



Bar-Ilan University  
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן



*Faculty for Jewish Studies*

## ***The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism Newsletter no. 14, June 2015, Sivan 5775***



***Prof. Judy  
Baumel-  
Schwartz\****

***Dear Friends,***

I am delighted to share with you a brief summary of our activities during this past academic year. During my fourth year as Director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism the Center has continued its active involvement in cooperative research ventures, has supported national and international conferences, and has been instrumental in promoting academic research on both the graduate level and among upcoming and prominent scholars dealing with various aspects of women in Judaism. This year in particular we have been fortunate in having been able to grant a large number of student grants, testimony to the growing interest in research topics pertaining to women in Judaism. The Heller Center has therefore continued and expanded its tradition of furthering and supporting academic scholarship in various fields that promote a better understanding of women's lives as connected to different aspects of Jewish life and practice.

As always, we are indebted to Mrs. Fanya Gottesfeld Heller for her support and direction, and see her own experiences as a guiding light for young scholars wishing to explore and document various academic facets of the study of women in Judaism, both today and in the past.

We also wish to thank the Faculty of Jewish Studies at Bar Ilan University, and particularly the Dean, Prof. Elie Assis, for his continued and enthusiastic support of the Heller Center and its various academic activities.

This year our activities focused on three areas: Academic Conferences and Symposia, supporting publications dealing with women in Judaism, and grants for Bar Ilan Staff and Graduate students with the lives of contemporary Jewish women. These activities, along with plans for the

next academic year, are featured in this year's newsletter. Please follow our website for further information.

Wishing you a summer and upcoming year of good health, fulfillment and Jewish growth,

*Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz, Director*

\* picture by Reuven Castro

## ***Research Grant Recipients:***

### **Prof. Aharon Gaimani**



*Prof. Aharon Gaimani is an associate professor in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, Bar-Ilan University, Israel and a historian who specializes in the history of the Jews of Yemen. His studies focus on religious and life texts of the Jews of Yemen. With the support of the 'Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism' Grant, Prof. Gaimani intends to publish his new study on Yemenite Ketubot.*

The research will be based on some 1,700 *ketubbot* from Yemen that are in my possession, most of which were collected from private parties. It is the largest collection in the world in this field.

In Yemen, the *ketubbah* was the legal equivalent of the obligations taken upon himself by the husband. In this study, I will concentrate all of the halakhic and social material on the topic, such as the status of the woman in the litigation before the community Religious Court; woman's status in non-Jewish courts, since in some instances Muslim law was more beneficial to the woman's rights, so she requested to approach the non-Jewish courts (on this issue in a certain period and in certain places, such as in the capital Ṣan'a, the *ketubbah* contained a clause that there would be no litigation in non-Jewish courts); the status of an urban woman versus a rural one; first marriages versus second marriages (for a divorcee or widow); preference for the observance of levirate marriage (*yibbum*) over performance of *ḥalitzah*.

Research into this topic will assist us in discerning the unique characteristics of the spiritual heritage of Yemenite Jews and their culture. Among the aspects concerned are the beginning of the *ketubbah* that includes blessings and prayer for the couple written artistically, tracing the times set for weddings, the sums of the bride's dowry according to time and place, and a comprehensive discussion of customs related to names.

### **Dr. Shalem Yahalom**



*Dr. Shalem Yahalom teaches in the Helena and Paul Schulmann School for Basic Jewish Studies at Bar-Ilan University. His research deals with Family Planning during the Middle Ages among the Jews of France and Catalonia. With the support of the 'Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism' Grant, Dr. Yahalom intends to further his research on this topic.*

The study examines the different attitudes of the scholars of France and Catalonia in the eleventh-thirteenth centuries toward *moch* - a technique for female contraception. This study discusses the incoherent approach of the ancient sages of Ashkenaz. The research points out the different editions in Rashi commentary to the Talmud that reveal a change in his halakhic approach.

The study focuses on the general permission of female contraception granted by Rabbeinu Tam. His ruling received a negative approach from his students and the Catalan scholars as well. The halakhic position was examined in parallel to the struggle of the Roman Church against the Cathar heresy, the rise of Kabbalah, and the resistance of the Catalan Rabbis to grant permission to their communities.

This study demonstrates the many external influences that shaped Jewish family law. Rabbeinu Tam, living in a community that was devoted to Jewish law, had no qualms in ruling that any woman in any situation may regulate her pregnancies. His students and disciples in France and Catalonia, living under the influence of the crusade against the Cathar heresy, and the process of secularization and permissiveness in the Catalan communities, were much more conservative. Our awareness of objective forces which influences the Sages, does not detract from their own subjective sense of a quest for truth, actualized by them via dialectical Talmudic tools.

## ***Outstanding Graduate Student Prize Recipients:***

### **Esti Dukac**



*Esti Dukac is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her dissertation under the supervision of*

*Prof. Zvi Mark on the topic of "Continuity and Change in the Works of Haviva Pedaya".*

The theme of this study is development and change processes in the works of Haviva Pedaya. The works studied are her three poetry books published until now: *Miteiva Stuma* (1996), *The Birthing of the Anima* (Motza Hanefesh) (2002) and *Blood's Ink* (2009), as well as her book of prose - *The Eye of the Cat* (2008). Each book will be examined as a developmental station, namely, as a work consisted of a significant change that gives the book its own character.

The principal goal of the study is pointing out the changes and transformations that took place in each book compared with its predecessor, where the metaphysical dimension and the change in relation to it constitute the criterion for those changes.

Examining the relation to the metaphysical will focus on the experience of searching for it and on the existential meaning of such experience, and in this context, the study will also raise the existential possibility of "non-benevolent mysticism", in which the yearning for an encounter with the Divine remains unanswered. In order to illustrate that aspect, I will present a comparison between Zelda's poetry as mystical poetry which includes revelations of benevolence, and in that sense, they bear redemption (although local), and Pedaya's poetry where such benevolence is non-existent. The comparison will become all the more poignant in view of the fact that these two poets belong to grand dynasties of mysticism: Zelda as an offspring of the Lubavitch Schneerson dynasty, and Pedaya as an offspring of a distinguished Kabbalistic family from Iraq.

In the broader context of Hebrew mystical poetry, it seems that Pedaya's poetry integrates well in 20<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew poetry in terms of representing the feminine mystical experience. It is a poetry combining traditional mystical elements with modern ones, like bold intimacy between the individual and holiness, and more specifically, between the woman and the divine, and even an inversion of power between them, as well as a sense of existential bleakness.

Pedaya's uniqueness is revealed, in my opinion, for all that, through the examination of her entire work on the timeline. Such an outlook reveals an existential-spiritual step; it is some kind of evolutionary microcosm of

a modern and feminine spiritual existence, deriving clearly from traditional mystical sources.

The feminine point in the study will be illuminated also via the discussion of the concept of the open space as margins, principally appearing in the prose book "The Eye of the Cat". The open space as margins will be illuminated in an existential and mystical context, in order to base the importance of the margins as an open space calling for authenticity in the first stage, and revelation in the second. In this way, through this study I hope to add a layer in revealing the feminine writing in the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, and this time - from the mystical angle.

### **Adi Marili**



*Adi Marili is a doctoral candidate in the Bible Department at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Ed Greenstein on the topic of "Body, Language and Gender in the Bible – Gender Presumptions in Biblical Society".*

The main goal of this research is to explore the presumptions about gender that were part of the social reality in Biblical times, and particularly to look into the ways in which womanhood was perceived in Biblical society. These goals will be achieved by examining the appearance of the human body parts in the Bible, their names and their meaning. Since the female characters are uncommon in the Bible, and the womanly references are few in comparison to the manly references, in order to learn something about women in the Biblical period, it is necessary to examine the overall picture of body language in the Bible and only then compare the woman figures with those of the men: which

actions are attributed to them, what is their operating range, what actions and meanings takes place in their near vicinity, in what way are their relationship to the deity described, and so on. The comparison of the functionality attributed to men with the functionality attributed to women (and with triple comparison, even to the functionality attributed to the figure of G-d) will illuminate the uniqueness of a gender perspective. From the unique appearances of women, and even from the lack of reference to them, we can start to make some conclusions about the fields that were attributed to women in Biblical times.

My research exposes Biblical gender perception through philological and semantic tools, with the belief that language, as the basis of human communication, exposes a world of thought, culture and society both overt and covert.

Understanding that the characters and images mentioned in the Bible were all created from a male point of view, requires us to search for meaning hidden "between the lines" and not accept the explicit facts that the authors provides the reader. Therefore, the discovery of the ways of thinking and the cultural and social perceptions will be achieved by undertaking a philology-semantic research approach. While the chosen research field is the names of body parts in the Bible.

The research focuses on some of the main body parts: the eye, mouth, hand and foot and examines their distribution in the Bible: where are the names attributed to women and where are they attributed to men, which roles represent the female body parts and which roles represents the male body parts, which objects are attributed to the female body parts and which to the male, when are the body parts mentioned in passive form and when in active, and so on. This examination includes both the physical occurrences of the names (e.g. seeing eye), the metonymic occurrences of the names (e.g. eye in the sense of personal opinion, and the metaphorical occurrences (e.g. 'doves eyes').

This research treats the Biblical text as an archaeological mound which requires "digging" between the different written text layers in order to reveal the findings. In this way it combines three research perspective: anthropology, semantic linguistics and gender theories.

## **Edna Hilvitz**



*Edna Hilvitz is a doctoral candidate in the Bible Department at Bar-Ilan University where she is writing her Thesis Equivalent under the supervision of Dr. Yael Shemesh on the topic of "Tziporah, the wife of Moses, as a Typical Example of a Life Saving Woman".*

Throughout the Bible we find stories in which, at the moment of danger, a woman suddenly enters the scene, restores quiet, and helps resolve the dangerous situation. In some cases she saves someone from certain death and in others from starvation, dangerous diseases, or various other threats. The saving of life by women runs as a thread through the books of the Bible, independent of place, time, author, and book. Biblical authors, whoever and wherever they are, choose to describe exceptional life saving women in many stories.

The first part of the study deals with the character of Tzipora, daughter of Jethro and wife of Moses. The central discussion focuses on the fascinating story on how Tzipora saved Moses and his family from a direct attack by God. The event takes place at the time of the family's journey from Midian to Egypt after the event of the burning bush. Amongst others, the study deals with a couple of difficulties which the story raises: the reason for the sudden and unexplained attack, the method of the attack, the identity of the attacked, the meaning of the expression "bridegroom of blood", etc.

The discussion contains an expanded analysis of the character of the story's main heroine, who acts fearlessly. The study presents Tzipora's extraordinary ability to find a way of escaping danger and thus bestowing new life upon the Savior of Israel. The uncommon way of rescue leads to

an investigation of the ancient law which was given to Abraham – circumcision carried out by women and its practical development in light of Halachic history. In the study I have juxtaposed the story of Tzipora at the lodging place with two analogies from the stories about the patriarchs. These analogies put the main heroine of this constitutive event on par with Abraham and Jacob.

On the one hand, the study analyses the structure of the story as supporting the view of Tzipora as the main heroine. On the other hand, it shows the importance and the contribution of the story to the series of events which touch upon the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt.

The second part of the study deals with the characteristics of female rescuing in the Bible. The chapter presents a literary genre with a clearly discerned pattern and literary conventions which reappear in stories on female rescuing. The chapter also contains an analysis of the economic and social class of the rescuing women as well as their standing within and beyond the Israelite community. The study discusses the scope of the phenomenon as well as gender-oriented differences between male and female rescuing respectively.

The chapter brings together all the stories about female life-saving. The stories are classified according to the degree of closeness between the saving woman and the person being saved by her. A categorized table presents all the Biblical stories on life saving women. The stories all belong to a pattern of fixed components making up for a truly Biblical convention. This pattern, hitherto unnoticed by scholars, brings to the fore an additional consensus which existed among Biblical authors concerning the roles of women – their role as life saviors.

## Fanny Yonish



*Fanny Yonish is an MA Student in the Department of General History at Bar-Ilan University. She receives the prize for a graduate seminar paper that she wrote on the topic of "The image of the Jewish Woman in England in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as it was represented by Judith Montefiore in the Jewish Manual".*

The integration between the Jewish tradition and the Victoria modernism is the base of my Seminar Paper. The purpose of my research is to feature the Jewish woman in Victorian England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it was represented by Judith Montefiore's work in *The Jewish Manual* she wrote/edited in 1846, and by the inspiration of her *Private Journal* of a visit to Egypt and Palestine (1838-1839). With the *Jewish Manual*, Judith Montefiore intended to guide other women in a subject gendered with female aspects, which are cooking, house management and taking care of a family. The importance of this guiding literature is that by satisfying basic needs Judith Montefiore creates elements of culture and aspects of folklore.

Judith Montefiore (1784-1862) was Levi Barnet Cohen's daughter. Her father immigrated to England from Holland, and was a rich and a respectable man who lived Jewish traditional way of live, giving good education to his children. Judith Cohen married Moses Montefiore (1784-1885) in 1812, who was a well known activist in the Jewish society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They both belonged to the Jewish elite in England and were active in the philanthropic activities.

For Judith Montefiore it was very important to keep the Jewish culinary tradition inside the Jewish home, as she wrote in the *Jewish Manual*: "Among the numerous works on Culinary Science already in circulation, there have been none which afford the slightest insight to the Hebrew kitchen... The various acquirements, which in the present day are

deemed essential to female education" (pp. 7-8). Nevertheless, she considered herself as an English Lady. We can see the integration between those two identities in the Jewish Manual as well: "Our collection will be found to contain all the best receipts hitherto bequeathed only by memory or manuscript, from one generation to another of the Jewish nation, as well as those which come under the denomination of plain English dishes" (p. 7).

It is a fact that different kinds of food and eating habits reflect ethnic and national identity. Therefore, we can ask whether Judith Montefiore was trying to create, with *The Jewish Manual*, a Jewish identity within the English society, or was she trying to make a Jewish integration into the English Victorian society. Trying to answer this question I was looking for Montefiore's motives for writing this guide book. Furthermore, while trying to find the fineness connection between Jewish tradition and Victorian modernism including bourgeoisie elements in her work, I looked for the bourgeoisie features, like education, respectability, ethic behavior and social norms of life combined with the Jewish tradition, which influenced her writing of the Jewish Manual.

Judith Montefiore appears through her Jewish Manual as a respectable English lady together with a proud and traditional Jewish woman, with a true desire to guide Jewish families their way into the bourgeoisie society and modern life. If we would like to feature the Jewish woman in Victorian England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century looking through Judith Montefiore's character and work, it must be a woman who appreciates guidance and education – even in cookery and house maintaining subjects – a respectable woman who lives by Victorian social codes combined with her personal Jewish traditional way of life.

## Gital Poupko



*Gital Poupko is a doctoral candidate at the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Adam Ferziger on the topic of "The "Mitzvah Tanz" and the art of the "Badkhan" at the Hassidic Wedding: Tradition and Change".*

The mitzvah dance (or *mitzvah tanz*, in Yiddish) is the ceremony which concludes the Hasidic wedding. The mitzvah dance is led either by a professional *badchan* (literally, jester) or by an amateur “inviter.” Singing or reciting verses prepared in advance, the *badchan* or emcee invites various male members of the wedding party to dance with the bride. The mitzvah dance is a dramatic, public rite of passage, and as such is charged with cultural symbolism as well as universal attributes. In this qualitative study, I examine the mitzvah dance and the art of the *badchan*, within their historical, philosophical, social and cultural contexts.

My goal is to shed light on the symbolic meaning of the mitzvah dance within Hasidic culture, and analyze the changes wrought to the ritual and to the role of the *badchan* toward the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. These changes will serve to illuminate differences between various Hasidic courts, especially as per their attitudes toward women, sexuality, joy, humor, and the effect of human action upon divine realms. Viewing the mitzvah dance as a cultural performance, I also aim to enhance our understanding of how rituals evolve and develop within societies committed to conservation of tradition.

My inter-disciplinary research method combines ethnographic fieldwork, with in-depth analysis of both primary and secondary texts. Thus, I draw upon close reading of sources such as Hasidic and Mitnagedic Halachic

texts, homiletic works, Hasidic tales, and texts recited by *badchanim* at historical as well as contemporary weddings. I am a participant observer at contemporary Hasidic weddings, including but not limited to those attended by Hasidic *Rebbes* of various courts. I conduct in-depth ethnographic interviews with key figures in the field, such as *badchanim*, wedding photographers, families of Rebbes, and ordinary Hasidic families, placing a special emphasis on Hasidic women with first-hand experience of the mitzvah dance.

Thus, I focus upon the role of women within contemporary Hasidism, both by analyzing the only public Hasidic ritual in which a woman takes center stage, both physically and metaphorically, and by conveying the nuanced female narrative regarding Hasidic culture. My research will shed light upon the first-hand spiritual experiences, and the social, religious and metaphysical roles of women within various contemporary Hasidic courts, while emphasizing the Hasidic woman's perspective, in her own voice.

### **Idit Bartov**



*Idit Bartov* is an MA student in the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her thesis under the supervision of Dr. Vered Tohar about "The Image of "Miriam the Prophetess" in Contemporary Hebrew Literature: Leader, Poet, Rebel".

From time immemorial, Jewish literature has drawn inspiration from the Bible and other holy canonical writings. Yet, contrary to expectations, secularization did not prevent writers from incorporating or referencing the holy writings. Nevertheless, the prevalent approach to the sacred texts underwent a change.

In addition to the aforementioned secularization, the feminism and post-modernism also make widespread use of canonical texts. In this context, the research process involves intertextuality, as a manifestation of a connection between different texts – either ancient or contemporary.

As a way of “stealing the language,” feminist writers turn to mythology and canonical sources, for several reasons and purposes: Conducting a virtual “dialogue” with classical and sacred texts empowers the female protagonists by positioning them within the cultural androcentric tradition. But at the same time, it appropriates this tradition for the sake of their own personal feminine needs and experiences. This is a corrective or deconstructivist approach to the mythology and the canon. Intertextual writing involves negating stereotypes, altering hierarchies, bringing marginal and excluded figures into the mainstream, using a model borrowed from the canon to describe emotions (anger, desire) and ideas (political, historical, and social opinions) that society considers to be beyond the pale, enabling a self-definition that is not bound by tradition, and allowing individual voices to be heard.

In contrast to Biblical figures in general – and women in particular – Miriam has played a central role in Jewish literature throughout the generations and across genres. Clearly, her character and personal history intrigued different groups of writers - starting with Chazal, who established the national canon, through the esoteric Kabbalists and Chassidic masters, and ending with modern, contemporary writers. They all perceived something in Miriam that distinguishes her from other Biblical women. Even today, Miriam continues to draw attention, and Torah institutions as well as both secular and sacred literary works are named after her.

My paper will examine the prophetess Miriam’s various representations in modern literature. Drawing on intertextual research, the works will be studied in relationship to the canonical text. The range of responses to the original text varies from respecting and venerating the ancient source – including adopting romantic, mystical, and religious attitudes toward it, and finally, to criticism and antagonism toward the text and its values (which are occasionally manifested as satirical or subversive writing).

The research corpus is comprised of modern Hebrew literature from different genres. Each of the selected works is directly informed by the image of Miriam as described in the canonical writings: the Bible and the

Midrash, Jewish law and Kabbalah, liturgy and even legend. Thus, each chapter opens with an exposition of the ideas upon which the literary work - is based. After presenting the intertextuality and analyzing the sources's significance, the chapters discuss the literary works that allude to the aforementioned sources and are directly or indirectly informed by them.

The first chapter deals with the connection between Miriam and childbirth and the sexual enticement. This idea appears in the Midrash, which repeatedly praises Miriam – both as the midwife who served as a leader for other women giving birth in Egypt and as Moses's sister who brought about his birth and saved his life. In addition, the Israelite women's seduction of their husbands is also linked to Miriam, and modern literature views this motif as a cultural and societal legitimization of female physicality and sexuality - in contrast to the cultural taboo.

The second chapter focuses on Miriam's power of speech as manifested in song, prophecy, her bold stances, and more. Her power of speech (in contrast to Moses, who is described as "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue"), was used for lofty purposes but also led to her downfall when she libeled Moses. Modern female writers see Miriam as a mother figure who inspired them to write songs and raise their voices in public.

The third chapter covers Miriam's well and also the connection to water in general and the symbolism of water and the Torah. In folk legends, water is also linked to women and childbirth, which brings us back to the first chapter. The well combines a miraculous, heavenly element with human deeds from below; it symbolizes more than anything else the "human" Torah that Miriam taught to the Israelites: the Oral Law, such as the Song of the Well (in contrast to Moses's Song of the Sea); and it adds another dimension – namely, a feminine Torah – to the power of speech discussed in the second chapter.

The fourth chapter deals with prophecy and the threefold leadership of the three siblings: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. Various customs and Jewish laws allude to Miriam's leadership and the way she prepared the Jewish people for salvation. Feminist writers who sought to write as congregational leaders and refused to be relegated to the (literal and figurative) women's section viewed Miriam as a role model, and they considered her to be the exemplification of a female leader who was on equal footing with her male peers.

In conclusion, one can argue that Miriam was indeed a unique figure, whom Chazal depicted as possessing bold, feminist traits. Remarkably, Miriam is now associated with modernist and post-modernist traditions that lie at the heart of the social, cultural, and religious consensus. These statements served as the basis for a large and diverse range of literary works that conducted a virtual “dialogue” with the ancient texts and perceived them as a framework both for developing the Biblical theme and as a rebellion and a protest in an attempt to bring about the desired change.

### **Ronit Shiran**



*Ronit Shiran is a doctoral candidate in the Bible Department at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her dissertation under the supervision of Dr. Yael Shemesh on the topic of "Deborah's Literary Character and the Portrayal of Her Leadership in Judges 4-5".*

Deborah's character in the poetic and narrative sections of Judges presents a unique model of female leadership, which can be implemented today as an example for **public female leadership**. Deborah's character is a special representation of charismatic and public leadership and has a lot in common with Moses and Samuel, the great leaders of the Israelite people in the pre-monarchic period.

My research is unique in that it represents a detailed comparison between Deborah's characterization and those of the great Israelite leaders Moses and Samuel. In this study it becomes apparent that there is a stronger affiliation between the leadership characterization of Deborah and those of Moses and Samuel than found between Deborah and other biblical female characters—including female biblical leaders.

This study examines Deborah's unique **charismatic feminine leadership**. Moreover, this study demonstrates that the typology of charismatic leadership is not only attributed to Moses and Samuel's

leadership, but is also present in the description of Deborah's leadership in Judges 4-5.

In this study I propose that, although Deborah's character did not receive a comprehensive description as did Moses' and Samuel's characters in the biblical accounts, it can be concluded from what is described of her that she had a charismatic character and that the writer depicted her as a female public leader, similar in ways to Moses and Samuel.

The interdisciplinary aspect of this study makes it particularly unique in that I integrate theories **from the social sciences** with the biblical studies. Current sociologists characterize female leadership as different from male leadership. They propose that charisma plays a larger role in the leadership of women, consolidating, and involvement and commitment of their followers. According to Shachar, charismatic leaders are those who are able to 'light a fire' inside people and create a following. I concur that this is relevant to Deborah, who used her charisma to achieve her goals, execute her vision, and save her people. Charisma carries more weight in the case of female leadership than in the case of male leadership, which can rely on other factors.

The research by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2003), which included 50 prior studies from 1985 to 2001 comparing female transformational leadership to men in managing positions, has found there is a small, yet significant difference between the genders in that women use more **transformational leadership** than men. In other words, women managers use more ways to inspire motivation in their employees than male managers, are more optimistic and enthusiastic about future goals, further develop their employees, develop better personal relationships with them, and tend to reward desired behavior.

Deborah was the only national female leader in the Bible. Therefore this study examines her leadership patterns as they are presented in her story and poetry. An interesting discovery in this study is that the patterns and characteristics of her leadership are similar to what is known as **transformational leadership**, which tends to be perceived as a more feminine type of leadership also used in times of crisis. In the days of the Judges, Deborah initiates change and leads a military endeavor at a time of crisis and distress—a period in which there was growing pressure from the Canaanites. Examples of women being able to make a difference in times of crisis in their unique way and lead to significant changes is apparent today, in Israel and around the world.

In this study I wish to emphasize that public leadership by women existed in Biblical times. Deborah's character may have been reduced or pushed aside, but she is still an example of the possibility that public female leadership, at the very least, was as good as male leadership.

Deborah's character is relevant in today's public discussion concerning the place of women in public leadership positions. There is still a "glass ceiling" forcing women to fight for their place in the free market, workplaces, managing positions and especially public positions. Deborah's character can be an example and role model, giving strength and courage to women who seek to influence in public positions and be heard.

### **Valeria Seigelshifer**



*Valeria Seigelshifer is a doctoral candidate in the Gender Program at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Tova Hartman on the topic of "Modern Orthodox Women Filmmakers; A Study on Voice, Arts, and Culture".*

My research explores the process of creating a public voice vis a vis the experience of modern orthodox women filmmakers in Israel. It asks in what ways being engaged in a creative endeavor such as filmmaking allows and encourages them to publicly reflect upon the norms and practices of their own culture, upon their personal biographies as members of a community, and upon their dynamic engagement with their womanhood.

In the past twenty years, many short films describing the experience of orthodox women have appeared in Israel, most of them written and

directed by modern orthodox women. A salient characteristic of such films is the presence of a woman's perspective on religious matters, usually involving women's roles in private and public spaces, and on practices dealing with women's bodies.

This study shows how making films enables women to address subjects not usually discussed in public and which often challenge hegemonic interpretations of women's roles in society. The process of creating a public voice described in the dissertation centers on two interrelated axes, personal and socio-cultural.

At the personal level, the study describes an engagement in introspection and a quest for self-expression inherent to filmmaking and filmmakers' negotiations in order to make their voices heard. It also points to filmmakers' use of filmmaking for therapeutic ends. However, contrary to classical therapeutic narratives focusing on an individual healing process, filmmakers' narratives combine a personal and a social voice, a means for dealing with painful personal issues and also a means of social dialogue. Acknowledging the connection between personal distress and larger social problems, filmmakers use their films to engage in a public dialogue with their culture and give voice to social critique. An analysis of the positions filmmakers adopt in terms of the content of their films – ranging from overt social criticism to denial of a desire to transmit a message – elucidates the multiple strategies women adopt in order to articulate social criticism and reflects on women's possibilities of having a public critical voice. Finally, this study shows that women's ability to maintain their voice is not only an empowering psychological move but also a political act. It sheds light on how modern orthodox women filmmakers expand and transform their communities' conversation by making room for their own subjective experiences.

## **Yarden Yitzhaki**



*Yarden Yitzhaki is an MA student in the School of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University. She is writing her thesis under the guidance of Prof. Chaya Yitzhaki about "Examining the contribution of individual characteristics and environmental characteristics to adaptation of ultra-Orthodox girls who dropped out of school".*

This study examines the contribution of personal and environmental resources to adaptation of ultra-Orthodox girls who dropped out of school, and thus puts them at the "Center of the map ", to encourage the services development for this unique population.

The importance of this study is that it will be the first examination of the phenomenon of ultra-Orthodox girl dropouts using quantitative research in the context of the personal, family and community. Ultra-Orthodox society protects the girls and the women living in it, so this is a population which has not truly been studied. My research will hopefully add to our knowledge about this population and contribute to familiarizing us with the unique feminine characteristics as they are expressed in Ultra-Orthodox society.

It should be emphasized that there is a significant difficulty for girls who are having difficulty in ultra-Orthodox educational frameworks, to find alternative solutions tailored to their needs. If the study will find that the factors do contribute to proper adjustment of the girls, this may contribute to the development of effective intervention avenues and rational treatment in this population to help them integrate into normative society.

## Noam Federman



*Noam Federman is an MA student in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University. He is writing his thesis under the supervision of Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz on the topic of "Ideology and Family among the Underground movement deportees from the Yishuv to camps in Africa 1944-1948".*

As part of my research about family and ideology among the underground activists from Israel who were exiled to camps in Africa, I will examine whether there was a conflict between two key values that played a part in the lives of exiles; the value of loyalty to the underground goals and ideology and the value of family devotion. Indeed, even before joining the underground organization and becoming a political exile, one chose the way of life that seemingly put aside one's ties to the family unit. However, only in prison, especially in a detention camp in exile, the ties connections with the family became stronger.

After the end of the First World War, Britain received a mandate governing the Land of Israel, a main goal of which was to establish a National Home for the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. Over the years a struggle against the British mandate began, and when Jewish underground organizations were established, the struggle had increasingly become fierce. The British mandate on its part, utilized a variety of methods to eradicate what it perceived as terrorist attacks, and its main tool was the imprisonment of underground movement members. On October 19, 1944 the British launched a new operation - Operation Snowball. As part of this campaign, the British resorted to a drastic step of transporting resistance fighters from prisons in Israel to detention camps in Africa.

The greater part of the research paper will be dedicated to examine the situation of the wives of the exiled detainees, who were torn between

maintaining a connection with their husbands and acting on behalf of their release. The main burden of the detention fell on the women who had to take care of their family on the one hand and on the other hand they had to work towards the release of their husbands from exile.

The study will be based on unique primary sources, the most important of which is the extensive collection of letters from my father - David Federman, who was an 'Irgun' activist and was exiled to Africa, to his wife Pnina Federman and their children Ehud and Amiram. These letters which were found in recent years were not released until now and had never been deposited in any of the archives dealing with the underground movements. In fact, this is the first time they will be used in any research.

The focus on the letters is not random; There are many memoirs written by members of the Jewish undergrounds, some of which whom were also exiled to Kenya. However, these books and memoires emphasize the heroics of the members of the undergrounds. I will used the letters to explore the human interest aspect of their contents and will particularly examine the tension between loyalty to family and loyalty to the underground.

This is the prime significance of this study, which examines the family life of members of underground organizations in general and in particular those whom were exiled to Africa.

## Yona Kapah



*Yona Kapah* completed her MA in the Department of Land of Israel Studies at Bar Ilan University where she wrote her Thesis under the supervision of Prof. Avi Faust and Dr. Avi Picard on "The Lives of Yemenite Girls in Palestine during the British Mandate".

My research deals with the way of life of young Yemenite girls in Eretz Israel during the British Mandate in Palestine between the years 1923-1945. The aim of my research is to evaluate the daily life of young Yemenite girls that lived in Eretz Israel: the reasons involved in the necessity of sending them out to work at such a young age during the years 1923-1945, and to evaluate if the manner of absorption of the Yemenite immigrants in Eretz Israel influenced the phenomenon of sending out young Yemenite girls to work .

In this research, the absorption of Yemenite immigrants before and especially after WW1 was examined and the causes that conditioned their absorption were also examined. In this setting, the external causes such as the economic situation, the security conditions, political and social sources were checked. In addition, Yemenite immigrants were evaluated in their capacity to deal with the changes in their lives, their environment and especially in their families. I also analyzed the marital changes, the reactions of the married couple to these transitions and their reaction of the parents to the younger generation in regard to the changes from the traditional Yemenite society.

The research focused on these young girls who worked as maids. This became a phenomenon in the society at that time. The following parameters were researched: the number of girls who went to work as maids, their young age, the employer's attitude towards them, and the

attempt of various groups to help these young girls get released from this setting.

The heads of the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Israel wished to create "a new Jew" in contrast to the Diaspora Jew who was represented in the old Yishuv. They imagined the new Jew to be able to take over the agricultural work from the Arabs, speak Hebrew, and as a result, he will become the human basis of the utopian society of the future establishment of Israel. They also put the emphasis on the building of a new generation based on their vision and their focus was on the younger generation. That was the main goal of the Zionist Revolution.

The Zionist Movement regarded Jewish education as a means to reach its goals in Eretz Israel. Teachers, authors, and poets were enlisted to achieve these goals and the means of achieving them were speaking the Hebrew language, writing children's literature, children's newspapers, and the creation of youth groups.

Yemenite immigrants were considered by the heads of the Yishuv to be suitable to the conditions in Palestine before WW1: mentally, physically, and were able to compete with the Arab worker. But, the heads of the Yishuv were disappointed because of the difficult integration of the Yemenites.

The difficulties of the Yemenite immigrants influenced the Yemenite family and undermined its stability. The Yemenite immigrants suffered from diseases, hunger, and death. They reached Eretz Israel without any worldly possessions because the journey to Eretz Israel ate up all their money. When they arrived in Eretz Israel, they didn't have proper housing so they slept in barns, stables, or under the starry sky. If they did succeed in renting a room, the condition were terrible and it was overcrowded which caused incessant arguments and bickering. Because of this overcrowding, many people contracted diseases and kept getting infected again.

It was difficult for the Yemenites to find work because most jobs were given to the cheap Arab labor or the Histadrut members. So there were no jobs left for the Yemenite immigrant. Those who were lucky and found work received very low pay. As a result, the family was often hungry, didn't have money for medical treatment and couldn't send their children to school. So women had to go out to work and neglected the house and their children.

The difficult absorption of the Yemenite immigrants had a great influence on the young girls. The girls were forced to become housekeepers when the mother had to go out to work. They also started working at a young age to help the family. They didn't go to school and remained illiterate for the rest of their lives. In addition, they suffered humiliation, snobbism, and disrespect on the part of their employers. This was a reflection of the humiliating behavior that their parents suffered.

The emphasis of education that the heads of the Yishuv gave to the younger generation did not include the Yemenite immigrants. The parents couldn't afford tuition and these poor children who were mostly Yemenite, walked around the streets hungry and barefoot. The boys sold newspapers, shoelaces, and the girls worked as maids, usually for worked long hours without appropriate salary and without proper conditions suitable for girls their age.

Those few who were able to go to school, felt the disrespectful attitude on the part of the principal, teachers, and mainly on the part of the other pupils. These pupils felt superior to the Yemenite pupils mainly because of the Yemenite girls who cleaned their houses. The heads of the Yishuv considered these children who wandered around the streets as a "plague" and thought of ways of getting rid of them. They opened an evening school for these Yemenite pupils which taught simple professions because the teachers considered them to have low intelligence. Evening classes to teach Hebrew were opened in the neighborhood clubs but the young girls were not allowed to go out in the evenings. Most of them weren't able to go anyhow even if they were allowed to because they were so tired. Very few organizations tried to help the girls receive an education instead of going to work.

From personal interviews and biographies of Yemenite women who lived during the stated period, they show how their lives were full of anguish, sorrow, and suffering. There is no doubt that the ineffectual absorption of Yemenite immigrants and the neglect of the administrative offices in Eretz Israel towards these children of Yemenite immigrants, caused all these girls to go out to work.

*Pictures from the June 15, 2015 prizegiving ceremony*



**Listening to the opening remarks**



**Prize winner Valeria Seigelshifer speaking**



**Prof. Aharon Gaimani receiving the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Research Grant**



**Prof. Aharon Gaimani and Heller Center Coordinator Yitzhak Pass at the prizegiving reception**



**Prize winner Dr. Shalem Yahalom speaking**



**Prize winner Yarden Yitzhaki speaking**



**Prize winner Idit Bartov speaking**



**Prize winner Edna Hilvitz Speaking**



**Noam Federman receiving the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Outstanding Graduate Student Prize**



**Prize winner Fanny Yonish speaking**



**Yona Kapah receiving the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Outstanding Graduate Student Prize**



**Group picture of the 2015 prize winners**

## *Academic Conferences and Symposia:*

On November 23, 2014 the *Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center* co-sponsored a symposium entitled "The Goals of Religious Zionism and Religious Education" together with the Institute for the Study of Religious Zionism, The Joseph Orgler Chair for the Study of Religious Zionism, the Josef Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace, the UNESCO chair for Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance, the School of Education at Bar Ilan University, The Chair for the Study of the Jewish National Fund. The symposium was held in honor of the publication of volume 44 of the inter-university journal "Dor Le Dor" which was dedicated to the topic of "Religious Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora", edited by Prof. Zehavit Gross and Prof. Yuval Dror. Speakers included Prof. Dov Schwartz, Rabbi Avi Gisser, a panel chaired by Haim Zisovitch that included Prof. Yissi Katz, Prof. Yaffa Zilbershatz, Rabbi Dr. Avraham Lipschitz, MK Rabbi Eli Ben Dahan, and Rebbetzin Esti Rosenberg and closing remarks by the president of Bar Ilan University, Rabbi Prof. Daniel Herskowitz and the Minister of Education, Shai Peron. The *Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center* was instrumental in underwriting a central lecture of this well attended symposium which was given by Prof. Zehavit Gross on the topic of "What is Religious Zionist Identity in the eyes of female graduates of the state religious educational system – an educational research perspective.

On June 1, 2015 the *Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center* co-sponsored a symposium entitled "Women's Spiritual Leadership – Whence and Whither" together with the Josef Burg Chair in Education for Human Values, Tolerance and Peace, the UNESCO chair for Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance, the Shocken Institute for the Study of Judaism, the School of Education at Bar Ilan University. Conference participants included Prof. Hannah Herzig, Prof. Ruth Halperin Kaddari, Dr. Hanah Kehat, Dr. Sarisi Naifa, Sr. Randa Abas, Rebbetzin Malka Piotrikowsky, Dr. Dalit Atratzki, the artists Miriam Rish, Chava Nevo, Drora Hochman, Rina Tzichtinger, Sarah Friedman, Naomi Rubin, Prof. Margalit Shilo, Vered Sueid and TED lectures by Tzofia Malev, Dvir Hadad, Liora Saks Shmueli and Sarah Levinger.

### ***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 two joint conferences next year, the first in cooperation with the Institute for Religious Zionism at Bar Ilan University and an additional conference to be held in cooperation with the School of Education. Several meetings have been held between the Center's Director, Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz and Prof. Zehavit Gross of the School of Education at Bar Ilan University and incumbent of the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights, Democracy, Peace and Tolerance at the University about possible conference topics and the conference is scheduled to be held in early 2016.

The Center continues its cooperation with the Israel and Golda Koschitsky Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry Department at Bar Ilan University and with other university institutes and programs connected with the study of women in Judaism.

In addition to these two conferences 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***



Center coordinator Yitzhak Pass, who is also a graduate student at the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar Ilan University, has continued his excellent work at the Heller Center. Mr. Pass is responsible for the smooth running

of the Center, acts as liason with departments and agencies both inside and outside the university and is instrumental in coordinating the prize giving ceremony

**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/>