



The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies

Opening Remarks by the Director of the Center

The year 2012-2013 was a productive one for the Levtzion Center in many areas. First, outside donations were raised by the Levtzion family and Reches Educational Projects LTD, matched by the University Authorities, for which we are deeply grateful. Secondly, the Center sponsored multifaceted academic activity, including conferences, public lectures and research workshops in collaboration with other bodies within and outside the University, reflecting our inter-disciplinary approach to the research of Islam and the Middle East. Thirdly, the past year witnessed the publication of a number of research works under the aegis of the Center, including three papers based on annual lectures delivered in past years, and a compilation focusing on religious knowledge, authority and charisma in Islam and Judaism (University

of Utah). Two other compilations are at press at this time. The Center also granted academic sponsorship to younger researchers from Israel and abroad who are doctoral and post-doctoral candidates and who delivered guest lectures and led seminars at the Center. This range of activity during the past year, which perpetuates the impressive record of the Center since its establishment in 2004, once again demonstrates the vitality of the Center as a main academic forum in the fields of Islam and the Middle East.

I wish to express my gratitude to the Academic Committee for their support and guidance. Special thanks are due to Professor Rachel Milstein, who has chaired the committee since 2010, and to the rest of its members: Professors Ella Landau-Tassarou, Elie Podeh and Brouria Bitton-Ashkeloni,

and Drs. Nurit Stadler and Miriam Goldstein. Professors Milstein and Landau-Tassarou have completed their term at this time, and I extend my deepest thanks for their services. We congratulate the new chair of the academic committee, Prof. Eli Podeh, and our new member, Dr. Liat Kozma. It gives me great pleasure to thank Mr. Sasha Schneidmann, activities coordinator of the Center, for his effective work. Last but not least, I thank Prof. Reuven Amitai, who, despite his demanding position as Dean of Humanities, continues to be actively involved in the Center's activities, enhancing our work by his wise guidance and goodwill.

With best wishes for a fruitful academic year,

Prof. Meir Hatina
Director of the Center

The Center's Mission

The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies was established at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2004. It aims to encourage and initiate research relating to Islam as a religion and a civilization from its advent in the seventh century C.E. until today, in the Arab world, elsewhere in the Middle East, in Asia and Africa, and in the West. To fulfill this goal, the Center organizes research groups, conferences, seminars and lectures; supports

individual and collaborative research; grants scholarships; and encourages dialogue between scholars of Islamic studies and related fields. Islam is approached not only as a religion, but, more broadly, as a culture and a civilization. As such, the Center deals with a range of subjects that include religious thought and practice, material and intellectual culture, politics, society, economics, and interfaith relations.

To this end, the Center supports

interdisciplinary research in religious studies, history, the social sciences, law and other fields. Innovative research projects within specific disciplines are also encouraged and supported. The Center directs some of its activities to the general public with the aim of bringing about greater understanding of the Islamic faith and civilization. The Center's publications seek to reach a wide audience of scholars as well as the public at large

The Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lectures

Background

The Nehemia Levtzion Lectures bring noted scholars to the Center to discuss main themes in the field of Islamic studies. The lectures are held in collaboration with leading academic institutions in Israel and are later published by the Levtzion Center.

The first Levtzion lecture was held in 2005 in cooperation with the Ben-Zvi Institute and the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University. Prof. Michael Brett of SOAS (London) lectured on "The Islamization of Egypt and North Africa." The second Levtzion lecture was held in 2006 in cooperation with Tel Aviv University. Prof. Andre Wink of the University of Wisconsin (Madison) lectured on "Perspectives on the Indo-Islamic World." The third Levtzion lecture was held in 2007. Prof. Baber Johansen of Harvard University lectured on "The Transformation from Islam as Cosmic Order to Islam as Legal Order." The fourth Levtzion lecture was held in 2008. Prof. Dale F. Eickelman of Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, lectured on "Whatever Became of the Islamic Reformation." The fifth Levtzion lecture was held in 2009. Prof. Haggai Erlich of Tel Aviv University lectured on "Muslims, Christians and Ethiopia: First Meeting, Last Meeting." The sixth Levtzion lecture was held in 2011. Prof. Christoph Schumann of the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany, lectured on "Identity and Normativity of Muslims in Transnational Spaces: Between the Middle East, Europe and America." The seventh Levtzion Lecture was held in 2012. Prof. David Cook of Rice University, Houston, Texas, lectured on "The Mahdi's Arrival and the Messianic Future State According

to Sunni and Shi'ite Apocalyptic Scenarios."

Annotated papers of the 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2011 lectures were published by the Center and may be ordered from the Center's offices. The contents of these lectures are also available on the Center's website and in university libraries.

The Eighth Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lecture, April 10, 2013, the Hebrew University

The eighth annual lecture, delivered by Prof. Israel Gershoni of Tel Aviv University, took place on April 10, 2013, titled: "The Devil and the Infidel: A Representation of Adolf Hitler in the Egyptian Public Sphere, 1938-1945." The lecture was part of an event which included the announcement of the Center's annual recipients of scholarships and research grants (see below).

In his lecture, Prof. Gershoni pointed out that the image of Hitler was commonly illuminated and discussed in the Egyptian public sphere both prior to and throughout the Second World War. Intellectuals, politicians, journalists, bureaucrats,

members of the professions and even segments of the illiterate population were among those who delved into the image of Hitler and Nazism. In this context, Gershoni focused on three major intellectual voices in Egypt during this era: Tawfiq al-Hakim (1898-1987); Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad (1889-1964); and Ahmad Hasan al-Zayyat (1885-1968). Each construed a variety of images and representations of Hitler and Nazism. Gershoni selected them for discussion not because they necessarily represented the intellectual stratum, but because their writing, and particularly their journalistic output, was representative of broad sectors of the literate society and the public arena. Using a variety of genres, such as journalistic drama and sketches (Hakim), a biography of Hitler ('Aqqad), and editorials and essays in the press (Zayyat), and by appealing to Muslims, Christians and Jews from the elite and non-elite communities of readers, these three intellectuals represented a mainstream voice of Egypt during the period under discussion.

Hakim, particularly in *Himari Qala Li* ("My donkey told me"), waged a fierce campaign against Hitler, Mein



Prof. Israel Gershoni

Kampf and Nazism in pieces that were first published as a series of dramatic sketches in the popular Egyptian dailies and eventually were published as a collection of articles in Cairo in 1945. Hakim made no secret of his allegiance to the Allied cause as well as his antipathy toward Hitler and fascism. He portrayed Hitler as a devil whose stated aim was to destroy the world and bring an end to civilization, accusing him of propagating a cult of the Aryan race with the objective of conquering and enslaving all other races. Hakim viewed Hitler as a militarist and war-monger whose vision of the ideal world was absolute German domination and the subjugation of all other nations and cultures. Moreover, for Hakim, Hitler was also a jahili infidel, in stark contrast to the prophets who sought to appeal to all of humanity. Hitler worshipped one blood, one land, one race; thus, Hakim concluded that unlike the immortal tidings of the monotheistic prophets – Moses, Jesus and Muhammad – Hitler's career was doomed to failure because the world would not tolerate his diabolical plans.

'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad used the Führer's biographies as a means to attack him. His major work on the subject, *Hitlar fi'l-Mizan* ("Hitler in the Balance"), was published in Cairo in early June 1940 when Hitler was at the height of his career and was poised to win the war. 'Aqqad described what he viewed as Hitler's crimes against humanity. Outlining his biography in detail, 'Aqqad demonstrates his psychotic character, paranoia and hysteria, which led him to become both a "liar" and a "criminal." Analyzing Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 'Aqqad demonstrated the application of the theory of race and racial practices in Nazi Germany of the 1930s. The Führer's psychological disturbances and his commitment to racial persecution and purification, 'Aqqad pointed

out, eventually led him to develop industries of mass annihilation, most prominently Jewish genocide. 'Aqqad warned the Egyptians, and Arabs generally, not to be enticed by the notion of Nazis as a friendly force merely because the fascists were "the enemy of the enemy": the Nazis should not be seen as liberators from the British and French imperial yokes. This was a myth that the Arabs would be wise to ignore, 'Aqqad wrote, because only the Allied powers, by defeating Nazism and fascism, could give the Arabs the independence and liberation they desired.

As editor of the most popular cultural journal of the time – *al-Risala* (the message) – Hasan al-Zayyat's anti-Nazi views reflected an even broader public sentiment. Zayyat's anti-fascism and anti-Nazism was clearly expressed from 1933 until 1945. One of his major essays, written just after the outbreak of the war, faithfully reflected his anti-Hitlerian stance. The title, "The Crime of Nazism against Humanity" (published in October 1939), was typical of his works and speaks for itself. Zayyat employed sharp, at times almost apocalyptic language to blame "Hitlerian Nazism" for the outbreak of the war and its horrific results. For Zayyat, Nazism was a demonic power viciously waging war against two major cultural traditions of enlightened humanity: the monotheistic religious traditions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and secular civilization as it had been reshaped by the Renaissance, the scientific revolution, and the enlightenment movement (16th-18th centuries). Zayyat vehemently rejected Hitler's theory of race as laid out in *Mein Kampf* and implemented in Germany through the racist laws and regulations in the 1930s. For him, Nazism was "a gross deviation of chauvinism and racism, of ethnocentrism and hubris." He called for the "weak

nations," including Egypt and the Arab countries, to unconditionally support the Allies in a concerted effort to make a stand against Hitler's vicious aggression. Zayyat was apocalyptically pessimistic about the fate of humanity if Nazism were to triumph. He stated in no uncertain terms, at the start of the war, that if Nazism emerged victorious, a very dark world would come into existence, a world that most people would no longer want to live in. Therefore, the only way to redeem the world was for the Egyptians and the Arabs to collaborate with Britain and France (America had not yet entered the war) in order to defeat this evil and the infidel who was inciting it.

Thus, Gershoni concluded, historians who are interested in the Egyptians' perception of Hitler and Nazism at the time can readily see that mainstream intellectuals and middle class voices in Egypt's public sphere developed profoundly negative attitudes and positions towards the German dictator. In contrast to the widely held perception, shared by many historians and observers, that the Egyptian public tended to develop pro-German sentiments, Gershoni's findings show that important public intellectuals were anti-fascist, and anti-Nazi and anti-Hitlerian in particular.



Workshops and Conferences

1. Wills in the Ottoman and Mediterranean Regions

Wills, often written or dictated by someone facing death, in the presence of approved witnesses who can vouch for his soundness of mind, are a valuable source of historic research. While some basic work has been done to collect Jewish wills – primarily Ashkenazic – no record exists of Hebrew wills from the Muslim world, and the situation in the Islamic context is also unclear. Thus research in this area is welcome. This workshop, ongoing during 2012-2014, sponsored by the Levtzion Center and Misgav Yerushalayim (The Center for Research and Study of the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage), focuses on Jewish and Muslim wills in the Ottoman realm and its periphery from the early seventeenth century until the modernizing reforms (Tanzimat) in the mid-nineteenth century. The workshop thus outlines a new research field with input from experts in various areas, constituting the basis for a planned

future international conference.

Following the initial conference in March 2012, two introductory encounters were held during the second semester (2013) at the Rabin World Center of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University, aimed at providing a historical underpinning for the thematic discussions about the research of wills. The first encounter, on April 29, 2013, was led by Prof. Amnon Cohen of the Hebrew University, who provided insights about the Ottoman Empire and about Eretz Yisrael/Palestine under its rule. Istanbul at the time (early 17th c.-middle 19th c.) was intent on enforcing Ottoman authority over this area with an emphasis on Jerusalem, in light of the importance of al-Aksa Mosque to the Muslims. The essence of this effort focused on two areas: increased urban construction, and the development of markets in order to reinforce the economy in the city. These efforts resulted in demographic growth and the

emergence of guilds in which Jews participated as well. Key positions in the regulation of the Ottoman regime were allocated to the qadi, the mufti and the muhtasib (supervisor of public morality and markets), all of whom reflected the authority of the sultan.

In the second encounter, held on May 27, 2013, Prof. Yaron Ben-Na'eh of the Hebrew University outlined the characteristics of the Jewish community in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries. He painted a panoramic picture of an internally stratified community involved in the economy and exposed to the process of acculturation into the Muslim environment. Although the Jews, as "protected subjects," had an inferior status, they were not under economic or physical threat. On the contrary, their relationship with the Muslim majority was characterized more by integration than by hermetic boundaries.

2. New Insights into Translation: Mediterranean Texts in Hebrew

Translating a poem, a novel or a historical account does not mean simply shifting it from one language to another, but, often, shifting it from one culture to another, which makes the task more challenging and complex. Thus, translators may be viewed as cultural agents who must demonstrate sensitivity and empathy for the other culture – in the present context Mediterranean works. These qualities were discussed by the participants in a one-day conference organized collaboratively with the Department



Prof. Yohanán Friedman, Dr. Ella Almagor and Prof. Reuven Amitai

of Arabic Language and Literature and the School of Ancient and New Literatures, held on December 26, 2012, at the Rabin World Center of Jewish Studies, the Hebrew University.

The first session was devoted to an anthology of early Sufi texts translated into Hebrew (2008) assembled by Prof. Sara Saviri of the Hebrew University. Saviri noted that she selected the texts by theme rather than by biographies/hagiographies or chronology, with the aim of showing as many examples as possible of how the Sufis viewed themselves, though she retained an academic context in terms of citations, notes and indexing. One of the issues she faced was how to simplify the original Sufi language, which is obscure and complex for the Hebrew reader. Responding, Prof. Ron Margolin of Tel Aviv University emphasized

the importance of thematic organization as an aid to unraveling the complexity of Sufi texts. For example, it allows the reader to perceive a diffusion between Sufi culture and Jewish Hassidic culture in terms of the inner experience, the process of growing close to God, and the struggle against lust. In Margolin's analysis, the element that links such mystic phenomena is man's humanism and spirit.

The second session was devoted to translations from Arabic into Hebrew of three autobiographical essays written between the 11th and 13th centuries: "The Ring of the Dove," by Ibn Hazm (2002); "The Lessons of My Lives," by Usama Ibn Munkidh (2011); and "Impressions from a Journey," by Ibn Fadlan (forthcoming). Here too, the translator, Dr. Ella Almagor, chose to present these works with a forward, notes, and flexibility

in vowelization and terminology. Prof. Reuven Amiti of the Hebrew University, responding, emphasized the importance of autobiographies as voices representing a period and a society, enriching historical knowledge.

The third and last session dealt with the dilemmas of the translator: whether to cleave strictly to the original version, or express more of the spirit of the message and convert the text into a freer format so as to draw in the readership. Two case studies were provided, one by poet and translator Shlomo Avayou from the field of Turkish poetry, with an emphasis on the work of Orhan Pamuk; and the other by Yoni Sheffer of the Hebrew University, a researcher of modern Arab literature, discussing memoirs by Babylonian Jews with an emphasis on the book "A Piece of Life" by Meir Muallem.

3. New Trends in the Historiography of the Middle East

Seminal developments in the Middle East since the beginning of the 21st century, especially the rise to power of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey, the American occupation of Iraq, and the "Arab Spring," have brought about a rethinking of Middle Eastern history. New narratives are emerging and old assumptions are being revisited. A seminar on this topic was held on April 1, 2013, in the Levtzion Center and the Truman Institute Middle East Unit. The first session addressed mainstream scholarly perspectives: Prof. Meir Hatina of the Hebrew University brought a critical perspective to the study of Arab liberalism. Dr. Mira Tzoreff of Tel Aviv University pointed to youth as a category in the study of Middle Eastern and North African societies. The second session focused on Egypt and Iraq

as case studies. Prof. Elie Podeh of the Hebrew University presented a comparative perspective of revolution in Egypt. Dr. Noga Efrati of the Truman Institute at the Hebrew

University surveyed debates in scholarly literature regarding the notions of nation state, nationalism, and democracy in Iraq.



Panel Discussions

1. On November 21, 2012, the Levtzion Center and the Honors Program at the Hebrew University held an evening devoted to a discussion of a recent book written by Daniel Lav, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Middle Eastern Studies, titled *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). The book traces the ongoing relevance of disputations from the Middle Ages to the rivalry in modern Islam between moderates and radicals over the question of who is a true Muslim and the status of local regimes: are they Muslims or unbelievers? Focusing on the importance of the past and bringing it forward to the modern discourse allows the author to question the view of Sunni radicalism as a modern construction with only a passing connection to Islamic traditions.

The event was moderated by Prof. Meir Hatina of the Hebrew University. Panel members were Dr. Livnat Holtzman of Bar-Ilan University and Drs. Nimord Hurvitz and Muhammad al-Atawneh of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Holtzman discussed the legacy of the medieval commentator Ibn Taymiyya, who preached a return to the early Salafi tradition based on the Qur'an and the hadith, and the existence of a society of purity and faith, while allowing for commentary and flexibility regarding the ancient sources. Hurvitz provided insights to theological discourse in modern times, pointing out that the main challenge of the modern radical Muslims was to simplify Muslim theology and make it accessible to their targeted audience – the masses. The radicals, who were mainly self-educated and lacked official religious credentials, primarily in the Sunni realm, did not develop systematic, sophisticated religious thinking on a deep

intellectual level, yet neutralized this weakness by means of personal charisma and the formation of social networks. The theology which they developed, based on a reworking of earlier traditions, was functional, simplified and practical in recruiting supporters to promote their vision. Muhammad al-Atawneh illuminated the complexity of the term Salafiyya, frequently used by researchers and foreign observers who do not grasp its inner logic in the context of streams that range from a quietist approach removed from all politics, to a pragmatic approach which assimilates democratic values, and lastly to a belligerent Tehran-type approach that oversteps all boundaries.

Author Daniel Lav, in concluding remarks, highlighted the importance of Ibn Taymiyya's legacy in understanding the modern radical discourse, and the rivalries within it, especially in defining the meaning of faith and the opposition to modern Muslim rulers.

2. On January 9, 2013, the Levtzion Center, in collaboration with the Mt. Scopus Bloomfield Library for Humanities and Social Sciences, dedicated an evening to a discussion of Prof. Shmuel Moreh's memoir, *Habibati Baghdad: Dhikrayat wa-shujun* ("Baghdad mon amour: The Jews of Iraq, Memoirs and Sorrows") (Haifa 2012). "Baghdad mon amour" conveys a longing and a passion for the beloved Iraq – its bygone tolerance and its cosmopolitanism – while in the same breath deploring the other Iraq of the 1940s and thereafter which was scalded by waves of nationalism and radicalism and became a fractured, bleeding country, to a great extent until this day. The memoir is a personal document, but is interwoven with

the events of an entire community in its distress and its hopes.

In her opening remarks, the moderator of the panel, Dr. Tamar Hass of the Hebrew University, argued that most of the books written by Iraqi emigrants are memoirs in which the author takes the liberty of representing the community. The further away in time from the old Baghdad, the more the more altered memory becomes, and the more critical the view of the old country. Prof. Menachem Milson of the Hebrew University reviewed Moreh's literary oeuvre, noting his groundbreaking contributions in three main areas of Arabic culture: modern poetry, theater and historiography.



Prof. Menachem Milson

Milson's colleague, Dr. Ronen Zeidel of the University of Haifa analyzed central themes in Moreh's memoir depicting an Arabic cultural milieu that influenced the identity of a child of a middle class family growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, although it did not blur his Jewish identity. This was true of much of the community. Essentially, the book is aimed more at the Iraqis than the Jews, conducting a dialogue with them about the past heritage of their country which treated the Jews well

and were cordial to them, but also conspired against them. Author Eli Amir, continuing in this vein, pointed out that Baghdad is engraved in the personal and communal memories of the Jews of Babylon who were exiled from it, and from which there is no escape. Yet, the nostalgia for the places, the tastes and the scents of the land of the Tigris and Euphrates, as reflected in Moreh's memories and those of other writers, also has different aspects, less pleasant, and this should not be forgotten.

In his concluding remarks Prof. Moreh likened Baghdad to an unfaithful wife who chased him and his community away, noting that his book points both to dark pages and white in the country's attitude to the Jews who served it faithfully. He noted that many readers in Iraq and outside it who read his columns in the on-line newspaper *al-Elaph* – which are compiled in this memoir – identified with this complexity.

3. On March 3, 2013, the Levtzion Center and the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies hosted a student delegation from the Virje Universiteit Amsterdam, Holland. The students, who arrived in order to learn about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at first hand, and also visited Palestinian institutions, toured the Mt. Scopus campus and were invited to a panel discussion titled: "Muslim-Jewish Encounters: Past and Present Perspectives." Four spokespersons, all from the Hebrew University, presented varied views of Muslim-Jewish relations historically and in the modern period. Their lectures revealed dissonance and tensions but also reciprocal relations and ideological cross-fertilization between the two populations.

Prof. Yohanan Friedman pointed out that the predominant characteristic in the interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims was that the

Muslims functioned as a ruling power who defined their attitude toward other religions according to the principles of their own faith. Thus, there was no systematic persecution of other religions – and in this respect Islam differed from European Christianity in the Middle Ages – but there was religious discrimination. With the approach of modern times, religious tolerance increased in the West while it faded in the Islamic world, which witnessed a rise in religious fanaticism and dogmatism, reflected as well in the persecution of minorities such as the Bahais and the Ahmadis.

Prof. Reuven Amiti, agreeing that a second-class existed, nevertheless presented a more nuanced picture of coexistence and even prosperity, as in the case of the Jews. Jews were part of the Muslim milieu, as

contemporary reality, Mansara called for the revival and reinforcement of this ecumenical heritage.

The last speaker, Prof. Meir Hatina, identified another stratum in the modern ecumenical approach, namely the discourse of Arab liberals regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. In his view, Arab liberals, especially after 1967, viewed a historic conciliation with Israel as essential to the very existence of Arab society and closely linked to the issue of Arab prosperity. In order for progress to take hold in the Arab landscape, liberals pointed out, the Arabs' political mindset will have to overcome the animosity and distrust it harbors toward the enemies of the past. Following the session, the students were invited to hold informal conversations with fellow students from the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies.



The student delegation from the Virje Universiteit Amsterdam

shown by the influence of Muslim philosophy and mysticism on Jewish culture and on Judeo-Arabic writing. A similar approach was held by Mr. Ghasan Manasra, a Masters student who was trained as a Sufi shaykh, and who accentuated the common denominators and ideological cross-stimulation between Muslim and Jewish mysticism. Sufism communicated with the "other," building bridges and minimizing disputes, as can be learned, for example, from the influential figure of al-Ghazali in the 12th century, some of whose writings were translated into Judeo-Arabic. Turning to the

4. On March 20, 2013, the Levtzion Center, continuing its ongoing and fruitful collaboration with the Mt. Scopus Central Library, organized a panel discussion on the subject: "Between Two Worlds: Writing Arabic Poetry in Israel." The discussion aimed to illuminate a genre that is insufficiently known in the public and academic discourse – modern Arabic poetry, with an emphasis on poetry written in Israel by Arab poets, both men and women, some of them young. Their poetry reveals a mix of identities, dilemmas and challenges in Arab society and its relationship with

the Jewish state. Participants in the discussion included Arab poets, who also read segments of their work, and academicians. Musical interludes during the event were provided by oudist Ermond Sabah. The event was moderated by Prof. Meir Bar-Asher of the Hebrew University.

The first speaker, Prof. Sasson Somekh of Tel Aviv University, provided a historical outline of the development of Arabic poetry in Israel, discussing the main influences of Hebrew culture and poetry on generations of Arab poets, especially in the wake of the Israeli victory of 1948, from Hana Abu Hana and Emil Habib, to Mahmoud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim, ending with young contemporary poets.

Poet Nida Khoury presented an opposing view of contemporary Arab poetry in Israel, which she identified as part of Palestinian literature, enlisted in the struggle with Israel, whose tone is essentially set by men. Illuminating works by women that emerged in the 1980s, she noted that their context was not necessarily political, but rather dealt with the struggle for women's social emancipation, bohemianism, aesthetics, beauty and love. Moreover, she attacked the Arab emphasis on discrimination and inferiority as reflected in Arab writing in Israel, which she viewed as a recipe for passivity, urging, instead, dialogue and building bridges between the two peoples. This view was also shared by poet Samir Khayr, who criticized "resistance poetry" that excludes any expression of brotherhood or love. This type of poetry reduces the opportunity for the integration of Arabs as citizens of the State of Israel and precludes any basis for dialogue with the Jewish side based on mutual respect.

Poet Marwan Makhul, by contrast, conveyed a narrative of Arab dissidence and estrangement



Poet Samir Khayr

toward the Jewish state, pointing out that, as the strong side, the state must compromise and make efforts to reconcile. So long as the Arabs suffer discrimination, they cannot be part of the state.

The closing speaker, poet and editor Almog Behar, emphasized the importance of translations into Hebrew of Arabic works written in Israel as an effective means of intercultural dialogue.

5. On May 1, 2013, the Levtzion Center, together with the Mt. Scopus Bloomfield Library for Humanities and Social Sciences, sponsored an evening titled "The Tahrir Revolution through the Lens of the Camera," encompassing an exhibition of photographs and a discussion of the 2011 Egyptian revolution.

The events of the revolution in Egypt, which were an important part of the Arab Spring of 2011, pointed to the rise of the masses in the urban centers as significant and active historic players who demanded greater palpable partnership in determining their fate. Even if this was not attainable, their voice was clearly heard calling for greater civil and political freedoms along with social justice. These were the banners that were raised in early 2011 in the public squares. The public space

altered its historic role: no longer a backdrop for the ruler to display his authority in public speeches, parades and official festivals, while the masses of spectators played a secondary role as reactors to supply legitimacy. Instead, the public space became an arena for open opposition toward the regime and a clear demand for change, expressed by the physical presence in the squares, epitomized by Cairo's Tahrir ("Liberation") Square, whose name was fitting. The event was devoted to the role and significance of this square in the Egyptian revolution.

The event, moderated by Prof. Meir Hatina of the Hebrew University, combined a media view with an academic one, and personal observations with outside impressions of the dramatic events. The first speaker was journalist and photographer Yaira Yasmin, who was in Cairo during the revolution and documented the events in Tahrir Square. Some of her photographs were on display. She conveyed the viewpoint of the ordinary people overflowing in the square, focusing on the poverty and neglect of the streets which illuminated the causes of the protest. Ksenia Svetlova, a journalist and doctoral student at the Hebrew University, pointed to the centrality of Tahrir Square as the beating heart of the revolution, where its symbols and its heroes

were forged. Tahrir was much more than a political event; it was a kind of communal festival and pilgrimage site for a variety of groups. However, the unity that was apparent during the revolution soon turned into factionalism, disputes and riots.

Prof. Gabriel Rosenbaum of the Hebrew University, who also heads the Israel Academic Center in Cairo, emphasized that Tahrir Square had served as an arena for opposition and protests against the Mubarak regime before the events of January 2011, but these did not alert the security services. On the contrary, Mubarak's removal from office was followed by a widespread sense of national pride, euphoria and accomplishment, creating a historical link to the events of the 1919 revolution. However, the

apparent failure of the revolution and the worsening economic situation led the Egyptian public to return to the square to express its traditional longing for order, a longing ultimately fulfilled by the army.

Analyzing the events from the outside, Prof. Eli Podeh of the Hebrew University examined the extent that the events in Egypt constituted a revolution ushering in a new era and hegemonic political order. In his view, the answer is not unequivocal, especially in light of the political instability and absence of security that accompanied the events. Nevertheless, clearly, a revolutionary spirit was evident beforehand, during the first decade of the 2000s, and the tone of the events of January



Ms. Ksenia Svetlova

2011 was set by the Egyptian street, the educated sector, the middle class and the online community, while the army showed restraint and abstained from interference.

Guest Lectures

1. On June 5, 2012, Dr. **Giuseppe Cecere** of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) in Cairo lectured at the Levtzion Center on the topic "Sufis and Muslim Mystics in Contemporary Egypt before and after the 'Tahrir' Revolution." The moderator was Prof. Gabriel Rosenbaum of the Hebrew University. Cecere drew a vivid picture of Sufism in modern Egyptian society and culture not only in terms of the number of its followers and supporters (estimated at several million) but also in terms of prominent figures in the country's Islamic institutions who are deeply involved in Sufism. Tracing the social constituency and doctrines of the Sufi fraternities, Cecere focused on four such groups, all based in Cairo: the Hamidiyya Shadhiliyya, the Jazuliyya Shadhiliyya, the Muhammadiyya, and a new branch of the Naqshbandiyya (linked to a shaykh living in Cyprus). These four groups, he pointed out, represent a meaningful sample of modernized

Sufi fraternities, which make an original contribution to the reform of Islamic culture, and take part in debates over the image of Egyptian politics and society in the post-Mubarak era.

Prof. **Sara Sviri** of the Hebrew University, serving as a discussant, stressed both the importance of field research of contemporary realities, and the importance of approaching such realities with a deep awareness of their historical background. The adoption of a historical perspective is especially necessary when dealing with a complex and "stratified" issue such as Sufism, in order to appreciate the continuity of certain spiritual values and practices which are at the core of the Sufi experience.

2. On December 17, 2012, Prof. **Orit Bashkin** of the University of Chicago lectured at the Levtzion Center on the topic "Iraqi Jewish Modernity: Gender, Nation and Class," based

on her book, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (2012), chronicling the lives of Iraqi Jews, their urban Arab culture, and their hopes for a democratic nation-state. The book illuminates their ideas about Judaism, Islam, secularism, modernity, and reform. Bashkin noted, in her lecture, that many educated Jews in urban Iraq were employed in governmental positions, were educated in Arabic culture, and had internalized the narratives of Arab and Iraqi nationalisms during the 1940s. Jewish writers, poets and journalists often dealt with political and national subjects, and were active in the demand to improve the status of women and attain social justice in Iraqi society at large. This portrait of the Jewish community as active in Iraqi public life differs from a prevailing perception of it as an isolated community which distanced itself from the Muslim majority and consisted of strong supporters of the Zionist movement.

Dr. Michael Eppel of the University of Haifa, serving as a discussant, emphasized, as did Bashkin, the process of the Iraqi-ization of the Jews, while also pointing to the dissonance and alienation between Jews and Muslims in the process of modernization, and heightened competition for places of work. Eppel also points to a methodological research lacuna, namely a focus on the written culture of the educated Jewish stratum and neglect in researching the lower strata of the Jewish community, thereby presenting only a partial picture of the Babylonian Jewish reality in the period studied. Both speakers, however, were in agreement that Jewish-Arab coexistence in Iraq became impossible during the 1950s due to the intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

3. On January 21, 2013, **Dr. Haim Koren**, Israel's ambassador to Southern Sudan, lectured on "A Tangle of Identities: Southern Sudan and the Challenge of a Nation State" in an event moderated by Dr. Irit Beck of Tel Aviv University. Koren conveyed close knowledge of the topic both as a diplomat in Southern Sudan and as a researcher of the history of Sudan. He traced a link between the rise of radical Islam in Muslim northern Sudan during the 1980s and deteriorating relationships with the Christian south, a development that ultimately led to the independence of the southern region in 2011 with the aid of international intervention. The new nation has important natural resources, including oil and water, but faces difficult challenges, first and foremost in the formation of a central government, as well as in social integration, especially of its tribes.

Prof. Steve Kaplan of the Hebrew University, who served as a discussant, provided an anthropological view, noting that Christian missionary activity in

Southern Sudan from the late 19th century onward reinforced the ethnic consciousness of the Christian south and its separation from the Muslim north. Kaplan also pointed to the ongoing influence of tribalism, which the new state must deal with when laying the foundations for a shared national identity. This goal, in turn, will make it difficult for anthropologists to continue documenting the old cultural traditions.

4. On March 4, 2013, **Dr. Eli Alshech** of the Hebrew University delivered a lecture titled "Between Purity and Pragmatism: Crises in the Salafi-Jihadi Camp." The Salafi-jihadists, who emerged in the 1990s, adopted a purist viewpoint which aims at purifying the surroundings from any sin or evil. As every movement that is captive from the start to rhetoric of fervor and pathos, the Salafi jihad was subject to feebleness, confusion and breakdown in its attempt to navigate between its puritanic ideal and actual reality. Verification of this analysis was provided by Dr. Alshech, a guest researcher at the Levtzion Center, who studied fragmentation in the ranks of the Salafi-jihadists at the end of the year 2000 due to disputes over the source of religious authority: erudition, or piety and battlefield jihad, as well as disputes over the concept of *takfir* (accusing other Muslims of heresy): should it be sweeping, or should it depend on the nature of the environment of the Muslims, as in the case of

Iraq. This internal controversy reflected different perceptions of the management of jihad, exposing the tension between flexibility and dogmatism in the Salafi-Jihadi discourse.

5. On May 6, 2013, **Mr. David K. Owen**, a Ph.D. student of Arabic and Islamic studies at Harvard University, lectured on "Forms and Sources of Obligation: Ibn Hazm of Cordoba (d. 1064) on Moral Reasoning and Islamic Legal Syllogistics." The event was moderated by Prof. Ella Landau-Tasseron, and the discussant was Prof. Zeev Harvey, both of the Hebrew University. In his presentation, Owen addressed the sources and epistemic status of norms, both legal and ethical, by introducing Ibn Hazm's *al-Taqrīb li-had al-mantiq* ("An Explanation of the Principles of Logic"), probably the earliest work by a jurist that explicitly defends formal syllogistics both as a tool of legal education and as a method of rationalizing legal inference. Textual analysis was intertwined with locating the *Taqrīb* in its multi-confessional and disputatious Andalusian context. Responding, Harvey added a comparative perspective by advising an examination of the Western influence of Aristotelian logic on Ibn Hazm, as well as the Jewish position on this subject as expressed by Maimonides.



Mr. David Owen, center; Prof. Zeev Harvey, r

Other Activities

Two research projects led by prominent scholars with whom the Levtzion Center is linked are:

1. **New Frontiers in Islamic Studies**, a cooperative program linking the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Free University of Berlin, supported by the Einstein Foundation of Berlin. The program consists of a series of summer schools for advanced students in Islamic, Middle Eastern and Arabic studies from Israel and Germany, alternating annually between the Hebrew University and the Freie

Universität Berlin. The conveners are Prof. Reuven Amitai and Prof. Sabine Schmidtke. The first summer school, which was held at the Hebrew University on September 18-23, 2011, addressed the topic: "The Political, Social and Intellectual History of the Mamluk and Mongol Empires: A Comparative Perspective." The second summer school, held at the Freie Universität Berlin on September 9-14, 2012, addressed the topic: "The Geniza: An Unexploited Source for the Intellectual History of the Medieval World of Islam."

The third summer school, held at the Hebrew University on September 8-12, 2013, addressed the topic: "Muslim Perceptions and Receptions of the Bible."

2. **The Formation of Muslim Society in Palestine-Eretz Israel (600-1500)** is a research project sponsored by the Israel Science Foundation. This ongoing research group, consisting of colleagues in Jerusalem and elsewhere, aims to provide a detailed picture of the society that developed in Palestine under a succession of Muslim states.

New from the Center's Shelf

New papers in the Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lectures publishing series (may be ordered from the Center's offices or through the Center's website): (1) Baber Johansen, *The Changing Limits of Contingency in the History of Muslim Law*; (2) Haggai Erlich, *Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and Ethiopia: The Messages of Religions*; (3) Christoph Schumann, *Political Mobilization in the Diaspora: Turkish-German and Arab-American Organizations and Media Compared*.

Daphna Ephrat and Meir Hatina (eds.), *Religious Knowledge, Authority, and Charisma: Islamic and Jewish Perspectives* (Utah: University of Utah Press, 2013).

Scholarships for Advanced Students in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Each year the Center grants awards for excellence to M.A. students. The following students won scholarships for the year 2012-2013 based on their theses:

Ms. Anna Pampalov-Alron, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. "Meditative Practice in Sufi Islam and in Tibetan Buddhism." The thesis examines social ties that were created between Sufism (especially the Naqshbandiyya fraternity) and Tibetan Buddhism in Central and Eastern Asia in the 14th century, and their view of meditation techniques of concentration and contemplation. The thesis incorporates philosophy and practice, enriching the study of comparative religion.

Ms. Tajread Keadan, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. "Responses of the Muslim Community in Israel to the Woman's Equal Rights Law, 1951-1961." The work presents an original and innovative contribution in tracing the changes in the status of Arab women in Israel, their efforts to attain their new rights in the Israeli courts, and the challenges they faced.

Affiliated Scholars

Eli Alschech (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2004) is a visiting scholar at the Hebrew University since 2011. Research interests: Islamic law, Islamic religious scholarship, early Islamic history, Islamic criminal law, Islam and human rights, Islam and the state; interdisciplinary theories of privacy. Co-author (with Nimrod Hurvitz), *The Clash within Islam: Making Sense of Muslim Fundamentalism* (under review).

Elisheva Machlis (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2010) is a research fellow at Tel Aviv University's Center for Iranian Studies. Research interests: Modern Iraq, Contemporary Islam, Shi'i thought and politics. Her forthcoming book (at press): *Shi'i Sectarianism in the Middle East: Modernization and the Quest for Islamic Universalism* (London: I.B. Tauris).

Aaron Rock-Singer (Ph.D. candidate in Near East Studies, Princeton University). His research project is titled: *Between Text and Contestation: Islamic Magazines and Religious Revival in Egypt, 1976-1981* (supervisor: Prof. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Princeton University).

Roy Vilozny (Ph.D., Hebrew University, 2012) is a lecturer in the Hebrew University Department of Arabic Language and Literature, fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and fellow at the joint *Biblia Arabica* project of the Free University of Berlin and Tel Aviv University. Research interests: Shi'i literature, religious thought and theology in the 9th-11th centuries, religious minorities, and depictions of the Arab-European encounter in Arabic fiction.

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Department of Islamic
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Dr. Nurit Stadler,
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Director of the Center

Prof. Meir Hatina

Center Coordinator

Mr. Sasha Schneidmann

Mailing Address

The Nehemia Levtzion Center
for Islamic Studies
Institute of Asian and African
Studies
Faculty of Humanities
The Hebrew University, Mt.
Scopus
Jerusalem 91905
Israel

Tel: 972-25881541

Tel: 972-2-5881541

Fax: 972-2-5880258

E-mail: islamic@mssc.huji.ac.il

Website: <http://islam-center.huji.ac.il>