

# Newsletter

1 2017

## TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS

### “Come, my beloved ...” – Illustrations for the Song of Songs

March 12 was the last day visitors could see this exhibition organized by the Jewish Museum in Prague in cooperation with the Museum of Czech Literature. The exhibition presented the Song of Songs, shedding light on its origin, place in Jewish liturgy, historical publications, and translations into Czech. The primary focus was, however, on the biblical book’s ornamentation, illustrations, and art works it has inspired from the early 20th century up to the present day. “Come, my beloved” was visited by a total of 7 602 people during the five months of its duration.



Illustration by Ephraim Moses Lilien featured in *Die Bücher der Bibel – Die Liederdichtung*, Berlin & Wien 1923. © Jewish Museum in Prague

### Through the Labyrinth of Normalization: The Jewish Community as a Mirror for the Majority Society

The period after the armies of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was called by communist ideologues “normalization.” Under the watchful eye of Soviet military occupation, Czechoslovak society was to return to “normal,” that is, to a rigid ideological socialism with a single political force having an unchallenged monopoly of power and wholly subject to Moscow’s dictates.

True to its anti-Semitic traditions, Soviet propaganda labeled the political

liberalization in Czechoslovakia from 1967 to 1968 a Zionist conspiracy, alluding to the show trials of the 1950s. The Kremlin considered a Zionist anyone with Jewish ancestry or who associated with Jews. Many Czechoslovak communists adopted this formulation, and after an interval of many years, State Security once again began to compile lists of names of those with Jewish heritage for “operational usage” in the fight against Zionism.

Citizens designated by the communist regime as Zionist, no matter if they considered themselves Jewish or not, began to encounter a variety of problems, the reasons for which they were often unaware. Jewish communities, which operated under the direct supervision of state bodies, experienced enormous pressure, as did other religious institutions, and, as was the case with the population at large, their officials were subjected to extensive vetting and purging.

This exhibition presents several chapters in this history, stones picked out from the total mosaic. We believe it will serve as inspiration for a deeper examination of life in the Jewish communities under the political monopoly of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia during the era of late state socialism.

The exhibition, on display until 28 Jan 2018, was curated by the film documentarist Martin Šmok and produced by the Jewish Museum in Prague in cooperation with the Security Services Archive and the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes. An English language exhibition catalogue is available at <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/e-shop-en/exhibition-catalogues/through-the-labyrinth-of-normalization/>

Robert Guttman GALLERY

U Staré školy 3, Prague 1

Open daily, except Saturdays and other Jewish holidays 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.



Tábor 1977. Photo Josef Broum. © Jewish Museum in Prague

# CULTURAL EVENTS AND LECTURES IN PRAGUE

## Gala concert in the Spanish Synagogue

In association with the Prague Jewish Community and the Czech Foundation for Holocaust Victims (NFOH), the Jewish Museum hosted its annual gala concert at the Spanish Synagogue in Prague to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 26 January 2017. The opening speeches were given by Jan Munk (chairman of the Prague Jewish Community) and Leo Pavlát (director of the Jewish Museum in Prague). The concert featured works by Maurice Ravel, Paul Hindemith, Günter Raphael and Gideon Klein as performed by Kateřina Englichová (harp) and Vilém Veverka (hoboe).



On 24 January, the Jewish Museum's Department for Education and Culture launched a new travelling exhibition about Anne Frank titled *Let Me Be Myself – The Life Story of Anne Frank*. Produced by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the exhibition shows the story of Anne Frank from her birth in 1929 up to her death in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945. One third of the exhibition is dedicated to stories of young people today. The exhibition was introduced to the Czech audience by Mr Levien Rouw of the Anne Frank House. The Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was also in attendance.



Anne Frank in 1940, unknown photographer

On 6 February, the Department for Education and Culture hosted the opening of a photography exhibition titled *Scots Jews: Identity, Belonging and the Future* by the well-known photographer Judah Passow. His photographs produce a portrait of a relatively unknown Jewish community at the beginning of the 21st century. The exhibition opening was accompanied by a lecture by the exhibition producer Michael Mail.





A remarkable performance titled *Words Resonate Inside These Walls* was held in the Maisel Synagogue on 8 March. Students of the Přírodní škola grammar school presented a selection of literary texts penned by the prisoners of the Theresienstadt ghetto, accompanied by original music they had composed together with their teachers to mark the tragic anniversary of the night of 8-9 March 1944 when 3,792 Jews from Bohemia and Moravia perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau.



March also marks 80 years since the issue of a Pope Pius XI Encyclical entitled *Mit brennender Sorge* (With Burning Concern) that condemned Nazi doctrines and racism. The Jewish Museum in Prague in co-operation with the Society of Christians and Jews held a debate on 14 March on the attitude of the Roman Curie and the Catholic Church in the then Germany and Czechoslovakia toward nazism, racism and antisemitism. The historians Jaroslav Šebek, Rudolf Vévoda, Miloslav Szabó and Michal Frankl all participated in the debate.



## INVITATION TO THE MAISEL SYNAGOGUE

**Thu 4 May at 7 p.m. Duo Teres / The Prague Kaleidoscope.** A concert of chamber music by **Duo Teres** - violinist Lucie Fulka Kopsová and guitarist Tomáš Honěk, featuring soprano Lucie Silkenová as special guest. The programme includes compositions by Martin Brunner, Ondřej Kukul, Lukáš Hurník, Matej Benko, Zdeněk Merta and the Israeli composer Jan Freidlin.

**Thu 8 June at 7 p.m. Czech String Duo.** A concert of chamber music by violinist Lucie Sedláková Hůlová and cellist Martin Sedlák featuring works by N. Paganini, R. Glièr, G. Piatigorsky as well as the so-called Theresienstadt composers E. Schulhoff, G. Klein and Z. Schul.

Tickets may be purchased in advance at the Maisel Synagogue, the Jewish Museum's Information and Reservation Centre (Maiselova 15, Prague 1), [www.ticketart.cz](http://www.ticketart.cz) and [www.jewishmuseum.cz](http://www.jewishmuseum.cz). Admission CZK 230 / discounted CZK 150.

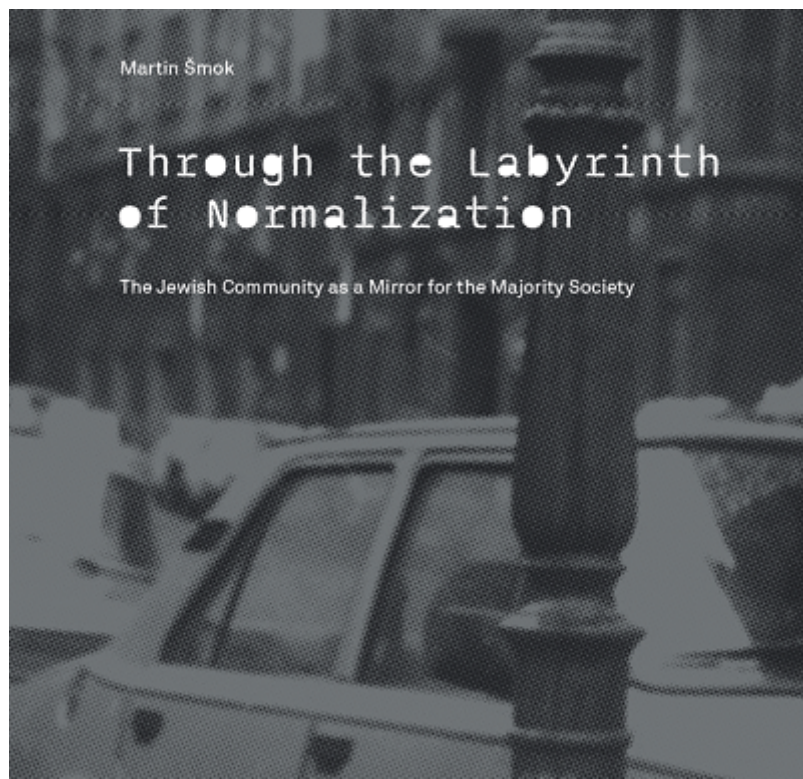
## PUBLICATIONS

### **Through the Labyrinth of Normalization: The Jewish Community as a Mirror for the Majority Society**

The catalogue accompanies an exhibition of the same name which is currently on display at the Jewish Museum's Robert Guttmann Gallery. Charter 77, a civic initiative demanding adherence to human and civil rights, was the most important form of resistance to the communist regime and normalization. The fortieth anniversary of its publication in 2017 provided an opportunity to present the situation of the Jewish community during the normalization period, undeniably unique on the one hand while on the other a microcosm in which similar processes no less intense than those affecting society at large were

taking place. Brought together from a number of archives, the majority of the unique documents and photographs were published for the very first time.

The catalogue is available for purchase at <http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/e-shop-en/exhibition-catalogues/through-the-labyrinth-of-normalization/> and at the Robert Guttman Gallery, U Staré školy 3, Prague 1.



## OTHER NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

### **Icy Prague**

At the end of January, the Jewish Museum once again took part in the annual charity event *Icy Prague*. This event gives children the opportunity to become acquainted with the past and present of the Czech capital, with its heritage sites and interesting things to see – which they have often only heard about or seen in pictures. This year's event – the 17th annual – was held on 3–5 February and was free of charge for children. For more information (in Czech), see [www.ledovapraha.cz](http://www.ledovapraha.cz)

### **150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Prof. Alfred Kohn**

On 22 February, 150 years passed since the birth of Prof. Alfred Kohn (22 February 1867 – 15 January 1959). The Jewish Museum in Prague, the Institute of Anatomy of the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University and the Czech Anatomical Society organised an event commemorating the life and achievements of Prof. Kohn. Prof. Kohn was the head of the Institute of Histology at the Medical Faculty of German University in Prague for 26 years. He was repeatedly nominated for Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine. For his Jewish origin he was expelled from the Deutsche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften und Künste für die Tschechoslowakische Republik in 1939 and transported to the Theresienstadt ghetto in 1943. After the war he lived in



Prague. On the occasion of his 90th birthday he was elected honorary president of the Anatomische Gesellschaft and awarded the Czechoslovak Order of Labour. Alfred Kohn died in 1959. He was one of the outstanding scholars that Prague gave to the world of science.



#### **Karel Poláček – known and unknown**

On the same February day the Franz Kafka Society held a lecture titled *Karel Poláček – known and unknown*, hosted in co-operation with the Jewish Museum in Prague. The lecture was delivered by Dr. Josef Krám to mark the anniversary of Poláček's birth 125 years ago.



#### **Remembering March 1944**

The Jewish Museum in Prague and the Terezín Initiative paid tribute to the memory of the Bohemian and Moravian Jews from the Terezín Family Camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau who were murdered in March 1944. In total, 3,792 Jews from Bohemia and Moravia perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-



Birkenau on the night of 8-9 March 1944 – the largest single murder of Czechoslovak citizens during the Second World War. On the morning of 8 March 2017, a memorial ceremony – organized by the Terezín Initiative – was held at the Pinkas Synagogue Memorial to the Victims of the Shoah from Bohemia and Moravia. The synagogue then opened its doors free of charge during the day.



### **Erasmus intern learns from the museum's specialists**

For the past five months, the Jewish Museum in Prague hosted an intern from the École de Condé, Paris, in the museum's paper and parchment restoration studio as part of the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students. Ms Jeanne Audiard, mentored by the studio's co-ordinator Ondřej Zatloukal, gained valuable work experience while processing Genizah finds from the East Bohemian town of Rychnov nad Kněžnou. This was already the second stay at the Jewish Museum in Prague for students from the renowned French higher education institution.



### **Going into Battle with Prayer. The Story of Rabbi Hanuš Rezek**

During World War II Jews from Czechoslovakia significantly participated in the fight against Nazi Germany. They were entering the Czechoslovak foreign troops both in the East and the West. The estimates vary, but their representation in the United Kingdom in 1943 accounted for approximately 32% of the soldiers, in the Soviet Union in 1942 around 35% and in the Middle East they were supposed to form as much as 50% of all soldiers. A considerable proportion of Jews in the Czechoslovak Foreign Army was due to their significant number among the refugees. They were mostly leaving Czechoslovakia via Poland to France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Jewish soldiers fought in the famous battles of World War II - at Tobruk, Sokolov, Dukla and Dunkirk. Their active participation in the foreign resistance was a sign of allegiance to the Czechoslovak state proving their full civic responsibility.

With the online exhibition "Going into Battle with Prayer" we want, on the background of selected documents and photographs, to honor JUDr. Hanuš Rezek (Rebenwurz), the military field rabbi in the Czechoslovak Foreign Army who served in the Middle East and later in the UK. His psychological and moral support was being recalled even after many decades following the Second World War by numerous former soldiers in their testimonies. In addition to daily tasks associated with religious practice, Rezek was in an intense contact with individual soldiers and used to have long talks with them in which he tried to encourage and motivate them in their struggle for the liberation of Czechoslovakia. After the Second World War Rezek returned to Prague, where he tried hard to restore the Jewish community and religious life. He was also at the birth of the organization The Circle of Jewish Participants in the Czechoslovak Resistance, and sought, among other things, to refute the false claim that the Jews had not participated actively in the fight against the Nazi Germany. Hanuš Rezek died tragically in a plane crash in December of 1948.

We would like to thank Mr. Yehoshua Rezek, son of Hanuš Rezek, for providing digital materials to the Shoah History Department of the Jewish Museum in Prague. You can see the exhibition at [http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/simpleGallery/Show/displaySet/set\\_id/289](http://collections.jewishmuseum.cz/index.php/simpleGallery/Show/displaySet/set_id/289)



### **Postcards from František Bányai's collection on display in NYC**

Historic postcards from the collection of František Bányai (former chair of the Prague Jewish Community) are on display at the Museum at Eltridge Street in New York City from 16 March till 8 June, 2017. Supported by the Jewish Museum in Prague, the exhibition offers a view of a time and of places that no longer exist, among them synagogues, many destroyed during the Second World War. The postcards carry greetings, messages and news from a vanished Eastern Europe of a century ago. To view František Bányai's collection, go to [www.judaica.cz](http://www.judaica.cz).



Prague Jewish Townhall in the 18th century. Monopol publishing house, cca. 1908.

### **Dos Pintele Yid – A spark of Jewish soul**

The library of the Jewish Museum in Prague newly features a signed copy of *Dos Pintele Yid – A spark of Jewish soul*, an autobiography (in German) by



Alexander Nesanel Fried which tells the life story of a Slovak Jew who survived the Holocaust, escaping certain death on several occasions. Born in 1925 into an Orthodox Jewish family, Fried first studied medicine in Prague and later history in Vienna. Today he lives in Prague and Tirschenreuth. The autobiography, a personal donation by Prof. Fried, is now available for loan for members of the museum's library.



## **PROMINENT VISITS**

### **February**

Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Czech Republic HE Daniel Meron visited the Jewish Museum in Prague on 10 February.





**March**

On 15 March the museum was visited by a deputies to the Knesset delegation led by the chair of the Interparliamentary Group of Friends Israel – Czech Republic Ms Aliza Lavie.



As part of its Prague mission, an American Jewish Committee delegation led by the Committee's president David Harris visited the Jewish Museum in Prague on 31 March, 2017.



Jewish Museum in Prague, U Staré školy 1, 110 01 Prague 1

[www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/info/visit/](http://www.jewishmuseum.cz/en/info/visit/)

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