

**The Jewish Communities of Hungary, Transylvania, Slovakia, Carpathian Russia, Bachka, Banat and Burgenland**



The Museum building, oil painting  
 Donated by the artist, **Yehuda Armoni**, June 2015

**Newsletter No. 45**

**Kislev 5776 – November 2015**

Opening hours: Sun-Thurs, 9:00-14:00, Fri, 9:00-13:00  
 Organized groups and guided tours upon reservation in advance.

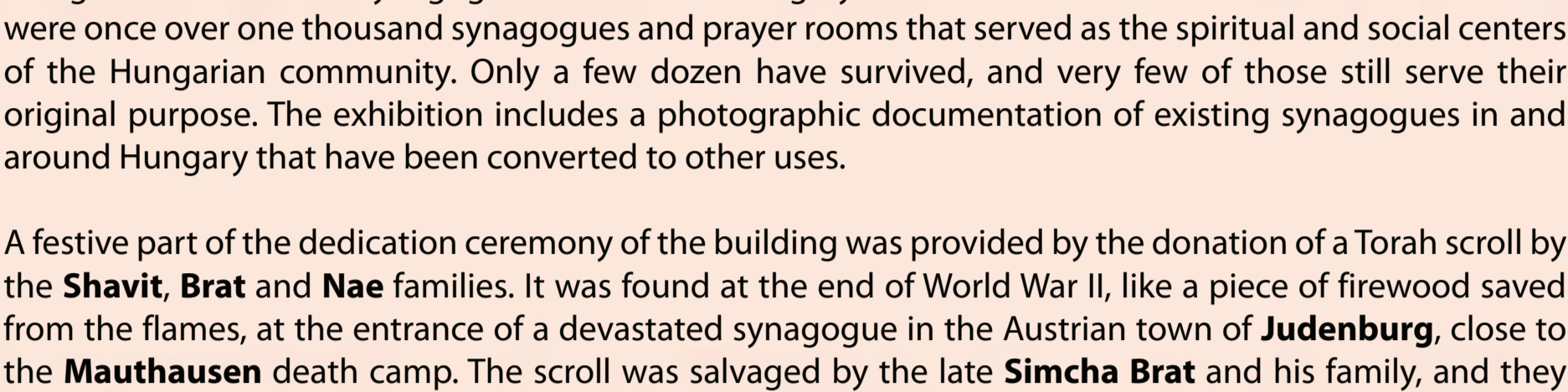
Saraya Building (opp. Beit Yigal Allon), Safed  
 Mailing address: P.O. Box 1168, Safed 1311101  
 Tel.: +972-4-6925881, fax: +972-4-6923880  
 E-mail: [museum@hjm.org.il](mailto:museum@hjm.org.il) Website: [www.hjm.org.il](http://www.hjm.org.il)

**Dear Friends,**

*This Newsletter describes some of the events and activities of the Museum over the last year. We are proud to share it with you.*

**Dedication of a New Exhibition Hall**

The new hall, dedicated this last June, contains an exhibition titled "A Memorial to the Destroyed Synagogues of Hungary." Situated alongside the main building of the Museum, the hall was restored with the help of the Safed Municipality.



The holy ark of the Tokaj synagogue, restored to its former glory, holds pride of place in the exhibition, along with remnants of synagogues from across Hungary. The name of the hall reflects the fact that there were once over one thousand synagogues and prayer rooms that served as the spiritual and social centers of the Hungarian community. Only a few dozen have survived, and very few of those still serve their original purpose. The exhibition includes a photographic documentation of existing synagogues in and around Hungary that have been converted to other uses.

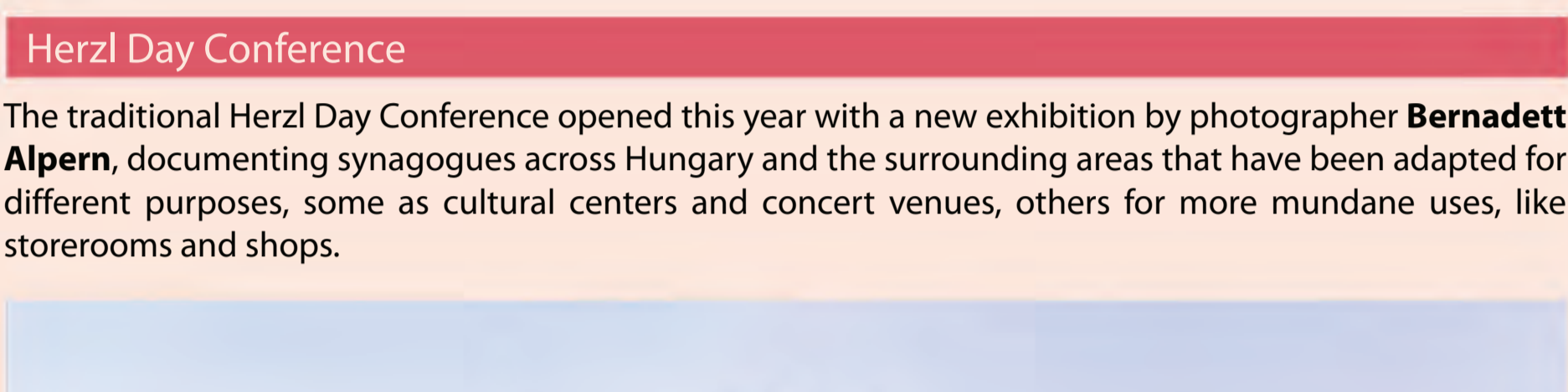
A festive part of the dedication ceremony of the building was provided by the donation of a Torah scroll by the **Shavit, Brat** and **Nae** families. It was found at the end of World War II, like a piece of firewood saved from the flames, at the entrance of a devastated synagogue in the Austrian town of **Judenburg**, close to the **Mauthausen** death camp. The scroll was salvaged by the late **Simcha Brat** and his family, and they carried it through Europe as they made their way to the Land of Israel.



The Torah scroll was given to the Museum by the descendants of the late **Eliezer Shavit** (Stern), originally from **Újfehértó**, in Hungary; his wife **Pnina** (née **Shavit**); the late **Hayim-Ziskind** and **Shoshana Brat**; and the late **Akiva** and **Miriam** (née **Brat Nae**). We would like to express our gratitude to **Haya Shavit-Kedar** for her initiative in arranging the gift on behalf of the extended family.

**Herzl Day Conference**

The traditional Herzl Day Conference opened this year with a new exhibition by photographer **Bernadett Alpern**. Herzl Day conferences across Hungary and the surrounding areas that have been adapted for different purposes, some as cultural centers and concert venues, others for more mundane uses, like storerooms and shops.



The former "Poaley Tzedek" Orthodox synagogue, now Transit House - Cultural Center, Kolozsvár / Cluj Napoca, 2014

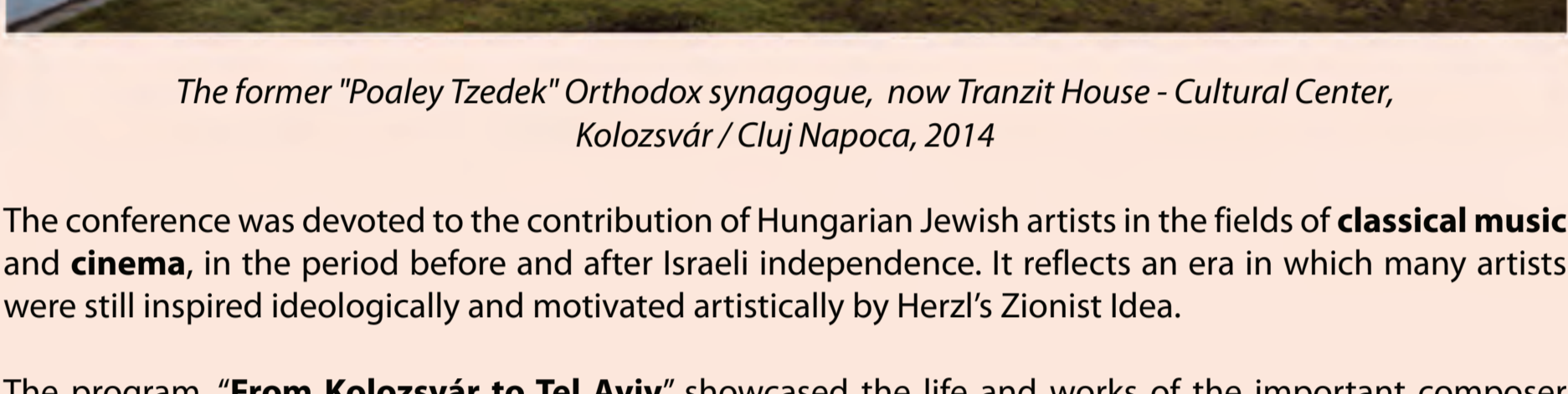
The conference was devoted to the contribution of Hungarian Jewish artists in the fields of **classical music** and **cinema**, in the period before and after Israeli independence. It reflects an era in which many artists were still inspired ideologically and motivated artistically by Herzl's Zionist Idea.

The program, "**From Kolozsvár to Tel Aviv**" showcased the life and works of the important composer **Alexander Uriah Boskovich** (1907-1964), one of the founding generation of Israeli classical music. He studied at the "Tarbut" Jewish high school in Kolozsvár (today Cluj-Napoca, in Romania), and began his musical education in his home town. His early work was inspired by Jewish melodies and folksongs he had heard on visits to Transylvania and Carpathian Russia. He completed his studies in Vienna and Paris.

**Yaakov Gross**, historian of Hebrew cinema, gave a lecture on the Hungarian contribution to the film industry in Israel. He noted that when the first films appeared in Europe, Herzl quickly identified the need and the possibility of utilizing the new medium to promote the Zionist Idea. It was important, in his view, to record the Jewish experience in the Land of Israel, something that was much of a mystery to many Jews in the Diaspora. In fact, the first attempt was only made in 1913, almost a decade after Herzl's untimely death. Mr. Gross spoke about the work of a number of producers and directors of Hungarian background, devoting a significant part of his talk to the contribution of the satirist and playwright, **Ephraim Kishon**.

**A Meeting of Cultures at the Museum**

The idea of cultural encounters became real in a series of activities that we organized for groups of new immigrants from the Bnei Menashe community of northern India, currently studying Hebrew at an *ulpan* in Israel. One group excitedly burst into a song of yearning for Jerusalem when they saw the restored holy ark from Tokaj. It was an unforgettable moment!

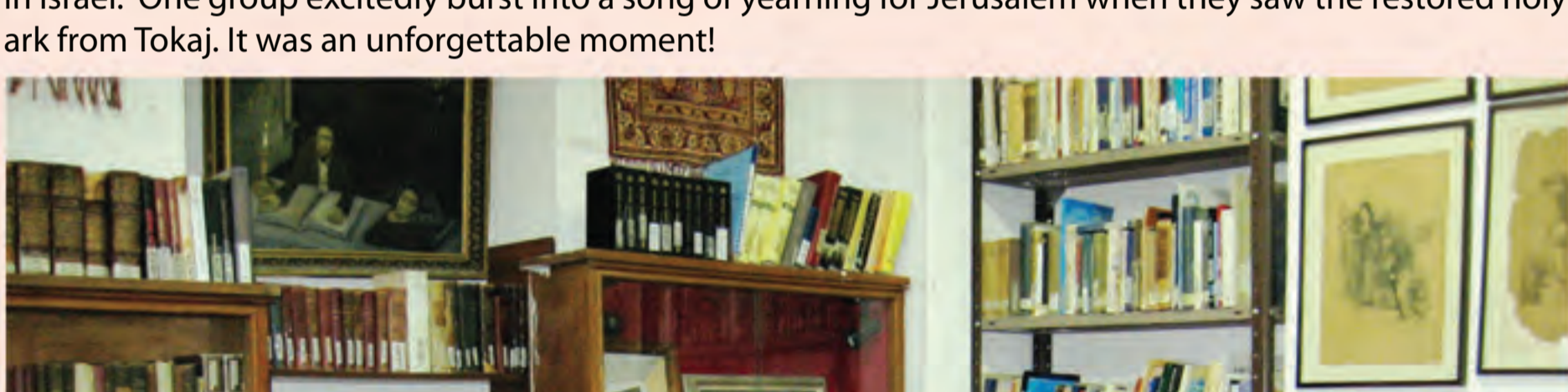


**New Treasures in the Museum**

Inspired by the "Memorial to the Destroyed Synagogues of Hungary" exhibition, Ms. **Merry Kane** donated an impressive collection of miniature Torah scrolls, made by a relative and Holocaust survivor, the late **Berényi Imre**.

Before the war, Berényi made a living as an apple farmer in **Csapod**, Hungary. His wife and parents perished in the Holocaust, and in 1947 he himself settled in the United States. His life's work, until his death in 1968, was this unique way of preserving the memory of his loved ones. For all religious holidays, Berényi made decorated covers for the miniature Torah scrolls, which carried the names of his family, and were displayed in hand-made wooden cabinets.

Berényi gave Ms. Kane his collection of hundreds of items just before she moved to Israel. She recently decided to entrust them to the Museum in Safed for preservation and display.

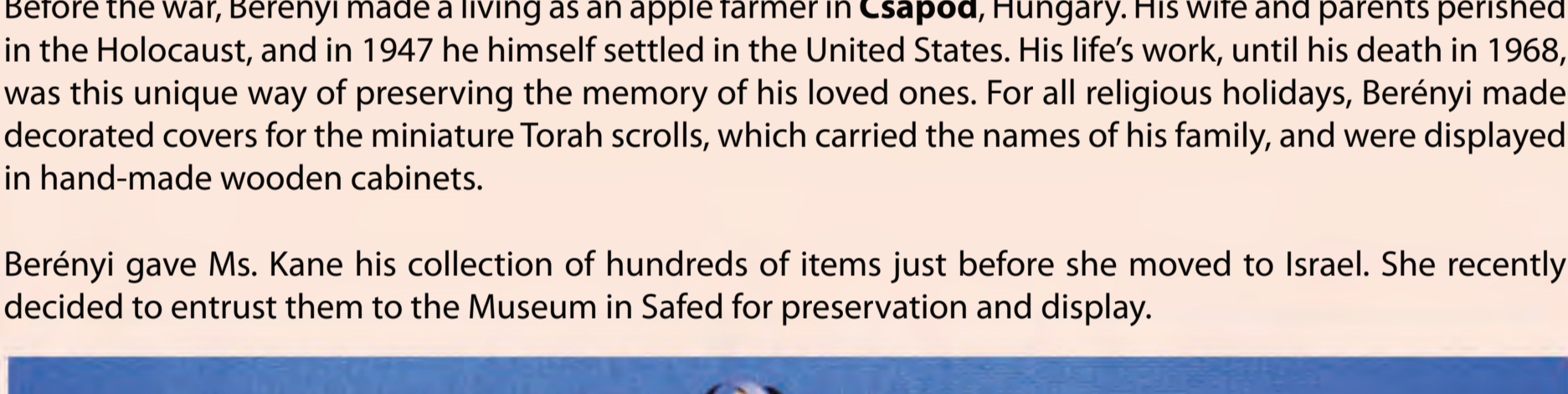


Translator **Miriam Algazi** recently donated several fascinating items that illuminate, from an unfamiliar angle, a major episode of the "illegal" immigration to Israel during the British Mandate.



In 1947, 13-year-old Miriam was a member of the "Barzel" (Iron) group of the Dror Habonim youth movement, aboard the famous immigrant ship, *Exodus*. The ship was intercepted and boarded by British forces, and brought into Haifa port, where its passengers were transferred to three deportation ships and taken back to Europe. Miriam's group sailed on the *Empire Rival*, and spent the next year in a D.P. camp in Germany, before finally "making aliyah" to Israel.

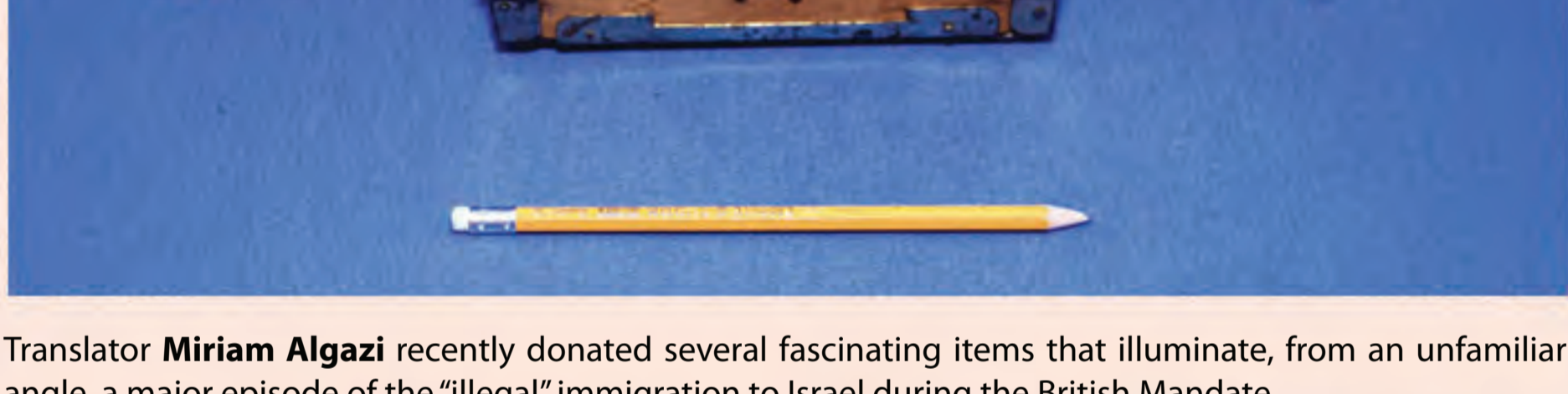
Among the original items we received were Miriam's own journal of the voyage; newspapers, hand-written on board, that included poems, illustrations and stories; and drawings and embroidery made by the boys and girls in her group.



Our thanks to **Yitzhak Livnat**, a dear friend and loyal supporter of our enterprise, for his historic collection of thousands of postcards from Carpathian Russia, which he assembled over many years. Most date to the first half of the 20th century, and are grouped by geographic regions. They give a unique window onto this region in a bygone era. In some of the postcards, one can identify Jewish shops and businesses, institutions, and synagogues.



We received a touching gift from **Shimon Gordon**, a resident of Safed, and the expert craftsman who restored the holy ark from Tokaj for our museum. **Shimon** and his wife **Irena** recently traveled to Russia to visit his aunt, who had once served as a medical officer in the Red Army, and was in **Budapest** when it was liberated from the Nazis. When Shimon's aunt heard his account of the restoration of the Tokaj ark, she gave him a wonderful tablecloth embroidered in the traditional *Matyó* style, 145 cm (57 inches) in diameter, as a gift to the Museum. She had bought it from a woman in Budapest for a loaf of bread and a can of meat in the difficult days at the end of the war...



Our heartfelt thanks to all Friends of the Museum, in Israel and around the world, whose donations enrich the collection and make the Museum activities possible.

**Keeping in touch in the digital age**

If you are holding a Newsletter that you received by regular mail, but you have an e-mail account, please send us your e-mail address. This will allow us to send you more updates and information about events through our mailing list, and we will be able to save resources and make our own modest contribution to preserving the environment.

**Are you planning a trip to Israel in the near future? Please contact us about visiting the Museum, and we will prepare a moving and unforgettable experience for you!**

**We extend our deepest gratitude to:**

- Our dear dedicated volunteers
- Friends of the Museum in Israel and abroad
- The Museum Board members
- The Museum Friends Association in Hungary
- Israel Ministry of Culture and Sport
- Safed Municipality and the Wolfson Community Center
- Civil Foundation – 2014 – Hungarian Holocaust Memorial Year

**Making a Donation to the Museum**

Your generous donation will help us maintain the Museum and further develop it.

*Our friends in the U.S.A. can give a tax-deductible donation to the Museum through the P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds Inc.* If you wish to donate this way, please make a check payable to P.E.F. Israel Endowment Funds Inc., and send it to their New York office along with the enclosed form.

**We greatly appreciate your ongoing support!**

On behalf of our staff and board members,

**Ron Lustig**  
 Executive Director

**Prof. Hanna Yablonka**  
 Chair of the Board