews have often been represented as the consummate example of an urban folk. In Europe and North America, observers claimed that Jews not only preferred to live in cities, but also that their long and seemingly “imprinted” pattern of urban dwelling actually shaped the way they lived, interacted with and reflected on their world. Jews were not only a prime case of urban adaptation, but served, indeed, as a prototype for an entire range of new social thought about and cultural representation of the urban experience and the modern world.

Critical analysis of the fluid intersections, connections and influences between Jews and their urban environments has become a staple of

contemporary scholarship on individual countries and cities. It is rare, however, for such scholarship to venture more widely into cross-cultural terrain. The nexus between Jews and cities offers a marvelous opportunity to survey the range of urban Jewish connections across the modern Jewish cultural map. Therefore, our research group intends to undertake a fresh examination of the fascinating yet often simplified connections between Jews and the urban environment.



From left to right: Dvir Tzur, Prof. Eli Lederhendler, Gali Drucker, Sara Yanovsky, Dr. Scott Ury, Prof. Sidra Ezrahi, Dr. Aziza Khazzoom, Yakir Englander and Naama Meishar

Lesser Ury, *Unter den Linden after the Rain*, 1888

Conferences

Ulam Umlo'o

(A Hall and its Whole)

Prof. Elisheva Revel-Neher

In December of 2007 two Scholion groups, "Ascending and Descending" and "Religions of Place", organized a convention called: 'Ulam umlo'o (A hall and its whole): The Ancient Synagogue and its activity'. Prof. Avigdor Shinan, one of the organizers, said that the idea for the conference emerged from the duty he felt towards Prof. Joseph Heineman, his teacher and mentor, to mark 30 years since his passing. The convention was held jointly with the Hebrew Literature Department of the Hebrew University and the Isaac Beker Jewish Studies Chair.

The convention took place at Beit Avi Chai, and included four sessions: The Ancient Synagogue – Structure and Design, Piyyut and Targum (translation), the Prayer in Israel and the Homily in Public and in the Aggadic Literature. Thus, the organizers tried to convey a sense of the ancient synagogue's various activities. Throughout the conference the hall was completely full (filled to its capacity), and Prof. Heineman's family, who were present, were moved by the fact that their loved one was remembered and cherished.



Photography G. Laron

Fragment of the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic



Prof. Zeev Weiss

Courtesy of Balazs Balogh



Between Two Worlds



Habima National Theater actors in action



Prof. Israel J. Yuval

Scholion's 2005-2008 group, "Ascending and Descending", held a concluding conference at the beginning of June 2008, titled "Between Two Worlds – Ghosts, Demons and Possessions in Jewish and foreign traditions". This lively event included two full days of lectures in various sessions and was capped by a festive evening session presenting short scenes from a new *Habima* play, "Dybbukim". This play is a modern adaptation of a collection of Dybbuk stories from Eastern Europe and Israel, which finds in the Dybbuk the eternal struggle between body and soul, man and woman. The conference took place at the Konard Adenauer conference centre at Misknot Sha'ananim and was incorporated into

the official program of the Israel Festival. The group has been a part of Scholion for the past three years, and this conference was their last public activity. Over the years their work encompassed a variety of activities, such as: M.A. seminars, cooperation with Bezalel Academy, field trips, conventions ("Traditions of Paradise", "Dreams and their meaning" and the aforementioned "Between Two Worlds") etc., all of which dealt with the group's field of research, the interaction between the earthly world and the heavenly one. As Prof. Yoram Bilu has put it: "The years have passed, like a dream goes by..."



Prof. Yorma Bilu



Prof. Rachel Elior



Was 70 Really a Watershed?



Prof. Danny Schwartz



Prof. Sarah Stroumsa,
Rector



Prof. Israel Bartal, Dean of the
Faculty of Humanities

The Scholion research group on “Religions of Place and Religions of Community” held an international symposium on the topic: “Was 70

Really a Watershed? On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple”. At the sessions, all held at the Rabin Building between 5-7 of January 2009, twenty-one scholars presented papers addressing the impact of the destruction of the Second Temple. Whereas Jewish tradition and scholarship of an earlier generation took it for granted that this event was of fundamental importance, dividing cataclysmically between

two eras, more recent scholarship has tended to undercut that axiom. Papers presented at the conference, which was very well attended throughout, addressed some of the aspects of ancient Jewish culture that were obviously affected by the destruction of the Temple, such as the status of priests vs. rabbis, or of prayer vs. sacrifice, but also such phenomena as the development of ancient Jewish art and demonology. The picture which they collectively painted was an impressive and varied one. Currently the group is gathering the finished papers and is starting the process of editing them; two academic publishing houses in Europe have expressed interest in publishing the volume of essays.



Perspectives on Pains

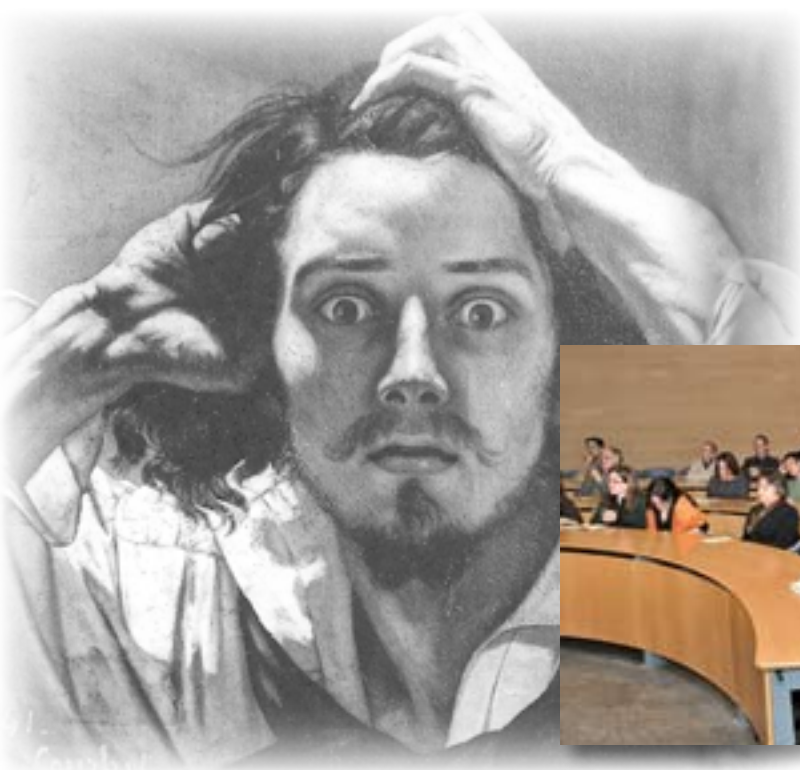
Members of Scholion's Research group on pain and knowledge, along with other scholars from Israel and abroad, held a unique international conference titled “Perspectives on Pains”, that was open to the public. The conference took place on March 2009, at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and at the Rabin Building on Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University.

The opening lecture, by Prof. Barbara H. Rosenwein of Loyola University, Chicago, was titled “Passion, Love, Ecstasy and Pain in Thomas Aquinas”. Among the themes discussed in the conference were pain and the concept of pain, treating Pain, the value of suffering, pain in art and the power of music to soothe body and mind.

Pain is one of the most persistent health problems faced by humanity. Nearly 20% of the world's population reports suffering from chronic pain, and nearly everyone suffer from some kind of pain, the most common of which are headaches or back and joint pains. Coping with pain involves physiological, cultural, psychological and ethical aspects. “The human need to express pain, to give it some explanation, is found in all cultures, and therefore research on pain in the past and in the present is essential in understanding every culture,” said Prof. Esther Cohen of the Department of History at the Hebrew University and organizer of the conference. “The research project of the Scholion study group on pain was established for the purpose of bringing together biologists, anthropologists, medical professionals, philosophers and historians so that together they would be able to delve into the intellectual aspects of the subject.”



Prof. Barbara H.
Rosenwein



Research Field Trip

Scholion Travels to the Seaside and Carmel (Spring 2009)

On what has become an annual tradition, the members of Scholion once again took to the road, this time in pursue of the urban experience on the Roman seaside. In the beginning of May, more than 30 members of the research center took two days off to visit different archeological sites near the Carmel mountain ridge and its shore. The field trip helped the Scholion members to acquire a better understanding of the social and political reality of the region in Roman times and late antiquity, specifically such aspects as religious affiliation and urban-rural relations.

The trip began early in the morning with a bus ride from Mt. Scopus campus to the ancient city of Caesarea. Being one of Israel's foremost archeological sites, an academic visit to this city proved to be an exhilarating experience. Prof. Zeev Weiss of the "Religion and Place" research group and the Institute of Archaeology led the way through the vast compound, beginning with a view to the ancient harbor from the site of a ruined temple. Such a complex, of a harbor that creates a vista with an impressive and dominant building, was common in the Roman Empire. The builder of Caesarea, King Herod, wished to emulate the great architectural achievements of his Roman patrons, and building a coastal city of such size and splendor was a feat of engineering befitting a Caesar.

Caesarea lacks any natural bay, and building a harbor proved to be a difficult mission. Herod managed to overcome this hindrance with the construction of massive underwater concrete foundations, the remains of which are still visible today. Nonetheless, this massive harbor fell to decay in the following centuries, its maintenance being overly expensive to the dwindling population. Eventually, a big part of the ancient harbor was filled with debris and today it is a grassy piece of land in the middle of the Caesarea National Park. Next, Prof. Weiss took us to the impressive Seaside Hippodrome



and the overlooking manor houses, through to a rocky lagoon where Herod chose to build his Palace, and eventually to the famous Theater. There, the group read an excerpt from the Palestinian Talmud dealing with the cultural friction with the Romans, giving it a historical and a literary reading. This tour helped to bring ancient Caesarea, with its diverse population,

bustling economy and struggling classes, back to life. From Caesarea the group traveled the short distance to the ancient city of Shuni, where a prime example of a small-scale Roman Theater has been preserved. Water from Several fountains in the area was led via the famous aqueduct to Caesarea, and was also used for the staging of marine battles in the local theater. The Crusaders and then the Ottomans used the complex for their own needs, turning it into a barricaded compound.

From Shuni the group journeyed to *Ramat Ha'Nadiv*, a public park erected around the burial grounds of the Baron Rothschild. Prof. Richi Cohen discussed shortly the historical role played by the Rothschilds and other prominent figures in the emerging national identity of the Jewish people. The park is also the location of *Horvat Akav*, a fortified Roman farmhouse on the slopes of the Carmel. The findings indicate that the inhabitants produced wine in considerable quantities, presumably trading it in Caesarea. A Mikveh testifies that the owners of the farmhouse were, at least in some point, Jewish. The next day saw us walking up Rakit stream towards its eponymous archeological site, which includes a synagogue and olive presses from the Roman and Byzantine periods. Within the perimeters of the synagogue, presumed to be of Samaritan affiliation, the group held a lively discussion about the ability of modern research to identify and discern between Samaritans and Judeans/Jews, based on both textual and archeological findings. The last stop in the tour was *Beit She'arim*, the Jewish city where Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi settled after receiving land from the Roman Caesar. The tour started at the synagogue, a monumental building on the hillside. Next, the group was fortunate to have access to burial caves not yet open to the general public, which featured some fine examples of Jewish art of the Roman period, like menorahs carved out of the walls and red murals with geometrical shapes. The site, overlooking Jezreel Valley, also features a monument in memory of Alexander Zaid, the famous "Shomer" (guard) of the Valley. Dr. Dmitry Shumsky discussed the different ways of erecting a substantial national self-image, both in the times of Zaid and in the times the monument was built. The tour concluded in the impressive set of elaborate burial caves, one of which also inhabits the grave of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi himself.

NEWS >>



Congratulations to Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson, a member of Scholion's 2002-2005 "Canon and Genizah" research group, who was elected president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. We wish him much success in leading the university into a new era.



Four of Scholion's past Mandel scholars were granted tenure tracks. Dr. Uzi Leibner, Dr. Dmitry Shumsky and Dr. Pawel Maciejko at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Dr. Havi Dreyfus at Tel-Aviv University.



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General Editor: Zohar Marcovich
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