

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
Department of Antiquities and Museums
Jerusalem P.O.B. 586

March 28th 1965

8365- 211/121

Baroness Minda de Ginsburg
25, avenue Bugeaud
Paris XVI^e, France

Dear Minda,

Here we are at the end of March with D Day approaching fast. Feverish activity everywhere. Visitors ask sceptically - how can you open on the 11th? And we answer with confidence - open we will, on time!

Most of the wall show-cases are in place and the objects of the Roman and Byzantine period make a beautiful display in their proper setting. The mosaics from Beth Shean, named the Leontis mosaic, discovered only three months ago, have been transferred to the Museum for the opening. They depict, among other things, a nilometer next to the word Alexandria, scenes of the Homeric epic, crocodiles and birds. The mosaics, which have been seen by hardly anybody yet, will, I believe, be of special interest to the visitors. This mosaic at the end and the mosaic from Hamat at the start of the exhibition (it depicts a synagogue of the fourth century and is tantalising in its Hellenistic influences) will undoubtedly be a major attraction.

The Hahn-Voss collection has arrived and so have Dr. Borowsky's ivories. The layout of the cases has been completed. On March 30th we expect the free-standing show-cases from Switzerland.

We will be working against time, of course, for we will have many problems to solve but I am confident that the exhibition will be an outstanding success. For the first time it will be possible to see the entire treasure of the Dead Sea Caves, for example, and we have reconstructed the Holy of Holies from Arad with its two altars. A magnificent bronze stand of the Islamic period just discovered and repaired in France; the restored Artemis on its original stand; the Reifenberg coin collection, back from the Smithsonian in Washington, among many other things are just some of the important exhibits. But of course you have seen some of these objects yourself.

We are now working also on the Archaeological Conference which is being convened by the Hebrew University, the Israel Exploration Society and my Department in honour of the opening. Prof. Ghirshmann, Prof. Marinatos, Prof. Wiet have accepted our invitation to come and address the Conference. Most Israeli scholars will participate. The Conference will open on the evening of May 11th and continue till the evening of May 12th, with a special tour of the Museum for the over one thousand visitors from all over the country. The Conference, which is to sum up the archaeological work in Israel during the past fifteen years will, I believe, be the highlight of the opening festivities. Archaeological discoveries, indeed, come in such rapid succession that it is well-nigh impossible to keep up with them. I have myself just completed a small dig in the Judaeon hills where over 400 objects were found, amongst them a unique bronze lamp of the 9th century B.C., numerous iron anklets and two tridents. And who knows what the morrow will bring?

Be well - with all our best wishes and warmest regards, and au revoir,

Yours sincerely,

א. בירן (A. Biran)

A. Biran.

--- P.S. Enclosed an article on the Museum - old and new you may not have seen.

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