

Shamir's Monumental Stained Glass Windows Unveiled At New Synagogue On Bar-Ilan Campus In Israel



AERIAL VIEW OF THE NEW JEWISH STUDIES COMPLEX AT BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY, RAMAT GAN, ISRAEL, which is rapidly nearing completion. Already finished, and dedicated this past July 1st, was the INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED TORAH STUDIES AND THE MIDRASHA LEBANOT, endowed by American philanthropists, Ludwig and Erica Jesselson of New York City. Mr. Jesselson was recently elected Chairman of the Global Board of Trustees of the University.

The monumental stained glass windows, "The Heavens and The Earth" by sculptor/painter Ami H. Shamir, were recently installed at the new Institute for Advanced Torah Studies at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. "The Earth" is constructed in hues of green while "The Heavens" encompasses myriad shades of blue. Each pane measures 22' x 20' and hangs 14' from the ground. The unveiling of this huge work is a major artistic achievement as Shamir has perfected the interaction of a visual form with its total environment. The unveiling of "The Heavens and The Earth" also marks the fusion of progressive trends in aesthetic and religious



AMI SHAMIR, the artist/sculptor, who created the monumental stained glass windows, "THE HEAVENS" and "THE EARTH," which now grace the new Synagogue at BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY, RAMAT GAN, ISRAEL. Shamir designed each of the 6000 plates by hand.

thought and has great significance for the Art world, the wider University community and the State of Israel.

Ami Shamir, collaborating with his wife, Nira, a graphic artist, also creates complete environments to complement his art pieces. His past works include a sculpted courtyard for the Museum of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies (Los Angeles), a total environment for the Children's Chapel at S.A.R. Academy (Riverside, N.Y.), stained glass works at Kennedy Airport (N.Y.)

and the Virginia Military Institute. Constructed from 6000 individually crafted segments of glass, "The Heavens and The Earth" has an especially dynamic relation to its surroundings. The subtle color, texture and design of the work are much accentuated by the availability of the changing light. Yet the harmonious balance of the work with the environment goes beyond architectural considerations.

Commissioned by Ludwig and Erica Jesselson, the work hangs in the synagogue of the Institute for Advanced Torah Studies. Bar-Ilan was founded to foster Jewish unity by providing an academic and religious meeting ground for all segments of Israeli society. The function of the building incorporates over 12,000 widely divergent students and faculty.

Stimulated by this multi-faceted space, Shamir seeks deeper unifying themes using religious and mythological symbols. Drawing from the work of Carl Jung, Shamir employs the images of the archetypal masculine and feminine principal. "These principals," he says, "manifest themselves in the spiritual, intellectual and physical aspects of both men and women. Harmony for the individual and the collective exists when equilibrium between the two is maintained."

Within the single principal is a polarity of positive and negative characteristics. "The Earth" represents the feminine principal. The positive side of the feminine principal manifests itself in creation, birth intuition and love. Its negative aspect influences rage, death, madness and destruction in nature. The symbols that sometime associate with the feminine are images of land, water, flowers, fruit and the form of the female body.

"The Heavens" represents the masculine principal. The positive side of the masculine principal encourages logic, linear thinking and the development of written language. In the negative form the masculine principal exhibits tyranny, exploitation and the subjugation of intuitive knowledge. Some

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