



Bar-Ilan University
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן



Faculty for Jewish Studies

The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism Newsletter no. 17, June 2018, Sivan 5778



***Prof. Yael
Shemesh***

Dear Friends,

I am honored to introduce myself as the new Director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism.

As a Bible researcher whose main fields of inquiry include women in the Bible and feminist interpretation of the Bible, it is a great privilege for me to head an Institute that advances Women's Research in Judaism, and I aspire to contribute my part to this field. As a hobbyist long-distance runner, I am aware that this is an ultra-marathon which has begun in previous generations and will continue after ours as well.

Fanya Gottesfeld Heller of blessed memory had the merit to partake in this ultra-marathon thanks to her generosity and vision, which brought about the foundation of the Center for Jewish Studies named after her at the Bar Ilan University in 1998.

Unfortunately, Fanya passed away on October 31, 2017. This is a great loss for all of us, but there is some consolation in the thought that although she is not here with us in the physical dimension, she is definitely with us in the spiritual one; her vision lives on, since the Gottesfeld Heller Center will continue to be committed to what was so important to Fanya and will serve as her memorial.

Before her passing, Fanya was fortunate to see the publication of the book by the outgoing director, Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz, ***My Name is Freida Sima: The American-Jewish Women's Immigrant Experience Through the Eyes of a Young Girl from the Bukovina*** (2017).

In light of Fanya's biography, it is easy to understand the book's importance for her, since everything related to women, women immigrants and the construction of a new life, as she had done, was very close to her heart. She supported and encouraged the project of publishing the book almost until its completion and was so excited and pleased to see the book published as a project of the Center which she supported and encouraged for so many years.

Here I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz, who has served as Director of the Gottesfeld Heller Center with success, enthusiasm and devotion over the past six years, for accompanying me as a mentor in my first steps in this role, and always does so willingly and welcomingly.

I am lucky to enjoy her full cooperation. With her help and with the cooperation of my dear colleagues, the members of the Center's directorate, Prof. Zohar Livnat, Chair of the Department of Hebrew and Semitic Languages, Prof. Rella Kushelevsky, of the Department of Literature of the Jewish People, and Prof. Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman, Chair of the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archeology, I look forward to continuing to lead the Gottesfeld Heller Center so that it will continue to make a significant contribution to the field for which it has been established.

My thanks are also extended to the Faculty of Jewish Studies, within the framework of which the Center operates, and the Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Elie Assis, for his unconditional support of the center's activities. This year, after several years of intensive activity, including book publications, the center has been planning projects for the coming year. Among other things, a translation of an autobiography of a religious Holocaust survivor is planned, as well as a Conference entitled "Women Recounting the Holocaust" marking the 80th anniversary of Kristallnacht, that will deal with women during the Holocaust and women survivors, in collaboration with the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute for Holocaust Research at Bar-Ilan University, the Dr. Josef Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace, School of Education, Bar Ilan University, and the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance at the University.

In addition, we intend to publish the Conference lectures, and will continue to examine various possible collaborations for the future. These activities, along with plans for the next academic year, are

featured in this year's newsletter. Please follow our website for further information.

I wish you a healthy and fruitful summer, full of spiritual and material success, and that we will be able to fulfill Fanya's dream, sounding the voice of women in Judaism, the Miriam's song resonating through various fields of knowledge in every generation.

Yours,

Yael

Prof. Yael Shemesh, Director

Outstanding Graduate Student Prize Recipients:

Elisheva Friedlander



Elisheva Freidlander is a graduate student in the in the Israel and Golda Koshitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her MA Thesis with Prof. Debra Kaplan on the topic of "***She Shouted Before Us in the Beit Din': Jewish Women and Communal Authority in Alsace-Lorraine, 1648-1791'***".

"She shouted before us in the *Beit Din*", are the opening words of a court case summary recorded in the *pinkas* of the Metz *Beit Din* in 1774. The *pinkas* belongs to a genre of sources called *pinkassim*, logbooks written by officials of the Jewish community, and contains summaries of cases brought before the court between the

years 1771–1789. In many of the cases recorded, women appear before the court as active litigants. The aforementioned case deals with a young woman who rather adamantly refused to marry the man to whom she had been betrothed.

The *pinkas* is one of the sources I will use in my thesis, which examines Jewish women in Alsace-Lorraine between the years 1648 and 1791. The purpose of my thesis is to understand the power relations between women and the predominantly male communal institutions in the Jewish communities of Alsace-Lorraine. I will examine the dynamics of these power relations by focusing on two different variables that affected the lives of women: the different stages of a woman's life and the socio-economic class to which she belonged. My approach to this research will also be comparative, taking into account scholarship on Christian women in early modern Europe.

While much work has been done on the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine, little scholarship has been produced on Jewish women specifically. No study has focused on the relationship between women and communal institutions despite the existence of a large corpus of Jewish communal sources, many of which contain information that affected the lives of women. One example are *takkanot*, communal regulations composed by the *parnassim*, lay elite of the community. These *parnassim* prescribed appropriate modes of conduct, dress code, and sexual behavior for the women in their communities. The utilization of different types of sources, such as the *pinkas* Beit Din and *takkanot*, provides a more complete picture of the lives of the Jewish women I am studying in my thesis. The court cases inscribed in the *pinkas* contain descriptions of how women comported themselves in their dealings with a communal institution while the regulations reflect ideals prescribed by the communal elite to women in their community.

Leah Klatchko



Leah Klatchko is a doctoral candidate in the in the Israel and Golda Koshitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her doctoral dissertation with Prof. Yehiam Weitz on the topic of "**The Women of Mapai: The Female Knesset Members of Mapai, from the First Knesset in 1949 until the Electoral Defeat of 1977**".

In this paper I investigate the unique status of the female members of Mapai in light of two premises articulated in the paper. The first is that the labor movement led government institutions and the country from the days of the Yishuv until the mid-1970s, thus having a major impact on Israeli society. The second is that of the dominant values of the labor movement that were its commitment to social justice and the promotion of gender equality. The fight for gender equality began in the early days of the first Aliyah (1881–1903), gaining momentum during the second Aliyah (1903–1914). The determined struggle of female workers for equality in aspects of work and defense created a myth of gender equality. However during the last quarter of the 20th century this myth has largely been disapproved.

The majority of female *Mapai* leaders until the Sixth Knesset were leaders of the Female Workers' Movement. In spite of their aspirations to lead social change and their actions to promote women, there was a major barrier that was difficult to overcome. In order to prosper in the political climate of that period the women had to remain disciplined and loyal members of the party before promoting their agenda. In time, political and social changes in the state of Israel led the female party members out of the inner decision making government circles and they became a minority in parliamentary forums. One of them, Golda Meir, managed to break the "glass ceiling". This fact can indicate that the *Mapai* women were an unrealized force, it is assumed that the actions and failures of the female party members, as individuals and as a group, contributed to this. The lack of solidarity, the attachment to the image of women as a weaker sex and the blind adherence to the male movement leaders' dictates ("Din Hatnua") all led to a reality in which ideals of gender equality were kept at bay while other issues were tended to.

During the entire period during which *Mapai* was in power, female party activists were not considered equal, contributing members of the party, contrary to formal declarations of the leaders and the ideals on which the movement was founded.

Aliza Haiman



Aliza Haiman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Information Science at Bar Ilan University. She is writing her doctoral dissertation with Dr. Jenny Bronstein and Dr. Gila Pribor about "**Publishing in Israel During the Early Years of the State (1948–1960) – Between Ideology, Education, and Culture**".

This study analyzes the literature that was printed in Israel between 1948 until the end of its first decade in 1960, in order to expand our knowledge of the printing culture of that society and to understand how publishing and writing influenced ideology, education, and culture of Israeli society in those years. The gender issue is part of the understanding of how the books and gender issues printed during that period influenced the shaping of Israeli society during the state's primary period.

Women who worked in the literary field during the first decade of the state left their mark on the field of publishing, either as writers or as publishers in various roles. In my work I will examine the special role of women in these fields during the first decade of the country, examining their role as book authors, poets, editors, and so forth.

Among the active women were Miriam Wilensky, who later called herself Miriam Yelin-Stekelis after her father (Yehuda Leib Nissan) and dealt with children's literature. Her books were distributed through the Dvir publishing house.

Women also translated books – for example: Ruth Livnit translated mainly American literature. There were writers who dealt with strengthening and teaching the Zionist legacy such as Amalia Kahana-Carmon, who wrote stories about the War of Independence. She first published her book in "Sifriyat HaPoalim", and only later became the writer of the Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House.

Yehudit Hendel published books dealing with current events (i.e. the Holocaust and the survivors, Israeli society, etc.). In addition, there were writers who worked in a number of fields, such as poet Leah Goldberg, who worked at the "Sifriyat HaPoalim" and also worked in translation

The dissertation will focus on these women, their books, and their publishing houses, reviewing their books according to the names of the various publishers, focusing on the gender issue of the authors and the subjects in which the books are concerned.

The research will be based on data collection – books published during the first decade of the State of Israel (1948–1960) which exist in a National Library database. Through this database, the books can be sorted and quantified according to the names of the various publishers, the authors' names, the titles printed, and the subjects of the books.

The quantification of the books, the subjects dealt with, and of course the gendered observations of the authors and publishers will lead to a better understanding of how women influenced Israeli society at that time through their writing.

The cross-referencing of this information with the characteristics of Israeli society between 1948 and 1960 will lead to an understanding of the various processes that Israeli society underwent during the first decade of the establishment of the State and a better understanding of the cultural basis on which it was established.

Matanya Mali



Matanya Mali is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar Ilan University. He is writing his doctoral dissertation with Prof. Zvi Mark on "Theology, Negative Theology and Radical Negative Theology in the Poetry of Rivka Miriam and Yonadav Kaplun."

This research offers, for the first time, a thematic and rhetoric analysis of the discourse of theology, negative theology and radical negative theology in the poetry of Rivkah Miriam and Yonadav Kaplun. The research aims to describe the various theological standpoints that arise from the works of Rivka Miriam and Yonadav Kaplun, reveal the poetic and rhetoric strategies that they employ to express these standpoints and explore their contribution to the theological discourse in modern and post-modern Hebrew poetry and thought.

The main assumption of this research is that there is a connection between deconstructive poetic strategies and radical negative theology. Therefore, recognizing the loss of the text's authority status, sensitivity to paradoxes and oxymorons and attention to the violation of the rules of grammar, to irony, to multiple meanings and to reflection, serve as a way to cope with canonic text in times of crisis, while complexity, contradiction, silence and embarrassment are opportunities for God's closeness. The virtue of poetry to describe and to motivate a spiritual transformation, and the understanding that sometimes it is not merely a description of a theological standpoint but also a *theistic act*, presents it as a genre suitable for theological creativity.

In Rivka Miriam's and Yonadav Kaplun's theological poetry oxymoronicness and paradoxicality serve to describe the presence of an absence and the desire for God as nothingness, ambiguity and irony describe standing before God in moments of doubt and embarrassment, and reflection and criticism allow regarding failure to reach God a possibility to achieve its closeness. Self-reflection is experienced as an invitation for closeness with the sacred and not as a threat to the awareness of the sacred. Using these literary means and others, Rivka Miriam and Yonadav Kaplun transform the theological challenges of the second half of the 20th century into an opportunity for a renewed theological discourse in places where other discourses have fallen silent.

The importance of this research to research on women in Judaism is in its contribution to recognizing the poetry of Rivka Miriam as an important theological voice, and as such a call to the male-oriented theological canon to open up to women's voices that enrich it with their new theological perspectives that emerge from the contexts of their lives and the context of their bodies. The poetry of Rivka Miriam is permeated with theological statements whose images and metaphors are from a woman's world, as harsh and softer experience alike. For example, in the lines below: "The book fell asleep on the lap of the Rabbi, / The Rabbi rocked as a compassionate mother and the book fell asleep like a baby..."

Nitza Kristal



Nitza Kristal is a graduate student in the Department of General History at Bar Ilan University. She is writing her MA thesis with Prof. Miriam Greilshammer about "The Jewel, an Open Window to the Status of Jewish Women in Italian Cities During the Early Modern Period".

According to the Sages of Israel (Chazal), jewelry has two definitions. The first one, is as it is customary today, namely: bracelets, necklaces, earrings, rings, brooches etc. The second definition is everything that pertains to beautifying, refining and enhancing women. Included in this definition, the Sages of Israel introduce perfumes, furs, beads, fabrics, textiles, paints, or any materials used to soften the skin, etc.

In my research I seek to shed new light on the role and status of Jewish women in the Italian Jewish community during the Early Modern Period, on the basis of research on jewelry in this context. I am conducting my enquiry according to the comprehensive approach of the French *Annales* method. In other words, the *Annales* historiography advocates a 'Total History', that is to say to broaden the scope of historical research to every possible extent, relying on all types of sources and methods available to the historian (including anthropology, sociology etc.).

I decided, according to the system of French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, to analyze jewelry as a "Total Social Fact". According the definition of this renowned anthropologist, "Total Social Facts" relate to the most significant areas of life of any society (social life, law, economy, culture, etc.) and enable us to understand it better. More specifically, concerning the society I wish to analyze, beyond the developments

that apply to taste, quality and appearance, jewelry is not only a piece of beauty and art, but it is connected to almost every aspect of Jewish society and especially of women's lives such as: their status, gender, property matters, legal matters involving ownership of property and inheritance, daily life such as the various rites of passage (births, alliances, marriage, divorce, death and burial etc.) as well as diverse subjects such as superstition, magic and more.

The sources at my disposition are numerous and varied. I will rely on Jewish halachic sources (decisions from the Sages of Israel beginning with the talmudic period and *responsa* of the Italian Rabbis of the Early Modern Period), as well as various types of other sources (such as inheritance orders, verdicts, inscriptions, lists of property, wills, literature, art, etc.). These sources will enable me to better understand the status of Jewish Italian women in the Early Modern Period, both materially, socially, economically and mentally, including the relationship between the sexes. In my opinion, it is particularly fascinating that the jewel, which will be at the center of my research, will enable me to illuminate such significant aspects of the Jewish Italian community of the Early Modern Period.

Ronit Kav



Ronit Kav is a doctoral candidate in the Gender Program at Bar Ilan University. She is writing her doctoral dissertation with Prof. Azi Lev-On of Ariel University on "Religious Feminist Activism on Facebook – social entrepreneurship, characteristics, and perceived impact among the Modern Orthodox Jewish Community".

The basic conflict between feminism and religion poses challenges on various domains for women. This study opens a window into the world of religious feminist women coping with gender inequality in Jewish law, and working to promote their position in their offline religious community, through online social media.

In the last decade, the Internet is used as fertile ground for religious feminist initiatives in Israel, a tool to promote their status within their respective religious communities. The Internet facilitates platforms for introducing personal voices relatively free from dictates of extant high authority, which is particularly significant

among peripheral groups, for if not for the Internet, they would be silenced. Hence the importance of studying religious issues as reflected from within, transformed through the Internet in general, and by social media in particular.

This interdisciplinary research combines the fields of gender and communication studies. The research is carried out using qualitative and quantitative research methods which examines the two main players in the Internet arena – the entrepreneurs of online activity, and the virtual members who make up the online community by following the facebook discussions.

The uniqueness of this study is its focuses on the Modern Orthodox population whose uses and perceived impact of social media have not yet been studied. The findings may be a step forward in understanding how, and to what extent, online activity transforms religious feminist groups from the margins to the mainstream of religious communities, and whether, and how, online transformations contribute to offline change.

Yehuda (Udi) Yifrach



***Yehuda (Udi) Yifrach** is a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Department of Social Sciences at Bar Ilan University. He is writing his doctoral dissertation with Dr. Orly Meron, Prof. Benjamin Sredni, and Prof. Simcha Yagel about "**Religion and Family Planning: Birth Control and Halakha Among Religious Women in Israel 2017**".*

Religious affiliation and level of religiosity of women may affect their fertility levels and contraceptive use. Matching contraceptives in accordance to a woman's needs is an important, yet difficult, task faced by obstetricians and halachic poskim, particularly due to their side effects and halachic implications.

Currently, one of the most common methods of contraception is the intrauterine device (IUD). A common side effect of the IUD is uterus bleeding, which in turn

shortens the period of permitted marital relations and intimacy to a few days. Unfortunately, to date doctors and halachic poskim uncertain of the reasons for this IUD induced bleeding between menstruation periods.

In this interdisciplinary research field, both demographics and medical research will be examined in accordance to Jewish law.

The demographic part of the study will explain the relationship between religion and culture of the individual and the reasons for use of contraception. These findings could help Rabbis, wedding instructors and doctors to recognize the position of the couples they meet in their respective roles. The target population of the field survey are married women of the age of fertility (sample will cover 1,000 women) and Rabbis from the religious sector. Research among halachic authorities will include in-depth interviews with ten influential rabbis.

The medical halachic part of this study will investigate (using hysteroscopy, blood, ultrasound and cytokines tests) if IUD induced irregular uterus bleeding is caused by injury to the uterus lining, and in turn considered as pure blood or that it is not possible to determine for certain the source of the bleeding is from the IUD injury, and therefore the blood cannot be considered pure. The results could help many women who suffer from irregular bleeding (causing prohibition of marital relations and intimacy) solve their halachic dilemma.

The medical halachic part of this study will include 40 women, and the medical tests results will be assessed in accordance with appropriate significance tests (t-test and ANOVA tests as needed).

Yigal Alon



***Yigal Alon** is a graduate Student in the Bible Department at Bar-Ilan University. He is writing his MA thesis with Prof. Michael Avioz about "**The Bathsheba Narrative (2 Sam. 11-12) – From the Bible to Josephus**".*

The biblical story of David and Batsheva is brought in Shmuel 11-12. During the war with Ammon, David, who was in Jerusalem, slept with Batsheva, the wife of Uriah the Hitti, and, as a result, she became pregnant. David, in order to cover up what he did, summoned Uriah who was serving the battle and tried to send him to his home. The plan did not work. David's plan to kill Uriah in the battle is described later. After

the incident, Nathan came to David and reprimanded him for his behaviour and David admitted his sin. The baby that was born from Batsheva died when it was only one week old. Finally, another son was born to David and Batsheva named Shlomo Yedidya. In 2 Sam. 23 and in 1 Chronicles 11: 41 Batsheva's husband appears on the list of the heroes but without mentioning David's sexual relationship with Batsheva and Uriah's murder. Batsheva is also mentioned in Psalms 51 in David's request for forgiveness for his actions.

The themes of this thesis are Batsheva's role in the plot and her ethnicity. These are not just two biographical and meaningless details in Batsheva's life but rather a work that focuses on the research of these two specific issues. It is clear that David's actions in the Bathsheba narrative do not add to his honor and his ethnic origin plays no role in the narrative's plot. But David's taking the wife of a minorities foreigner is not the same as taking an Israeli woman (according to Yevin). I do not associate its role in the Batsheva narrative with her ethnic identification as these two issues are not interdependent.

The study will be carried out by comparing the following texts: The Masoretic text (MT), the Septuagint (LXX), the First scroll of Samuel from Qumran (4QSam^a), the The Covenant of Damascus (CD) and The Antiquities of the Jews (Josephus).

In all these texts, MT, LXX, 4QSam^a and the Targum Peshitta it becomes clear that Batsheva's ethnic identification is Hittite. On the other hand, in the description in Josephus and CD, it is devoid of an ethnic identity.

Attached with this is a summary of the main differences:

CD	Josephus	4QSam ^a	Septuagint	Masoretic	
	No	yes			Is it written: "Hitti"?

The findings from Qumran and Nahal Hever have a significant role in this analogy since they contain texts from Second Temple literature. In practice, the relevant connections to this work are only 4QSam^a and CD. From the other scrolls, such as Aramaic and Greek translations, there were no passages on the Biblical books relevant to this work, so I will suffice with later Greek and Aramaic material such as the Targum and the Syrian Aramaic translation. I intend to examine the differences between MT and these sources and try to offer explanations for the meaning of the differences, to explain the reason for the differences and to answer the question of whether the differences stem, as a result, from interpretations or other textual traditions, or, alternatively, from parallel traditions that were passed on orally in the post-biblical literature. The figure of Batsheva doesn't appear to the same extent as in the Masoretic text.

It is mentioned once, in a casual manner, in a Kumranic treatise called "The covenant of Damascus", and it is completely absent from the Apocrypha and Philo's writings. In the New Covenant Batsheva is mentioned off-handedly and in few words. In contrast, in "The Antiquities of the Jews" (Josephus) and in the literature of the Sages, the figure of Batsheva appears at relative length.

Pictures from the June 5, 2018 prizegiving ceremony



Group Picture of the 2018 Prize and Grant Winners



Leah Klatchko discussing her research



Nitza Kristal describing her research



Matanya Mali describing his research



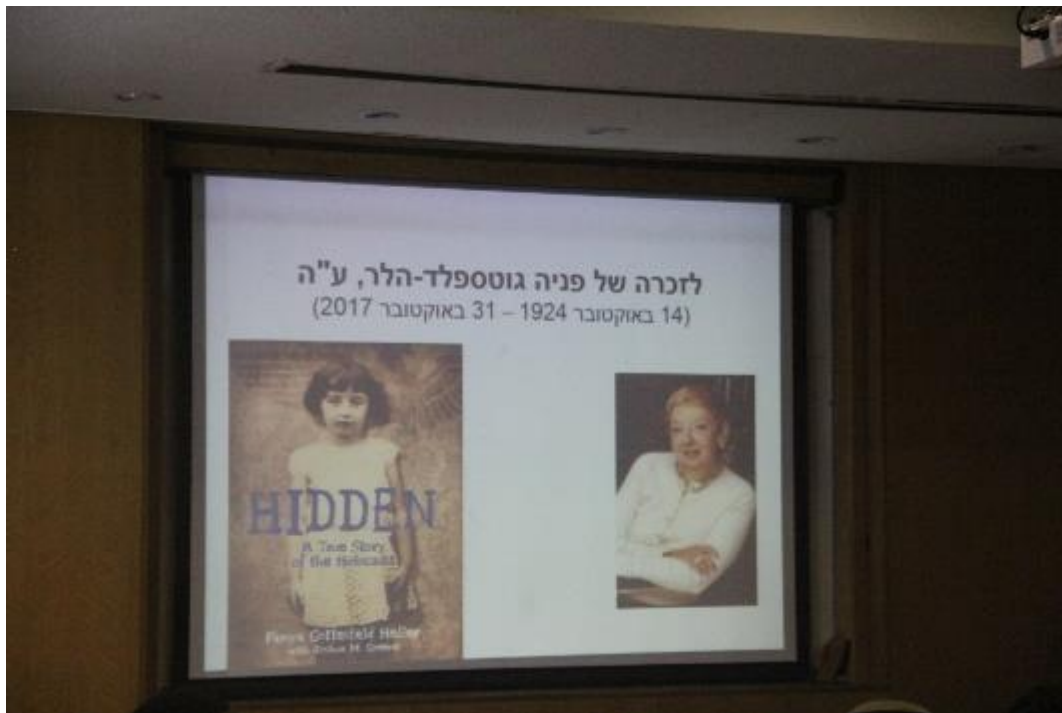
Ronit Kav receiving her prize envelope



The Opening of the Prize Giving Ceremony



Yigal Alon discussing his research



***In Memory of Fanya Gottesfeld-Heller z'l
October 14 1924 – October 31, 2017***

Cooperation with other Centers both inside and outside Bar-Ilan University:

The ***Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center*** continued its tradition of cooperating activities with other centers and institutes both inside and outside the university. The Center is planning a joint conference during the next academic year, in cooperation with the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research, the Dr. Josef Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace at the School of Education and the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance at the University. The Conference will take place in November 2018 on the 80th anniversary of ***Kristalnacht*** and will be entitled "Women Speaking about the Holocaust".

The Center continues its cooperation with various departments in the Faculty of Jewish Studies, the Faculty of the Humanities and the Faculty of Social Sciences at Bar-Ilan University and with other university institutes and programs connected with the study of women in Judaism.

In addition to this conference we plan to continue the tradition of student prizes, research grants, publication and travel grants, and support for translation of scholarly articles dealing with women in Judaism.

Staff



Yitzhak Pass, a doctoral student at the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan University, continues to admirably coordinate the administration of the ***Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism***. Mr. Pass has been

instrumental in smoothly ensuring the day-to-day running of the Center, acting as liason with other Institutes and Departments inside the university in terms of both the co-sponsored symposia and conferences. He is a pivotal figure at the prize-giving ceremony, coordinating the participants and cooperating Departments, and ensuring a successful reception before the ceremony begins.

Updates on our conferences and programs will appear on our website:

We hope that you will be able to join us for all the activities that we will host this year. For further information about conferences and fellowship opportunities:

<http://www.hellercenterforjewishwomen.org/>