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ISRATHEME

THE ENGLISH BULLETIN OF AYELET - The Thematic Association of Israel

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK - Nahum Shereshevsky

This is the first issue of ISRATHEME, and I would like to introduce ourselves. We are the Thematic Association of Israel, known locally also as AYELET (hind), our Hebrew initials. This is our English bulletin, which we intend to issue quarterly, and it is not a translation of our Hebrew bulletin. One of AYELET'S aims is to exchange philatelic-thematic information with other countries, and help our members make contacts with fellow collectors outside Israel. Being a country with a unique language, we can't just send our "regular" bulletin overseas, and so we have decided to have a separate publication in English and to use it to provide the thematic collectors in other countries with information about Israeli philately, especially what is not found in stamp catalogues. We intend to publish, on a regular basis, all the special postmarks that we have here, with full translations of text and background information that can help the thematic collector relate them to his/her theme. And the same goes for new issues, all new issues, including postal stationery, booklets, etc. All fully reproduced, as we all know how important it is for us thematists to see the design of an item. Our assumption is that, as mentioned before, the readers cannot read Hebrew and thus every text must be translated, and, also, terms that are known to all Israelis, need to be explained to others.

Another feature would be names of our members that are looking for exchange partners. We invite you to send us your 'ads' for publication in our Hebrew bulletin.

We are not going to write about how to collect/exhibit thematics, as we think that our readers don't need us for that: enough is written about it in publications of other associations such as ATA, AAPE, BTA. We are interested, however, to be a forum for debate about thematics, and we welcome articles and comments from collectors.

We would also like to hear your opinion about ISRATHEME. Do you find it useful? Is there any specific information that you would like to see, or do you think that some space could be better used? Would you be interested in receiving the next issue, or exchanging ISRATHEME for your society's bulletin? Please drop us a line!

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Thematic Elements in Israeli Regular Postmarks / Nahum Shereshevsky

In Israel we do not have 'pictorial postmarks', like those in Australia, for example. But one can find thematic elements in some of the regular postmarks of Israel, and by 'regular' I mean as opposed to commemorative postmarks. These postmarks - CDS, machine cancellations, meters - are the only devices used at their respective places, as opposed to special pictorial postmarks in some countries that are used only by special request.

I have divided the postmarks into three groups, according to the reason behind the thematic element.

I. Postal function

Mobile Post: These postmarks have a post van to denote 'mobile post', and the van is used instead of the wording 'mobile post'. For that reason, the van is incorporated in all types of postmarks: CDS (fig. 1), special postmarks, private meters (fig. 2). The van first appeared on 29th March 1955 ('Hamerkaz' and 'Shomron' MPO's) and by 19th August 1958 all MPO postmarks had the van. There are now over 40 MPO lines in Israel.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Passenger ships: These are a memory of the past, when Israel had passenger liners, which had post offices aboard. Fig. 3 shows an example, from S.S. Aliya. The first ship to use a postmark of that kind was the S.S. Artsa, 23rd May 1954, and all together there were 13 postmarks, with a few variations in the ships' design. For most of the ships the actual closure date of their post office is unknown, but the last Israeli passenger ship was sold in 1974.

Fig. 3

II. 'Postal Points'

'Postal points' were set up to give a minimal postal service in sites of interest where no permanent settlement existed. Mail collected at the postal points was cancelled with a special postmark, which included a graphic element related to the site. (The interested reader is referred to the article 'Postal Points in Israel', by B. Fixler & I. Nachtigal, Holy Land Postal History, Vol. II, No. 36 (1988), p. 909.)

Fig. 4 is an example from a group of postal points that were located in forests, represented by the tree with the Hebrew letters "KKL" (JNF - Jewish National Fund). These forests were planted by the JNF as part of its afforestation programme, which makes the postmark suitable for both environment and Zionism themes.

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Another group of postmarks come from archaeological sites. Fig. 5 is from Qumran, 'home' of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls, which are featured in the design. Fig. 6 shows an ancient seal with two lions and a jar between two pillars, and the place is Avedat, in the Negev desert. The illustration in fig. 7 should be familiar to anyone who is into Roman culture: the ceremonial 'ploughing of the city limits', taken from a Roman coin. The postmark was used in Caesarea, the remains of an ancient Roman port city in the north of Israel.

Other postal point postmarks come from a variety of places. Fig. 8 depicts 'Coral Island', in the Red Sea near Eilat. The names in the postmark are the Hebrew and Arabic names, respectively 'I Ha-Almogim' and 'Jezirat Farun'. Fig. 9 is from En Gedi, also on the Dead Sea, bordering the Judean desert. En Gedi is an oasis of fresh water, as can be seen from the waterfall and the palm tree on the postmark. Tradition says that King David hid in the area when he was running away from King Saul; the waterfall is named after him, so you can include this postmark even in a 'Bible' collection. Fig. 10 shows something that looks odd: the famous cartoon figure of "Israelik", with his "tembel" hat, but instead of sandals he is wearing skis! Now, snow is not what you would expect to find in sunny Israel! Well, that postmark comes from Mt. Hermon, our one and only ski site (in a good year, that is). This postmark can be used in a collection of sports skiing, but don't mistake it for postal service on skis that exists in some Northern countries.

Fig. 7

Fig. 9

Fig. 8

Fig 10

III. Town/site identifiers

In the postmarks belonging to this group, the pictorial element represents the place, rather than a postal function. These postmarks are from cities (as opposed to the postal points group), and the pictorial element can appear in a number of postmarks (branch offices).

Fig. 11

Fig. 11 is from Eilat, our south-eastmost town on the Red Sea. All the CDS of Eilat are of this pictorial type, showing the bay of Eilat with two ships and the French inscription "Eilat - port de la mer rouge" (Eilat - the door to the Red Sea). The number '9' at the bottom is the identifying number of the postmark, as in regular CDS. (If there are more than one postmark with the same place name, they are numbered.) The first pictorial postmark in Eilat was introduced in 1958, and since then all of the Eilat postmarks have been of this type.

Fig. 12 shows the Citadel ('Tower of David') in the Old City of Jerusalem, with a part of the wall. This design was incorporated in all the postmarks used in Eastern Jerusalem, introduced shortly after the city's unification on 5th July 1967. The original group included 'Jerusalem '71 to '77', and later (August 1968) '78 to '79 were added. 'Jerusalem '79' shown here was used by the Philatelic Service for FDC's from 1968 to 1987. The spelling 'Jerusalem' was changed to 'Yerushalayim' (the correct Hebrew pronunciation), in '79 on 7th June 1983 and 21st August 1984 in all the postmarks of Jerusalem. The 'Citadel' design was incorporated in the machine cancellation used by the Herod's Gate B.O., Fig. 13, which has the ID number VI (machine cancellations have Roman ID numbers).

Fig. 14 shows one of the postmarks used by the post office in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, which incorporates the Knesset building. The Knesset postmarks have an ID numbering sequence of their own, different from that of Jerusalem/Yerushalayim. Knesset postmarks are often used on Knesset members' free mail, and it should be borne in mind that a strike on an unfranked cover is probably not a favour cancellation but a genuine 'franking privilege' letter. (These covers also have other identifications.)

Fig. 15 shows a special postmark used in the Haifa Port in special post offices that are opened occasionally to service visiting foreign passenger ships. A similar postmark was used in the Ashdod Port. The inscription on the postmark is in French: "Bateaux de plaisance" - "Touring Ship". I have included these postmarks in this section rather than the first, as here the ship denotes the place - (port) - it is not maritime mail used aboard a ship.

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

7th August 1990

"With Love" Booklet - NVI x 10 (NIS 5.50 when issued).

The "With Love" stamp from the NVI (No Value Indicated) greeting stamps series was issued in booklets of ten, in two tete-beche rows of five. NVI stamps are supposed to be used only singly, though sometimes a person would use two NVI stamps for a heavy letter if there's nothing else. A tete-beche pair on a commercial cover is very unusual and I have not yet seen one. Fig. 1a shows the booklet pane. Fig. 1b shows the cover: the left side is the front, and the inscription is: "Greeting Stamps / 10 inland letter stamps". The back cover's Hebrew inscription says: "A Philatelic Service subscription the best gift". Fig. 1c shows the inner covers (after removing the stamps). On the right: "Dial 171 and send a telegram for every occasion". On the left: "Bills are paid at the Postal Bank".

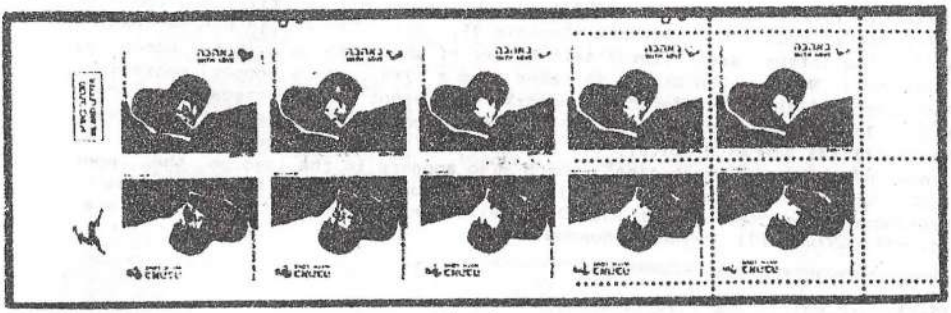

Fig. 1a

Fig. 1b

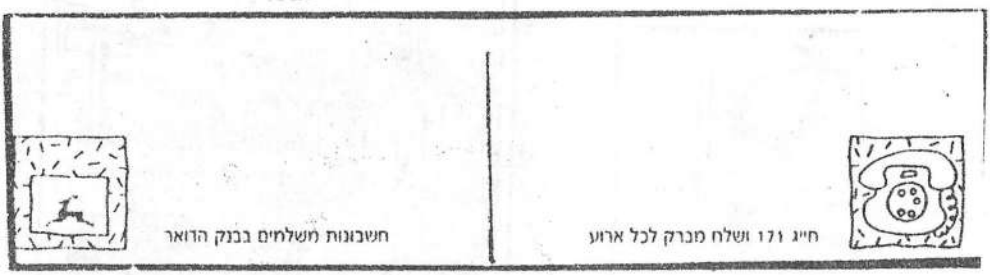

Fig 1c

4th September 1990

Aliya Absorption - NIS 1.10 (fig. 2).

"Aliya" means "ascending", but in Hebrew it has another, unique, meaning: it means the repatriation of Jews born outside Israel. Under the Law of Return, every Jew has the right to "make Aliya" and be granted Israeli citizenship immediately. The stamp was issued to commemorate the recent wave of aliya, mainly from the USSR. The stamp design is symbolic: an "oleh" (a person who makes aliya) is joining a group of Israelis and completing the "Magen David" figure that they are making. The tab refers to the linguistic side of aliya: learning Hebrew. Depicted is the verb "to ascend" in its conjugation.

Beersheva '90 National Stamp Exhibition Souvenir Sheet - NIS 3 (fig. 3).

This exhibition took place during Succot, i.e. 5th to 12th October 1990. Beersheva (or Beersheba) is one of Israel's ancient cities, first mentioned in the Bible in relation to Abraham (Genesis 21, 31). "Be'er" in Hebrew means a well. The stamp area (lower left corner of sheet) shows a site known as "Abraham's Well". The sketch is taken from a 17th century copper engraving. The rest of the sheet depicts landmarks of present day Beersheva: (1) City Hall; (2) the Negev Brigade Monument (depicted on the 1986 Memorial Day stamp, Sc. 937); (3) Soroka Hospital; (4) Yad Labanim (Soldiers' Memorial) House, the venue of the stamp exhibition, which also appears in the logo on the upper right corner of the sheet; (5) City Conservatory; (6) the Eliyahu Khalaschi Synagogue (depicted also on the 20 shekel value of the 1983 Festival issue, Sc. 847/SG910); (7) Beersheva Museum.

Electronic Mail - NIS 1.20 (fig. 4).

The stamp was issued on the occasion of the "Paris Group" conference in Israel. The "Paris Group" is an association of some 40 postal authorities which are concerned with promoting E-mail systems amongst postal authorities around the world. The stamp depicts the developments of means of communication. From top to bottom: a satellite aerial; binary code; a computer terminal; radio waves; envelope; postal rider - the Jewish postman from Prague, 1741, that is depicted also on the TAVIV 1960 stamp and s/s (SG195, Sc. 187); ancient inscription in Moabite, written in Hebrew script, from the Mesha stone, 9th century B.C.; Egyptian hieroglyphs; inscription on clay ("calev"), 17th century B.C. The three uppermost rows are repated on the tab.

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Festival Stamps 5751 (1990) - 55 ag., 80 ag., 1 NIS., booklet. (Fig. 5)

Festival stamps are issued for the Jewish New Year, like Christmas stamps in other countries. They usually depict traditional, Biblical or religious themes. This year's set depicts spice boxes, called in Hebrew "hadassim". "Hadas" is also the myrtle plant. Spice boxes and their contents are used in a variety of Jewish religious ceremonies. The boxes take different forms, as can be seen from the stamps: 55 ag. - Austro-Hungary, early 19th century. Silver, cut, pierced and engraved, wire work; 80 ag. - Rome, Italy, 19th century. Silver, pierced, engraved and cast; 1.00 NIS - Ausburg, Germany, c. 1700. Silver, cast, repousse and engraved. Made by Matheus (Markus?) Wolf.

All of the Hadassim are at the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Booklet: This is the first time that Festival stamps are issued also in booklets, and the last time commemorative booklets were issued in Israel was the "Freedom from Hunger" issue of 1963. The booklet pane (fig. 5a) includes 6 stamps: 55 ag. x 3, 80 ag. x 2, 1 NIS x 1. Total price NIS 4.25. The border design is from a tablecloth for Sabbath and Festivals, Central Europe, 19th Century, wool embroidered on cotton. One can see on it trees, birds, butterflies. The booklet cover (fig. 5b) shows a full view of the spice boxes. On the inner cover (fig. 5c) is a descriptive text (Hebrew and English) on one side, and the designer's name, Ad Van Ooijen, on the other. A very attractive booklet. It can be used for many themes: religion, applied art, birds, embroidery, butterflies, to name but a few.

Fig. 4

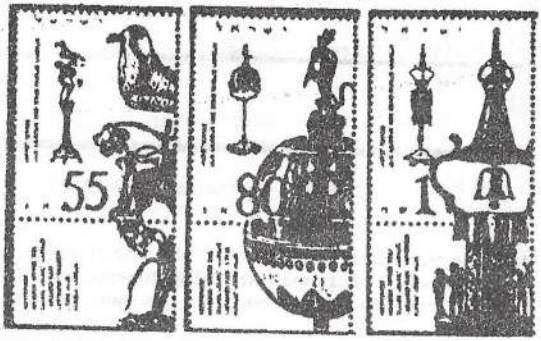

Fig. 5

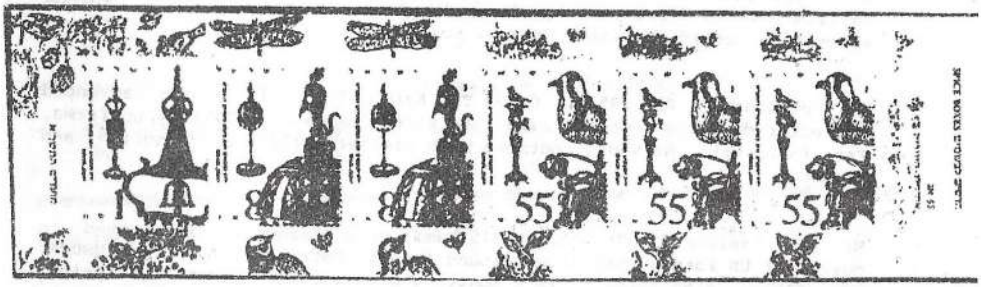

Fig. 5a

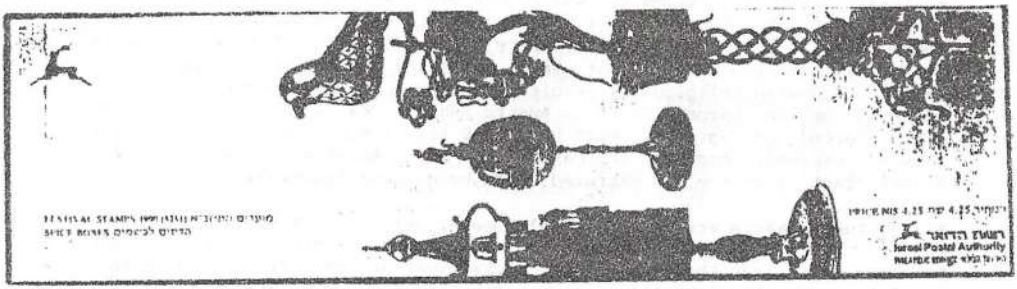

Fig. 5b

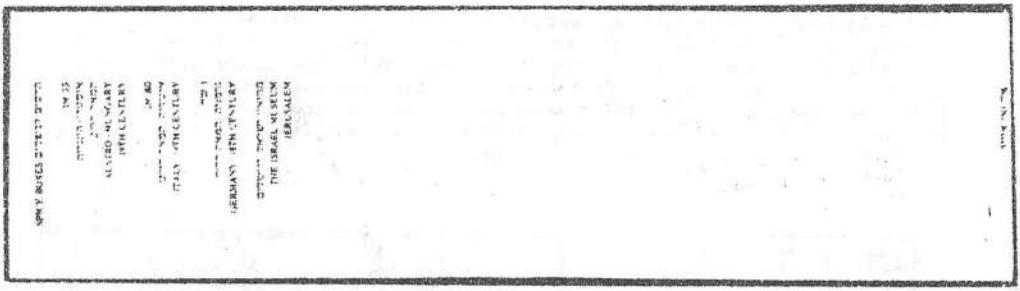

Fig. 5c

CONTACTS

* Mr Mordechai Ben-Horin, Abu-Shdid 3/12, 42307 Netanya, Israel. Special cancels, European art mint blocks against Israel - mint, used, FDC and others. English, Romanian, German, French.

* Mr Michael Silberman, POB 2334, 24122 Acre, Israel, wants to exchange Maximum Cards, one-for-one, needs all countries but only Comm. issues with FDC cancels. He offers MC's from Israel and other countries. All letters answered promptly by air mail. Partners from USA and W. Europe especially needed. English, German, Romanian.

* Mr Dov Ganani, POB 29549, 61294 Tel Aviv, Israel is a very advanced collector of ships, marine life, folklore costumes, military uniforms, Far East art. He wants contacts with similar collectors. English and German.

* Mr Meir Kasirer, POB 1521, 52115 Ramat Gan, Israel is interested in covers of UN Forces that serve around Israel: UNEF, UNIFIL, UNTSO, UNDOF, MFO SINAI. Also Israeli field post, and Gaza Strip/West Bank material. English.

SPECIAL POSTMARKS July - November 1990

Note: '*' denotes a postmark for FDC of stamps.

1. 9th July 1990 - Ramat Hasharon: (Klussendorf) Vending Machine Postage Labels.

2. 17th July 1990 - Arad: Hebrew Song Celebrations.

3. 22nd July 1990 - Givat Ze'ev: XVI World Convention of Beitar (political movement).

4. 5th August 1990 - Haifa: The 8th Int'l Folklore Festival in Israel.

5. 24th August 1990 - Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Israel's Philatelists Greet New Zealand 1990.

6.* 4th September 1990 - Yerushalayim (Jerusalem): Aliya Absorption.

7.* 4th September 1990 - Yerushalayim (Jerusalem): Festival 5751 (1990) - Spice Boxes.

8.* 4th September 1990 - Yerushalayim (Jerusalem): Electronic Mail.

9.* 4th September 1990 - Beersheva: Beersheva 90 National Stamp Exhibition (m/s issue).

10. 13th September 1990 - Bet Dagan: 70th Anniversary of State Veterinary Services.

11. 16th September 1990 - Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Ze'ev Jabotinsky [founder of Beitar] and the National Movement in Philately and Numismatics.

12. 5th to 12th October 1990 - Beersheva: Beersheva 90 National Stamp Exhibition.

    12a. 5th October 1990 - Opening Day.
    12b. 6th October 1990 - Postal Authority Day.
    12c. 7th October 1990 - Aliya Day.
    12d. 8th October 1990 - Youth Day.
    12e. 9th October 1990 - Thematic Philately Day.
    12f. 10th October 1990 - Beersheva and the the Negev Day.
    12g. 11th October 1990 - Closing Day.

13. 17th October 1990 - Emeq Hayarden Mobile Post: 70th Anniversary of Deganya Aleph and 80th Anniversary of Deganya Bet.

14. 21st November 1990 - Ashdod: 25 Years Port of Ashdod.

15. 27th November 1990 - Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Israel's Philatelists Greet Armenia '90.

STOP PRESS - New postal rates in Israel as of 29th November 1990 (NIS):

Inland standard letter/postcard: 0.60 Registration surcharge: 2.00
Airmail: 10g. per step for letters, 20g. for printed matter
Zone A (Europe): 0.90 first step, 0.35 for each additional step
Zone B (N. America, Asia): 1.10/0.45
Zone c (s. America, Pacific): 1.40/0.55
Aerogramme/postcards to all zones: 0.70

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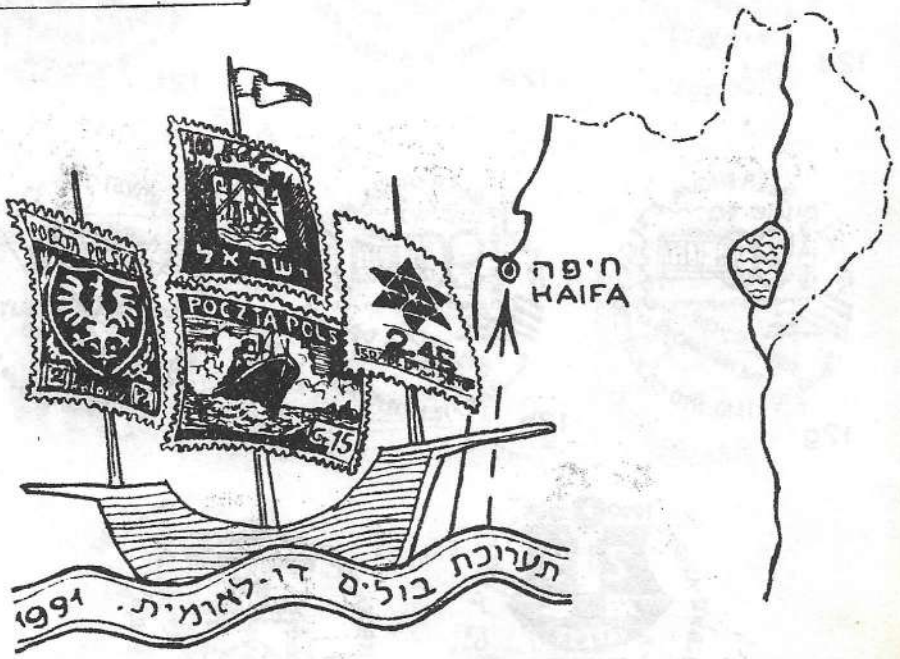
BINATIONAL STAMP EXHIBITION
POLAND-ISRAEL
HAIFA, 1991