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A JOURNEY THROUGH JEWISH WORLDS

Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books

Only U.S. Showing of Significant Private Collection

On View at the Yeshiva University Museum

March 21 – July 11, 2010

February 26, 2010 (New York, NY) – Seven centuries of Jewish tradition spring into vivid life at the U.S. premiere of an exhilarating exhibition coming to Manhattan next month.

Direct from its world premiere in Amsterdam, the **Yeshiva University Museum** will host the first-ever U.S. showing of an extraordinary private collection -- *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds. Highlights from the Braginsky Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books.*



The exhibition opens on March 21st and will run through July 11th 2010. **The Yeshiva University Museum is located at the Center for Jewish History at 15 West 16th Street in New York City.**

For the past several decades, Swiss collector René Braginsky has been building a spectacular collection of Hebrew manuscripts and printed books. *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds* marks the first time that he has opened his collection to a wide audience, first in Amsterdam and now, in New York City.

Private collections of this kind are rarely made available to a large public and the prospect of glimpsing these treasures of Jewish tradition drew capacity crowds at the world premiere in Amsterdam. Indeed, the scope and quality of the Braginsky collection makes the upcoming exhibition at the Yeshiva University Museum an especially remarkable event.

“These dazzling manuscripts provide insights into the Jewish experience over centuries and across the globe,” said Sharon Liberman Mintz, a prominent curator of Jewish Art at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary and a senior consultant for Judaica at Sotheby’s. “They transmit a sophisticated

appreciation of beauty and convey the centrality of text in Jewish life. A showing like this represents a remarkable opportunity for the viewer."

The world-class curatorial team has selected the most precious, fascinating and beautiful examples from a total of over 600 items in the Braginsky Collection for this exhibition.

In *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds*, an exceptional range of important handwritten Hebrew books will be on display. These include illustrated manuscripts, around one third of which date from the Middle Ages and highlights from the largest privately-held collection of works created during the renaissance of decorated Hebrew manuscripts in the 18th century. The exhibition will also feature beautifully decorated Jewish marriage contracts (ketubbot) and illustrated scrolls of the Book of Esther (megillot), with richly crafted cases made of wood, ivory or silver and gold from Jewish communities across the globe.

This opulent collection spans seven centuries with examples of artwork from virtually every corner of the Jewish world. It presents a rich, multi-cultural tour through Jewish history.

Highlights of the exhibition include:

- The Charlotte von Rothschild Haggadah, an opulent work from 1842, the first Hebrew manuscript known to have been illuminated by a woman
- Richly-illustrated Italian marriage contracts (ketubbot) on parchment, adorned with a proliferation of colourful signs of the zodiac, symbols of the twelve tribes and other evocative iconography
- Four centuries of elaborately-illustrated Esther Scrolls (megillot) from Holland, Italy, Greece and India
- A 13th c. manuscript of a legal compendium handwritten in Germanic Lands
- A gold-embellished marriage contract (ketubbah) from a wedding celebrated in Cochin, India
- A 16th Century Italian Esther Scroll (megillah) written by a female scribe, the earliest known decorated object of its kind
- Moses Nahmanides's Perush ha-Torah (Commentary on the Pentateuch), published in Rome circa 1469-1472, one of the first printed Hebrew books

EXHIBITION DISPLAYS VISUAL SPLENDOR/SCHOLARLY CONTENT

A Journey Through Jewish Worlds displays the exceptional quality of the collection artifacts, so that Museum visitors will enjoy both the visual splendor and the scholarly content of these important books and manuscripts.

A Journey Through Jewish Worlds opens to the public on March 21st. Private tours of the exhibition are available upon request.

About Yeshiva University Museum

For more than 35 years, the Yeshiva University Museum has provided culturally diverse exhibitions and programming for the greater metropolitan area and beyond, as well as to Yeshiva University students, faculty, and alumni. Its permanent collection includes more than 9,000 objects spanning over 3,000 years of Jewish history. The Museum also emphasizes teaching schoolchildren and adults of diverse backgrounds about Jewish culture through many varieties of interdisciplinary programs. Located at the

Center for Jewish History, the Museum occupies four spacious galleries, a children's workshop center, and an outdoor sculpture garden.

Museum Hours

Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday: 11 am – 5 pm

Monday: 3:30-8:00 pm (FREE)

Wednesday: 11 am – 8 pm (FREE 5 pm – 8 pm)

Friday: 11 am – 2:30 pm (FREE)

Museum Admission

Adults: \$8 Seniors and Students: \$6

YU Museum Members and Children under 5: Free

Yeshiva University Faculty, Administration and Students: Free (with valid ID)

Location

Yeshiva University Museum

at the Center for Jewish History

15 West 16th Street, NYC 10011

212-294-8330

www.yumuseum.org

For further information about *A Journey Through Jewish Worlds*, to request an interview with one of the curators or a private tour, please contact Shira Dicker at shira.dicker@sd-media.com 917-403-3989. Please visit www.yumuseum.org.

About the Curatorial and Publication Team

The curatorial and publication team for includes many of the most renowned experts in this field: Evelyn Cohen (Academic Fellow, The Metropolitan Museum of Art); Elka Deitsch (Senior Curator, Bernard Museum, Congregation Emanu-El); Gabriel Goldstein (Associate Director for Exhibitions and Programs, Yeshiva University Museum); Sharon Liberman Mintz (Curator of Jewish Art, The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary; Senior Consultant for Judaica, Sotheby's); Shalom Sabar (Professor, Art History and Jewish and Comparative Folklore, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem); Menahem Schmelzer (Professor Emeritus, Medieval Hebrew Literature and Jewish Bibliography, The Jewish Theological Seminary); and Emile Schrijver (Curator, Biblioteca Rosenthaliana). Ardon Bar-Hama of Ra'anana, Israel is responsible for the collection photography.

The exhibition was first presented at the prestigious Biblioteca Rosenthaliana, the Judaica and Hebraica Special Collections Division of the University of Amsterdam, an institution that is internationally renowned for its exceptional exhibitions of Hebrew books and manuscripts. For the New York presentation at Yeshiva University Museum, the exhibition is being expanded to include exciting new material recently acquired by the collector. Following its showing in New York, the exhibition will travel to the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Image: *Miscellany for Life Cycle Events*, Italy (possibly Ferrara), 15th century. Photograph by Ardon Bar-Hama.

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