Presenter: Peter Lehnardt, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Title: **In the Aftermath of 1096: Strategies for Coping with an Outburst of Violent Anti-Judaism in Europe**

Panel: Medieval History

The paper shall evaluate the combined Jewish liturgical and other literary creative responses to the experience "to extinct the name of Israel" during the the first months of the first crusade which produced the first major autochtone texts of Ashkenazy Jewry. The first time after more than houndred years of adaption of, compiling, and commenting on literary traditions from the oriental centers of rabbinic tradtions, like liturgical texts, Talmud etc. Aschkenaz - as place, time and personae, became subject of literary activity. These new text from the beginning to th middle of the 12th century were based on a new literary stategy coping with the very violent experience of Anti-Semitism! Ashkenazy Jewry had to define its identity in twofold plausibility structures: one according to Ashkenazy religious textual and non-textual tradition, the other according the standards of the Christian majorty society. Once the sudden brake down of neighbourhood made the borders of the Jewish community far more distinct, motifs and literary expressions could be creativly adopted (in Hebrew): the lists of deceased members of Benedictine prayer fraternities could 'become' the first quires of a Memorbook, the rhyme officia for the local saints could 'become' the incent to write localized liturgical poetry mentioning actual events in historical categories and the masterplan to rule over history in the bendictine and chapter chronicles became the literary mould of the so called 'Hebrew First Crusade Chronicles'; while every act of Jewish martyrdom described in them was defined by place, time and name, just as in a vita and passio of a Christian saint. Catastrophy led to creativity and the cruel experience of Anti-Judaism fostered European Hebrew literature which became in all its complex dialogue with the local majority culture the foundation of Ashkenazy literary identity.