

Judaica Olomucensia

2016/2017
Special Issue
Kurt Schubert, the Founder



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This special issue is a last and final volume of biannual peer-reviewed journal *Judaica Olomucensia*.

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Introduction

Ingeborg Fiala-Fürst

The anthology we present to the readers fulfills a dual function: the authors of the individual articles both recall Prof. Kurt Schubert (2017 marked the 10th anniversary of his death) and the institutions which were co-founded by Kurt Schubert and his wife, Ursula Schubert. This double function is reflected in the title of the anthology, "Kurt Schubert, the Founder".

One of the youngest institutions that Kurt Schubert helped to found, the Center for Jewish Studies at the Faculty of Arts at Palacký University, is allowed to bear the Schuberts' name since 2008. We use the right of the editor and publisher of the anthology and begin with the article by Ingeborg Fiala-Fürst about the birth of the institution, which follows an article by prof. Josef Jařab, the University's first rector after the Velvet Revolution who, in the early 1990s, participated in the resurgence of the Olomouc Jewish community, Jewish life in Olomouc in general and the introduction of Jewish Studies at Palacký University along with his wife Zdenka Jařabová.

A commemorative passage then adds a report by Ivana Cahová, the current head of the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Center for Jewish Studies, about the current conditions of the institution.

After the three Olomouc articles we include other contributors of varying genres: from the purely commemorative subjective reflections (Eva Schubert, Petrus Bsteh) to the articles of an objective nature, which introduce institutions funded by the Schuberts' or their ongoing research projects.

The publishers of the anthology hope that they have honored the memory of the Schuberts' academically and with dignity, while also presented to the public a whole range of Jewish Studies institutions operating in Europe and around the world.

The Jewish Community in Olomouc Reborn

Josef Jařab

The excitement of the „Velvet Revolution“ was still in the air as spring of 1990 was gradually taking over the rule in the city from the receding winter. On one such day two people were announced as visitors in the rector’s office. In short time I was welcoming an elderly but very lively couple who presented themselves as representatives of the local Jewish community. They were ing. Miloř Dobrý and Ms. Ema Donátová both lucky and brave survivors of the Holocaust, as I learnt later. They came to invite me to a following ceremony – the public unveiling of a plaque commemorating the 51st anniversary of the burning down of the monumental synagogue that had been built only in 1896–7 by the renowned Viennese architect Johann Jakob Gartner but could not be tolerated by the Nazis and their local fanatic supporters. My visitors modestly asked whether I would join them for the gathering. Did they say the 51st anniversary? Whoever gives a special mind to such an odd number? But then I realized that after the war, as for antisemitism, the Communists continued what the Nazis had started. That was the reason for the odd number – the more than odd history of Central Europe.

The ceremony that we with my wife readily joined was strikingly small. Just a handful of people, most of them only curious passers-by attracted by the words of the chief rabbi David Meyer and the singing voice of cantor Neumann. And still I think that we can claim the occasion to be an important beginning of the following process of revitalization of the Jewish community in the city.

As the community was growing and more people gathered in the house of the Deutsch family who turned part of their apartment into a prayer-room the community’s existence and activities began to be visible to the rest of the town. And the new life drew some interest and recognition from the magistrate of Olomouc (Restitution of property), national Jewish organizations, and the Government. A year after the November turnover President Václav Havel happily gave the credentials to the first Israeli ambassador to Prague after 23 years, Mr. Joel Sher. And the Excellency accepted our invitation to visit

Olomouc, in particular the more visible Jewish community and the University. Ambassador Sher and a number of his followers in the office have been sources of vital encouragement.

Being in the position of rector of Palacký University I started examining the possibility of opening an institute or even a department of Jewish Studies. In this effort I received a lot of support from my wife – who for years had been a very assiduous student of Jewish history, culture and literature. She even attracted into the revitalizing process some of our friends from abroad. Among them our oldest American friend, Carol Weingait, who kept sending scores of boxes with books to our Central Library. And she also helped Mr. Dobrý with organizing and financing the program of cleaning Jewish cemeteries in Olomouc and Úsov.

In coordination with the Jewish community we tried to establish courses in Hebrew and Yiddish but those attempts did not have a lasting effect. But lecturing on Jewish culture and literature became incorporated in departments of English and American Studies, department of history and department of German Studies. Appearances of personalities, such as rabbi Karol Sidon, writer Arnořt Lustig, or director of the Jewish Museum in Prague Mr. Leo Pavlát also helped to warm up the academic community to the more serious and scholarly interest in Jewish Studies in its wider scope.

It is fair to say that the past, the very sad past, is being brought back to the minds of citizens of the city when they walk on the sidewalks and have to realize, as they are reminded by the copper-covered coble-stones with names on them, of inhabitants that were murdered in the times of the inhuman genocide. Every year the Jewish community also organizes a public calling of the names of the Jewish inhabitants who became victims of the powers of evil. The fact that the Jewish community is alive again has a symbolic expression in the fact that the grandson of Miloř Dobrý, Mr. Petr Papouřek is currently chairman not only of the Olomouc community but all Jewish communities in the country. And the community even publishes its own journal – as there seems to be enough to write about. So, as much as it can – life seems to be back.

A turning point in the whole process of introducing Jewish Studies into our alma mater occurred when the new and dynamic young scholar, professor Ingeborg Fialová-Fürst, who returned from her exile in Germany, used the position of Head of the German Studies, along with some experience and contacts from her international activities, managed to establish a Center for Jewish Studies which, though with considerable difficulties, manages to survive and can boast of solid academic results.

Kurt and Ursula Schubert Center for Jewish Studies

Ivana Cahová – Ingeborg Fiala-Fürst¹

The word “Jew” used to be a taboo in the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. It was considered a despicable word, and it used to be dangerous to address Jewish themes. The Slánský trial, 1951–1952, orchestrated on Stalin’s order after the failure of Soviet policy in Israel, initiated the following course of events, since 11 out of the 14 accused high ranking Communist party officials who were charged, and later executed, for conspiracy, espionage, treason, Zionism and Trotskyism were Jews. When I started studying at university at the beginning of the 1980s, the difference between the situation in the 1950s and 1980s lay only in the diminished degree of brutality with which any deviations from this doctrine were pursued. The atmosphere was reminiscent of the tone of Franz Kafka’s works (which were not even allowed to be referenced at the time): “... everyone grew weary of the meaningless affair. The gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wound closed wearily. There remains the inexplicable mass of rock.”² The atmosphere can also be portrayed in two sad anecdotes that I experienced during my studies: Ludvík Václavek, the present-day doyen of German studies in Olomouc and throughout the whole of Czech Republic, discovered and researched German-speaking culture in the Theresienstadt ghetto in the 1970s and 1980s, after he had been banned from studying, teaching and publishing. However, when he wanted to publish an essay (probably using a pseudonym as this was common at the time when authors could not publish) on Jewish prisoners of the ghetto who were literarily active, such as Ilse Weber, Gertrud Groag, Petr Kien, Vlastimil Artur Polák and many others; he was notified by the director of the Theresienstadt Museum as follows: “Theresienstadt interests historians only as the Theresian fortress, not otherwise.” The other one happened to me when I, thanks to the

1 The first part of the article was written by IFF, while the second part was presented as a power point presentation by I.C.

2 Kafka, Franz. "Prometheus". in: *Franz Kafka: Poseidon und andere kurze Prosa*. Trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir. Frankfurt: Fischer, 1994. p. 136. See https://www.vanderbilt.edu/olli/class-materials/Franz_Kafka.pdf, p. 475f.

bravery of my then teacher Lucy Topolská and in spite of the ban (which had, however, also become “weary of the meaningless affair”), finally discovered the topic of Prague-German, or Prague-Jewish, literature and decided to write my master’s thesis on Johannes Urzidil, “the last great writer of the Prague Circle” and a central creator of the “Prague literary myth”. I then entered a part of my thesis in a student competition. One member of the jury (I can still remember his name, of course) asked me after my apparently very good performance: “Was Urzidil Jewish?” When I replied that Urzidil “was only half-Jewish”, the juror seemed to be satisfied, and I could win the competition.

In such an atmosphere, which I outlined only briefly in the two partially humorous stories, public Jewish or religious community life, scientific or popular interest in Jewish themes and official education or extracurricular enlightenment about Judaism were unheard of. The only officially approved Jewish institution, the Jewish State Museum in Prague, lingered on under the stern supervision of the secret police. Only students of Protestant and Catholic theology, who were also strictly supervised, were allowed to learn Hebrew, though only Biblical Hebrew. Most Czech-Jewish writers were in exile, or they were not allowed to publish their works. The nationalized Czech publishing houses were not interested in translations from foreign literary works, and so on.

The year 1989 changed many things. The newly awakening Jewish life in the Czech Republic, the new institutions brought back to life after 1989 and the lively interest in Jewish themes are described in an essay by Marie Crhová from 2011.³ At the beginning of the 1990s, academics also considered the establishment of Jewish studies at Palacký University in Olomouc. Professor Josef Jařab, the founding rector and professor of American Studies and History of Literature, who has written many texts on Jewish-American literature, and his wife Zdenka Jařabová, who dealt with both the research and support of minorities at that time, took the first steps in this direction. However, in the 1990s, the dean had other important tasks to do (e.g. the establishment or restoration of faculties: the Faculty of Theology, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Physical Culture, the purchase and reconstruction of university buildings, the modernisation of the university library, the revision of study programmes, the increase in the number of students, the consolidation of the teaching staff, the struggle for international recognition, etc.), so the intention to establish Jewish studies as an independent study programme at Palacký University in Olomouc only became realistic at the beginning of the new millennium. Not until 2004 could the programme be fully launched.

3 Crhová, Marie. "Jewish Studies in the Czech Republic." in: *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*. 10 (2011), 1: 135–143.

In the tenure of Professor Ivo Barteček, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and a renowned historian, who was very thorough regarding the quality of study programmes, and who was for now the last dean to give priority to a wide-ranging, academic choice of study programmes rather than to their “economic prosperity” and to the mass rise in fashionable study programmes, entrusted me with the establishment of Jewish studies in 2000. It was known that I “somehow dealt with Jewish subjects” and wrote an article or two or gave a lecture on German-Jewish literature from time to time. With a vivid memory of the establishment of “The Center for German Moravian Literature”, which I brought to life together with my colleagues and, above all, our students from the Department of German Studies in 1997, I gathered young people around me, mainly doctoral students from various departments at the Faculty of Arts (History, German Studies, American Studies, Czech Studies, Theology, Philosophy, Political Science), and we discussed, during many inspiring and pleasant meetings, how this new study programme was supposed to be set out and what it was expected to look like. Of course, we drew inspiration from already existing institutes abroad, since there were not any institutes of Jewish Studies at university level in the Czech Republic at that time. We agreed on the fact that the new study programme would have to be interdisciplinary: more departments from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Theology were supposed to participate, providing both lecturers and students. Furthermore, we assumed that the programme would require previous knowledge of the subject and language, i.e. it would be launched as a Master’s and Doctoral study programme and would be able to stand up to international competition. I secretly hoped for a close connection with German studies and the Center for German Moravian Literature.

In spite of all our devotion and well-intentioned zeal, we were all mere laymen, albeit passionate and enthusiastic, and not qualified or well-established researchers in the field of Jewish Studies. I was well aware of this fact when I, after about two years of preparation, sat down to put together the accreditation documents, which were demanded by the Czech Ministry of Education. This is why I decided to ask my friends in Austria for advice. Their response was immediate, innovative, uncomplicated, non-bureaucratic and in the “good Austrian style”: In the spring of 2003, the Ambassador Dr. Bernhard Stillfried, who was the honorary managing director of the Austrian Cooperation Association (“Österreich-Kooperation”) at the time, introduced me to Professor Kurt Schubert. The first meeting with Kurt Schubert will always be etched in my memory, because it was a little bizarre. The living legends, both old, big men, had apparently not seen each other for a long time, so they had to exchange news about their well-being, forgetting momentarily their

visitor from Olomouc, who was in Professor Schubert's university office. They competed in praising their orthopaedists who took care of their joints, especially the hip and knee joints. In order to prove their good physical state and make their physicians appear to be better, they were soon hopping like frogs or like boisterous lads across the room – and I knew: I'm in the right place. Here, a gate into a different dimension of time opens.

After this first meeting, I sat many times with Professor Schubert in his favourite café opposite the university campus drinking Austrian 'big coffee' ("Don't be afraid to order our 'Verlängerten' big coffee, Mrs. Fiala, it is not lighter, it's just bigger.") and listening to stories about the establishment of Jewish Studies in Vienna in May 1945, the daily struggle for money for the new institute, the creation of other institutes, research with his wife Ursula, as well as about the academic dog belonging to the Schuberts, who had to attend every conference (What was his name? Tobi?).

In the spring (or was it autumn?) of 2004, Professor Schubert came to Olomouc for 14 days to tell my little research group dealing with Jewish Studies what Jewish Studies actually were. The memory of these 14 days dwells in me as an uninterrupted conversation with a lot of laughter – we feared for Kurt Schubert's life many times, because he often burst out coughing during his boisterous fits of laughter and then hovered in the danger of suffocation for several seconds – and a close fellowship between the students and their master. Professor Schubert's visit to Olomouc was not only the supreme highlight of all hitherto events regarding the establishment of Jewish Studies in Olomouc, but also a transition into the second phase, which was suddenly full of obstacles.

The first obstacle, which was actually to be expected, had to be overcome during the accreditation process. The proposed interdisciplinary approach (ancient and modern history, philology, philosophy, theology – well, which subcommittee is supposed to have the final say?) seemed to be too adventurous for the members of the Accreditation Commission (mostly conservative representatives of classical, clearly defined, individual disciplines). Moreover, the freedom of choices offered in the study programme seemed too large and unusual for Czech conditions. This is why it required several attempts and repeated, detailed explications until some enlightened minds of the Accreditation Commission (I believe that it was Professor Vladimíra Dvořáková, the former chairwoman of the Commission, and Professor Jan Štěpán, the philosopher of Palacký University in Olomouc, who should get credit for it) finally approved this "founding document" and validated it.

In the autumn of 2006, the first students could enter the study programme, and they met at least one of our expectations: all of them were

young, enthusiastic people eager to learn. They identified immediately with Jewish Studies, lived with it and devoted their youthful energy and vigour to it. So it was a unique pleasure to work at the department. In the very same year, two actual researchers in the field of Jewish Studies joined our group of laymen: Tamas Visi, who studied Jewish Studies at ELTE in Budapest and at the Sorbonne, and Louise Hecht, who was Kurt Schubert's student and studied Jewish Studies in Vienna and Jerusalem. With these two colleagues, our department was also officially/academically represented, and, seemingly, nothing stood in the way of the positive development of Jewish Studies in Olomouc. However, in the following year, in which we also formed the organisational framework around the Jewish Studies study programme, i.e. to establish an independent Department of Jewish Studies at the Faculty of Arts, the news of Kurt Schubert's death filled us with grief, which could have been understood as a bad omen for the future, and the general conditions at the Faculty of Arts in Olomouc also underwent a fundamental change. The aforementioned Dean Barteček could no longer defy the pressure of the representatives of the "strong mass fields of study", who occupied the Senate at that time, and he was forced to change the financing of individual fields of study and departments according to the "number of heads". Not only the Jewish Studies programme, which was intended as a demanding elite field of study only for a handful of elite students, but also "small" philological fields (Dutch Philology, Classical Philology and German Studies as well) found themselves "in the red" overnight. At the same time, a managerial principle had been spread that "fields of study that cannot sustain themselves (i.e. cannot procure enough from the Faculty's total budget) are guilty and have nothing to do at the Faculty of Arts". The proposal for the establishment of the Department of Jewish Studies was rejected by the Senate about three days before the long-awaited celebration. Nevertheless, the celebration of the establishment took place, since there was a lot to celebrate anyway – namely the awarding of the names "Kurt and Ursula Schubert" to the Olomouc Center, which was now – involuntarily – allowed to be named only a "Center for Jewish Studies", not a department. I can still remember how we had to have the long-prepared signs corrected as quickly as possible... For organisational reasons, the centre became a part of the Department of German Studies, which I then ran as its head.

We knew from now on that we had to take care of the money for the equipment ourselves, which progressed really well at the beginning. Daniel Melchet from Jerusalem, the son of a former citizen of Olomouc named Salpeter, donated a large sum of money for the purchase of books. Many books were also bequeathed by Kurt Schubert. Louise Hecht and Tamas Visi, as well

as other members of the Center, obtained money from projects⁴, and shortly before the end of his tenure, Dean Barteček managed to provide the Center for Jewish Studies with three nice rooms in the building opposite the square where the Olomouc Synagogue used to stand. Cooperation with TEVA Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd., an Israeli subsidiary in the Silesian town Opava, was an especially adventurous and joyful (as well as well paid) experience. The Czech managers invited us to train them in the matter of Jewish culture so that they would know how to deal with their Israeli partners and superiors. I enjoy recalling my lectures on stories from the Old Testament that I held in front of about 50 chemistry graduates.

But, in spite of all the efforts, the financial hardship⁵ and, even more, the virtual daily struggle for the justification of our existence at the Faculty, recently under a new leader, was a large burden on the shoulders of the Centre. Having become weary of the struggle for two endangered departments (the Department of German Studies was not doing any better, as the number of applicants kept decreasing), I withdrew from the fight and observed it from a distance, albeit with a lot of respect. However, my colleagues from the Centre for Jewish Studies, especially Ivana Cahová, who took over the leadership, were very resourceful. The struggle for survival brought about positive results: The bachelor's study programme was accredited, and, therefore, more students could be accepted. Further, funds from projects were acquired, book publications in our own book series, "Judaica Olomucensia", were written and published by the university publishing house, the electronic journal "Judaica Olomucensia" was founded and edited by Louise Hecht for four years, and the Center for Jewish Studies participated in the new festival "Days of Jewish Culture" in Olomouc from its beginnings, as well as organised international meetings, conferences and student workshops.⁶ This, naturally, also led to tension within the department/centre, which was hardly surprising, since eight lecturers had to share two salaries.

The inevitable happened: the best employees are gradually leaving the department. Most of them find another better-paid job and work for the Center for Jewish Studies only in honorary positions, mainly because of their loyalty and enthusiasm. The Faculty and University leadership provide no considerable help except for some general phrases such as: "We won't let Jewish Studies fall" – which no one has to pay for. Jewish foundations and relief organisations

4 See the list of the most important projects in the second part.

5 The financial contribution of the Faculty to the total budget of the Center for Jewish Studies was 19.5% in the year 2013, 23.7% in 2014, 20.4% in 2015 and 23% in 2016. All other resources had to be obtained through various funds.

6 See the list of the most important conferences and workshops in the second part.

have apparently become weary of the constant covering of “start-up” costs for Jewish Studies in Olomouc, which does not “start” anything anymore, but uses the money to cover the urgent existential distress, and the major European project funds have remained aloof to the Center for Jewish Studies recently.

In spite of all these facts, I neither accept the image of the silent downfall of the Center for Jewish Studies in Olomouc nor do I want to sound like a complainer, since other small elite institutes have to suffer a similarly difficult fate. Therefore, I decide to follow the example of Kurt Schubert, and I hope my brave fellow researchers will follow him as well; since he was a fighter par excellence, which he showed when he learnt Hebrew during the war when Austria was occupied by the Nazis, as well as when he saved the lives of returning Austrians from loaded Russian weapons, established Jewish studies in Vienna and consolidated the new institute in the anti-Semitic atmosphere in Austria. Since we carry his great name, we must not give in.

Kurt and Ursula Schuberts Center for Jewish Studies (CJS), Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc

Between legacy and new challenges.
Commentated powerpoint presentation



Jewish Studies (CJS), Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc



Palacký University
Olomouc

History of CJS

- **2004 Section for Jewish Studies**

Founded by Professor Ingeborg Fialová-Fürst

In cooperation with Professor Kurt Schubert and *Institut für Judaistik* in Vienna

- **2008 Kurt and Ursula Schubert Center for Jewish Studies**

www.jud.upol.cz



HISTORY OF CJS

In 2004 Professor Ingeborg Fiala-Fürst founded a center for Jewish Studies at the Faculty of Arts. This small department was meant to fill blank spaces left in the research of Jewish legacy in Bohemia and Moravia by the Communist regime. While carrying out this project Professor Fiala-Fürst addressed the Viennese expert in Jewish studies, Kurt Schubert, and asked him for content and institutional help. Kurt Schubert was well-known in Czech ambiance thanks to many lectures and several books published in Czech.

In 2008 the Olomouc center was re-named in honor of Kurt and Ursula Schubert to Kurt and Ursula Schubert Center for Jewish Studies and in a short period it built a considerable reputation both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Professor Schubert had the chance to see the department himself when he lectured here in the academic year 2005/2006.

After Professor Schubert passed away, the Olomouc Centre was donated many valuable Judaic books from his heritage.



Palacký University
Olomouc

Faculty

Head of CJS

Mgr. Ivana Cahová

Lecturers

Mgr. Eva Kalousová

Professors

Prof. PhDr. Ingeborg Fialová, Dr.

Assistant Professors

Doc. Tamás Visi, MA, Ph.D.

Senior Lecturers

Mgr. Marie Črňová, Ph.D., M.A.

Mgr. Marie Krappmann, Ph.D.

Mgr. Daniel Soukup, Ph.D.

PhDr. Lenka Uličná, Ph.D.



PEOPLE

In its early stage the new department worked thanks to activities of several voluntaries, researches and teachers who joined their interest in Jewish history and culture with their original fields of studies.

The team of members of CJS gradually grew via acquiring significant scholars, however the variety of fields and disciplines is preserved which reflects the interdisciplinary complexion of the Jewish studies taught at CJS.

At present days only two members of CJS have full time positions here, all the other teachers' jobs are financed thanks to various projects and grants or they are paid as external collaborators.

One of the members of CJS has been also dr. Louise Hecht, former student of Kurt Schubert.



STUDIES OFFER OF CJS

CJS struggled from the very beginning to receive early accreditation of the major, which would integrate Jewish topics into the framework of the academic education and research.

In 2006 MA studies *Jewish Studies: History and Culture of Jews* was accredited.

Scholarly discussion and research of Jewish themes that has a strong and rich tradition in Bohemia received their space also in Moravian context. **In 2013 also BA studies** *Jewish and Israeli Studies* were accredited.

The major has one unique characteristic – narrower focus on regional topics – Jews in Moravia. It forms CJS a regional research and educational center and at the same time a place stimulating interest in Israel which contributes to formation of unbiased attitudes towards the Near East problematics.

Both programs offer interdisciplinary educational model of Jewish Studies. The studies are focused on culture, society and history of Jews both in Czech lands and abroad. The model system of instruction allows students great flexibility in choosing their subjects and their focus in the field they choose.

The program *Jewish Studies: History and Culture of Jews* is an exclusive major: it belongs to the so called small fields with lower numbers of students. This brings both individual involvement of students and untraditional perspectives and methods of education.

Besides traditional lectures, CJS offers interactive seminars, intensive classes lead mainly by lecturers from foreign institutions and many specialized excursions focused on connection of theory and practice.

CJS greatly emphasizes language knowledge of its students. Many courses are taught in English, students have the chance to learn both biblical and modern Hebrew, Arabic and Yiddish. CJS also offers classes taught in German.



Palacký University
Olomouc

Research activities of CJS



- Scholarly and research aim of CJS: history, culture and literature of Moravian Jews, problematics of Israeli studies
- International conferences and workshops with a focus on the above-mentioned goals
- Since 2014 CJS publishes a peer-reviewed journal *Judaica Olomucensia*

RESEARCH AIM

Scholarly research of CJS presently aims mainly on **history, culture and literature of Moravian Jews**. This is reflected in many prestigious foreign grants acquired by members of CJS.

Recent focus of CJS is also on the complex problematics of **Israeli studies**, meant as the interdisciplinary studies of one of the most exposed parts of the Near East region.

In 2013 CJS reached important success when its regularly issued journal *Judaica Olomucensia* was enlisted as a reviewed journal. The content of the first issues is available online at <http://judaica.aither.eu/>.



Palacký University
Olomouc

Most significant international conferences 2004-2016

Haskalah, 2008, Olomouc, Czech-German Fund for the Future, Czecho-Slovak fund for Holocaust victims

Die Vielen Geschichte des Ludwig August Frankl von Hochwart (1810-1894), 12/2010, Olomouc, AKTION 58p12

Women and the Holocaust in Central Europe: New Perspectives and Challenges, Gender Studies Program of the Institute of Literary Research, Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw), Kurt and Ursula Schubert Center of Jewish Studies (Olomouc), 11/2011, Visegrad

Judaism and Jewish Studies in the Modern World, 11/2012, ESF CZ.1.07/2.2.00/15.0300

The Land in Between – Three Centuries of Jewish Migration to, from and across Moravia, 1648-1948, 11/2012, Olomouc



ACHIEVEMENTS OF CJS IN 2004–2016

In accord with its major interest, CJS organizes regular scholarly conferences and workshops and its members are involved in many prestigious Czech and foreign projects.

From the above-mentioned conferences I would like to focus on two important conferences organized in Olomouc: in 2008 conference on Haskalah and two years later a conference on the anniversary of the birth of Ludwig August Frankl.



Most significant workshops 2004-2016

- “Literature, Science, Medicine and Jewish-Christian Relations: Berechiah ben Natronai ha-Nagdan and the Reception of his Works” led by T. Visi and D. Soukup, GA CR 14-196863, 5/2015
- “The Emergence of Judaism and Christianity I, II” led by Professor Israel Yuval (Hebrew University in Jerusalem), 10/2014
- “Advances in Medieval Church and Religious History” with students of Jewish studies, University of Wrocław (Poland), 11/2013
- “Berechiah Hanaqdan’s Mishlei Shu’alim and European Fable Traditions” led by doc. Tovi Bibring (Bar-Ilan University)
- International workshop organized during the visit of Professor Miri Rubin (Queen Mary, University of London), 4/2013

WORKSHOPS

Also the regular International Students’ Conference: The Students’ Voice grows in importance. This year, it will be held for the sixth time and students from Poland, Hungary and Austria will participate.



PROJECTS

Among the most significant projects are those supported by the Rothschild Foundation – scholarly projects aimed mostly at research of medieval manuscripts or developing projects supporting education. Also the scholarly

projects supported by the Palacký University are of great significance for us. They are focused on the research of Jewish heritage both in Moravia and in Czech lands. Orientation on the symbiosis of Jewish studies and art history is a proof of efforts to keep the heritage of Professor Schubert and impact of his activities in Olomouc. Nowadays electronical archives of Kurt and Ursula Schubert in Vienna and Jerusalem will enlarge the scholarly discussion and research and will make them more accessible to both scholars and students.



Palacký University
Olomouc

Student research activities



- Involvement of students in the scholarly and research activities of the Center, student internships at both Czech and foreign institutions:
- Yad Vashem, Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, Jewish Museum in Prague
- International workshop of students of Jewish studies *The Students' Voices*

STUDENTS' RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

One of the major assets of CJS is the individual approach towards its students. From their first year of study students are involved into scientific and research activities of the Center, they can take part in many foreign practices and courses.

For five years CJS has organized an international workshop of Jewish studies students where students have the opportunity to discuss their papers with Czech and foreign professionals.

CJS also organizes prestigious international conferences.

Students of CJS have the chance to participate in regular internships at both Czech and foreign institutions – Jewish Museum in Prague, Yad Vashem, Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow etc.



Palacký University
Olomouc

International relations



Cooperation with Jewish studies departments:

Vienna, Budapest, Krakow

Cooperation with institutions:

University of Haifa, Jerusalem, Trier, Düsseldorf, Dresden, Potsdam, Heidelberg, Graz, CEU and ELTE in Budapest and Wrocław

Co-financing of both internal and external research and lecturers via international donators:

EU-Fellowship Marie Curie, Fellowship of the Rothschild Foundation, ESF, MOEL Program

Erasmus+ Program:

Hebrew University in Jerusalem, David Yellin Academic College, Jerusalem


INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

At the very beginning of its existence, CJS established a partnership with a leading European institution in Jewish studies – *Institut für Judaistik* in Vienna.

Throughout its existence, CJS built a net of international relations with many renowned institutions, besides Vienna, such as Budapest or Krakow, University of Haifa, departments in Jerusalem, Trier, Düsseldorf, Dresden, Potsdam, Heidelberg, Graz, CEU and ELTE in Budapest and in Wrocław.


CJS secures co-financing of both internal and external scholars and lecturers in Jewish studies via foreign donators (EU – Fellowship Marie Curie, Fellowship of the Rothschild Foundation, ESF, program MOEL).

The department is also involved in structures providing financial support to studies abroad (Erasmus+). Every semester one or two students of CJS study abroad and the credits acquired at the foreign universities are acknowledged as part of their regular studies.


 Palacký University
Olomouc

Cultural and public activities of CJS

- Festival Days of Jewish Culture, film section
- Exhibitions
- Author readings of both writers and students
- Excursions to Jewish monuments
- A series of lectures on Judaic topics for the public, cooperation with various institutions in the Czech Republic: Olomouc Jewish community, Brno Jewish community, Jewish Museum in Prague, Museum of the Kroměříž region, Museum of the Mohelnice region, Respect and Tolerance Foundation, etc.



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR PUBLIC AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITIES OF CJS

Besides its own activities, series of Judaic lectures for public, organization of conferences and workshops, CJS established partnerships with various foundations, institutions and Jewish communities in the Czech Republic – Olomouc Jewish community, Brno Jewish community, Jewish Museum in Prague, Museum of Kroměříž region, Museum of Mohelnice region, Foundation Respect and Tolerance etc. and participates in many cultural and educational events associated with Judaic topics: discussions at the festival *One World*, successful film section of the festival *Days of Jewish Culture* in Olomouc, cooperation of the CJS students on the project *We are one*, students' author readings.

Many of these activities are feasible thanks to an intense cooperation between students and their teachers. Individual approach to students is thus one of the main advantages and assets of the small major.



CJS Library

- Heritage of the private library of Professor Kurt Schubert (over 800 volumes)
- Library of Nina and Beno Melchet-Salpeter (more than 1300 volumes)
- Access to the collections of the Dr. Stanton Canter Library (Respect and Tolerance Foundation)
- Gift from *Jüdisches Museum, St. Pölten* – complete collection of Encyclopaedia Judaica
- Heritage of the archive of Mr. Chaim Frank from the *Dokumentations-Archiv für Jüdische Kultur und Geschichte in Munich* (over 1000 volumes)

CJS LIBRARY

CJS disposes of valuable library consisting mainly from books published abroad that are not available not only in regional libraries but also in the collections of Jewish Museum in Prague.

The extent of the library owes CJS mainly to its donators and patrons.

Significant part of the library's collections is formed by the heritage of deceased professor Schubert, numbering over 800 volumes.



In January 2016 CJS in cooperation with Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna and with a generous support of Austrian Cultural Centre in Prague and many other institutions, organized a festive commemorative event in honor of significant life and professional anniversaries of its patrons, Kurt and Ursula Schubert. The event was held in beautiful venues of Art Centre of Palacký University Olomouc.

Prof. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Dr. Bernhard Dolna gave a lecture *Between Jewish Tradition and Early Christian Art*.

The Importance of Feeling Continuity

Eva Schubert

I was living in Brussels when my father, during one of his daily morning telephone calls, told me enthusiastically about his first visit to Olomouc and his meeting there with a very energetic and determined professor of German language, who had decided to promote the foundation of an institute for Jewish studies. “Und so wunderbare Konditoreien!” – at that time, because of his diabetes, he was no longer allowed to eat sweets, but he enjoyed having a black coffee, rigorously without sugar, sitting in front of a showcase full of sweets, surrounded by the typical atmosphere of a *Konditorei*, the traditional Central European pastry and coffee shop.

The *Konditorei* stood for a kind of ideology, a philosophy of life – in German, I would use the term *Weltanschauung* – and for my father’s understanding of a healthy world. During the following days and weeks, we frequently spoke about his Olomouc involvement: he told me of his hope that one of his students, Louise Hecht, would find a place there; he shared his childhood memories of walking through Olomouc’s Medieval and Baroque centre; and he always emphasised the importance of creating a centre for Jewish studies in South Moravia to counteract the anti-Jewish feelings that still existed in the region.

He was enthusiastic about the project and about the people he had met in Olomouc, and I understood immediately that the foundation of this new institute would acquire a central place in my father’s life. Even during the last weeks before he died, when he was already in hospital, he told me about his ideas for Olomouc, hoping that he would be able to continue contributing to the establishment of the institute, also by giving lectures and conferences.

After his retirement as the head of Jewish Studies in Vienna, my father continued working at the Institute, where the Emeriti-Zimmer was a quiet room with the view of a much-loved chestnut tree. During his last year, he moved a part of his personal library from the Institute to his home, as commuting between the two places became increasingly tiring. For health reasons, he had stopped teaching and decided to conclude his academic commitment with

two book projects, which he defined as ‘summaries of his life work’: ‘Judentum in Österreich’ (Austria’s Jewish History) and ‘Jüdische Geschichte – Ort der Jüdischen Identität’ (Jewish History – the Place of Jewish Identity). His office at home, which for many years had made it possible for my mother to combine her academic interests with raising two daughters and running an open house where guests were received almost every evening, provided an ideal environment. Surrounded by his library and his and my mother’s academic archives, looked after by Alicja, a Polish caregiver who loved listening to my father’s theological interpretations, and with frequent visits from his student and friend Bernhard Dolna, my father enjoyed the last months of his life.

The ‘Olmütz’ folder remained on top of his desk until the end, perhaps as a kind of reassurance that there would be continuity ...

When my father passed away in February 2007, I had to find a new place for this personal library. My initial plan to keep the library myself soon proved to be unrealistic (because of space problems), and I decided to offer it to Olomouc, as I was convinced that this is what my father would have asked me to do. I contacted Louise Hecht and still remember when we sat together, surrounded by dozens of boxes, to discuss the planned new use and destination of the library. Louise, who was enthusiastic about the plan and confident of approval from Olomouc, then proposed to name the Institute (which for formal reasons had taken the designation ‘Centre’) after my father; later, the name was extended to include both of my parents in recognition of their joint academic work.

My first visit to Olomouc took place a few months after the library had left Vienna, with a second visit for the inauguration of the new premises of the Centre, and these were followed by a visit almost every year. From my first meeting with Prof. Fialova and her team, it was clear to me why my father had felt in love with the ‘Olmütz Projekt’. The awareness that his library would serve this enthusiastic team and contribute to the realisation of the Institute gave me a feeling of happiness. I decided to stay in close contact and to support it as much as I could.

In the meantime, we collaborated successfully on the occasion of the different events that during the past few years took place in Vienna, Olomouc and Jerusalem to commemorate my parents’ academic work. This gave me the opportunity to establish close relations with several members of the team and to experience their professionalism, competence and humanity.

As for myself, I am working in a different field – the multilateral cooperation of museums and cultural heritage institutions – but since childhood, I have been familiar with the academic interests of my parents and my father’s understanding of an institute for Jewish Studies as a place where

people meet and share ideas and passions and where the knowledge of Jewish history and culture becomes a philosophy of life. This is how I experience the Centre in Olomouc, too.

My father always understood his dedication to Jewish studies as a reply to his personal history, which was determined by the diabolic events of WWII. His main concern was being relevant to the present.

From today's perspective, I think his hope would be to see the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Centee for Jewish Studies in Olomouc as the promoter of an innovative conception of humanities, providing an essential key for success in fields as apparently far apart as economy, information technology or engineering.

Thank you for your efforts and wonderful work!

Interreligious Dialogue as The Mainstay of Kurt Schubert's Research

Petrus Bsteh

One never should forget what inspired and motivated K. Schubert to undertake his pioneering work in Jewish Studies, particularly round German-speaking countries. At first, it was his passionate resistance against the “diabolic dictatorship” of national socialism. At a young age, he opposed calumnies and molestations; then as student, he resisted the persecution of Jews, among others, by purposefully studying Semitic languages. Before the end of World War II, he completed his doctoral studies. He gradually became acquainted with the treasures of Israel's traditions, deepened his discoveries and succeeded in attracting a number of valuable disciples in his long academic career as Professor of Jewish Studies, which he founded as a new discipline at the University of Vienna. With his multiple talents, he displayed, in cooperation with his wife Ursula, the arts of Israel's ancient past and its course through history. It was emotionally moving to witness his tender and respectful attitude towards his many Jewish acquaintances and friends.

K. Schubert was a humanist deeply rooted in oriental and occidental history. He was a committed member of academic traditions and university culture. He also contributed, as a member of staff and later as editor in chief, to one of the first interfaith publications - “Kairos”. Its highly qualified contributions were trend-setting for many years. A special concern of his was the Union of Christian-Jewish Cooperation in Vienna, which he headed for a good number of years.

A direct history of early Jewish-Christian relations was not the main topic of those who were profoundly shocked, like Schubert, by the alarming anti-Semitic manifestations of the rising national socialism leading up to the Shoa. However, the long history of Jewish-Christian relations was subsequently a prominent field of Schubert's excellent school. He himself was one of the first and most competent researchers of Qu'mran's movement and written relicts. The history of the 'rest of Israel' and of the early Church with regard to each other later found developments of research and were privileged

to have both Jewish and Christian partners in a rather recent breath-taking process. Jewish pioneers were those who evaluated the close relationship between this 'rest of Israel' after the Roman destruction of its centre of cult and teaching, Jerusalem, and the early Community of Christians, in the vicinity of Antioch in particular. One could perceive how their own future was somewhat reflected in the rising messianic community of Christians. Basic studies (D. Bojari, I. Youval, P. Schäfer) have been launched in this field and have been successfully pursued further in recent years: Initiatives of rabbinic responses unheard of so far turn up in various proposals of Christian dialogue groups nowadays. All this leads to a sincere mutual approach and results in genuine friendships. They seem to reach farther than Schubert's many friendly connections on an individual level, as well as in small groups of Jewish-Christian sharing.

As for Jewish-Christian dialogue, under such new presuppositions, one must essentially ask about the new relations to Islam. I remember well an encounter with the then chief rabbi of France, René Sirat, when he warned me never to entertain relationships with Jews without inviting Muslims, too: That means, to continue the dialogue that had existed in the past and which has an increasingly important message for present Biblical traditions. Practical experience shows that there is often a much closer tie of understanding between Jews and Muslims than with Christians. Since the occupation of the territory of Israel (Balfour Declaration), problems between the two have been numerous. In Central Europe and in the West, the three Abrahamites seem to get on well with each other, being on the same level under their secular constitutions. The important theological evaluation of the convergence of the three is still missing, but should not be discussed at this point. In our Austrian context, we have had a "Christian-Muslim bond of friends" meeting regularly since 1980. The chief rabbi of the liberal branch of Jews in Austria one day asked spontaneously if he could join with a group of his friends. This, of course, was agreed upon gladly, and ever since, we have been meeting regularly. It seems indispensable to observe two rules of participation: Only personally acquainted friends should be invited, and the topics of discussions should be prepared carefully. Steady meetings are important.

When talking about Jewish-Christian dialogue, we must keep in mind that Islam cannot be left out, as it is not only a relative in the context of monotheisms, but it is possibly an indispensable, and moreover complementary, partner within the economy of salvation. Schubert, quite certainly, did not hold such convictions. He purposefully used to deal with Islam as "Muhamadism", a pious construction of a religious founder who was, in Schubert's view, neither inspired nor sent by God as a genuine Prophet let alone the seal with

a message of the true revelation. Maybe there have been some theological developments meanwhile yet to be attended to by earlier highly esteemed Jewish Studies scholars.

Jews and Muslims met at an amazing point in the course of history. Whereas Jews intended to turn away any suspicion that they were corporately involved in Jesus' crucifixion, Muslims tried to intercept any failure of true prophetism a priori by denying his shameful suffering and death altogether. In such a way, they were confident in their cause to propagate the community 'Allah wanted' without serious hindrance, setback or failure. At a closer look, Jews knew from their own history how many tests were necessary to overcome superstition and false worship in order to profess that Jahwe was the absolute One in front of themselves and in front of their many adversaries. In this role they were to demonstrate their own vocation of proclaiming their hope for a universal kingdom of Jahwe by suffering in the hands of sinful and violent people for the price of freedom and the heritage of peace. Thus, little by little, the figure and role of the "suffering servant of Jahwe" and of the "paschal lamb" was developed. When Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples took over this mission from the chosen people of Israel, they began to focus on seeing this vocation for themselves as an entire people in a "twin role". This was commonly professed in over three centuries until the political role of a triumphant, imperial Christianity left the Jewish community alone. Such a close relationship was also discovered in our times in the experience of the secular "Third Reich", whose aim was to wipe out the Jews and, as a consequence, the Christians as well.

Kurt and Ursula Schubert

In memoriam

Elisheva Revel-Neher

Three years after Kurt Schubert's death, the article I had dedicated to his memory finally appeared.¹ Every word of its title was meant to be a reminder of his personality. I added a dedicatory sentence, in Hebrew and Latin:

לזכר קורט שוברט ז"צ.
In memory of Kurt Schubert
"Beatus Vir"

These two words, present in Jewish as well as in Christian liturgies, frequently illustrated in medieval biblical manuscripts, are the initial words of the first Psalm and open the book itself:

אשרי האיש אשר לא הלך בעצת רשעים
*"Happy is the man who has not walked
in the counsel of the wicked..."*

I wanted them to be read with the third verse:

*"He is like a tree planted by streams of water
that bears its fruit in its season, whose foliage never withers
and whatever it produces thrives."*

Such was Prof. Dr. Kurt Schubert, whom I have had the privilege to know and benefit from his knowledge as well as his friendship, during more than 30 years.

Our first encounter took place in Jerusalem. Shortly after I came with my family from Paris to Israel, I met him for the first time. I was a young

¹ Revel-Neher, Elisheva. "Between Heaven... Middle Ages", in A Garden Eastward in Eden. Traditions of Paradise: Changing Jewish Perspectives and Comparative Dimensions of Culture, Ed. Rachel Elior, Magness Press 2010, 290–308.

assistant to Bezalel Narkiss, himself a senior lecturer at the Department of the History of Art of the Hebrew University.

Narkiss was profoundly dedicated to convincing the scholarly world that Jewish art was an academic discipline. He had found a like-minded spirit in Prof. Schubert, and their exchanges were very fruitful.

It was evident to me in the first few minutes that I was in the presence of two giants who were creating a new approach to artistic expression in Judaism.

Prof. Schubert had come to present an exhibition he had brought from Vienna entitled "*Spätantike und frühchristliche Kunst*". For the young doctoral student I was at that time, in 1976, this was an important event. I had, of course, read some of Professor Schubert's articles at the time of my Master's thesis on illustrated books of Genesis in Early Christian art.²

He kindly took an interest in what I was doing and in my research. He asked questions, delighted in the answers and nearly succeeded in convincing me I was "one of them".

When he gave his lecture at the seminar which followed, the assistance was gripped by his extraordinary charisma, which, during his long life, never left him.

At the International Congress for Jewish Studies, which was held every four years at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, there had been – for the first time in 1973 – and still is, a section of Jewish Art. Professor Schubert took part in each and every one of them, accompanied by his wife Dr. Ursula Schubert, a scholar of Assyriology, who had just discovered her real domain: Jewish illuminated manuscripts. They never came alone. Theo, a small black 'puli', always accompanied them and stayed quietly lying under the table or the chair his masters were occupying.

Kurt and Ursula Schubert complemented each other and worked in extraordinary symbiosis. They were great scholars, gifted teachers and founding figures, along with Kurt Weitzmann, of an entire school of studies on the influence of rabbinical texts on Jewish and Christian art.

After Bezalel Narkiss founded the Center of Jewish Art at the Hebrew University, in which research was to be the main focus, Prof. Schubert and his wife became frequent guests. Seminars and exchanges of ideas became part of the scholarly life between the Hebrew University and the Institut für Judaistik.

In Vienna in 1990, Prof. Schubert organized an International Seminar around the publication of K. Weitzmann and H. L. Kessler's summa

2 Mainly, this article was fundamental for me: "*Die Illustrationen... rabbinischen Tradition*", in: *Kairos* 25 (1983) 1-17.

on Doura-Europos³, which had just appeared. Kurt Weitzmann was already too frail to make the trip from Princeton, but the guests of honor were Bezalel Narkiss and Herbert Kessler.⁴ We had a wonderful week of discussions and making contacts, planning the future of the field of Judeo-Christian relationships through art in the early centuries. Schubert's knowledge of Jewish texts and commentaries blended easily into Jewish art, and we were all full of awe.

Of course, the conviviality also translated, thanks to him and his good humor, into great evenings around tables covered with glasses of excellent wine.⁵

When he came to Jerusalem for visits to the Center of Jewish Art, for public lectures or participation in the Congresses, we did our best to render his stay exciting and agreeable. We took him for tours around Jerusalem, discovering new views and sights, which he loved immediately.

At that time, my husband and I still lived in Rehovot, and Prof. Schubert was not inclined to leave Jerusalem. And so, there were evening meals at my mother's house in Ramat Eshkol, where they spoke together in German and enjoyed my mother's Alsatian cuisine!

At one of these visits, he offered me the book he had recently written with Heinz Schreckenberg on *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, which was published in 1992. His section, *Jewish Pictorial Traditions in Early Christian Art*, was a fascinating analysis of four works of art he deemed determinant for the birth of Judeo-Christian biblical art; the Doura-Europos synagogue frescoes, the Via Latina catacomb and the Vienna Genesis and Ashburnham Pentateuch (the latter continued to be Narkiss' personal focus of research until its final publication as a facsimile a few years prior to his death).

Professor Schubert's inspired and inspiring book remains, twenty-five years after its publication, the main source of information and an utterly convincing affirmation of the existence of Jewish figurative art in the early centuries, which would have been a model for the newly appearing Christian iconography.

3 The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art. Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., 1990

4 A brilliant scholar of Medieval Art, former student of Weitzmann and a steadfast friend.

5 He also cared for every detail regarding his guests. My husband accompanied me and needed to find a synagogue. The first morning, he was asked what brought him there. He explained that he received the address from Prof. Kurt Schubert. The answer was: "Schubert, the Just among the nations!" This was the scribe who had worked with Schubert on the rehabilitation of the Krems Ketubba, which the Nazis had ripped in two!

I was thrilled to discover that my own research appeared in the bibliography of this book, and my impression was confirmed by the fact that a short time later, Prof. Schubert invited my article on Cosmas Indicopleustes to be published in *Kairos*.⁶

But sadly, the wonderful example of deep love, pure collaboration and pursuit of a common goal set by Kurt and Ursula Schubert, admired and awed by friends and students, slowly vanquished over time. Ursula suffered for a long time from multiple sclerosis and could not accompany her husband any more. At some point, he started refusing invitations and remained with her. Her death in 1999 was a terrible blow to him. According to her wish, however, he did not give up and continued working with immense courage and the strongest of will.

He donated their huge collection of pictures, which had always been at the disposal of anyone who came to their office in Vienna, to the Centre of Jewish Art, under Narkiss' promise that he would make the best use of it for students and young scholars.

On that time when he came to Jerusalem for a simple ceremony in a room in which the walls were covered with closets for the slides, his appearance was different. He was as impeccable as always, but he had a sad gait and unsteady hands, although the light in his eyes burned as fiercely as always.

I did not see Prof. Schubert again. He gave me a final present, which I will always cherish, along with the coming generations of scholars. He agreed to contribute an article for my *Festschrift*.⁷ Under the title *Jewish Art in Late Antiquity: An Example of Jewish Identity*, it appears on pages 39–55. Alas, he was not there to see it published. The editors, who knew him well, added footnotes and completed it. And thus it became his scholarly testament.⁸ His words will always guide us. They were accompanied by the last article of Bezalel Narkiss. Two great scholars, having worked closely in life, are joined in death by their final words.

In its digitized form, the collection of Ursula and Kurt Schubert graces the Center of Jewish Art and the Hebrew University.

6 *Some remarks on the Iconographical Sources of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes*. *Kairos*, Zeitschrift für Judaistik und Religionswissenschaft, vol.32–33, 1990–1991, 78–97.

7 *Between Judaism and Christianity. Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*. Ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Mati Meyer, Brill 2009.

8 "What we have here then is a clear demonstration of how post-70 Judaism overcame the catastrophe of destruction without losing its eschatological hopes. In the realm of pictorial art, one of the ways to overcome the trauma of destruction and the struggle for a new identity was reached with the aid of Hellenistic imagery and its reinterpretation in accordance with rabbinic thought." p. 50

Fundamentally generous, deeply sensitive, Ursula and Kurt Schubert were beacons for all who met them, and their memory is blessed in the Jerusalem they loved.

*“I am putting before you life and death,
blessing and malediction. And you will choose life,
thus, you will live, you and your descendants “*

Deuteronomy 30, 19

The Jewish Museum as a Physical, Social and Ideal Space – a Jewish Space?

Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek

In the year 1972, Kurt Schubert founded the Austrian Jewish Museum in Eisenstadt. After Amsterdam and Basel, it was one of the first Jewish museums in Europe after the year 1945.¹ In contrast to Amsterdam and Basel, there was already a place in Eisenstadt where the museum was supposed to be situated. This building was not just any house; it was a “Jewish” house – the former Wertheimer/Wolf house. It was not a mere secular building, but it also housed (and still houses) a private synagogue and was located in the former Jewish quarter. Schubert never strove for a new building for the Jewish Museum, as he did not want a neutral “white cube”. He deliberately chose a historical building for “his” museum – a historical complex in a formerly Jewish-urban ensemble.² He chose a “Jewish space”, about which I will ruminate upon in this essay.

**We all know what a museum is.
But do we really know what it is exactly?**

For Kurt Schubert, the museum was not necessarily a place of artefacts, as he saw it rather as a place of documentation. After the Shoah, he was not interested in aesthetics, but in enlightenment. A Jewish museum does not need to be object-based, and according to Schubert, the narrative was the most essential aspect. The question has been a source of disagreement among museologists to this day. The museum is a “a refractory object” stated

1 In 1953, the Museo Ebraico di Venezia (The Jewish Museum of Venice) was established; in 1955, the Joods Historisch Museum in Amsterdam (the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam), which had been founded in 1932, reopened; in 1966, the Jewish Museum of Switzerland was founded in Basel.

2 The Joods Historisch Museum in Amsterdam moved into the historical ensemble of synagogues, where the museum is situated today, as late as 1987. The Museo Ebraico in Venice could also be established as the administrator and mediator of Jewish heritage in the former ghetto as late as the last two decades.

Joachim Baur. When answering the question ‘what is it?’, he replied: “worlds clash against each other; that is, self-evidence, unambiguity and the indeterminability of the concept (such as the notion of the ‘museum’ in everyday discourse) face emphasizing its ambivalence, diversity and vagueness in academic discussion. It is a tension coming to light even more within the boom that has been affecting both the institution and its scientific interpretation for a long time.”³ For the sake of simplicity, I will sum up the definition of a museum according to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) from 2007 in this article; since it deliberately, and for pragmatic reasons, avoids all various developments, continuities, discontinuities and innovations regarding its (re)definition. “A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

We all know what a Jewish museum is. But do we really know what it is exactly?

Based on the above-quoted ICOM definition, the answer would possibly have to sound as follows: “A Jewish museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of Jewry for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.” Is this correct? Or should the part of the sentence “in the service of society and its development” be exchanged with another formulation, such as “in the service of Jewish society and its development”? Or, the other way round, with “in the service of non-Jewish society and its development”? I believe Kurt Schubert never asked this question in this sense. He assumed that his audience in the 1970s and 1980s would be mainly non-Jewish and that they should experience, learn and understand their own (cultural) history, as well as take over the responsibility. He wanted to return the “Jewish space” to Jewish visitors. I will comment upon this at the end of this contemplation.

The ICOM sees the function of museums as follows: “Museums play a key role in development through education and democratisation, while also serving as witnesses of the past and guardians of humanity’s treasures for

3 Baur, Joachim. “Was ist ein Museum? Vier Umkreisungen eines widerspenstigen Gegenstands,” in: *Museumsanalyse. Methoden und Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes*. Ed. Joachim Baur. Bielefeld 2010, 15–48, 15.

future generations.” I would also like to transfer this definition onto Jewish museums. It would have to read: “Jewish museums play a key role in development through education and democratisation, while also serving as witnesses of the past and guardians of Jewish treasures for future generations.” Or “guardians of Jewish treasures for future Jewish generations.” Or “guardians of Jewish treasures for future non-Jewish generations.”

My distinguished colleague, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, asked the following question right at the beginning of her intelligent keynote-lecture entitled “Why do Jewish museums matter?”, presented at the conference of the Association of European Jewish Museums in London in 2011: “So, what is a Jewish museum?” - and did not provide any answer. However, what she did say would definitely be worthy of a discussion: “Virtually all ‘Jewish museums’ in Europe are Holocaust museums by another name, with some possible exceptions. Outside Europe, Jewish museums are often immigration museums by another name. In Israel, almost all museums tell the Jewish national story, whether alone or together, state funded or not.”⁴ According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, if I’m interpreting it correctly, in reality, there are no Jewish museums. Can we, therefore, not define these places when they still claim themselves to be Jewish museums? In any case, I am in good company when I join her in not answering this question about what a Jewish museum is by definition.

There is one more question which arises from the ICOM definition. We all agree that the objective of museums is undoubtedly to preserve and mediate cultural heritage. Under cultural heritage, we understand each thing and each idea that is significant in art, history, science, society, or as intangible heritage. What does it mean for Jewish museums? Where does Jewish heritage begin? Where does it end? This can sound a little obsolete, or, in other words, as if each museum could, or rather had to, decide about the definition according to its own consideration and historical circumstances. Yet, I do not consider this absolutely correct, since this cultural heritage presented in museums contributes a great deal to our self-consciousness, and it reflects – whether only supposedly or truly – our identity. Let’s take an “Aryanised” painting confiscated, or stolen, in 1938 from its Jewish owners. This Austrian cultural heritage has served Austrian citizens as a projection of their Austrian identity for decades, regardless of whether or not they have ever really seen it and visited its place of exhibition in the museum. The restitution right is then claimed. Should then the restitution panel – dealing with restitutions as soon as the Commission for Provenance Research completed its dossier

4 <http://www.aejm.org/django-files/cms/pool/Why_Jewish_Museums_BKG.pdf>

with all necessary materials – be forced to decide that, in the case of the painting, it was not a question of “Austrian” but “Jewish” heritage? Would it be Jewish heritage because there was only one Jewish family willing to pay for the acquisition of this unique piece of art? And what should happen if there were no other legatees in the meantime or if they decided to abandon the claim in the end? Where or to whom would it belong? To the Jewish museum? Questions upon questions.

Even if we did not answer the questions about the definition of a Jewish museum and about the kind of museum in which Jewish cultural heritage should be exhibited (if we only knew what exactly this cultural heritage is), we, nevertheless, want to approach and try to understand the problem of a Jewish museum in its physical space in order to get closer to the definition of “Jewish space”. Jewish museums are not just located anywhere. They are situated in specific public spaces in the city. I believe that little attention has been paid to this dimension so far. However, this is not a minor fact regarding our subject matter, since these museums have a certain function in these places. As was stated above, the Austrian Jewish Museum was deliberately accommodated in the Wertheimer palace by Kurt Schubert, i.e. in the “house, where the synagogue is”, as was recorded in a document from the year 1696.⁵ The famous Jewish court factor, Samson Wertheimer, who was an agent of three Austrian emperors and a chief rabbi of Hungary, had this house built, and it was later taken over by Sandor Wolf, who committed himself to the rescue of Jewish cultural heritage in Burgenland in the interwar period.⁶ Some years later, the Jewish Museum in Hohenems, for example, was established in a former Jewish quarter in a private villa where Jews used to live. The Jewish Museum in Munich belongs to a newly established ensemble that consists of a unique synagogue, a community centre and a museum. In Berlin, on the other hand, the Jewish museum is located in the Kreuzberg borough, which was enclosed by the Berlin Wall on three sides until its fall, and which called for “gentrification”. Therefore, in any case, the location of the museums is not insignificant.

The actual content of their function is usually of no importance to the current policymakers. Frankfurt am Main with its Museum Riverbank can serve as an example of an establishment of a museum complex that is based purely on urban criteria and its tourist or commercial utilisation. The deficiencies in democracy and participation, which were acknowledged in the 1970s, and which were evident mainly in the new city museum on the Frankfurt

5 <<http://www.ojm.at/wertheimerhaus/>>

6 Schubert, Kurt, “Das Österreichische Jüdische Museum in Eisenstadt”.
<http://www.zobodat.at/pdf/Oesterr-Museen-stellen-sich-vor_20_0032-0036.pdf>

Römerberg square, were revised between the 1980s and 1990s on behalf of “high cultural projects” proposed by famous architects such as Richard Meyer, Hans Hollein and Josef Paul Kleihues.⁷ The Jewish Museum Frankfurt am Main, which opened in 1988 in the former Rothschild Palais, was one of these projects. It served, similarly to other museums on the Museum Riverbank, primarily to create a positive image. However, as a specifically Jewish museum, it mainly served as a symbol of political progress, even though it should have served as proof of a different and new Germany that definitely left the time of National Socialism behind. Just how superficial this confession was became clear when, at almost the same time as the opening of the Jewish Museum took place, the remains of the famous Frankfurt Judengasse (Jewish quarter) on the Börneplatz Square were unearthed during construction works. As a matter of fact, the place is of great importance for the history of Jews in Germany, or, to put it in better words, for Jewish history in Germany. I say “as a matter of fact” because the origin of today’s physical place does not take the historical and cultural significance of the place into account. For three hundred and thirty-four years (from 1462 to 1796), the Jewish ghetto of Frankfurt was located here, where the largest Jewish community in Germany lived in the early modern period. The restrictions of the ghetto were not removed until the beginning of the military conflicts between France and Austria-Prussia-England. Therefore, most of the inhabitants moved to Ostend, a part of Frankfurt. However, the city did not decide to tear down the then shabby, yet still tourist-attractive, quarter until 80 or 90 years later. Within the new building development, the orthodox Börneplatz-Synagogue was built in 1882, not far away from the main synagogue of the Reform congregation. Just like all other Jewish houses of God in Frankfurt, this synagogue was destroyed by the Nazis during the pogrom of November 1938. The whole area fell victim to Allied air raids during the Second World War. After 1945, the city decided on a radical transformation of the entire area. Only the medieval Jewish cemetery remained preserved in the devastated state from the Nazi era. For about half a century, the place was erased from the city’s consciousness as a former Jewish area. When foundations of houses from the former ghetto and a mikvah were found here in the 1980s during the aforementioned construction works for municipal utilities, this historical site slowly returned to the consciousness of Frankfurt inhabitants. Even though the city wanted to document the excavations, they intended to fill in the site again. However, massive protests from citizens led to the first essential ‘Federal German’ debate on how to deal with the material Jewish heritage in Ger-

7 See: Kirchberg, Volker. “Das Museum als öffentlicher Raum in der Stadt” in: Joachim Baur (Ed.), note 1, 231–265, 239ff.

many. Eventually, the city decided to preserve a small part of the excavated foundations from the former Judengasse, or more precisely, to relocate it *in situ* and to make it accessible to the public. The Museum Judengasse became a branch of the Jewish Museum Frankfurt am Main. The site of the former Börneplatz-Synagogue was set up as a memorial site in 1996, to which the outer wall of the Old Jewish Cemetery also belongs. Nevertheless, the compound relevance of the site, i.e. the physically urban, the spatial Jewish and the contextually historical relevance, remained invisible since various associations with medieval and early modern, as well as contemporary, history were brought about during the discussions and mixed up. In the end, these discussions gave rise to the following mixture of views: An unsatisfactory, ahistorical tension was created at the site of the former ghetto, which testified both to the inability of political decision-makers and to the unstable relationship between Germans and Jews. In December of 2011, the City of Frankfurt made a crucial decision and took concrete steps for the expansion of the Jewish Museum, regarding both construction work and content of the museum, as well as for the necessary restoration of the current headquarters – the Rothschild Palais. A few years later, the “Museum Judengasse” was closed and redesigned – as far as was possible under the miserable urban conditions and all the mistakes made. It is to be hoped that this “focal point” of Jewish history in Germany will receive the attention it is due in the future.

In general, the Frankfurt Museum Riverbank illustrates the economic expectation of the museums “to create contiguous consumer landscapes with areas of ‘clean’ entertainment, as they are preferred by members of upper occupational groups and employees”.⁸ In this respect, many museums – not only in Frankfurt – are economically instrumentalised by urban developers in transferring their cultural and social value to their physical “secondary spaces”. In other cities, the tendency to draw economic added value from the establishment of a Jewish museum can also be observed – as when setting up antiques and souvenir shops with Judaica products.

This leads us to the question of the extent to which the museum is a social space, although this has already been mentioned in connection with the physical space. In particular, the Frankfurt discussions about the fate of the excavations of the Judengasse and the neighbouring Börneplatz have vehemently pointed out society’s claim to involvement in cultural political discourse, and thus defined the place as a space for social discourse even before it became

8 Kirchberg, Volker. 'Kulturerlebnis Stadt: Money, Art and Public Places', in: *Kultur in der Stadt. Stadtsoziologische Analysen zur Kultur*. Ed. Albrecht Göschel and Volker Kirchberg. Opladen 1998, 89.

a museum.⁹ This example is just one of many that can show that there is no public space that would not be a social space at the same time. Jewish museums, especially in the German-speaking realm of the second half of the 20th century and the turn of the millennium, are manifestations of a socio-political action and interaction. It was the discourses of remembrance culture carried out in society that allowed them to arise.¹⁰ I do not wish to go into the details of the museum's obvious social functions, e.g. people go to the museum together, meet in the museum, have coffee together in the museum, and they possibly speak with the museum staff. This has always been inherent in both Jewish as well as non-Jewish museums, ever since the institutionalisation of museum cafés and museum shops. I would like to briefly consider the following thoughts: The development policy at the Frankfurt Museum Riverbank clearly shows the immense impact of the social space a museum has on the neighbouring areas. Yet, undoubtedly, the growing social space is highly elitist in these areas. But is not the museum space itself elitist? As well as the Jewish museum space? Is not the Jewish Museum Berlin, the Libeskind building, an elitist space? By no means do I want to say that the Jewish Museum Berlin is intentionally socio-elitist, but who actually interacts in a social sense in this space? Or what should we call this social interaction? Perhaps it is easier to use an example of a smaller museum in order to clarify what I mean by "socio-elitist": The Jewish Museum Hohenems has a café, where people meet even when they do not visit the exhibitions. In this café, museum projects are discussed, the museum's advisory council meets, but also friends of the house or the landlords come round. Day-to-day politics and urban problems are discussed, and current issues are also commented on. It is an exclusive space, which is status-generating through its symbolic attributions, since it is, after all, situated in the Jewish Museum Hohenems.¹¹ This means that it is a natural and an important social space; however, it is an elitist space at the same time, where it is not important to define this elite. How do the Jewish museums want to, or how can they, deal with it in the future?

Lastly, we come to the question of the Jewish museum as an ideal space, a space that generates ideas, history, memory and values. Hanno Löwy called such a space "Jewish space". I quote: "There is probably no institution that makes more sense of the term 'Jewish space'. Jewish museums represent

9 Heimann-Jelinek, Felicitas. "Ort der Erinnerung: Von der Judengasse zum Börneplatz". in: *Die Frankfurter Judengasse. Katalog zur Dauerausstellung des Jüdischen Museums Frankfurt*. Ed. Fritz Backhaus, Raphael Gross, Sabine Kößling, Mirjam Wenzel. Geschichte, Politik, Kultur, München 2016, 41–61.

10 Pieper, Katrin. "Resonanzräume: Das Museum im Forschungsfeld Erinnerungskultur", in: *Baur*, Anm. 1, 187–212, 200.

11 Kirchberg, (See note 4) p. 261.

a space that is not defined by Jewish tradition or a particular Jewish audience, but constitute an arena of discourse about ‘Jewish questions’ conducted by Jews and non-Jews alike, a discourse that constitutes the ‘Diaspora’.”¹² This is true on various levels. 1. Jewish museums are a relatively new type of museum. The establishment of Jewish museums is a history of differentiation. With the establishment of Jewish museums, Jewish history and culture were relocated to a different space and to a different context than ‘the society as a whole’. I will leave open the question of whether this was a positive or a negative process, or whether this will bring more positive or more negative results. 2. It is, in this respect, absolutely correct to see the Jewish museum generally – not as a specific museum – as a “public stage that helps to teach social competences”¹³ in the area of the genuine contents of a Jewish museum. However, there would have to be a further discussion about these genuine contents, or the so-called “key competences”, of Jewish museums. 3. This idea is correct, because Jewish museums function as generators of meaning, probably more so than any other type of museum. “This is mainly about what is happening with and in the places and what impact this has on cultural memory.”¹⁴ Therefore, Jewish museums also generate new memories, as well as dynamically transform historical and cultural memory. 4. This idea is correct, in so far as far as Jewish museums allow interaction with the ‘other’ or the ‘others’. Jewish museums increasingly rely more on the other ‘other’ than the Jewish ‘other’. Jewish history and experience serve Jewish museums more and more as a template for other kinds of history of minorities and their experience. Katrin Pieper stated positively: “The Jewish Museum Munich and the permanent exhibition in the Jewish Museum Hohenems, which also opened in 2007, present questions of identity and integration as the main feature of the exhibition. It links the Jewish migration experience with contemporary political and historical issues.”¹⁵ These topics are also covered in the Jewish museums in Berlin, Paris and Frankfurt – and I apologize to all those I have not mentioned here.

The question arises whether the positioning of the Jewish museum as an ideal “Jewish space” can actually be concluded. I would like to ask about the extent to which Jewish museums really are Jewish spaces if they do not have any connection to Jewish communities? And I beg you not

¹² Loewy, Hanno. "Diasporic Home or Homelessness: The Museum and the Circle of Lost and Found" in: *German Historical Institute London Bulletin* 34/1 (May 2012), p. 40–55, here p. 44.

¹³ Kirchberg, (See note 7) p. 239.

¹⁴ Pieper, (See note 3) p. 201.

¹⁵ Pieper, Katrin. "Zeitgeschichte von und in Jüdischen Museen. Kontexte – Funktionen – Möglichkeiten". <<http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/site/40208760/default.aspx#pgfld-1036428a>>

to misunderstand – I am not advocating a community museum here. Can the museums be Jewish spaces if there is no genuinely Jewish-theological or philosophical content in them that would go beyond the representation of more or less formal religious practice?

A synagogue is a Jewish space. A sukkah is a Jewish space. An eruv is a Jewish space. Of course, the traditional Jewish “shul” is a Jewish space. Learning is traditionally a form or a facet of Jewish existence. In this respect, it could be argued that all spaces where Jewish themes are taught and learned in the form of temporary or long-term units are a form of Jewish space. Examples include the European Summer University for Jewish Studies in Hohenems or the Academy of the Jewish Museum Berlin, which invites people “to research, debate and exchange views about the Jewish past and present, as well as about social diversity”.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I would like to ask whether a public secular place can actually be a Jewish space, and whether it should be a Jewish space? And, if we agreed that the Jewish museum should be a Jewish space, what would we have to do in order to turn it into one?

Kurt Schubert provided an answer to this many, many years ago, long before the summer universities and academies of recent years were founded – I do not want to diminish their merits, since I enthusiastically participate in many of them – when he brought the annual study conference in Eisenstadt to life that was dealing with specific Jewish historical or cultural-historical themes. He was the first one to create a firm, cyclically recurring framework for an academic exchange on socially relevant Jewish themes. And all this in Eisenstadt, around the corner from “his” museum. And here I come back to the fact that he did not just want to enlighten and teach; he wanted to offer a space for students and lecturers, for Jews and non-Jews – a place for everyone. Thus, the conference always took place on the Shabbat, and there was always a minyan in the synagogue of the Wertheimer house. Even if the museum and the conference were strictly devoted to science, Kurt Schubert declared this a “Jewish space” once a year.

16 <<http://www.jmberlin.de/main/DE/03b-Akademie/00-akademie.php>>

The Kurt and Ursula Schubert Archive at the University of Vienna

Sarah Hönigschnabel¹

The academic inheritance of the Schubert couple covered four boxes of material. In 2014, Professor Gerhard Langer from the Jewish Studies Institute in Vienna and the couple's daughter, Eva Schubert, developed the idea to classify the remaining texts with the purpose of making them available online for the interested public. I joined the project as an assistant, and together we started to take a closer look at the remaining material. The material was already pre-sorted by Dr. Bernhard Dolna after the death of Kurt Schubert.

The majority of the texts were keyword and material collections. Through their academic career, which lasted almost half a century, both Kurt and Ursula Schubert left many notes, to which they could come back for their different projects. In many cases, the notes can be identified with a lecture, seminar or article. On some occasions, the original purpose of the text got lost or could not be determined. Concerning lectures which were not held for an academic audience, at times a date or place was preserved, but no further identification was available. Although it was interesting to examine their reading lists and to trace their manner of analysing, the more important part of the material was made up by their lecture notes. For Kurt Schubert, we were able to detect a couple of notes which held great importance for the history of Jewish Studies in Vienna.

For example, "The History of Austrian Judaism"² was taught by Professor Schubert from the winter semester 1971–1972 until the year 2007 over a four-semester cycle. It covered the period from the first known medieval sources of Jewish settlements to contemporary history and the reestablishment of the Jewish community after the Second World War. In addition to a comprehensive overview, Professor Schubert placed personal emphasis on certain aspects, such as anti-Semitism in the Catholic Church or the Vienna Gesera (the persecution of Jews in Vienna in 1421). For some topics, Professor Schu-

1 I would like to thank Louise Hecht for her valuable comments and suggestions.

2 <<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:426683>>

bert gave many references in literature and also marked his sources in the manuscript of the lecture. Furthermore, the attachments and the references which were used in the lectures are enclosed with the notes and therefore allow us to gain a closer look into the working methods of the academic teaching of Kurt Schubert. Despite the span of the time, his analysis of the sources is exact and enabled his listeners to gain an insight into the historical developments of Austrian Jewish history. Professor Schubert was thus the first person to lecture about Austrian Judaism since the National Socialist period in Austria. For many listeners, his lectures were the first contact with Jewish history; he thereby set the standard for further work in this field at Austrian universities. Therefore, the lecture notes serve as a historical source for the history of science at the Institute of Jewish Studies.

Based on his lectures, Kurt Schubert also began writing a book on Jewish identity and Jewish history. Unfortunately, he passed away in 2007 and could therefore not finish “Jewish Identity from the Babylonian Exile until the Present. Jewish History and Jewish Identity”. However, he did leave behind the first six completed chapters³ of the originally planned fourteen along with the notes⁴ for the entire book. We were also able to provide those parts of the book on Phaidra. Starting with Antiquity, the work would have also dealt with the Middle Ages and Jewish art. Thankfully, we can also provide the articles which served as key references. The book project serves as an excellent example for the research connection between Kurt and Ursula Schubert. The chapter concerning Jewish art was influenced by Ursula Schubert’s research, and her articles serve as the main reference source. This is just one example of their close working relationship, which is also visible throughout the entire collection of material.⁵ The last chapter of the book would have addressed the issue of Jewish identity in the period after the Second World War and the Shoah. Written before his death, and therefore accessible to readers, are the chapters dealing with Jewish identity in Antiquity. Professor Kurt Schubert examines the rise of monotheism in Judaism and discusses various passages of the Tanach under this aspect. In the subsequent chapters, his observations stretch from the Hellenistic period to the first century after Christ.

We found dozens of lecture and course notes concerning Kurt Schubert. A part of his work that might be less known were his lectures for non-academic audiences. These lectures were mostly held at adult education centres. Some of these lectures were held at Christian institutions and therefore often

3 <<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:438718>>

4 <<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:438891>>

5 Furthermore, Kurt Schuber refers to their working connection in Schubert, Kurt: *Erlebte Geschichte* [Zur Erinnerung an Kurt Schubert, 4. März.1923 – 4. Februar 2007]. Wien, 2007 p. 31f.

focussed on Jewish-Christian dialogue. In the collection, we could find a couple of these lectures, which were preserved in keyword notes, and their number shows that Kurt Schubert held many of these lectures on various occasions mostly in Austria. The Kurt Schubert collection is, therefore, an indication of Schubert's life goal to immunise against Anti-Semitism with education.⁶ He did not limit his actions to the University (as the example of the lecture on the History of Austrian Judaism showed before), and he expanded his work to a general audience.⁷

In his speech on the 60th anniversary of the Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Vienna, Kurt Schubert describes that his first actions in 1945 were to develop the basis for the fight against Anti-Semitism. Focusing on the teaching of the Hebrew language in the early years, together with his students, he also worked on the mediation of cultural history. In some cases, Kurt Schubert tried to examine both Christian and Jewish questions to explain Jewish religion to a Christian audience.⁸ Unfortunately, the inheritance does not contain lecture material from the earliest days of Kurt Schubert's teaching. Nevertheless, a great part of the material deals with Jewish-Christian dialogue and Anti-Semitism. A couple of lectures examine the life and teachings of Jesus; nevertheless, Kurt Schubert always focused on the relationship to Judaism, even when teaching about Christian topics.

Another point which was both mentioned in Kurt Schubert's speech and is visible through the archive is the variety of topics Kurt Schubert dealt with in his lectures and articles. A couple of lectures and seminars cover several periods and various topics. His teaching spanned from Antiquity to contemporary history, or in his own words, his special field was "from King David to David Ben-Gurion".⁹

The material of Ursula Schubert made up a quarter of the texts. She also left many articles, lecture and material notes. Like her husband, she held various lectures for academic and non-academic audiences. Furthermore, Ursula Schubert wrote a material collection focusing on Medieval Jewish art; this was the foundation for some of her lectures, which she held at the Institute of Jewish Studies, and for her book projects.¹⁰ The material collection includes

6 Schubert, Kurt: *Die Geschichte des österreichischen Judentums*. Wien, 2008. p. 13.

7 Schubert, Kurt: *Die Geschichte des österreichischen Judentums*. Wien, 2008. p. 16.

8 Schubert, Kurt: "Vortrag: 60 Jahre Judaistik in Wien. Rückblick und Ausblick". Seite 3f. <<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:471777>>

9 Schubert, Kurt: "Vortrag: 60 Jahre Judaistik in Wien. Rückblick und Ausblick". Seite 6. <<http://phaidra.univie.ac.at/o:471777>>

10 Mainly for one of her chief works: Schubert, Ursula: *Jüdische Buchmalerei*. Graz, 1992.

a variety of sources as well as notes by Kurt Schubert, which he likely added after her death.

After reading through everything, I began scanning all of the material and decided upon which parts should be uploaded to a public database. We soon settled on Phaidra, the long-term archiving platform of the Viennese University. The database creates user-friendly e-books and provides worldwide access. The material was arranged in collections and therefore allows for the provision of cross references. Professor Katrin Kogman-Appel provided abstracts for the material by Ursula Schubert. She did an excellent analysis, provided many references, and marked the corresponding pictures which were mentioned by Ursula Schubert in her texts. In a further step we contacted the Centre of Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which possesses a large number of connected pictorial material. Co-operation was set up to link the art with the text, so that the idea of the original presentation (which came along with slides) was made visible to the user. Dr. Vladimir Levin and Michal Sternthal searched through their material to match up the required pictures.

For the material concerning Kurt Schubert, together with the help of Dr. Bernhard Dolna, I wrote abstracts for every text to show the historical context of the material. Furthermore, I uploaded the material to Phaidra. Even though most of the texts are in German, we also decided to provide English abstracts. This allows non-German-speaking readers to gain an insight into the material. Dr. Joan Avery served as a translator for all of the abstracts.

After almost three years of work, the Kurt and Ursula Schubert Archive provides more than 300 entries concerning their academic legacy. Furthermore, the database includes various personal pictures of the couple selected by their daughter, Eva Schubert. Three presentations were held, one each at the University of Vienna, at the Palacký University in Olomouc and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They served as a memorial to Kurt and Ursula Schubert, and therefore the talks and pictures held and taken at these presentations were also added to the archive. Throughout their lifelong work, both received various honours, and the collection also includes a selection of certificates. The Kurt Schubert Gedächtnispreis was also documented with pictures and inventions in the collection. Established in 2010, the prize is granted every second year and mainly decorates individuals involved in projects of interreligious dialogue. Additionally, the Institute of Jewish Studies at Palacký University in Olomouc, named after Kurt and Ursula Schubert, is represented in the archive by its annual reports, documents and pictures of its team.

As the final task, a website was set up by the University of Vienna to provide a centre for information and projects concerning Kurt and Ursula

Schubert. Furthermore, it will link all institutions involved in the projects and the archive. It also lists all the institutions connected to the couple, e.g. the Jewish Museum Eisenstadt or the Austrian Catholic Bibelwerk. The website also includes the curricula vitae for Kurt and Ursula Schubert. Kurt Schubert's life has already been examined in the past. His biographical essay "Erlebte Geschichte" serves as a great source concerning his life. Additionally, a more elaborate work by Dr. Ursula Mindler-Steiner, entitled "Erlebte Geschichte. Erinnerungen an Kurt Schubert", will soon be published. For Ursula Schubert, it was previously difficult to find any information. There was barely any biographical information on her, and whatever was available was always connected to her husband's work and life. This gap has been partly filled by her curriculum vitae and a first attempt at a publication list on the website. Furthermore, the website will contain access to the Kurt and Ursula Collection in Phaidra and therefore allow the user to search and read through the material of the archive.

At this point, I would like to thank all those involved in the project who helped to create the archive and therefore preserve the academic legacy of Kurt and Ursula Schubert. Another aim of the archive was to present the working methods of Jewish Studies from the 1950s until the death of Kurt Schubert. Access to the working archive of this couple might allow for further research on the history of science.

The Institute for Jewish Studies in Vienna – From its Beginnings to The Present

Gerhard Langer

Jewish Studies are closely linked to the so-called “Wissenschaft des Judentums” in the 19th century, which couldn’t gain a foothold on academic grounds. Institutions like the Collegio Rabbinico in Padua, the Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau and the Higher Institute for Jewish Studies in Berlin were, first and foremost, institutions dedicated to the education of rabbis and cantors, though the institute in Berlin was also open to non-Jews.

Phase one: a mission against anti-Semitism

The Institute for Jewish Studies in Vienna is closely intertwined with the name of Kurt Schubert, who not only played a part in reestablishing the University of Vienna after WWII, but was also committed to academic Jewish Studies after the Shoah. Schubert studied old Semitic Philology and Oriental Classical Studies and taught Hebrew at the Department of Oriental Studies. He explained his commitment as a result of his Austrian-Catholic attitude and a deep solidarity with Judaism. The establishment of this Institute must be seen in the light of encounters with anti-Semitism and the Shoah.

Schubert was convinced that a deep knowledge of the sources of Judaism would be a good way of fighting anti-Semitism. From its beginnings, the Institute for Jewish Studies has been an initiative that represented a political stand, beyond the purely academic field, a position against anti-Semitism and National Socialism. Schubert’s strong rooting in the Catholic tradition contributed to the strong bond between Judaism and Christianity as the basis for the conception of the Institute. Reference to the sources was closely tied to the Hebrew language, which Schubert acquired in a camp for displaced persons on Alserbachstraße in the 9th Viennese district, while at the same time listening to the eyewitness accounts of the survivors. From there, not only students, but also an important colleague, the engineer Leon Slutzky, who

died in 2013 at the age of 93, were recruited for teaching Modern Hebrew at the Institute. Schubert's professional formation in Oriental languages/studies, his interest in a Jewish-Christian dialogue, the reference to the Hebrew language and the sources of Judaism, esp. Talmud and Midrash, shaped the Institute in its beginnings. The study of sources of the corpus of the Dead Sea scrolls – back then on everyone's lips – led to an intense engagement with this new material, based on a comparison with other Jewish sources of that time, as well as with the New Testament. Unlike Biblical Studies at the Theological Faculty and their focus on the historical-critical and literary-critical methods, the Institute for Jewish Studies concentrated more on the religious-historical comparison. In short, Jewish sources shouldn't be seen or used in a Christian light, but rather "have their own voice".

Schubert also turned his attention to philosophy and mystics, and in 1955, he published one of his major books: "Die Religion des nachbiblischen Judentums" (Religion of Post-Biblical Judaism).¹

His dealing with Jewish "Theology" and Jewish history was coined by his political interest in participating in contemporary historical debates and in a redefined post-war Jewish-Christian dialogue.

A gifted networker, he tried to get in contact with as many people as possible from different political backgrounds, with anti-Fascism being their common denominator.

Schubert was very fond of Zionism and the idea of creating a new Jewish homeland in Israel, and he even held lectures in the country in 1949. He also brought up the issue of the conditions of different Jewish identities in the Diaspora after the Shoah. He wrote down his experiences in the book: "Israel, Staat der Hoffnung" (Israel, State of Hope)² in 1957.

His wife, Ursula Schubert, an art historian, focused on studying Jewish iconography³, also as a source of Christian iconography, which added to the academic scope of the Institute. This resulted in a large image collection of Jewish book art, kept at the Center of Jewish Art at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. For their work in the field of image art, the couple received an honorary doctorate of Theology from the Freiburg University in Switzerland.

In 1959, Schubert received an associate professorship for Jewish Studies at the Department of Oriental Studies. However, it took until 1966 for a chair and the Institute for Jewish Studies to be established, which was groundbreaking

1 Schubert, Kurt. *Die Religion des nachbiblischen Judentums Religion of Post-Biblical Judaism*. Wien – Freiburg: Herder.

2 Schubert, Kurt. *Israel, Staat der Hoffnung*. Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag.

3 To quote only one article: "Der politische Primatanspruch des Papstes dargestellt am Triumphbogen von Santa Maria Maggiore in Rom." in *Kairos*. 13 (1971): 194–226.

for Jewish Studies in Europe. The Institute in Cologne was also co-founded by Schubert. Johann Maier, one of his students and a former assistant at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Vienna, was offered a chair in Cologne. Clemens Thoma, an assistant to Schubert, founded the Institute of Jewish-Christian Research at Lucerne University.

Berlin already had its first Institute for Jewish Studies in 1963, but its chair-holder, Jacob Taubes, an important scholar, described himself “as a philosopher and an avid and critical companion of the spiritual life in Berlin and Germany... rather than a Judaic scholar in a narrower sense”.⁴ Taubes left for the Institute of Philosophy, and in 1964/65, Johann Maier took over the chair as “Diätendozent”, succeeded by Marianne Awerbuch, while Taubes was still active at the Institute of Philosophy.

The promotion of young scholars was an important aspect at that time, and Schubert supported scholars like Brigitte Gregor (Stemberger)⁵, Fritz Werner⁶, one of the most important Hebraists of our time, Ferdinand Dexinger⁷, whose expertise in the research field of the Samaritans, amongst others, are worth mentioning. Others include Nikolaus Vielmetti⁸, an expert on (Italian) Jewish historiography, and Jacob Allerhand⁹ from Berlin, who was asked by Schubert to join him in Vienna, where he later taught Eastern European history and culture as well as Yiddish. The request for a professorship of Yiddish language and culture as a “memorial” to Allerhand, who died in 2006, is welcomed by the University of Vienna. Amongst the scholars promoted are also the logician Klaus Dethloff¹⁰ and the religious philosopher Fritz Wolfram, who later in life became diocesan secretary of the Katholischer AkademikerInnenverband.

4 Schäfer, Peter and Klaus Hermann. "Judaistik an der Freien Universität Berlin." in *Religionswissenschaft, Judaistik, Islamwissenschaft und Neuere Philologien an der Freien Universität Berlin*. Ed. by Karol Kubicki and Siegwald Lönnendonker (Beiträge zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Freien Universität Berlin 5). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012. 53–74, 62.

5 E.g. "Der Traum in der Rabbinischen Literatur." in *Kairos*. 18 (1976): 1–42.

6 E.g. "Die introflexive Wortbildung im Hebräischen." in *Folia Linguistica*. 16 (1982) 263–296; *Modernhebräischer Mindestwortschatz / Moderner hebräischer Mindestwortschatz*. Wien: Hueber, 1979, 1982, 1998.

7 E.g. *Der Glaube der Juden* (Grundwissen Religion = Topos plus Taschenbücher 474). Limburg-Kevelaer: Lahn, 2003; *Die Samaritaner* (Wege der Forschung 604). Ed. by Pummer Reinhard. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992.

8 E.g. ed. *Das österreichische Judentum: Voraussetzungen und Geschichte*. München: Jugend und Volk, 1974.

9 E.g. *Das Judentum in der Aufklärung*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980; *Jiddisch. Ein Lehr- und Lesebuch*. Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag, 2001.

10 E.g. (Edited with Ludwig Nagel and Friedrich Wolfram). *Die Grenze des Menschen ist göttlich. Beiträge zur Religionsphilosophie*. Wien: Parerga, 2006; (et al.) ed. *Humane Existenz. Reflexionen zur Ethik in einer pluralistischen Gesellschaft*. Wien: Parerga, 2007.

After Schubert's retirement in 1994, Günter Stemberger¹¹, one of the most distinguished experts on Rabbinic Judaism worldwide and who has been working at the Institute since 1972, became his successor. Schubert continued to lecture until his death on April the 2nd 2007.

Schubert's strong friendship with historian Erika Weinzierl, dating back to his youth, and Hans Tuppy, biochemist and later Minister of Science, was intertwined with his commitment to a reevaluation and a scientific revision of Judeo-Christian relations. Schubert founded the Austrian-Israeli Cultural Society, which existed between 1949 and 1953 in Innsbruck and Vienna, and he pushed for Christian-Jewish dialogue in adult education centers and Catholic training institutes. From 1957, he was president of the Katholischer AkademikerInnenverband (a Catholic corporation for academics) and of the Austrian Catholic Bible Society. The establishment of the Coordinating Committee for Christian-Jewish Cooperation was based upon his initiative.

The Institute was first located at Ferstelgasse 6 near the Votive-church in a private flat, where students and lecturers would study and teach in a rather informal atmosphere, and in 1998, it moved to the University Campus of the former General Hospital. A former student, now a renowned historian, in a private conversation, recalls this period in the 1980s as an encounter with "authentic novel teaching figures with a high level of knowledge" and points out that "there, an informal imparting of Jewish culture with an appropriate sensitization for the Shoah took place, at a time when the public Austria maintained its silence".

According to various students of that time, the intense language training and the broad overview of Jewish history and culture that served as an excellent basis for in-depth studies were also worth noting.

The capital of the Austrian province of Burgenland, Eisenstadt, served as an important reference point of the Institute. There, the Austrian chancellor Fritz Sinowatz, a former provincial parliamentarian, supported the establishment of a society with the objective of planning a Jewish museum in the former Wertheimer house upon the initiative of Kurt Schubert. It was opened in 1982 and housed the exhibition "1000 Years of Austrian Jewry" the same year.

Once a year, on the Christian holiday of Ascension or Corpus Christi, a study conference would take place in Eisenstadt, first organized by the Coordinating Committee for Christian-Jewish Cooperation, later by the Jewish Museum. This and other festivities, such as the legendary *Weihnukka*¹² parties, would serve as an opportunity for an exchange between students and

¹¹ See his long bibliography on the website of the Institute: <<http://www.univie.ac.at/Judaistik/>>.

¹² Chrismukkah, a merging of Christmas (in German "Weihnachten") and Chanukkah.

lecturers in a relaxed atmosphere. Exams were conducted even on the way to the Heurigen¹³ in Gumpoldskirchen, which shows that the common “mission” also included celebrating together.

In the final years of his life, Kurt Schubert supported the establishment of the Center for Jewish Studies in Olomouc, Czech Republic, in 2004, which was named after him. This institute, which also offers a Master’s program, and since 2013 also a Bachelor’s program, teaches Jewish history in general and, in particular, in Moravia.

This first phase after its establishment until the 1980s was shaped by a strong awareness of the importance of Jewish Studies for a commemorative culture in Austria against anti-Semitism. There was also a strong desire to contribute, not only scientifically but also politically, to a renewed awareness of the Austrian public through knowledge of Jewish sources.

Wanting to be “more” or “different” than other “normal” departments also challenged criticism by students, who found fault in the lack of methodical pervasion in certain fields or in the lack of source criticism. It also entails big differences in content and impartation and some differences of opinion amongst colleagues with distinctive personalities, which is not uncommon in academic disciplines.

The Austrian public reached out to in phase one was mainly Catholic. The Second Vatican Council and its declaration *Nostra aetate*¹⁴ ushered in a new approach to Judaism.

The Institute continued its involvement in a Christian-Jewish dialogue over the years. On October 29 in 1998, Cardinal Schönborn unveiled a plaque on Judenplatz 6 in the first district of Vienna bearing a text substantially influenced by Kurt Schubert.¹⁵ The text provides a critical account of the contribu-

13 “Heuriger” (German pronunciation: [h]; Austrian dialect pronunciation: Heiriga) is the name given to a tavern in Eastern Austria, where a local winemaker serves his new wine under a special license in alternate months during the growing season” (<<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heuriger>>, 1. 12. 2016).

14 For the English text of this declaration, see: <http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html> (1. 12. 2016).

15 The German text runs as follows: ‚Kiddusch HaSchem‘ heißt ‚Heiligung Gottes‘. Mit diesem Bewusstsein wählten Juden Wiens in der Synagoge hier am Judenplatz – dem Zentrum einer bedeutenden jüdischen Gemeinde – zur Zeit der Verfolgung 1420/21 den Freitod, um einer von ihnen befürchteten Zwangstaufe zu entgehen. Andere, etwa 200, wurden in Erdberg auf einem Scheiterhaufen lebendig verbrannt. Christliche Prediger dieser Zeit verbreiteten abergläubische judenfeindliche Vorstellungen und hetzten somit gegen die Juden und ihren Glauben. So beeinflusst nahmen die Christen in Wien dies widerstandlos hin, billigten es und wurden zu Tätern. Somit war die Auflösung der Wiener Judenstadt 1421 schon ein drohendes Vorzeichen für das, was europaweit in unserem Jahrhundert während der nationalsozialistischen Zwangsherrschaft geschah. Mittelalterliche Päpste wandten sich erfolglos gegen den judenfeindlichen Aberglauben, und einzelne Gläubige kämpften erfolglos gegen den Rassenhass der Nationalsozialisten. Aber es waren derer viel zu wenige. Heute bereut die Christenheit ihre Mitschuld an den Judenverfolgungen und erkennt ihr Versagen.

tion of Christians to the Vienna Gezera, the persecution and murder of Jews in Vienna from 1420–1421, and the Shoah. The last sentence says (translated by Daniela Hanin-Balili from German):

“Today, Christianity admits that it shares part of the blame for the pogrom and understands its failure. The ‘sanctification of God’ for Christians can mean only one thing today: a plea for forgiveness and hope for divine salvation.”

Christian-Jewish dialogue didn’t become less important over the years, but Judaic institutions and initiatives have certainly shifted their emphasis.

Phase two: Judaic Studies vs. Jewish Studies

In the 1980s, Jewish Studies were often regarded as an interdisciplinary initiative and focused mainly on Judaism as a contemporary phenomenon and on the modern period by including oral history. Judaic Studies were also criticized as a philological discipline for putting too much emphasis on the Hebrew language and knowledge of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, while neglecting the time period from the Enlightenment onward.

Students at the Institute in Vienna agreed with this critique. It was the time of the Waldheim affair¹⁶, which increased people’s interest in contemporary historical events.

In its second phase, basically the period after Kurt Schubert, the Institute took up the challenge of treating Judaism more like an interdisciplinary topic outside its four walls and focused upon a linguistic and source-directed approach.

„Heiligung Gottes‘ kann heute für die Christen nur heißen: „Bitte um Vergebung und Hoffnung auf Gottes Heil.“

16 "The Waldheim affair marks a turning point in the Second Republic. In 1986, the former General Secretary to the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, ran as a candidate for the office of the President of the Austrian Federal Republic. The war-past of the former member of the SA-Cavalry Corps and of the National-Socialist Student League became a central theme of political debate in Austria and abroad. Thus, among others, the US daily newspaper, the New York Times, reported on it on the basis of materials supplied by the World Jewish Congress. These documents stemmed from Austria and were in flat contradiction to the official biography of Karl Waldheim. In his biography, he had concealed the fact that as early as March 1943, he had been transferred to Army Group E of the German Army in Saloniki. This unit had taken part in the terrible deportation of the Jewish population... In April 1987, the US Ministry of Justice put Kurt Waldheim on its 'watch-list'. Thus, he was not to be allowed entry into the US as a private individual until his innocence in connection with the charges brought against him was proven. At the request of Waldheim, the government of Austria set up an international commission of historians to scrutinize the charges. In February 1988, they presented their conclusion: Waldheim had known what he denied knowing. He had found himself in 'consultative proximity' to war crimes. He had not, however, been personally involved in any of them... In domestic politics, the Waldheim-affair led to extreme polarization, but it also occasioned a public debate of new proportions on the complicity of Austria in Nazi crimes." (*Station: The Waldheim Affair - Last update: 02/2006*) – <<http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/en/knowledge/stations-a-z/the-waldheim-affair.html>> (1.12. 2016).

In Austria, the Center for Jewish Studies in Graz and the Center for Jewish Cultural History in Salzburg were established (in 2000 and 2004, respectively). They certainly helped to shape, albeit late, the Austrian university landscape.

Both Centers now offer a Master's program (in Graz in collaboration with the University of Heidelberg), focusing on an identity development process in a social and cultural-religious exchange. The Center in Graz emphasizes the time after the Enlightenment, while Salzburg doesn't have this specific focus. There, students must also study Hebrew and Yiddish and are educated in Rabbinic texts.

In 2008, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Jüdische Studien in Österreich* (AGJÖ) was founded, an informal union of academic and non-academic institutions, that deal with research, publication and teaching of Jewish history and cultures. Amongst its members are the Institute for Jewish Studies in Vienna, the Institute for Jewish History in Austria (INJOEST), the Center for Jewish Cultural History at the University of Salzburg and the Center for Jewish Studies in Graz.

Concerning the justified criticism of Jewish studies not addressing current issues sufficiently, one has to point out the changes that have taken place in this field, while stressing the strength of the specific Judaic approach.

Phase three: Preservation and Development

Since the 1990s, a constant personnel upheaval has been a part of the further development of the Institute, while simultaneously it has been building on the past.

A modern Institute for Jewish Studies cannot forgo the Hebrew language, in this field the second important academic language besides English. The old sources and their linguistic world plays and hermeneutics can only be understood through a deep knowledge of the Hebrew language. Modern sources, of course, include Israeli newspapers and Modern Hebrew literature.

A major point for discussion is whether the language should be used primarily to understand the sources, or if it should be taught rather for its intrinsic value in all its detailed reappraisal and grammatical pervasion. At the moment, one tends to lean towards the former.

The core themes from the beginnings of the Institute are being readopted today, e.g. the methodical interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls within the framework of an international exchange (Armin Lange¹⁷), the controversial

¹⁷ E.g. *Handbuch der Textfunde vom Toten Meer*, vol. 1: Die Handschriften biblischer Bücher von Qumran und den anderen Fundorten. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009; *Biblical Quotations and*

literature of the Middle Ages (Ursula Ragacs¹⁸) and mysticism and Chassidism (Klaus Davidowicz¹⁹). The focus is shifting from Christian-Jewish relations towards the influence of the Christian mindset on Judaism, especially in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, while Rabbinic literature, once reviewed on the highest level and close to the sources by Günter Stemberger, remains one of the focal points as the basis of Judaism (Gerhard Langer²⁰).

Because of the strong focus on the source texts of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and only partly of the modern period, the cooperation with Jewish Studies and its emphasis on the modern age becomes very important in terms of closing gaps, opening up new fields and gaining new insights. An exchange with colleagues is also considered important, since looking at Judaism when disconnected from an in-depth knowledge of Jewish tradition will not lead to satisfying results.

Jewish Studies keep the memory of central elements of Jewish culture alive, which seems to have gotten lost in the course of modernization. Nevertheless, it shows that in most cases, elements have been preserved in a shattered or secularized manner or live on in a different way. Jewish Studies build an important bridge to modern philology by helping one analyze literary documents by or about Jews. German and Yiddish literature plays a prominent role, as well as movies by/about Jews, with their own particular aesthetics, language and form. The "Jüdischer Filmclub" (Jewish Film Club²¹), co-founded and managed by Klaus Davidowicz from the Institute, shows the entire spectrum of films tackling these issues, and there are a variety of lectures dealing with the topics of contemporary Judaism. Obviously, further initiatives are needed and welcomed, such as a planned professorship for Yiddish culture and language, focusing on Yiddish studies of the 20th century.

Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements 5). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011 (together with Matthias Weigold).

- 18 E.g. *Die zweite Talmuddisputation von Paris 1269* (Judentum und Umwelt/Realms of Judaism 71). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001; "Mit Zaum und Zügel muß man ihr Ungestüm bändigen..." (Ps 32,9). *Ein Beitrag zur christlichen Hebraistik und antijüdischen Polemik im Mittelalter* (Judentum und Umwelt/Realms of Judaism 65). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997.
- 19 E.g. *Kulturgeschichte der frühen Neuzeit, von 1500 bis 1800*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014 (with Anton Grabner-Haider and Karl Prenner); *Kulturgeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015 (with Anton Grabner-Haider and Karl Prenner); *Film als Midrasch - Der Golem, Dybbuks und andere kabbalistische Elemente im populären Kino* (Poetics, Exegesis and Narrative 6). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016; "Der Dibbuk: Der ungebetene Gast aus dem Jenseits", in "Let The Wise Listen And Add To Their Learning" (Prov 1:5). Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday (Studia Judaica 90). Ed. Constanza Cordonì and Gerhard Langer. Berlin - Boston: De Gruyter, 2016, 745–756.
- 20 E.g. *Midrasch* (Lehrbuchreihe Jüdische Studien; UTB). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016; *Leviticus Rabbah: Its Structure and Purpose*, in "Let The Wise Listen And Add To Their Learning" (Prov 1:5). Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75th Birthday (Studia Judaica 90). Ed. Constanza Cordonì and Gerhard Langer. Berlin - Boston: de Gruyter, 2016, 345–380.
- 21 <<http://www.juedischer-filmclub.at/>>

Nowadays, it isn't necessary to distinguish between Judaic and Jewish Studies.²² Furthermore, Judaic Studies, seen as part of Jewish Studies in a broader sense, open up other fields of Jewish Studies in their linguistic, religious-cultural and literary depths. Social, political and historical sciences, philosophy, musicology, fine arts and media science, as well as modern philology, also help in understanding the Jewish phenomenon.

Even if Jewish Studies are in a state of interdisciplinary exchange, they have consciously chosen the option of being an institution of its own, a discipline aware of its specific approach to this topic. Jewish Studies are not a loose affiliation of disciplines interested in Judaism, but an institution, offering a BA and an MA program (unique in Austria), its topics clearly structured in epochs (Antiquity, Middle Ages and the Modern Age). This way, each lecturer deals with his/her own field and era, consulting original sources and using a methodologically compatible structure.

Some of the professors of the Institute have a background in Catholic or Protestant theology. On one hand, this is because of Kurt Schubert and his interest in Christian-Jewish dialogue; on the other, it is the result of the history of a country that had lost many of its Jewish academics due to National Socialism. This sometimes raises the question of a stronger Jewish presence at the Institute, but Jewish Studies mustn't be seen as a theological institution and should be open to all students and scholars regardless of their religious background, as long as they aren't declared anti-Semites, something which is utterly unacceptable to the Institute.

Jewish studies also need to protect themselves from usurpation by other disciplines, such as Catholic theology, which, of course, has a theological and denominational approach to Judaism.

Europe cannot be understood without understanding the Christian religion and culture, which also influenced Judaism and vice versa, not only because Christianity has its roots in Judaism and played an important role in the protection and/or destruction of Jewish existence. In the last few years, some research has been done on the reception of Christian elements in Jewish tradition and on the complex relationship of Jewish and Christian sources, perceptions and cultural appropriations.²³

²² See also Stemberger, Günter. *Einführung in die Judaistik*. München: Beck, 2002.

²³ Cf. the works of Israel Yuval, Peter Schäfer or Daniel Boyarin. See Langer, Gerhard. Notizen zur jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung im Kontext judaistischer Forschung, in *Der „jüdisch-christliche“ Dialog veränderte die Theologie. Ein Paradigmenwechsel aus ExpterInnenansicht*. Ed. Edith Petschnigg and Irmtraud Fischer. Wien – Köln – Weimar: Böhlau, 2016, 29–44.

Islam also has its points of contact with Judaism. An analysis of this relationship should not be made based on the description of the current situation, but should rather take into account the historical-cultural dimension.

Here, the Institute is involved in the interdisciplinary Research Platform “Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society” (RaT).

Jewish Studies are more than a historical discipline; they fight for their autonomy as a cultural science, reaching out to Jewish institutions and communities, but they should be aware of being influenced by them in their freedom of research.

Over the past few years, the Institute has attracted more religious Jews, many of them having graduated from local religious schools, which shows that its variety of academic, analytical and methodical approaches, e.g. to traditional literature, is highly valued, while the views and opinions of atheists and agnostics are appreciated as well.

No subject is free from beliefs and fundamental agreements. The Institute, as an example, rejects any kind of anti-Judaism or anti-Semitism, also with regard to modern anti-Zionism.²⁴ At the same time, the variety of methods and a constant exchange through international academic discourse prevent political or academic usurpation by any of the various groups within and outside the Jewish spectrum. In other words: Jewish Studies examine the cultural, social and historical contexts within Judaism over the centuries, and they are connected to the knowledge of various languages, such as Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, Yiddish and Judeo-Spanish. Jewish Studies focus on sources, while Vienna also takes into account that Judaism sees itself as a culture of texts (including the so-called *oral* tradition).

Günter Stemberger wrote in his introduction to Jewish Studies:

“Jewish Studies are more interested in Judaism itself than in its enemies, in the variety of its historical, cultural and religious development, in its values and achievements. Understanding Jewish tradition from the inside should protect it from any kind of anti-Semitism. It may sound naïve nowadays to still believe in an improvement of the world through knowledge, but Jewish Studies from their basic approach are suited to define an attitude through knowledge.”²⁵

This plea, deeply connected to the tenor of Kurt Schubert, might be a tad too optimistic, but it is certainly correct in its approach.

Jewish studies are not in their early stages of development anymore: academic reforms, especially the introduction of the BA and MA programs

24 Armin Lange and Klaus Davidowicz placed a focus on this issue.

25 Stemberger, Günter. *Einführung in die Judaistik*. Translated by Daniela Hanin-Balili. München: Beck, 2002, 20.

(after the so-called Bologna Process), the abolition of a mandatory minor subject, the association with the faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies and moving from the apartment in Ferstelgasse to the campus of the former General Hospital with its more anonymous structure, all of this creates different preconditions.

A reasonable approach would mean offering not mass studies, but rather exquisite special education, while at the same time staying focused on broader basic education with regard to Judaism.

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Between Jewish Tradition and Early Christian Art

The Via Latina Catacomb in the Work of Kurt and Ursula Schubert

Katrin Kogman-Appel – Bernhard Dolna

The present essay sketches the methods that Kurt and Ursula Schubert employed in their joint studies. At the core of their efforts was the question – much debated at the time – as to whether late antique Jewish figural art was among the pictorial sources of early Christian art. The Schuberts approached this issue primarily through elements of Jewish exegesis found in Christian Old Testament iconography.

Between the 1970s and the 1990s, students and scholars of Jewish art in the United States, Israel, and Europe followed the intellectual and very fruitful collaboration between Kurt Schubert, the founder of the postwar Institute of Jewish Studies at the University of Vienna, and his wife, Ursula. The Schuberts's interest in art history was somewhat unexpected. Both initially had other interests and their studies centered on Semitic languages. Ursula discovered her passion for art history during the 1950s after she had completed a full curriculum in Assyriology and cuneiform, and from the outset, her focus was on early Christian art.¹ In those years, the emergence and development of Christian Old Testament iconography was at the core of art historical research. It was, in fact, the subject of a stormy controversy, one of which the Schuberts were very much aware.²

1 For example, Schubert, Ursula. "Der politische Primatanspruch des Papstes – dargestellt am Triumphbogen von St. Maria Maggiore in Rom." *Kairos*. 13 (1971): 194–226.

2 For a survey of the controversy, see Kogman-Appel, Katrin. "Bible Illustration and the Jewish Tradition." In *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible*. Ed. John W. Williams. University Park and London: Penn State University Press, 1999. 61–96.

After the spectacular 1932 discovery of the synagogue in the ancient city of Dura Europos in Syria and its third-century murals, some scholars suggested that late antique Jewish art should be considered as one of the origins of early Christian Old Testament iconography.³ Most of the paintings on the walls of the synagogue depict events from the Hebrew Bible,⁴ but it soon became apparent that they do not simply reflect the biblical text, but rather rely extensively on late antique exegesis – the Midrash.⁵ A hermeneutic method that played a central role in the late antique period, the Midrash was developed in parallel with the liturgical practice of sermonizing based on the weekly readings from the Bible. Given the third-century date of the Dura synagogue, the Midrash thus evolved as a suitable “*Sitz im Leben*” for its murals. We discuss the evidence of midrashic influence in the imagery of the Dura murals toward the end of this essay.

Midrash comes from the Hebrew root *d-r-sh*, which refers to searching, questioning, investigating, or interpreting the Bible. In rabbinic usage, the word *midrash* is understood as investigating and learning. This learning is pursued primarily in the *Bet ha-Midrash*, the House of Learning, where the Torah and the texts of the oral tradition of the Torah as found in the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the Midrash were and are studied. Transcribing the oral tradition began around the end of the second century with the written text of the Mishnah (study by repetition). The Midrash evolved from the *derashah*, the sermon in the synagogue on the specified weekly Torah portion. The *darshan*, who was responsible for this interpretation of the text, was supposed to direct attention toward its literal meaning, the *peshat*, and to choose the investigative method, the *derash*. It was through the *derash* that the text of the Torah was interpreted, always including and relying on previously acknowledged rabbinical explanations.⁶

- 3 For a report on the excavations, see Kraeling, Carl. *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura Europos* (Final Report vol. 8, pt. 1). New Haven: Yale University Press, London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956; for the suggested relationship to Christian art, see Weitzmann, Kurt. “The Illustration of the Septuagint.” In *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*. Ed. Herbert L. Kessler. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971, 45–75; Weitzmann, Kurt. “The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources on Old Testament Illustration.” In *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination*, 76–95; for a later look at the question, see Weitzmann, Kurt and Herbert L. Kessler. *The Frescoes at the Dura Europos Synagogue and Christian Art*. Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990.
- 4 After the excavations, the paintings were transported to the National Museum in Damascus; for a publication that includes all of the images, see Goodenough, Erwin R. *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (Bollingen Series 37). Vols. 9–11. New York: Bollingen Foundation and Pantheon Books, 1964.
- 5 For an early assessment of the influence of the Midrash on the paintings, see Sukenik, Eliezer L. *The Synagogue of Dura Europos and Its Murals* [in Hebrew]. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1947.
- 6 For a recent introduction into the *Midrash*, see Langer, Gerhard. *Midrash*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016 or Stemberger, Günter. *Einleitung in Talmud in Midrasch*. 9th Rev. Ed., München: C. H. Beck 2011..

Rabbinic Midrash was transmitted orally long before it was ever transcribed. We do not know when the Midrash was first transcribed. In its written form, it covers a period of hundreds of years throughout most of the Middle Ages. Employing the various genres and encompassing many different approaches – legal, exegetic, narrative, and homiletic – it was originally developed owing to the Jewish People’s inseparable association with the Torah and from the relationship between the written and the oral Law. In some ways, it is an elucidation of the Torah, which renders the Bible more understandable.

The Midrash was framed by *halakhah*, which relates to the Law, and *aggadah*, which refers to legend and narration. Or, as Hayim Nahman Bialik described it: “The midrash is *halakhah*, which sets out behavioral norms. It is also *aggadah*, which gives a sense of the meaning of life through its stories. The *halakhah* gives knowledge and the *aggadah* awakens longing. The *halakhah* decrees and the *aggadah* inspires.”⁷ This polarity or contrapuntal structure is the essence of the Midrash, and it embodies the conviction that the Torah includes everything that is written and all that is alluded to, all that is between the words and all that lies beyond them. Even the contradictions in the Torah point to a deeper meaning waiting to be revealed. It is precisely these textual inconsistencies and contradictions that encouraged the Rabbis to question and to attempt to find answers, with the help of the Midrash. It is in this sense that some of the representations in the Via Latina catacomb can be seen as visualized answers to some of the inherent questions within the biblical texts.

Ben Bag Bag said: “Turn it and turn it again, for all is therein. And look into it; and become gray and old therein; neither move thou away thereupon, for than it thou hast no better standard of conduct” (Avot 5:22).⁸ This is precisely the role of the Midrash: it creates networks where one word or sentence of the Torah or a historical account is connected to the whole of the written and oral teaching, thus providing answers while remaining within the context of Jewish tradition and history.

The suggestion that Jewish art may have been among the roots of early Christian art was based on the observation that the imagery in some works of Christian art also reflect midrashic elements, and it was at that juncture that the academic interests of Kurt and Ursula Schubert intersected. Ursula’s background in art history linked to Kurt’s interest in rabbinic literature. One of the sites that played a dominant role in their collaborative efforts was a catacomb discovered in 1955 at a construction site on the Via Latina

7 Hayim Nahman Bialik. *Collected Writings* (in Hebrew). Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965, p. 215.

8 *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Nezikin (Aboth)*. Ed. Isidore Epstein. London: Soncino, 1935. Vol. 4. 76.

in Rome. Although it is an unusually small catacomb, it is packed with a rich series of murals portraying mostly narrative scenes.⁹ Much early Christian art, especially funerary art in the Roman catacombs and on sarcophagi, centered on the Old Testament. Depictions of salvation scenarios, which could be associated with the community's hope for future resurrection, were among the foci of the imagery in funerary contexts. For example, Daniel being saved from the lion's den for the sake of his faith represented the hope of salvation and eventual resurrection of the deceased.

The biblical imagery in the Via Latina catacomb goes beyond that strong focus on salvation and the hopes of resurrection, and is much richer in detail than anything found in any other early Christian catacomb. Of a narrative nature to a degree unknown in earlier Christian art, it is intensely communicative and diverges strongly from the more rudimentary "image sign" compositions in other catacombs, especially those of the third century.¹⁰ Portrayals in early Christian catacombs generally tend to convey only basic elements of biblical events, as if they were meant to offer only a small semiotic sign of any given story that would have been understood by the spectator by virtue of his/her knowledge of the text.

The Via Latina catacomb dates to the fourth century. Stylistic observations have led scholars to suggest that the inner section, including Cubiculum C, for example, belongs to the early fourth century and that the murals in the outer part (Cubiculum O) were added a few decades later.¹¹ The cubicula are particularly rich in scenes from the Hebrew Bible with forty-three images, whereas only eleven depict stories from the New Testament; several others are of mythological, pagan background.

The Via Latina murals became a focus of the Schuberts's work when they discovered that the pictorial language of some of the Old Testament scenes bears extra-biblical elements. They believed these elements to be of Jewish exegetical, midrashic background. Several publications by the Schuberts and their team of researchers discussed these elements, their meanings, and their possible roots in the Midrash.

9 The first publication of the murals was Ferrua, Antonio. *Le pitture della nuovecatacombe di Via Latina*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1960; later Ferrua, Antonio. *The Unknown Catacomb: A Unique Discovery of Early Christian Art*. Glasgow: Geddes and Grosset, 1990, was published with new photographs; for a contextualizing analysis of some of the narrative scenes, see Tronzo, William. *The Via Latina Catacomb: Imitation and Discontinuity in Fourth-Century Roman Painting*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1986.

10 The term "image sign" was coined by André Grabar. *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins* (Bollingen Series 35.10). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

11 For a detailed discussion, Tronzo (See note 9), ch. 3.

The Via Latina catacomb is the site of one of the earliest depictions of Adam and Eve committing the Original Sin ([Img. 1](#)).¹² A similar image was found in the very early Christian church in Dura Europos ([Img. 2](#)), but the synagogue there had no depiction of the Temptation. In the catacomb image, Adam and Eve, covering their nakedness with large leaves, are standing beside the Tree of Knowledge, and a serpent is shown coiled about the trunk of the tree. During the Middle Ages this composition became a standard and virtually hundreds of similar settings can be found in all kinds of media ([Img. 3](#)). The Bible mentions the conversation between Eve and the serpent but does not say anything specific about how the contact between the two came about:

The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame. Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” The woman replied: “... It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said: ‘you shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die’...” When the woman saw that [the fruit of] the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate (Gen. 3:1–6).¹³

However, the late antique Rabbis had something to say about how the connection came about. The relevant texts examine the different wordings of Genesis 2:17 and Genesis 3:3. Whereas the former states: “... but as for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die,” the latter says: “It is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden.”

In the *Midrash ha-Gadol* (early fourteenth century and harking back to much older material), the two verses are put into one context:

When the Holy One gave the prohibition, he said: You may not eat from the tree, otherwise you must die (Gen. 2:17). But even to touch

¹² Schubert, Ursula. *Spätantikes Judentum und frühchristliche Kunst (Studia Judaica Austriaca 2)*. Vienna: Edition Roetzer, 1974; Schubert, Kurt. “Jewish Pictorial Traditions in Early Christian Art.” In *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, Ed. Kurt Schubert and Heinz Schreckenberg. Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum and Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. 189–210; Ri, Su-Min (Andreas). “Mosesmotive in den Fresken der Katakomben der Via Latina im Lichte der Rabbinischen Tradition.” *Kairos* 17 (1975): 57–92; Stemberger, Günter. “Die Patriarchenbilder der Katakomben in der Via Latina im Lichte der jüdischen Tradition.” *Kairos* 16 (1974): 19–78.

¹³ Quotations from the Bible in English are based on *The Jewish Bible: Tanakh – the Holy Scriptures. The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text*. Jerusalem and Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985.



Image 1

Adam and Eve committing the Original Sin; Via Latina Catacomb, Rome; Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, Rome.



Image 2

Baptistry wall painting: Good Shepherd and Adam and Eve; Photo: Yale University Art Gallery, Dura-Europos Collection.

Image 3

Images in Ursula and Kurt Schubert Archives of Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts at the Centre for Jewish Art, Hebrew University, Jerusalem: <http://cja.huji.ac.il/sch/search.php?submitted=submitted&free_text=Adam>

the tree meant dying? For it says: “You should not touch it, so that you will not die” (Gen. 3:3). ... They have made a fence for themselves around the word and made a rule they could not to fulfil: not to touch it. And this is the reason why they failed. When the serpent heard the words, he said: “I will go and touch the tree. It will not harm me.” The serpent approached and touched it. The tree shouted: Villain, do not touch me! The serpent said to Eve: I touched the tree and neither did it harm to me, nor did I die. You also, touch it and you will not die!¹⁴

Another midrash, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, presents similar aggadic material.

The serpent went and said to the woman: Behold, I touched it, but I did not die; thou also mayest touch it, and thou wilt not die. The woman went and touched the tree, and she saw the angel of death coming towards her; she said: Woe is me! I shall now die, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will make another woman and give her to Adam, but behold I will cause him to eat with me; if we shall die, we shall both die, and if we shall live, we shall both live. And she took of the fruits of the tree, and ate thereof, and also gave (of its fruits) to her husband, so that he should eat with her, as it is said, “And she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her” (Gen. 3:6). When Adam had eaten of the fruit of the tree, he saw that he was naked! and his eyes were opened, and his teeth were set on edge. He said to her: What is this that thou hast given me to eat, that my eyes should be opened and my teeth set on edge?¹⁵

The motif of the serpent touching the tree plays a crucial role. With this deception Eve was supposed to become convinced that touching the tree was safe. Moreover, Eve did not want to die alone, as Adam left on his own might find another woman, so she drew him into her misery. Three motives appear in these later midrashim: (1) The extension of the prohibition to eat from the tree to touching it; (2) the serpent touches the tree to deceive Eve; (3) Eve draws Adam into her misery.

All three motifs can be traced to an early-third-century midrash, *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*:

1. The extension of the prohibition “...make a hedge about the Torah. ... What is the hedge which Adam made about his words?” follows the indication

¹⁴ *Midrash Ha-Gadol* [in Hebrew]. Ed. Mordechai Marguliot. Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1972. Vol. 1: *Bereshit* 3. 3–5.

¹⁵ *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 13. Ed. and transl. Gerald Friedlander. New York: Hermon, 1965. 95f.

of the difference in the wording between Genesis 2:17 and Genesis 3:3. It also refers to Adam not only wanting to pass on the prohibition against eating from the tree, but to the fact that he added a further precaution, the prohibition against touching it. Further the midrash asks: "What was the reason that led to Eve's touching the tree? It was the hedge which Adam put around his words."¹⁶

2. The serpent touches the tree:

He (the serpent) said to her (Eve): If it is against touching the tree thou sayest the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us – behold, I shall touch it and not die. Thou, too, if thou touch it, shalt not die! What did the wicked serpent do? He then arose and touched the tree with his hands and feet, and shook it until its fruits fell to the ground.... Furthermore, the serpent said to her: It is against eating of the fruit of the tree thou sayest the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded us, behold I shall eat of it and not die. Thou too, if thou eat of it shalt not die.¹⁷

The idea that the serpent touched the tree to take away the fear of touching it and to cause Eve to eat from it thus predates the paintings in the Via Latina catacomb. The visual motif of the serpent coiled about the tree might illustrate such rabbinic motifs.¹⁸

3. Eve wants to draw Adam into her misery:

She saw the Angel of Death approaching her and said to herself: Perhaps I will have to leave this world. And then another woman instead of me will be created for the first Adam. What shall I do? I will make him to eat with me. When Adam had eaten, he saw that he was naked. His eyes were opened and his teeth were set on edge. He said to Eve: What did you give me to eat that even my teeth have become set on edge? Just as my teeth are set on edge, so shall the teeth of all generations be set on edge.¹⁹

¹⁶ *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* 1. Ed. and transl. Judah Goldin. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955, 8–10.

¹⁷ *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* 1 (see note 16), p. 9.

¹⁸ A further reason why the serpent wanted to deceive Eve: "I (the serpent) will go and kill Adam and marry his wife," *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* 1 (see note 16), p. 10.

¹⁹ *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* 1 (see note 16), p. 11. The translation was slightly altered for clarity.

The Via Latina representation could well apply in this context. Adam seems to be pointing at Eve in a reproachful manner.

Finally, as a visual motif, the image of the serpent coiled around the trunk of the tree was also known from Greco-Roman artistic contexts and appears in mythological imagery. An example in the catacomb itself shows Hercules being sent out to collect golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides. There, the tree was guarded not only by the Hesperides, but by Ladon, a hundred-headed dragon, who appears in artistic renderings as a snake coiled around an apple tree. Hence a Greek artistic motif could have influenced an image in Christian iconography that may have had links to rabbinic exegesis, thus creating an interesting threefold relationship within the arena of late antique cultural interaction.

Another Via Latina image shows the offerings being brought forth by Cain and Abel ([img. 4](#)). Abel the shepherd dressed in a long garment is holding a sheep in his arms, whereas Cain, next to him, clothed in a short tunic indicating lower social status, carries an object that is difficult to identify, perhaps meant to represent a box. The scene appears in the same frame and adjacent to a representation of Adam and Eve wrapped in pelt clothes (Gen. 3:21), laboring after the expulsion. The serpent is hovering in a vertical position between the brothers and their parents. The biblical text does not explain either the juxtaposition with the working parents or the presence of the serpent at the offering:

In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the soil; and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The Lord paid heed to Abel and his offering, but to Cain and his offering he paid no heed. Cain was much distressed.²⁰

Whereas the right-hand image was likely based on Genesis 4:3–4, there is no reference in the biblical text that relates to the left-hand section of the composition showing Adam, Eve, and the serpent.

How can this picture be understood in the light of the rabbinic interpretation, which seems to offer a solution for the link between these two scenes? Several midrashim (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, *Yalqut Shimoni*, and the *Midrash ha-Gadol*) see Abel as the son of Adam and Cain as the son of the serpent.²¹ This would mean that in this image: (1) the left-hand part of the picture shows two fathers, Adam and the serpent, and Eve as the mother of the two sons

²⁰ Genesis 4:1–5.

²¹ *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 21 (see note 15), p. 151; *Yalqut Shimoni*. Ed. Aaron Heiman et al. Jerusalem: Rav Kook Institute, 1973. Vol. 1: *Bereshit*. 119; *Midrash HaGadol* (see note 14), p. 112.



Image 4

Offerings being brought forth by Cain and Abel; Via Latina Catacomb, Rome; Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, Rome.

from different fathers; (2) the right-hand part shows Cain's worthless sacrifice (*p'solet*), as the rabbinical sources refer to it.

The notion of Eve's impregnation by the serpent is found in rabbinic texts from the Tannaitic period (third century). In *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* we read: "What did the evil serpent contemplate at this time? He thought: I shall go and kill Adam and wed his wife."²² The Mishnah's Tractate *Avot* mentions the serpent's intention, and the Babylonian Talmud refers to the consummated sexual intercourse between Eve and the serpent:

Why are the idolaters lustful (*mezohamim*)? Because they did not stand on Mount Sinai. For when the serpent came upon Eve he injected filth (*zohama*) into her [as for] the Israelites who stood at Mount Sinai, their lustfulness (*zohamatan*) departed. The idolaters who

²² *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* 1 (see note 16), p. 10.

did not stand at Mount Sinai, their lustfulness (*zohamatan*) did not depart.²³

The notion of Cain's worthless sacrifice is found in *Midrash Tanhuma* (dated to the fourth century): "Cain and Abel were both forty years old. Cain brought an offering of the fruits of the earth. What are these fruits? Remains of his food? The Rabbis say: It was flax."²⁴ A similar version is found in *Genesis Rabbah* (first half of the fifth century): "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground: of the inferior crops, he being like a bad tenant who eats the first ripe figs but honours the king with the late figs."²⁵

Avot de-Rabbi Nathan notes that the serpent was cursed because he wanted to kill Adam in order to wed Eve, to be king over the whole world, to walk upright, and to eat of all the world's delicacies. As punishment he was cursed from among all the beasts of the field and had to crawl on his stomach and eat dust.²⁶

Taking the rabbinic text as a template for the visualization, one can find in the left-hand scene, which shows Adam, Eve, and the serpent, an illustration of Genesis 4:1–2, that is, a reference to Eve's pregnancies with Cain and Abel by different fathers (Adam and the serpent). It also pictures the three who were punished (Adam and Eve in pelt cloths and the crawling serpent). The right-hand scene depicts the respective sacrifices of the two sons. The imperfect condition of the image does not allow for a clear identification, but it is obvious that an interpretation of the rabbinical text can help toward an understanding of the image.

Several of the Via Latina murals address the Abraham story, among them a composition that visualizes the encounter between Abraham and the messengers of God at the terebinth of Mamre ([Img. 5](#)). The composition is unusual when compared with other early Christian images of that meeting, such as a wall mosaic in the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna (547; [Img. 6](#)). Instead of showing the Patriarch approaching the messengers and bowing down before them, in the Via Latina mural he is seated and raises his hand in conversation with the three men who enter the scene from the right-hand

²³ Epstein, I. (transl.) *Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Moed, Shabbat 146a, Soncino Press, London 1958, 738.

²⁴ *Midrash Tanhuma I*. Ed. and transl. John Townsend. Hoboken: Ktav Publishing, 1989. Vol. 1: *Genesis*, 9.

²⁵ *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis*. Ed. and transl. Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino, 1961. 182.

²⁶ See *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan 1* (See note 15), p. 10.



Image 5

Abraham and the messengers of God at the terebinth of Mamre; Via Latina Catacomb, Rome; Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, Rome.



Image 6

Sacrifice of Isaac (mosaic); Basilica of San Vitale, Ravenna; Photo: Wikimedia, Author: Petar Milošević.

side. A small calf is shown near Abraham. The messenger to the viewer's left is shown slightly taller than the others. In Genesis 18:1–7 we read as follows:

The Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre; he was sitting at the entrance of the tent as the day grew hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, "My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant. Let a little water be brought; bathe your feet and recline under the tree. And let me fetch a morsel of bread that you may refresh yourselves; then go on – seeing that you have come your servant's way." They replied, "Do as you have said." Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Quick, three seahs of choice flour! Knead and make cakes!" Then Abraham ran to the herd, took a calf, tender and choice, and gave it to a servant-boy, who hastened to prepare it.

The image does not show Abraham standing up and bowing down before the men, but rather has him conversing with the Lord's messengers while seated. The Schuberts's analysis suggests that the rabbinic exegesis can offer an explanation. Rabbinic tradition tried to deal with an apparent inconsistency in the biblical text. The first verse mentions the appearance of God Himself ("The Lord appeared to him by the terebinths of Mamre."), whereas the following verses tell of three men standing before Abraham ("Looking up, he saw three men standing near him.").

Further, it is only in the image of the calf at the bottom of the left-hand side that the painting refers to the meal that Abraham prepared according to verses 5–8. The Schuberts contended that these divergences in the image can only be explained by a reference to the rabbinic tradition. The Rabbis posited a connection between the appearance of the three angels at the terebinth of Mamre and Abraham's circumcision, an association that was noted in the *Targum Neophyti*: "Three angels were sent to Father Abraham at the time when he had circumcised the flesh of his foreskin."²⁷ This accounts for the fact that Abraham remained sitting, as he was in pain after the circumcision. A similar tradition is found in the Babylonian Talmud (second half of the third century):

What is meant by the heat of the day? Chama ben Chanina said:
It was the third day from Abraham's circumcision. But the hospitable

²⁷ *Targum Neofiti*. Ed. and transl. Martin McNamara and Martin. Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1992. Vol. 1: *Genesis* 18:1. 103.

Abraham, despite his pains, sent Eliezer, his servant outside to look out for guests. Since Eliezer could not find any guests, Abraham went out and saw the Lord standing at the front door. As the Lord saw that Abraham was sore, he said: You cannot stand. ... Abraham sat down and when he lifted up his eyes he saw three angels standing before him, and when he saw them, he ran to meet them. ... At first they came and they stood over him. But when they saw that he was in pain, they urged him: You have to sit down.²⁸

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer relates to a similar tradition:

Rabban Gamliel, son of Rabbi Jehuda Ha Nasi, says: On the third day after having been circumcised, Abraham was very sore... He went forth and sat down at the entrance of the tent in the heat of the day. The Holy one said to His ministering angels: to visit our father Abraham. ... Come and see the power of circumcision. Before Abraham was circumcised, he fell on his face before me (Gen. 17:17). Now that he is circumcised, he sits and I stand, for it says: And he looked, and, three men stood over against him. (Gen. 18: 2)²⁹

It is not unlikely that the inconsistency in the biblical text caused the Talmudic Rabbis to equate God and the three men (angels); further, perhaps the notion that Abraham remained sitting owing to the pain after in his circumcision influenced the artist who painted this mural.

The Schuberts and their team also discussed another image in the Via Latina catacomb, which shows Jacob's dream of the ladder. Jacob, imaged as extremely tall and shown in a diagonal position, is resting his upper body on a three-part rocky formation. The ladder is standing parallel to the Patriarch's body and two angels, significantly smaller than Jacob, are shown climbing up and down. One of them is looking down and the other up. Genesis 28:10–19 tells first about Jacob taking “from the stones of that place...” upon which to rest his head, while in the morning he is said to have picked up *the* stone: “Early in the morning, Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.”

²⁸ *Babylonian Talmud, Baba Metsia* 86b.

²⁹ *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 29 (see note 15), p. 205.

The Rabbis attempted to settle the discrepancy wherein several stones turned into one. In *Genesis Rabbah* we read:

He took twelve stones of the place (XXVIII, 11): R. Judah said: He took twelve stones, saying: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, has decreed that twelve tribes should spring forth. Now neither Abraham nor Isaac has produced them. If these twelve stones cleave to one another, then I know that I will produce the twelve tribes' ... Rabbi Nehemiah said: He took three stones, saying: The Holy One, blessed be He, united His name with Abraham, Isaac too He united His name. If these three become joined, then I am assured that God's name will be united with me too.³⁰

The relevant mural in the Via Latina catacomb visualizes this rabbinic concept. Jacob's arm is resting on three stones, which are joined to one another so that they appear to be a single unit. The Babylonian Talmud's emphasis that Jacob was a righteous man fits well in this context:

It is written: "And he took from the stones of the place" (Gen. 28: 11). It also says that "he took the stone." Rabbi Hashak said: "all the stones were to be found in one place. And each one said: "the righteous one should lay his head on me. That teaches us that 'all were merged into one.'"³¹

In verse 12 we read: "He (Jacob) had a dream; a ladder was set on the ground, and its top reached to the sky; and angels of God were going up and down on it." The rendering of the angels in the painting with one looking up and the other looking down corresponds to the motif conveyed in *Targum Neophyti* and *Targum Jonathan*: Jacob was accompanied by two angels, who, at the time of the dream, invited their heavenly counterparts to descend in order to see the pious man Jacob, whose portrait is engraved on the Throne of God. In *Targum Jonathan* (Gen. 28:12) we read:

... And behold, the two angels, who had gone to Sodom and who had been banished from their heavenly realm because they had revealed the secrets of the Lord of the world and went about when they were banished until the time that Jacob went forth from his father's house.

³⁰ *Midrash Rabbah* (note 24), p. 623.

³¹ *Babylonian Talmud Hullin* 91b.

Then, as an act of kindness, they accompanied him to Bethel. And on that day they ascended to the heavens on high and said: Come and see Jacob, the pious one, whose image is fixed on the Throne of Glory and whom you have desired to see.³²

Targum Neophyti tells a similar and even more detailed story: “And behold, the angels from before the Lord ascended and descended and observed him.” The appearance of the two angels in the Via Latina catacomb could well suggest that the upper angel is talking to his heavenly colleagues and asking them to descend to look at Jacob in reality, whereas the lower angel, pointing at Jacob, might be saying: this is the one whose image is already engraved on the Throne of the Glory.

The depiction of Jacob’s dream in the Via Latina catacomb ([Img. 7](#)) is in many ways similar to the image in the Dura Europos synagogue ([Img. 8](#)). Here we can see the same diagonal position of both the Patriarch and the ladder and the angels climbing up and down. However, the area where Jacob’s head is supposed to appear resting on a stone is damaged and the details can no longer be discerned. Nevertheless, the parallels in composition led the Schuberts to consider a visual link between the Jewish synagogue and the early Christian catacomb. Interestingly enough, the stone motif as part of the Jacob story seems to have created an iconographic tradition that subsequently appeared occasionally in other works of art. Examples can be seen in a mosaic in the thirteenth-century Cathedral of Monreale in Sicily and on a small ivory relief that is part of the Antependium of Salerno, dated to late-twelfth-century Amalfi ([Img. 9](#) and [10](#)).

One last element in this image is worthy of special attention: Jacob’s enormous size. Genesis 28:13 notes: “And the Lord was standing beside him and He said, ‘I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. The ground on which you are lying I will assign to you and to your offspring.’” The Rabbis asked how it was possible for the spread of land on which Jacob was lying to suffice for a whole people. In the Babylonian Talmud Rabbi Isaac offers the following interpretation: “This teaches us that the Holy One has rolled up the whole of the Land of Israel under our father Jacob, to indicate to him that it would be very easily conquered by his descendants.”³³

The last image we discuss here shows the priest Phinehas killing the Israelite Zimri, who had committed the sin of fornication with a Midianite woman. The biblical text reads as follows:

³² *Targum Jonathan*. Ed. and transl. Michael Maher. Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1992. *Genesis*. 99f.

³³ *Babylonian Talmud*, *Hullin* 91b.



Image 7

Jacob's ladder / Jacob's dream at Bethel; Via Latina Catacomb, Rome; Photo: Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, Rome.



Image 8

Jacob's Dream; Dura Europos Synagogue (wall painting), Dura Europos/Damascus; Photo: Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



Image 9

Jacob's Dream (mosaic); Cathedral of Monreale; Photo: HEN-Magonza on Flickr & <<http://www.christianiconography.info/sicily/genesisMonreale.html>>



Image 10

Antependium of Salerno; Cathedral of Salerno; Photo: German Institute Florence.

Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman over to his companions, in the sight of Moses and of the whole Israelite community who were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. When Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he left the assembly and, taking a spear in his hand, he followed the Israelite into the chamber and stabbed both of them, the Israelite and the woman, through the belly. Then the plague against the Israelites was checked. Those who died of the plague numbered twenty-four thousand. (Num. 25:1–9)

In the image Phinehas is standing tall and instead of stabbing the pair on the ground, he is lifting his spear on which he has impaled the two sinners. This origin of this iconography might also be rooted in the Midrash.

Phinehas had just caught Zimri, from the tribe of Simon, and Cozbi, a woman from Midian, engaging in forbidden intercourse. The spear, which owing to damage to the image is barely recognizable as such, seems to be resting on Phinehas's left shoulder. The couple appears fixed in place on the upper section of the spear, but they are not bleeding.

This image corresponds to a rabbinic tradition about Phinehas's miraculous spear. In *Numeri Rabba* the miracles are enumerated: "He pierced them both as one lay on the top of the other.... As he had been jealous in the cause of the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, He [God] wrought twelve miracles for him [Phinehas]." In the painting some of these miracles are visualized clearly: (1) God put strength into Phinehas's arm in order that he might lift them both up; (2) He put strength into the wood of the spear to hold them both; (3) they did not slide down the weapon, but remained in place; (4) they did not shed any blood, this in order that Phinehas might not be defiled; (5) the Holy One preserved their lives, so that they might not die and Phinehas be defiled.³⁴ The last two miracles are significant, because in the rabbinic tradition priests become defiled by blood and corpses, so Phinehas was thus protected by a miracle.

In conclusion: the phenomenon of midrashic motifs in early Christian art was analyzed by the Schuberts and their research team as a reflection of their dependence on Jewish visual models. However, in the almost complete absence of Jewish works of art prior to the fourth century, the proposed theory remains hypothetical. The only firm support for such a supposition comes from the murals in the Dura Europos synagogue, which testify to the existence of a late antique Jewish art. However, as the synagogue murals were

³⁴ *Midrash Rabbah* (note 24), *Numeri* 20:25. 824–25.

in view for only eleven years before the synagogue was overrun by Sassanian forces in 256 and only rediscovered under the rubble in 1932, they could not have had a direct influence on any later works of art. The peripheral location of Dura Europos at the edge of the Roman Empire made matters yet more difficult. The recension theory developed by Kurt Weitzmann in the 1940s, which put late antique and medieval works of art in a network of complex model-copy relationships, provides a solution. It was assumed that the Dura murals were based on earlier Jewish models, most likely illuminated manuscripts produced in one of the Greek metropolises, perhaps Antioch. By this reasoning, mosaics dating from the fourth to the sixth century that have been discovered since the 1930s were expected to add further evidence.

A brief look at one example from the Dura synagogue can shed light on the complexity of Weitzmann's theory. On the southern wall in the lowest register we find two paintings visualizing the encounter between Elijah and the worshippers of Ba'al on Mount Carmel, a story told in the Book of Kings: Elijah and the worshippers of Ba'al decide to test their beliefs. Both would build an altar, prepare a bull for sacrifice, put it on the altar, and pray for God and Ba'al, respectively, to send down fire to consume the sacrifice. The images in vivid color show that Elijah was not disappointed, whereas the altar of the worshippers of Ba'al remained cold.³⁵ But the image tells us more. It shows a hollow in the altar, the small figure of a man, and a large snake attacking him. A nonprofessional hand added a scratched inscription "Hiel," which is not legible in photographs. Since the image is in a lower register, scholars assumed that this was done by a visitor who was familiar with the relevant midrash. That tale tells that the worshippers of Ba'al built the altar with a hollow and charged a man named Hiel to sneak into the hollow and light the fire once they started to pray. The moment that Hiel was about to do so, God sent a snake to bite and kill him.

Earlier scholarship on these murals emphasized that the Midrash was the perfect *Sitz im Leben* for the Dura Europos synagogue. The community, the patrons, and the artists would have had access to homiletic collections of the Midrash genre. However, the Hiel story was not an easy one to tackle, as all the relevant textual evidence dates from the Middle Ages. The closest version regarding the Hiel pictorial appears in the fourteenth-century *Yalqut Shimoni*, an early fourteenth-century compilation, probably from Frankfurt.³⁶ Indeed, the *Yalqut* is famous for its many citations of late antique Midrash; hence one can assume that there was an earlier version, now lost, that the patrons and

35 1 Kings 18:20ff.

36 Strack, Hermann and Günter Stemberger. *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992. 351.

artists relied on. Avigdor Shinan goes so far as to argue that the visualization of the story at Dura proves exactly that point – that this particular midrash was known as early as in the late antique period.³⁷ Recent scholarship, however, takes into account that written versions of late antique midrashim were not necessarily available around the third century. Thus it is doubtful that these patrons and artists had any text to work with, so the midrashic iconography in Dura Europos might very well have been the outcome of an oral midrashic culture for which we cannot easily date the stories. Indeed, although we can make sense of the Hiel episode with the aid of the medieval midrash, there are other visualizations to decipher, and scholars are struggling with their meaning to this very day. This observation puts an entirely different complexion on the visualized version of this and other stories in terms of the cultural history of the Midrash.

What stands out in the paintings from the Dura Synagogue is their high degree of narrativity, a feature that also played a central role in the Schubert's theory. These paintings do not simply remind us of stories; rather, they tell stories, sometimes in lengthy sequences of individual episodes set into one composition, a technique that enhances the narrativity. One example is the depiction of the Departure from Egypt and the Crossing of the Reed Sea ([img. 11](#)). Other narrative sequences come as individually framed separate images, such as the story of Elijah and the worshippers of Ba'al described above. We have already noted that the paintings in the Via Latina catacomb



Image 11

Departure from Egypt and Crossing of the Reed Sea; Dura Europos Synagogue (wall painting), Dura Europos/Damascus, Syria; Photo: Center for Jewish Art, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

³⁷ Avigdor Shinan. *The World of the Aggadah*. Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1990). p. 83.

are likewise highly narrative, to a much greater degree than other imageries in early Christian funerary art.

Here the Schuberts's collaborative method is very much apparent. Ursula Schubert, the art historian, dealt with the visual language, compared imageries in a broader context, analyzed the narrative approach (in contrast to the "image-signs"), and had the necessary knowledge to make sense of these images within the framework of Old Testament iconography and to point out the various idiosyncrasies. Kurt Schubert, the student of rabbinic texts, was then able to imbue these observations with text-based interpretations in the way we tried to demonstrate here. This approach was born out of a synthesis between an art historical method for analyzing narrative cycles that Kurt Weitzmann developed during the 1940s. Weitzmann approached narrative image cycles in a similar way that philologists considered textual tradition. He assumed that these cycles reach back to a much earlier tradition, developed from model to copy over the centuries, and that each such tradition goes back to an "Ur"-model. Ursula Schubert's suggestion that, owing to their sophisticated narrativity, the imageries in Dura Europos must have been based on an earlier tradition was closely related to Weitzmann's way of discussing image cycles.

This theory should be, and occasionally is, put into a broader context. As we noted at the beginning of this essay, this way of interpreting early Christian art was controversial and the Schuberts were well aware of the debate. A conference hosted in Vienna in 1991 was dedicated to revisiting the whole subject against the background of the prevailing controversy. Among the counterarguments there was one that dealt with the prohibition against making images. Others argued that if there was a Jewish influence on early Christianity it ran via texts rather than images – again because Jewish culture was perceived of as antivisual.³⁸ Both Schuberts wrote and lectured frequently about the biblical prohibition regarding the creation of images and its interpretation in Jewish exegesis: two-dimensional art does not fall under the category of forbidden art, so the prohibition is relevant only for sculptures.

In the last years new voices have been heard. Recent research into medieval imagery suggests that it did not always depend as heavily on texts as had been assumed. As we noted above, the Midrash in evidence on the walls of Dura Europos may well have been based on an oral culture, but there is one important point that links the Schuberts's work with the more recent discourse. Their conception of midrashic imagery in Christian art references a meeting point between the cultures, which is a matter of great interest

38 For a more detailed summary of the arguments, see Kogman-Appel (see note 2).

in recent art historical discourse. The links between Jewish and Christian art – between Dura Europos and the Via Latina catacomb – might not demonstrate a chain of tradition, but they can teach us a great deal about what happens when two different cultures interact. The major question would then be: What do we know about the shared visual language of Judaism and Christianity? The people in these cultures may have had different beliefs, different images of God, and different theologies, but within the Roman Empire they shared a similar visual language. One of the Schuberts's major contributions to the field of art history was a recognition of those shared elements, features that can now be revisited and reinterpreted in the current discourse.

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**„My life is shaped by my roots in Christianity and my love
for Judaism, which always interacted like cogwheels.“**

Kurt Schubert