The engraved signet ring, which was later made into a brooch, features the coronation of the Roman god, Jupiter (Zeus in Greek mythology). The image was engraved in carnelian and placed in a modern gold setting. The inset image is that of Sigmund Freud reading a letter; the carnelian ring can be seen on his finger. The photograph of Freud was taken in 1938, shortly after he arrived at his new home in London.

The inspiration for the exhibition of the rings of Freud, which was shown at Israel Museum in Jerusalem from 19 June 2018 to 2 March 2019, was a ring that was presented by Freud to a student. The ring was part of the museum’s collections. In depth research led the exhibition curator to the discovery of sister rings around the world, all gifts from Freud to those in his secret inner circle.

In the exhibition, the rings were displayed together for the first time. They bear an ancient gemstone inscribed with figures from Roman mythology, each one carefully selected by Freud to reflect traits and attributes of the recipient. Also on display with Freud’s own ring and those given to his students are objects from his personal collection, which reveal connections to both his psychoanalytical theory and his personal life. In addition, a contemporary video work examining the inherent power contained in these objects was included in the exhibition.

(For more information, see also Harefuah July 2019)