

**Dedication and Tour of the new Judaica Suite, Sunday, January 19, 2014, 1.00-3.00 p.m.**

*Speech by Rebecca Jefferson to follow performance of Ernest Bloch's string quartet "Prelude"*

Ernest Bloch was the product of a great age for European Jewry – an age of emancipation and enlightenment.

The Jews were first emancipated in France in 1791 when centuries of legal discrimination against them was removed, and they were granted the same rights as all citizens. With emancipation, came the blossoming of the Jewish Enlightenment and the adoption of the values of the European Enlightenment, promoting scientific thought, skepticism, and intellectual interchange within the Jewish belief system. The movement was led by Jewish philosophers such as Moses Mendelssohn who first pointed the way for Jews to gain greater integration and acceptance among non-Jews. Realizing that a good knowledge of German was necessary to secure entrance into cultured German circles, Mendelssohn provided Jews with a means of acquiring the language through his seminal German translation of the Torah.

Greater Jewish integration in Germany and around Europe led to a proliferation of Jewish intellectual work. The Jewish Enlightenment witnessed a massive outpouring of Jewish secular literature along with intensive, critical religious studies. Jewish music and art flourished and Yiddish belles-lettres were brought firmly into the modern period by classic writers such as Mendele Mokher Sforim, Shalom Aleichem and Y. L. Peretz. Jews engaged deeply in political life giving birth to Jewish nationalist and socialist movements and the birth of the Reform Movement. This vibrancy in Jewish life and culture was reflected in the phenomenal publishing output of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In the "Roaring Twenties," a man called Leonard Mishkin left Lithuania for the United States where he soon became ordained as a Rabbi and engaged as an Educational Director in Chicago. Mishkin began collecting the books mostly of his own and the previous generation. With a keen collector's eye and a philosophy of building for the future, Mishkin realized the importance in amassing a collection from this key period in Jewish history, particularly once the storm clouds began to descend over Europe.

In 1977, thanks to the insightful efforts of Harold Hansen, the university administration and prominent members of the Jewish community, the University of Florida purchased Rabbi Mishkin's 40,000 strong collection to form a Judaica Library in support of Jewish Studies at UF. Mishkin's collection was supplemented by a collection of mainly Hebrew works from Shelomo Marenof, a professor at Brandeis, and by an inventory of largely Yiddish works from Bernard Morgenstern's bookstore on New York's Lower East Side. These core collections were then developed into a Judaica Library of enormous breadth and depth, covering the range of Jewish Studies, by its long-serving bibliographer, Robert Singerman. In 1981, the library was generously endowed by UF alumni, Samuel and Jack Price of Jacksonville and named for their parents, Isser and Rae. Thanks to their support and the continued support of the wider Price family and friends we can easily boast that the Isser and Rae Price Library of Judaica is the largest and best Judaica collection in the Southeastern United States.

Many of the Price Library's late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century materials are held by just 30 or 40 institutions around the world, and a good deal of the Yiddish and Hebrew works from this period are held by less than 10 American libraries.

Thanks to the extraordinary vision and generosity of Kenneth Treister and the wonderful support of Sam and Charles Price, we now have a space in which to house the scarce and rare portions of the Price Library of Judaica. In the new Judaica Suite, you will find a unique collection, a view of Jewish life at an intellectual and cultural highpoint before the destruction of the 1930s and 40s. Each alcove in the room is dedicated to an area of Jewish life, thought, language and culture; no other collection constructed in this manner and solely devoted to this period from emancipation to destruction currently exists. In addition to these works, you will also see early publications devoted to documenting and analyzing the Holocaust,

including our large and valuable Yizkor (memorial book) Collection brought together in one place for the first time.

Along with the Jewish Studies faculty and students, it is our profound hope that scholars of the period will come to UF to use this room for their research. We expect the room and the collection to gain national prominence, and in this way we hope that we can contribute towards President Machen's efforts to ensure that UF rises. We also hope this wonderful new library space will be greatly used for teaching by the wider UF faculty and for UF events.

There are so many people to thank for this restoration. In addition to the generosity of Kenneth and Helyne Treister and Sam and Charles Price, I would like to thank the Libraries administration, particularly Dean Russell for her leadership and incredible vision for restoring the spaces in this beautiful Smathers Library, and Associate Deans Diane Bruxvoort and Brian Keith for their excellent management of this project. We thank Kevin Ward and his team for their construction and installation work. And, for bringing everything together under a tight deadline, we owe a very great debt of thanks to our wonderful facilities department, first under the management of Jeff Lazja and then under Peter Miller. We thank Orah Goldman, Todd's partner, for supplying a beautiful photograph of Todd for the foyer. Thanks go too to Misty Swain, Lela Johnson and Barbara Hood for PR and Marketing and to Samuel Huang, Katie Boudreau and Gail Burton for Development, and to Lourdes Santamaria-Wheeler, our Exhibits Coordinator, for her amazing work on the Haggadah Exhibition. Many thanks to Bess de Farber, Michele Wilbanks, and to the Music Department, Professor Estrin and Professor Duff, and the UF musicians and student musicians, for supporting our events with their wonderful musical contributions, particularly Joshua Mazor for agreeing to play his harp at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour! Thank you to Emily Madden, our Judaica Library Assistant and to our student staff for their terrific help in locating and moving the books. Last, but not least, a huge thank you to all of our colleagues in the Libraries, particularly in Special and Area Studies, who lent a hand in the big move. With such an incredible major effort, I do hope that I haven't forgotten anyone!

When you go into the room, you will see the Star of David and you will think of the Jewish people. But remember that this symbol, the hexagram, has been used for thousands of years in the iconography of faiths all around the world. The hexagram has long been studied by mathematicians and philosophers in their attempts to understand form and to connect the microcosm to the macrocosm. In the same way, the books in the new room represent the attempts of a small minority group to connect to and interact with the wider world. Thus, when you contemplate the intersecting lines and perfect symmetry of the six pointed star you might also think about the many ways in which, as human beings, we all connect to one another.