



Bar-Ilan University
אוניברסיטת בר-אילן



Faculty for Jewish Studies

The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism

Newsletter no. 16, June 2017, Sivan 5777



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

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to be able to share with you the various activities of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism during the past academic year. During this year, the Center has continued its active involvement in cooperative research ventures, and has brought to fruition a publication project about Jewish women immigrants and their daughters which has long been in the making. In addition the Center 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. As in previous years, this year the Center distributed a large number of student (graduate) grants in addition to the grants given to academic staff dealing with research topics pertaining to women in Judaism. The Heller Center is proud to be able to continue its tradition of furthering and supporting academic scholarship that shed light on the lives and activities of Jewish women in various countries and at different periods in Jewish history. By doing so, we continue our mission of promoting 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.

The Center's major activities during this academic year have been in three areas: Supporting research publications dealing with women in

Judaism, bringing the "Jewish Women Immigrants and their Daughters" project to fruition, and distributing grants for Bar-Ilan Staff and Graduate students who have studied and written about 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

Research Grant Recipients:

Dr. Tania Zion Waldoks



Dr. Tanya Zion-Waldoks teaches in the Graduate Program for Gender Studies at Bar Ilan University. She received a received a 'Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism' grant for her study of "Bayit Na'eman Beyisrael: Jewish-Orthodox Women's Motherhood and Public Action for Agunot".

This qualitative research study examines the multi-dimensional connection between motherhood and activism in Israel. It is based on an analysis of the life narratives of Orthodox women who fight against Get refusal. Israeli society is characterized by traditionalism and pro-natalism which are expressed through policies and discourses that support marriage and childbearing. Motherhood is considered a type of 'national service' through which a Jewish woman fulfills her purpose, preserves her forefathers' traditions, and contributes to the national effort. Moreover, the research literature shows that in many social movements in the world in general, and in Israel in particular, use women's roles and identities as mothers as a means of acquiring a voice in the public space and legitimizing (or delegitimizing) their agenda. Nevertheless, in contrast to many other women's movements, the motherhood issue

does not at first glance seem to be a prominent component of women's public activism against Get refusal. The opposite is true, as religious women they are socialized to view the roles of mother and housewife as central. They are educated to express modesty and unwavering loyalty towards religious authorities and national institutions. Therefore, public activism, especially if it includes aspects of criticism towards rabbinic and state authority, is considered a dangerous deviance from the gendered norm for religious women. However, this study shows that the vast majority of women fighting for a woman's right to divorce are married, mothers, and believers in the institution of marriage and "the Jewish family". In fact, both their motherhood and political activism are salient to their Jewish identity and their belonging to religious society.

The study identifies four models of the relationship between motherhood and activism: Contradiction, Complimentary, Challenging and Mutual Constitutive; and analyzes the different linkages between them. It shows how these religious women treat motherhood and activism as a type of "identity work", "boundary work", gendered political strategy, a religious-ethical imperative, and/or "emotion work". This claim offers a new perspective on the shape and characteristics of women's activism for social change in general, and religious society in Israel in particular. The question of motherhood is central to the field of research both because activists are often accused by their opponents of *wrecking homes* – both in the sense of striving to end specific marriages and dismantling concrete families and in the sense of undermining the ethos of "a loyal/faithful house in Israel" and breaking through the boundaries of *Halakha*. The activists are often accused of severely damaging the cultural, social and political "Jewish Home" in its broadest sense. Yet the activists do not perceive themselves as acting under the influence of "foreign" claim "liberal" influences and refute that they intend to undermine the status of the family, *Halakha*, or to destabilize the "Jewish nation". The opposite is true, they often refer to their work as a sanctification of God's name (*Kiddush HaShem*) and see their efforts as a religious imperative or call for repair to ensure the continuation of the Jewish people in Zion. They experience themselves as working to preserve the essential values of *Halakha* and maintain its relevance to the general Jewish society in modern Israel.

In other words, the ostensibly personal boundary work of each activist between her role as mother and her public-political role has symbolic (and sometimes even normative) repercussions on gendered power relations, negotiations regarding the boundaries of the Jewish people and the interpretation of collective Jewish identity of Jews in Israel and of the State of Israel itself. Thus, the research challenges the dichotomous discourse surrounding religion and state in Israel and contributes to a new understanding of the links between the public and private space in Israel, and between the personal and the political in general; as well as their repercussions.

Dr. Lilach Rosenberg



*Dr. Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman is a senior lecturer at the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology, Bar-Ilan University, Israel and a historian who specializes in the history of Israel in the modern period. Her studies focus on women and gender in Mandatory Palestine, and deal with range of issues: feminine identity, feminine leadership, the Hebrew family, marriage and motherhood and biographies of women in the era of national renaissance. Her book, "Revolutionaries despite themselves: Women and Gender in Religious Zionism during the Yishuv Period" (Hebrew) was published by Yad Ben-Zvi in 2005. With the support of the 'Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism' Grant, Dr. Rosenberg-Friedman intends to publish her new study on "**Outmarriage between Jews and non-Jews in Mandatory Palestine and in Israel (1920-1968): National, ethnic, social and gender aspects – A view from below**".*

This study will undertake an in-depth and comprehensive study of outmarriage between Jews and non-Jews in Mandate Palestine and in the State of Israel (1920-1968) from a socio-historical perspective. This in-depth analysis of the phenomenon will serve as a platform for the discussion of the place and status of the woman in the Yishuv and Israeli society and the perception of the family in these societies.

In this innovative study on a topic as yet unexplored from a comprehensive historical perspective, I will take a view "from below" in order to analyze the phenomenon of the immigration to Israel of mixed families, the result of a marriage between a Jewish and non-Jewish man or woman in Europe in 1920-1968, and their absorption in Israel from a social, cultural and religious aspect. I will also examine the local phenomenon of outmarriage, which was a product of the local historical context: marriages between Jewish women and British men during the British Mandate, and between Jews and Arabs throughout the period.

During this period, thousands of mixed families were scattered all over the country in various types of settlements. Their encounters with Jewish society, whose national and ethnic boundaries were still in a state of flux, were often stormy, accompanied by familial and social upheaval. These encounters were a reflection of the complex relationships between religion, ethnicity, nationality, society and gender. They played a role in consolidating the perception of the Jewish family as well as the identity of

the Jewish woman, and in forging the Jewish identity of Israeli society, along with its attitude towards non-Jews.

The study will address various topics: a profile of the mixed families and a demographic perspective; daily life; gender aspects; Israeli Jewish identity, and more. All these subjects will be investigated from a comparative perspective, to the various groups that make up the discussion, but also with an eye to other countries, and to Israeli society of today.

The gender aspect played a major role in the issue of Outmarriage. The women in these mixed families – both the Jewish and non-Jewish women alike – bore the brunt of most of the criticism. The hostility with which they were received stemmed from the perception of the proper place for women in a nationalist society and their role in it. The non-Jewish women were perceived as a threat to the nation in demographic terms because they jeopardized its Jewish character. The Jewish women were perceived as having deserted their nation, betraying it in order to fraternize with the enemy. The common gender denominator seems to have overshadowed the ethnic and national differences between women at the focus of the study.

This comprehensive study will serve as an important infrastructure for the study of the history of the family in Mandate Palestine and the State of Israel. It will also provide insights into theories relating to the interrelationship between nationalism, ethnicity, society and gender.

Prof. Zvi Zohar



Prof. Zvi Zohar teaches in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry and in the Law Department at Bar Ilan University. Prof. Zohar received a 'Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism' grant for his study "She Opens Her Mouth with Wisdom": The Qualities of the Accomplished Jewish Woman According to Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Algazi's Exposition of "A Woman of Valor".

Eshet Hayyil – "A Woman of Valor" (Proverbs 31:10-31) – is a paean to the exemplary woman. Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov Algazi (d. 1756) was the chief rabbi of Palestine and one of the leading Sephardi sages of his time. His striking interpretation of *Eshet Hayyil* describes a woman whose advanced study of Torah has made her aware of the sources that permit women to put on *Tallit* and *Tefillin*, against the view of most rabbis. Relying on her own knowledge of the alternative's benefits for her religious life, rather than external decisors, the "Woman of valor" "opens her mouth with wisdom" and decides for herself. She fulfills these precepts meticulously and even recites the benedictions on them. By observing these optional commandments in full view of her family and community, she motivates the menfolk to greater religious devotion – and for this she receives Heavenly approval and reward.

A secondary theme of the article is the "original position" of the Sephardi rabbis of Jerusalem on women's observance of time-dependent precepts (and reciting the benedictions for them). Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef famously portrayed the eighteenth-century sages as totally opposed to this, and characterized women who performed them as brazen rebels against rabbinic authority. However, a close reading of the original sources reveals that this is a misrepresentation: by and large, those rabbis condoned and supported women's observance of such precept. Indeed, it is Rabbi Yosef's own insistence that women desist from this practice that is revisionist.

Prof. Adam Ferziger



Prof. Adam S. Ferziger teaches in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar Ilan University. He is the incumbent of the S. R. Hirsch Chair for Research of the Torah with Derekh Erez Movement and a Senior Associate of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. Prof. Ferziger received a 'Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism' grant for his study of "Gender and the Evolution of the American Orthodox Rabbi".

On February 1st, 2017, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU), the national Orthodox synagogue association and sponsor of the global kosher supervision agency, adopted a religious ruling signed by seven rabbinical authorities that prohibited women from serving as Jewish clergy. The swift electronic dissemination of the detailed legal decision and the accompanying official OU

statement explaining the process that preceded its acceptance set off a wave of passionate written protests along with vociferous expressions of support.

From one perspective, there was nothing extraordinary about this course of events. It was merely another stage in the conflicts over women's religious leadership and involvement in public rituals that have been brewing for over three decades within Orthodox Judaism. Indeed, notwithstanding certain theological and organizational distinctions, to a great degree this process mirrors struggles that took place in the more liberal Reform and Conservative Jewish movements prior to their respective policy reversals, in 1972 and 1983, that opened rabbinical ordination to women.

Likewise, the back and forth that preceded the decisions by most Protestant denominations to accept female ministers, and the ongoing debates within the Catholic church share many common tropes. When examined through the lens of the evolution of the modern rabbi, however, key aspects of the February 2017 ruling that sparked the rancor are *sui generis*, and project a clergy model that has minimal historical precedent within Orthodox Judaism. My research aims explores how the advancement of feminist ideals and the consequent revolution in the roles of Orthodox women, precipitated a transformative reconceptualization of the male Orthodox rabbi.

Outstanding Graduate Student Prize Recipients:

Aliza Haiman



*Aliza Haiman is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Information Science at Bar-Ilan University. She received a prize for a seminar paper about "**Bereaved Mothers Commemorating their Sons**", which she wrote as part of her doctoral requirements in the Seminar "1954: a Microhistory" taught by Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz in the Department of Jewish History.*

This study will examine how M.K. Faige Ilan (Ilanit) chose to commemorate her son Uri, and what it teaches us about how bereaved mothers choose to perpetuate the memory of their loved ones. Uri Ilan was a soldier captured while on a secret mission to Syria in late 1954. Separated from his captured comrades and told that they were dead, he chose to commit suicide as he feared he would break under interrogation. Studies have been conducted regarding the affair itself, and the notes Uri left behind declaring: "I did not betray, I committed suicide". However the female perspective has not yet been presented – the commemoration process of Uri by his mother.

My research about Faige Ilanit will focus on four main issues:

The first chapter will extensively discuss the historical background of Feige's life. Her childhood and her youth, her relationship with her grandfather Rabbi Shimon Shkopf after she made Aliyah to a Hashomer Hatzair Kibbutz, in complete contrast to her grandfather's ideology and religious beliefs. Feige's early biography will shed light on her unique personality that brought her to commemorate her son's memory as she did.

The second chapter of this study will present the historical background of Uri Ilan, thus shedding light on another significant life event in Fayge's life. This will clarify the starting point of this research topic - How bereaved mothers choose to commemorate their sons.

The third chapter will focus on private and public remembrance and the spiritual and non-spiritual commemoration Faige choose to conduct for her son. This section is based on the model proposed by Karin Shaked on her master's thesis and modes of mourning expressions and commemorations types among the IDF bereaved families.

The fourth chapter of the study will serve as a touchstone to the success of the continued remembrance which Faige initiated, as continued by her descendants and will address the current commemoration of Uri after Feige's death, according to her will.

For this study I will use past studies that have already been conducted on Uri Ilan's case and will examine the angle of a women's perspective by using material found in the Uri Ilan archive that recently became part of "The Jona Kirschenbaum archives for the research of Religious Zionism" at Bar Ilan University.

This research is of great importance in understanding the processes and attempts to preserve the memory of beloved sons by their mothers.

Galit Bareket Danieli



Galit Bareket Danieli is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar Ilan University. She received a grant for her doctoral dissertation being written under the guidance of Dr. Nissim Leon and Prof. Orna Sasson-Levi, about "Establishing Ethnicity and Generational Identities in a State Welfare Organization in Israel".

One of the prevalent agreements in the social research of labor is that labor markets throughout the world are characterized by occupational hierarchy based on ethnicity, gender and class. This hierarchy produces inequality in daily practices between various groups. The ramifications thereof manifest, among others, in the gap prevalent in the building of social-networks and in disparate negotiating capabilities for promoting employees of certain ethnicities, classes and gender groups in the workplace. This research examines the interaction between organizational structure and ethnicity, class and gender identities in public welfare organization in Israel. The research examines how organizational structure perpetuates ethnic, class and gender construct; the meanings workers attach to ethnicity, gender and class in the workplace and the relationship between organizational structure and ethnic, class and gender identities among workers.

The research is based on the Intersectionality Theory, which relates to the juncture at which social categories such as gender, ethnicity and class meet. The intersectionality phenomenon is depicted as mechanisms that intersect each other, creating diverse positions. For example, how the experience and social status of women of differing ethnic origins or working-class women differs from that of white, middle-class women. Joan Acker's (2006; 2009; 2011; 2012) theoretical model of labor organizations serves as the analytical means in this research. The model's advantage lies in its analytical potential at parallel yet differing levels; the structural, cultural and interactional levels.

The study's methodology is based on institutional ethnography. During the course of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with 46 workers. Likewise, observations were conducted on an ongoing basis. The research aims to contribute to

our understanding of the relationships between various workplace hierarchies to gender, class and ethnic origins as affecting employment, promotion, occupational satisfaction, and esteem at work by pointing out practices that create it.

Karni Krigal



***Karni Krigal** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar-Ilan University. She received a grant for her dissertation which she is writing under the guidance of Prof. Orly Benjamin about "The Meaning of Work in the Life of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Survivors".*

Neo-liberal public policy adopted in Israel, as well as in the OECD countries, advocates reducing welfare transfer payments while encouraging income from work for self-sufficiency. One aspect of this is that there is social and public expectation and demand that women, who are supported by welfare, including women who are survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV), will develop economic independence. These expectations usually ignore the combination of unique barriers and their social-class context, which make it difficult for them to fulfill this demand.

In my research, I examine the meanings that survivors of IPV have given to work in their lives. Given the finding that spouse violence tends to cross the sphere from private to public, I would like to examine two possibilities: the possibility that becoming employed will reinforce the violence and its ramifications for women and their children and construct the meaning of work as unique for IPV survivors; and the possibility that joining the workforce will promote opportunities for acquiring social capital resources and moral strength, so that the meaning of work would be constructed as a healing space which enables personal, social and economic development. This research will focus on the meaning of work through the eyes of IPV survivors in order to conceptualize the relationship between these two possibilities.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology of work history, which combines in-depth interviews with working women on the meaning of work in different stages of their lives, and enables focusing on disruptive events in order to find out the effects of the

partner's violence on their work history. For the study I conducted in-depth interviews with 33 Jewish women survivors of IPV and with 15 women with similar characteristics, other than having a background of IPV. This is according to the insight that comparison between groups in qualitative research helps to better understand the research question. This is done through the adoption of feminist methodological principles, research reflexivity, and an understanding of the sensitivity of the subjects involved in the intimate private sphere. This research will enrich the sociological discussion in raising the issue of IPV in sociological analysis of neo-liberal discourse and its practices.

Keren Maliniak



Keren Maliniak is a Master's Student in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar-Ilan University. She received a prize for her Thesis that is being written under the guidance of Dr. David Reir about: "The Shaping Role of the Natural Childbirth Discourse on Childbirth Experience in Hospitals".

In my study, I investigate childbirth experiences of women, who desire a natural childbirth, and choose to do so in hospitals. In a matter of fact, the hospital actually constitutes a space that contradicts and even opposes the natural childbirth discourse. Such conflict leads me to examine the actual process, by which women try to shape their own experiences, compatible with their discourse, within a space that contradicts and opposes it.

In order to study this process, I adopted two different theoretical approaches, which both affect and complement one another. The first is Foucault's approach, which assumes that a system of knowledge in a certain field thus influences the way of thinking. The second approach, proposed by Goffman, focuses on the unique characteristics of a particular interaction. I use these two approaches to examine how social discourse does, in fact, construct expectations, and how these expectations shape the childbirth experience.

My research includes twenty interviews of women, before and after their first childbirth. Studying childbirth from this perspective contributes to the theoretical framework concerning discourse effects on experiences. Furthermore, this study deals with the urgent matter of women's rights over their own bodies, facing social systems,

and dismissing such rights due to bureaucratic, financial, and even personal convenience-based reasons.

Merav Sagi



***Merav Sagi** is a doctoral candidate in the Israel and Golda Koshitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar-Ilan University writing her dissertation under the guidance of Prof. Yehiam Weitz on the topic of "**Women Write in the Telz Izkor Book**".*

I chose to dedicate my work to a special group of Orthodox women led by Dr. Malka Blechman and Shoshana Holtzberg-Yaffe from the town of Telz, who graduated from the first Hebrew seminary for women in Lithuania, the Yavne Gymnasium, in the mid-1920s.

Most people have heard about the famous men's *Beit Midrash*, Yeshivat Telz in Lithuania, but it turns out that in those years there was a women's struggle to establish an educational institution for women. The women asked for a high level of general education and Torah that would also be recognized by the Lithuanian government and enable them to be accepted to university. The struggle eventually succeeded, and the Yavne Gymnasium became a focus of pride in Lithuania and a model for high level education for Orthodox women in Lithuania.

Fifty years later, in Israel, dozens of women, all of them Yavne Gymnasium graduates, gathered together, and, led by Dr. Malka Blechman and Shoshana Holtzberg-Yaffe, completed a unique project: writing a *yizkor* book about their town. That was the first time ever, and unfortunately the only one, when a group of women undertook the task of writing their history in the framework of a *yizkor* book. The book implements a gender agenda, and gives a great deal of expression to the female voices, which are often not reflected in the *yizkor* books which, as mentioned above, follow a dominant male hegemony.

Large sections in the book were dedicated to the struggle for Jewish Enlightenment for women. Blechman and Holtzberg-Yaffe described the mission to combine Jewish life with the challenges of modernity and education in Europe, while strictly observing the highest level of secular studies, including Lithuanian literature, mathematics and

physics, which were recognized for high school diplomas by the Lithuanian authorities.

My research shows that the very acceptance for study at the prestigious Yavne Gymnasium, the recruitment of high-level academic teachers from Germany, and the exposure to high academic level content created a feeling of belonging to the crème de la crème that accompanied Blechman and Holtzberg-Yaffe for many years in their lives, until they were appointed principals themselves.

The fact that, at the time of the publication of the book, female students of the ultra-Orthodox movement of Agudat Israel were denied the possibility of accessing the Israeli matriculation, and as a result, deprived of their ability to continue towards academic studies, must have been a leading idea of the members of the editorial system as a founding value in their memories regarding the opening of the Yavne Gymnasium.

Unfortunately, these educated and religious women Yavne Gymnasium students, some of whom even went on to pursue doctoral studies and management, were forgotten in the pages of history and have not properly been acknowledged. I therefore hope that my work will contribute to their commemoration.

Michal Almagor



*Michal Almagor is a doctoral candidate in the Psychology Department at Bar-Ilan University writing her dissertation under the guidance of Prof. Rivka Tuval-Mashiach. She received a prize for her dissertation that deals with "**The Contribution of Women's Writing Groups to its Participants' Personal Development**".*

This qualitative-phenomenological research aims to explore and understand the experience of participating in a women-writing group, and its contribution to the participants' personal development. While the use of writing as a therapeutic mean has been recognized and found to be effective, and in spite of the aggregated knowledge about the psychological impact of group processes, the combination of writing and groups as a therapeutic tool was hardly investigated.

This research will attempt to identify the occurred processes from both the participants' and facilitators point of view. For this purpose, the researcher will follow the full process of a writing-group, a group which will last 12 sessions, and with the use of interviews, excerpts from the participants' texts, and a reflective journal of the researcher, will document and analyze the phenomena as a participant-researcher. In addition to following and researching a group of 8 participants and a facilitator, the researcher will review two focus groups, one with participants, and one with facilitators, which will enrich the research database and allow cross-checking and identification of themes beyond the researched group.

This research combines psychological content fields of psychotherapy and groups, with the element of writing, in the context of gender and feminism. The combination of these elements will be explored in regard to their contribution to shape and change narrative identity. In addition, we will investigate what aspects are perceived as supporting or delaying change and development processes, and what is the process inside the group which enables changes in the self.

Miri Levi



Miri Levi is a doctoral candidate in the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry at Bar Ilan University. She received a prize for her dissertation being written under the guidance of Dr. Orly Meron that deals with "Jewish Feminism among Muslim Societies during the Age of Colonialism: Jewish Women in Urban Morocco, 1912–1956."

The proposed research will discuss the lines of the stable character of Jewish woman in Morocco in the era of transformations, and its contribution to the historical processes, between the years 1912-1956. All this is shown in a different reading of the following text and the contribution of the women as participants in the historical narrative, and an examination of the other blanks in writing. Such a research will contribute to complete the mosaic of images of women in the East.

In addition, the study will contribute to the theoretical debate that has taken place for many years with issues related to feminism, eurocentrism and multiculturalism. The proposed research will address the ways in which these women have shaped their own

destiny, and the destiny of their communities, the theme of modernity and advancing these issues.

The study will examine the nature of the dominant gender discourse, how the company defines the relationship between genders with reference to the position of power and control of the Jewish woman.

Up until now, there has not been any comprehensive study about gender discourse in Morocco. The following interviews will give information concerning the hidden and unknown documents in the archives. It is important to "give voice" to the woman herself and thus to create the opportunity to see the full image.

Moriah Kor



Moriah Kor is a Master's Student in the Department of Literature of the Jewish People at Bar-Ilan University. She received a prize for her Thesis being written under the guidance of Dr. Moshe Golchin that deals with "***Adultery as an Interpretive Principle in the Writings of Emunah Elon***".

My research focuses on Emuna Elon's character, viewing her as a cultural agent and mediator among the discourse types of a variety of Hebrew-speaking reader communities who have partitioned the Israeli sphere amongst themselves, in more than one sense. Elon's work serves as a literary-cultural indicator, as the sum of her written works indicates. In this paper I will illustrate the evolutionary process that her writing has undergone, focusing on the great taboo of adultery, in all its forms, that appears so significantly in her work as a whole.

In a closed, seemingly homogeneous society, one that is often both silent and silencing, any act that appears to deviate from that silenced consensus of the community is likely to be seen as an act that has an element of adultery, be it ideological adultery, religious adultery, social adultery, cultural adultery, or even adultery in the literal sense -- the transgression between a man and women who are

committed to others. The settler society as reflected in Emuna Elon's writings is a puritanical one marching toward a cultural abyss. Elon the critic, who is at the same time an inseparable part of that society, wishes to open up its eyes, to protest against its various forms of silencing, and to sound a warning bell.

The notion of adultery serves as a critical tool and a creative interpretative principle that is repeated in numerous varied configurations in Emuna Elon's writings. It seems as if Elon is almost drawn against her will to the motif of adultery as a critical device, perhaps the only one available for a woman who is a critic and wishes to shake up her audience of readers and the subjects of her criticism. This criticism has been perceived by Elon and by a part of her conservative reader community, whose identity has been in flux, as a breakthrough and as a breach. This has found expressed in Elon's writings in the element of adultery.

The repeated appearance of adultery as a motif is just an outward indication of a much more fundamental principle, also dictating choices in plot structuring and stylistics -- linguistic style, representation, plot development -- as I indicate in my study.

Rina Mazuz Pichon



***Rina Mazuz Pichon** is a Masters Student in the Department of Jewish Philosophy at Bar-Ilan University writing her thesis under the guidance of Dr. Avi Elkayam. She received a prize for a seminar paper that deals with "**Reviewing Biblical Women's Character Types as Commentated by Rabbi Isaak Abarbanel**"*

In this paper, I discuss R. Isaac Abravanel's interpretation of five protagonist female characters in the Book of Genesis: Woman-Eve, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah. The study was composed of two main chapters: the first, dealing with the character of Woman-Eve as it appears in Avravanel's allegorical-philosophical interpretation of the story of the Garden of Eden. The second, deals with the character of the four matriarchs: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah, and their portrayal in Avravanel's interpretation of the Book of Genesis. In this study, I compared the tripartite typology which Avravanel assigns to the female character in the story of the Garden of Eden, to his interpretation of the character of the four matriarchs.

In the story of the Garden of Eden can be grouped into three separate characters that represent humanity as a whole: Woman as a part belonging to Adam's **soul**, the **good**

woman prior to the sin, and the **evil woman** in her act of deception and after the sin. In this story of creation, Abravanel generates a dichotomy between the characters of the Good Woman and the Evil Woman. The Good Woman is the traditional, family-oriented woman who is taken for granted. She is not an erotic object. Rather, she is the woman of the house, who is charged with the family's continuity and sustenance. She represents the house and the family, but does not represent herself or her will, and if she does act on her own will and aspirations, she ceases to be good. In contrast, the Evil Woman is a woman filled with erotic desire, passion, drive and excitement. She deceives and beguiles her husband by her passions and licentious desires, she breaches monogamous relations, abandons any sense of responsibility for others. She does not seek sexual relations for the purpose of procreation, but only out of lust and enjoyment.

Following the assumption that the three characters of the story of the Garden of Eden, rather than historical figures, are the forces of human soul and psyche and represent humanity as a whole, it seems that they become realized in Abravanel's grasp of the four matriarchs, according to their conduct, interpersonal interactions with other characters, as well as their social status, roles and chronological age. I examined metaphors used by Abravanel to characterize each figure, and compared these metaphors to the character portrayals of the women examined in this study. Our approach took into account and compared its findings to modern feminist interpretations pertaining to the female characters covered in this study.

In conclusion, we proposed that the character traits Abravanel found in the three female characters in the Garden of Eden pericope are also reflected in the four matriarchs. From them we can sometimes extrapolate as to the exemplary behavior of the "good woman" depicted in the Eden pericope and in keeping with the gender concepts of his time. We saw how the three images of woman, Eve, and all humankind are expressed in the four matriarchs. For example, Abravanel's view that woman was not created in the image of God, lacks intellectual perfection, and is associated with inferior and physical matter, with the lower aspects of the soul, is reflected in his consistent denial of prophetic powers to the matriarchs. We have also seen how his battle against physical desire and the power of imagination informs his treatment of the matriarchs throughout. It was important for him to eliminate any hint of sexuality in the mothers of the nation. Defending their honor and modesty, he never employs any erotic words or motifs. Physical contact with a woman and thoughts of sexual desire detract from a man's perfection.

The consistent line that Abravanel follows with regard to female characters is clear evidence of how his notion of gender affected his exegesis. Along with highlighting the gender bias that views women as inferior, which was influenced by the status of women at the time and ancient traditions, we also noted that Abravanel could evince a positive and even egalitarian approach. It is important not to miss the latter, because Abravanel's positive view of women can have an impact today, when the various streams of religious Judaism are grappling with many questions about the status of women.

Tanya Regev



Tanya Regev is a Doctoral Student in the Graduate Program for Gender Studies at Bar-Ilan University and is writing her dissertation under the guidance of Dr. Ronit Ir-Shai. She received a prize for her study of "John Berger: Men Act and Women Appear. The Formation of the Feminine Identity in Religious Writing Regarding the Ethos of Modesty."

The discourse about modesty in Orthodox circles has been expanding in recent decades. The discussion of the laws of modesty has shifted from the margins of the discussion to its center, with reference to new strictness that had not yet been discussed and an expansion of details that were not hitherto dealt with. Moreover, the concept of modesty only concerns its erotic meaning, even though it is related to non-physical aspects, such as non-ostentatious behavior or understanding one's own limitations. Accordingly, many books of instruction, Responsa, and Torah articles deal with the physical issue of modesty, the proper relations between the sexes and the moral substance which can justify the demand for strict adherence to bodily modesty and so on. In addition, there is an unequivocal distinction between female modesty which receives the most attention and male modesty, to which there is little reference.

In this study, I wish to explore the way in which philosophical and halakhic texts, written by the representatives of the religious hegemony, form the feminine identity. The implicit assumption in the study is that gender identity is not predetermined, natural or innate, but acquired. Therefore, it is necessary to re-establish it in order to preserve its existence. The question of research, then, is where and how these texts teach what proper femininity is, how to behave in order to be a woman and how this knowledge is woven into the daily routine of the halakhically observant woman.

The study rests on two pillars. The first is the coding of sources that will be done through theories from the world of feminist criticism. Themes such as the masculine gaze, binary thinking, and feminine corporeality will serve to explore the various details existing in the texts. At the same time, the sorting of details that have been found, as well as the questions that will be asked about them, are well planted in the world of gender content. This world no longer seeks to expose the hierarchies or oppression of social structures, but how the fabrication of the gender identity that allows these structures to exist, is created.

This study seeks to direct the spotlight on women living in an Orthodox context and to

locate the special identity components of these women which are built as an additional layer of the identity of every other Western woman. Therefore, alongside the questions to be asked about how the preoccupation with the body and sexuality establishes the identity of each woman, more questions should be asked. For example: What is the effect of the contexts in which the texts are planted, such as holiness and secularism or impurity and purity? What are the exemplary stories that serve as models for proper modesty? What are the guilt feelings that writing about the ethos of modesty can evoke? What is the responsibility of a religious woman for the prohibitions that apply to observant men? These and other questions may help identify the unique identity of a woman who observes the rules of modesty or at least lives in an environment where there is a "dialogue explosion" of constant preoccupation with the ethos of modesty.

Yifat Drori



Yifat Drori is a Doctoral Student in the Graduate Program for Hermeneutics and Cultural Studies at Bar-Ilan University and is writing her dissertation under the guidance of Dr. Daniela Gurevitch. She received a prize for her study of "Feminine Characteristics of Israel 20th Century's Love Poems Written by Women: Lea Goldberg as a Case Study".

The dissertation compares love poems written by Israeli male poets with those written by Israeli female poets of the 20th Century and explore whether or not it is possible to define a style as gendered and to categorize it under the category of typical "female writing". Using a Hermeneutical-literary analysis, the dissertation asks whether or not it is possible to develop a fundamental model to identify female characteristics in poetry and to map themes, motives and typical descriptions that characterize female writing and differentiate it from male writing.

Lea Goldberg's poetry is taken as a case study and is compared with other Israeli male and female poets of her time. The dissertation examines the poems under the lens of different psychoanalytic theories.

Yeshayahu (Shaike) Fisherman



*Yeshayahu (Shaike) Fisherman is a Doctoral Student in the Talmud Department at Bar-Ilan University. He received a prize for his study of "**The Halachic and Educational Profile of Rabbi Shlomo Aviner**" being written under the guidance of Prof. Adam Ferziger of the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, and Dr. Benjamin Katzoff of the Talmud Department.*

My research focuses on the ruling and guiding of Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, one of the most influential rabbis in the Religious- Zionist stream in Israel in the last four decades. A main part of my research discusses Rabbi Aviner's ruling and guiding regarding the place of the woman. I examine his ruling and guiding regarding relations, family, and society while examining his attitude toward various sources in comparison to other contemporary rabbis and his influence over the Religious-Zionist society.

For example, I examine how he deals with the prohibition of women voting and running for leadership according to Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook versus other rabbis in Religious-Zionism, the women's place in leadership, his perception of women sexuality, the place Jewish ruling and guiding in various modesty issues in a changing social reality, his perception of the different feminisms and other topics that play a central role in his writings.

In addition, Rabbi Aviner deals with new trends in parts of the modern Religious-Zionist public, where a significant change in the women's place in the various fields, and what he believes is the proper way to treat cultural perceptions and western social norms. Rabbi Aviner's attitude is studied in light of his Rabbis' sayings, who functioned in a different cultural and social environment, on the one hand and in comparison to the statements of other Rabbis who turn to the Religious-Zionist public, where some of them are more conservative and some are trying to promote more liberal trends.

Pictures from the June 12, 2017 prizegiving ceremony



Group Picture of the 2016 Prize and Grant Winners



Moriah Kor discussing her research



Tanya Regev describing her Dissertation



Yeshayahu Fisherman receiving his prize envelope



Karni Krigal receiving her prize envelope



The Opening of the Prize Giving Ceremony



Miri Levi discussing her research

Co-Production of Academic Publications:

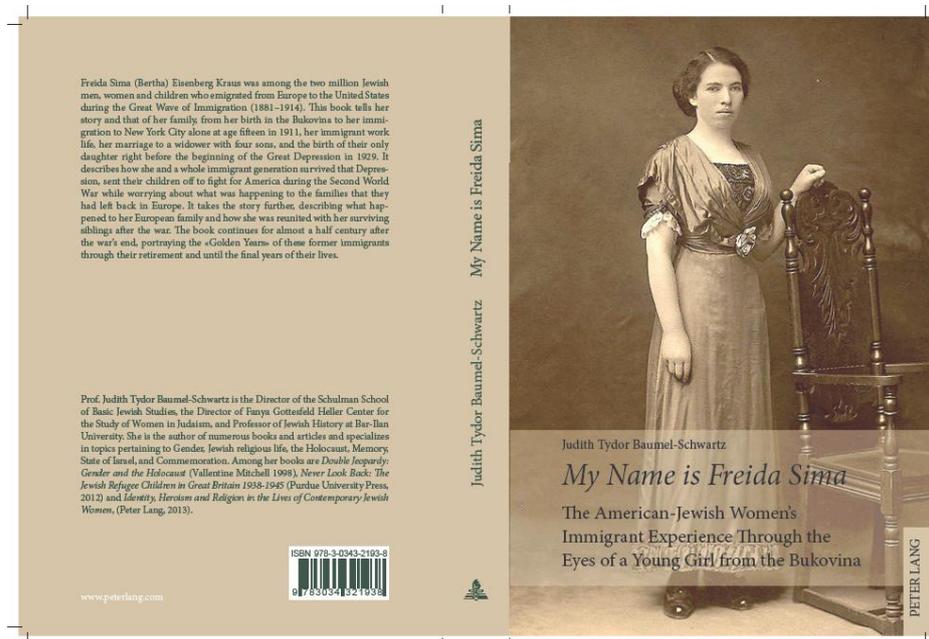
The Fanya Gottesfeld-Heller Center has traditionally supported the publication of books dealing with different aspects of Jewish women's lives, or those focusing on women and Judaism. Some of this support is given as research, translation or publishing grants to individual scholars. At other times it translates into co-producing academic publications with other research institutes or publishing houses.

Over half a decade ago the Center decided to support a two-volume English\Hebrew publication project entitled "Jewish Women Immigrants and their Daughters". The first volume was to focus on the history and experiences of Jewish girls and women immigrants in the United States during the Great Wave of Immigration (1881-1914), through the story of a young Jewish girl who immigrated to America on her own at age fifteen. The second volume was to focus on the next generation of American-Jewish women, those born in America to immigrant Jewish women and men, and their experiences being "at home in America.

Both books were to be written by Prof. Judith Baumel-Schwartz of the Golda and Israel Koshitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry who, at the time, was the Director of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Jewry. Dr. Baumel-Schwartz is a specialist in Women's Studies and has already written several studies dealing with American Jewish history during the mid 20th century. Soon after the project was approved, she completed her term as Director of the Graduate Program in Contemporary Jewry and was appointed as Director of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism. During the past several years she has worked on the "Jewish Women Immigrants and their Daughters" Project, and has now completed both books. The idea was to have both books published in the same year, first in English and the next year in Hebrew, in order to promote the topic and series as a whole.

After over half a decade's work, the first of the two books in English, entitled ***My Name is Freida Sima: The American-Jewish Women's Immigrant Experience Through the Eyes of a Young Girl from the Bukovina***, was published in English by Peter Lang International Publishers (Switzerland) in January 2017 and will be published next year in Hebrew by Resling Publications. The second volume of the project, ***A Very Special Life: The Bernice Chronicles – One Woman's Journey***

Through Twentieth Century Jewish America, will be published in late 2017 in English by Peter Lang International Publishers and in 2018 by Resling Publications.



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 one 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. Dov Schwartz, Head of the Institute for the Study of Religious Zionism to begin planning future conferences. Similar meetings have been held with 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. Conferences are scheduled to be held in early 2018.

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



Yitzhak Pass, a graduate 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 began.

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/>