



From the Department Chair, Prof. Kimmy Caplan:



Dear Readers,

The academic year has begun, and I welcome our returning students as well as those who have joined us this year in beginning their undergraduate, masters and doctoral degrees. We are privileged to have you with us and hope that you will enjoy a challenging, thought-provoking and fruitful year.

Our department is named after the late Israel and Golda Koschitzky. Thanks to the generous support of the Koschitzky family, we are able to coordinate a wide range of scholarly activities for faculty members and especially graduate students who receive scholarships as well as funds to present academic papers in international conferences and conduct their research in archives. On behalf of the Department, and in deep gratitude, we thank the dear Koschitzky family for its partnership. In addition, our department is blessed with several chairs, supporting a myriad of scholarly projects.

An investment in scholarship provides a solid foundation for sustainability and academic visibility. Our faculty and students are actively contributing to academic discourse and publish articles in peer-reviewed professional journals and books in leading academic presses. In addition, many of our faculty are nationally and internationally recognized as renowned scholars in their respective fields. For example, Professor Shmuel Feiner was recently elected as the head of the Israel Historical Society.

We would like to congratulate two of our colleagues, Dr. Dotan Arad and Dr. Uriel Gellman, who were recently promoted to senior lecturers with tenure. We are fortunate to have these two outstanding lecturers and scholars in our Department. At the end of this academic year we will bid farewell to Professor Moises Orfali and Professor Meir Bar-Ilan who will retire after many years of highly-regarded productivity.

Our devoted administrative director, Ms. Cohava Akrabi, as well as our administrative assistant Ms. Chen Avraham, make our work possible. Their behind-the-scenes efficiency and sensitivity are highly appreciated not only by their colleagues but also by the faculty and students. We also would like to thank Ms. Aliza Haiman for continuously maintaining our website and Facebook page.

We are particularly grateful to our Dean, Professor Yaron Harel, and the administrative staff of the Faculty of Jewish Studies led by Ms. Maya Yonati, as well as our academic and administrative colleagues throughout the university, for their ongoing assistance.

Finally, Professor Yigal Levin has provided excellent content for this issue of our newsletter. My deep gratitude to him for taking upon himself this task yet again with much enthusiasm.

Yours as always, Kimmy



Rothschild Prize in Jewish Studies to Prof. Moshe Rosman

Congratulations to Prof. (Emeritus) Moshe Rosman, who is the recipient of the Rothschild Prize in Jewish Studies for 2020. The Rothschild Prize for Jewish Studies is awarded by Yad Hanadiv once every four years, together with prizes in other fields of research. Among the recipients of the prize in Jewish Studies in the past are Gershon Scholem, Yitzhak Baer, Ben-Zion Dinur and Ephraim Elimelech Urbach. We are proud of Prof. Rosman's achievement!



Retiring Faculty

At the end of the present academic year, the department will bid farewell to two of our faculty members who will be retiring from the university: Professor Moisés Orfali and Professor Meir Bar-Ilan. Prof. Orfali is an expert on Spanish Jewry, a corresponding member of the Spanish Royal Academy of History, has served as dean of the faculty of Jewish Studies at Bar-Ilan and has researched Judeo-Christian relations. Prof. Bar-Ilan is an expert on the history of the Second Temple Period and the time of the Mishnah and Talmud, and has also studied the customs of Jewish communities through the ages, published an edition of "The Words of Gad the Seer" from a manuscript that was found in India, written on rabbinic literature, numerology and various other fields. On January 16, 2020, the department will hold a conference in his honor, in which sixteen scholars, some of them former students of Prof. Bar-Ilan, will deliver papers. A conference in honor of Prof. Orfali will be held on March 17-18. We interviewed Prof. Bar-Ilan about his career.

Professor Bar-Ilan, before we discuss your retirement, perhaps tell us how you ended up at Bar-Ilan University in the first place?

It's simple. Actually, I've always been here. When I was a child, my father, the late Dr. Tuvia Bar-Ilan, was CEO of the university, so I was familiar with it since childhood. I even played with friends that lived in the old faculty living quarters. My father eventually left the university, and then returned as founder of the university regional-college extensions. It was always clear to me that I would study at the university named after my grandfather Meir Bar-Ilan, after whom I'm also named, and that my father also worked to develop. We lived in Holon, but I attended the "Netiv Meir" yeshiva high school in Jerusalem, also named after my grandfather, and after a year at the Merkaz Harav yeshiva and four and a half years in the army, my path here was clear. My father was very proud that I enrolled here, since my two older brothers and my sister did not.



And what attracted you to study Jewish history?

The truth is that at first I signed up to study Jewish philosophy and Jewish history, but after the first year I requested to expand my studies to include Jewish history, Talmud and Jewish philosophy. In addition, I studied in the "kollel" (the men's division of the Institute for Advanced Torah Studies) for four years. I was a "humanities and texts person" to my core, and I was also influenced by Professor Saul Lieberman, who served as my role model and inspiration. By the way, both my father and my uncle, despite their having spent time and studying abroad, discouraged any thoughts that I had to do the same. They thought that Bar-Ilan was the best place for me.

So who were your teachers?

I had many, not only in the three departments in which I was enrolled, but also in sociology, in Greek and in German.

And who were your advisors for your doctoral work?

The teachers who influenced me most were Prof. Moshe Beer and Prof. Izhak Gilat. Beer was one of the founders of the Department of Jewish History and served as its chair for several years, and Gilat founded the Talmud Department. Beer was a student of Prof. Efraim E. Urbach, from whom I also heard a course at Bar-Ilan, and he was also a great admirer of Lieberman. So my path into the study of ancient Jewish history was clear, and the dissertation that I wrote under the guidance of Moshe Beer dealt with the struggle between priests and sages in the late Second Temple Period. By the way, three weeks after I submitted my dissertation, I was severely wounded in the first Lebanon war, and my dissertation was approved while I was in rehabilitation.

So your doctorate is in Jewish history?

Yes, but the Talmudic component was central, and I also used sociology and anthropology in my work. I originally thought that Gilat would also advise me, but he was on sabbatical in the US that year.

And how did you come to be accepted as a member of the faculty of Bar-Ilan?

I was already a junior instructor in 1981, and I never actually applied for a job or interviewed as a candidate for a teaching position. From the start, my position was

split between the departments of Talmud and Jewish History. I was like "a servant with two masters", but on the other hand, this reflected my interdisciplinary approach. At the time, it was not unusual to have a position that was split between two departments, but with time this became rare. I was warned that having a divided position would cause problems in being promoted, but I didn't care, and continued to do research in several fields. This was considered unconventional.

And what happened during your career?

Quite a lot. Over the years I continued to learn, to teach and to write. Over that time, the university grew in size and in quality. The small institution that I knew since my childhood grew and turned into a sort of academic empire, as can be seen in the number of faculties, in the size of the campus, and in its budget.

I was referring to your research. How has it developed over the years?

Over the years, I expanded my fields of interest and research. First Talmudic history, then liturgy and Jewish mysticism. Yes, I was influenced by Gershom Scholem, and I found the Hekhalot literature to be totally uncharted territory. Over time I found more areas that were unstudied, if not esoteric, beginning with numerology and astrology and ending with Gad the Seer. I never left the field of Talmudic and historical studies, but I never thought that I should limit myself to them. I entered the field of social history, at a time in which I had no-one to speak to about it. I had one conversation with the late Prof. Yaakov Katz, but quickly understood that the questions being asked in the research of ancient Jewish society were different than those relevant to later pre-modern times. I was thinking in terms of the French *Annales* school, even if the data that comes from antiquity is not sufficient for statistical analysis.

How would you summarize the changes that have occurred in your fields of research over the years? Do you consider them to be positive?

Well, first of all, along came archaeology. In other words, the Department of Land of Israel Studies was established and became a competitor of the Department of Jewish History. Second, over the years the number of researchers and students who were interested in these fields decreased. I eventually began to feel as if I belonged to a dying breed.

Do you feel that we are responsible for this? Should we change the way we teach and research Jewish history, or rabbinic literature?

My answer may seem complex, and not pleasant to hear. In my opinion, it is only partially up to us, and even in that part - our situation is not good. We can begin by stating that as the university grew, the relative place of Jewish Studies within the university became smaller - to the extent that we no longer count. With time, we became the university's "backward" little brother. While the big brothers like physics and chemistry grew, our part became smaller. I feel that to this day, the natural sciences throw us crumbs. For example, a few years ago the rector honored me with a letter stating that because of the small number of students, he was considering cancelling one of my classes.

Was the class cancelled?

No, but over the years the number of students and faculty in Jewish Studies has gone down. This year seems to be a little better, but we have no reason to be complacent.



Is this the university's fault, or is this a general trend?

Both. First of all, in the late 1980's and especially the 90's the university began measuring things according to cost. This happened because of the demands of the government higher education budget committee, and in this way, the humanities became irrelevant. Up to that time, all academic fields were considered equal, and it did not matter if you were studying the history of Assyria or the composition of the atom. The new university measured everything in terms of money: how much money each researcher brings in from external grants. Thus was born the institution as we now know it, in which everyone is equal, but some are more equal than others. Obviously, as a scholar of humanities and Jewish Studies, I have no chance of getting funding like a physicist, and this is reflected in appointments, promotions and jobs.



In other words, you are not surprised by reports of a significant decline in the humanities?

Of course not. We are now reaping the fruits that were planted years ago, and it is obvious to me that not everyone in our university is unhappy. By the way, the biggest problem is in the educational system, because there is a lack of teachers in all fields of the humanities. From the academic perspective, the problem is that the intellectual knowledge of research in Jewish studies cannot be translated into discoveries and inventions, so that the modern academy is not interested in us as anything more than decorative feathers. The university, as an institution with a religious ethos, needs the Jewish studies as a fig-leaf, but not much else.

So everyone is at fault accept for the Jewish studies and humanities themselves?

That's not what I said. Sadly, we are also to blame for the situation, and I warned about this in my review articles.

One moment. From what I recall, you wrote reviews of specific books, not of all of Jewish studies.

True, but one can interpolate from the individual cases. The humanities and Jewish studies are facing a crisis with two sides: the external side is in the dwindling number of students and researchers, but the internal side of the crisis is in our inability to innovate, and I'll explain. Jewish studies, as an academic field, began in 1818, two centuries ago, and every new study was like sowing in empty ground. Thus, the fruits of that research were impressive in any case. With the discovery of the Cairo Geniza, Jewish studies gained a whole new field. In the 1930's, 40's and 50's it was Kabbalah research that led the field. The establishment of the State of Israel, the discovery of Qumran and other archaeological finds brought new blood into the system. However, it seems as if since the 1980's, Jewish studies are not able to do anything new. Books that come out today in Hebrew are similar to those published 60 years ago in English and 120 years ago in German. By analogy to the sciences, Jewish studies present us with a better fax machine instead of something entirely new, such as a smartphone. I know of more than one such book. It seems that the font of innovation has dried up. There is also the "more of the same" phenomenon and other ills that cannot be healed. Under such conditions, we should not be surprised at the fading of Jewish studies.

What you say is very serious. Perhaps these are your own personal feelings.

Indeed, what I say is very serious, but it does not reflect my personal distress, but rather an analysis of the situation. You cannot excite students without showing them new things. It goes beyond saying that it's our job to make new discoveries, but it is clear to me that we also have to reinvent ourselves, to create new research areas that were unknown to our teachers. Without innovation we resign ourselves to extinction. By the way, a journalist who investigated our universities came to the conclusion that in general, Israeli academia is bankrupt. Even if we don't go that far, it is clear that there is a problem in the academy in general, and in Jewish studies specifically.

And finally, what will your life be like after you retire from teaching? Will you continue to do research? Are there new areas which you would like to investigate? In other words, what will you do "when you grow up"?

First of all, I have not retired yet, and "the wars of the Jews" never end. Second, I do intend to continue to do research, to learn and to teach. My book on the Shapira affair (the story of the apostate 19th century forger Moses Wilhelm Shapira) is under review. In the meanwhile, I continue with my physiotherapy in order to keep up my health and also swim every week. I wish that I had more time. I do have additional plans: publication of the Saul Lieberman archives, a book on rabbinic theology, we shall see.

Professor Bar-Ilan, we thank you for the years which you have dedicated to our department, and for the time which you spent with us for this interview.



Last summer, Prof. Bar-Ilan, Prof. Yigal Levin and Dr. Idan Breier participated in a conference in Warsaw, Poland. The three of them met for dinner at the "Be-Kef" kosher restaurant

The Fourteenth International Conference on Jewish Names

The Fourteenth International Conference on Jewish Names took place on June 3, 2019, under the auspices of the department and of the Project for the Study of Jewish Names, which has been active in the department for nearly 30 years. The conference featured 19 lectures delivered by scholars from various Israeli institutions, together with guests from Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Italy and the United States. The papers dealt with names in the Bible and in rabbinic literature, in various Jewish communities, names in modern Hebrew literature and Jewish names in American television, as well as place-names in the Land of Israel in various periods. A special session was dedicated to methodological aspects of Jewish onomastics. The opening lecture was given by linguist Dr. Avshalom Kor, who commented on the names of the two candidates running for the Prime Minister's office, Binyamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz, and the closing paper, by linguist Dr. Ruvik Rosenthal, was on "Biblical Eponyms as Creators of National and Cultural Identity". All lectures were filmed and uploaded to Bar-Ilan's YouTube channel and have since been viewed by a wide audience. The conference was organized by Prof. Aaron Demsky, founder and head of the Project for the Study of Jewish Names, together with Prof. Yigal Levin and Dr. Idan Breier, with the invaluable help of the department's administrative staff Ms. Cohava Akrabi and Ms. Chen Avraham. The conference was supported by the Koschitzky Fund and by the office of the Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies.



New Books Written and Edited by Department Members

In the humanities in general and in Judaic Studies in particular, the publication of a new book is an important milestone for a scholar and for his or her scholarship. The appearance of a monograph, a book that summarizes a broad research project on a particular topic, is considered a noteworthy achievement for an individual

scholar, while the editing of a collection of articles by different scholars, all of which revolve around a central subject, is an important way for scholars to interact with each other, and helps make their scholarship available to other interested scholars and to the public in general. Studies in Hebrew are important for us, as Israeli scholars, to bring the fruits of our study to the Israeli public, while books in foreign languages, especially in English, are crucial to our connection to the international academic community.

During this past year, our department members have been blessed with a large number of new books, which we decided to highlight in this newsletter.

Dr. Yitzhak Conforti's new book *Shaping a Nation: The Cultural Origins of Zionism, 1882-1948*, published by Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, came out in April 2019. The book's cover reads: "This book offers a new look at the origins of Zionism, a cultural look. The main argument of *Shaping a Nation* is that Zionism must be understood not only from the point of view of politics, but also from that of culture. In order to explain the movement's growth and success in establishing a modern nation-state, one must understand how the movement's activists and leaders understood the reality of their lives, their past and their future. Zionism appeared as part of Jewish cultural history, it did not 'invent a nation' as is claimed by some modernist scholars. On the other hand, the religious yearning for Zion alone cannot account for the growth of modern Jewish nationalism. Jews from all over the world created the Zionist movement as a multivocal organization that cannot be understood in 'top-down' political terms. This book shows that the values, the myths and the beliefs of Zionism are based on pre-modern Jewish culture. This culture often influenced the political agenda of Zionism, and this book examines its impact on the shaping of the nation. Basic questions that concerned Zionism in its early days once again concern Israeli society, seventy years after the founding of the state." A book-launching event was held at Yad Ben Zvi in Jerusalem on September 2, 2019.



Dr. Yossef Charvit's new book, *Les Juifs d'Algérie: Historiographie, Méthodologie, Tradition et Modernité (1750-1914)*, published by Éditions Universitaires Européennes, came out in May 2019. The book depicts the history of Algerian Jewry from the French conquest of the country to the beginning of the 20th century, using varied sources, such as responsa literature of the Algerian rabbis and French colonial archives.



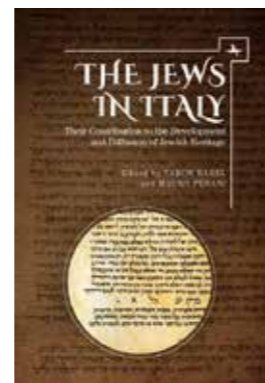
Prof. Adiel Schremer's new book, *Ma'ase Rav: Halakhic Decision-Making and the Shaping of Jewish Identity* (Bar-Ilan University Press) was published in May of 2019. The book depicts the process of halakhic ruling as one that is determined not only by meticulous study of halakhic literature and by halakhic precedent, but also by the rabbis' understanding of the public repercussions of their rulings and of their influence in the fashioning of the religious lives and identities of their followers. An event in honor of the new volume was held at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem of September 24.



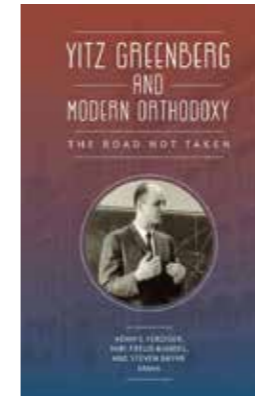
In Memory of Daniel by **Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim**, is an anthology of 1080 sources that deal with some of the issues that arise in Israeli society, that reflect the complicated relationship between the various sectors within Israeli Orthodox Judaism: "ultra-Orthodox", "national-religious", "traditional" and "secular". The collection was published in in May in memory of Prof. Friedheim's cousin Daniel Fingerhut, who made aliya on his own from France, volunteered to join the IDF, and passed away prematurely.



In August of 2019, a new volume co-edited by **Prof. Yaron Harel** and by Prof. Mauro Perani of the University of Bologna, Italy, first appeared, titled *The Jews in Italy: Their Contribution to the Development and Diffusion of Jewish Heritage* (Academic Studies Press). The 22 papers that make up this book originated in a conference on this subject that was held at the University of Bologna in 2011, and all deal with the history of Italian Jewry from Roman times to the present.



Yitz Greenberg and Modern Orthodoxy: The Road Not Taken, edited by **Adam Ferziger**, Miri Freud-Kandel and Steven Bayme, was published in September 2019 by Academic Studies Press. The volume includes 13 papers that originated in a conference that was held in Oxford in 2014, the first of a series of summer conferences on Contemporary and Modern Orthodox Judaism that have been organized by the co-editors. That conference and this volume deal with the thought and influence of Rabbi Dr. Irving "Yitz" Greenberg, one of the outstanding leaders of Modern Orthodoxy in the United States.



Hebraism and Beyond: An Intellectual Portrait of a Spiritual Leader in a Revolutionary Era: Rabbi Yehouda Leon Askenazi (Manitou) (1922-1996): Thinker, Teacher and Man of Action, Algeria-France-Israel, by **Dr. Yossef Charvit**, published by Idra, Tel Aviv, was launched on March 6, 2019. The book is focused on the figure of Rabbi Yehouda Leon Askenazi (Manitou) as a thinker, an educator and spiritual guide, and a practical leader.



My Name is Freida Sima by **Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz**, originally published in English by Peter Lang in 2016, and now in Hebrew by Resling, was launched on April 8, 2019. The event was co-organized by the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research of which Prof. Baumel-Schwartz is head, and the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism, directed by Prof. Yael Shemesh.



Department students visit Tel Beth-Shean



Students on field trip to Mount Gilboa

Outstanding Students

Matthaeus Kestenbaum – Dean’s List for Outstanding Students

In a ceremony held on May 12, 2019, department student Matthaeus (Massye) Kestenbaum received a certificate of excellence from Dean of Jewish Studies Prof. Yaron Harel. We asked Massye to tell us about his experiences in our department.

My name is Matthaeus (Massye) Kestenbaum. I had the privilege of studying for my B.A. in the department of Jewish History during the years 2016-2018. I'll never forget the first day of university, as it happened to be the morning after Donald Trump's election. It served as a pretty good icebreaker with classmates, as upon introduction, my strong American accent made me the immediate target of direct, charged political questions. At first, I was somewhat taken aback by the forthrightness. Later, I realized, this is how we students in the department get things done. If we have a question- we look for the answer. If we have an opportunity to ask- then let's go for it. There's no time nor reason to be bashful.

The days spent in class and the library, researching, studying and learning, taught us to think deeper, more critically and analytically. I appreciated being able to focus on the specific periods my interest gravitated towards while also being exposed to a wider range of courses I would have otherwise not experienced. The heat was slowly turned up as the degree progressed, with papers needing to be longer and longer, and more and more exacting. The more we wrote, the more we realized that we could indeed produce quality works.

The teachers in the department were especially gracious; their doors were always open for questions, guidance and sometimes just a nice schmooze. E-mails were answered within hours - often in the late hours of the night. I recall Dr. Idan Breier joking that that's when the real academics can get their work done anyways.

Due to my wife's medical school studies, we are currently living in Be'er Sheva, where I am pursuing an M.A. in Jewish History. I've also begun an archival and research position at the Cochini Jewry Heritage Center in Nevatim – come on down, it's worth a visit! I am grateful to the faculty and students of Bar-Ilan for the strong basis they have provided me with, and I hope that we can all continue to learn from and shine a light onto our storied past.



Massye with Dean of Jewish Studies Prof. Yaron Harel and department chair Prof. Kimmy Caplan

Tzachi Paz and Tsachi Solomovich win prizes from Jabotinsky Institute

In a ceremony that was held on September 22, 2019, two research students from our department received prizes from the Jabotinsky Institute in Israel. We asked them both for short descriptions of their work.

Tzachi Paz received his award for a seminar paper that he wrote as part of his MA in Contemporary Jewry, under the guidance of Prof. Yehiam Weitz. Tzachi, who served in the IDF until about three years ago, lives in Moshav Nir Galim and teaches history in the Amit Yeshiva High School in Ashdod. Last year, he and his family won first place in the Zionism Quiz that was broadcast on channel 12 on Independence Day. His paper deals with the dismissal of Mapam Party member Yisrael Galili as head of the general division of the Haganah underground by David Ben-Gurion when that organization was disbanded following the

formation of the IDF, and with Galili's part in the sinking of the Altalena that was carrying weapons meant for the Etzel underground in June of 1948.



Tsachi Solomovich won a reward for his doctoral research proposal on The Social Growth of the Herut Movement, 1955-1973, under the guidance of Dr. Itzchak Conforty. Tsachi completed his BA and MA in the University of Haifa. In his doctoral dissertation, he wishes to examine the social implications of the integration of activists from "oriental" communities, from the country's periphery as well as younger activists and students, in the Herut movement and in the Gahal party (the predecessor of the Likud), up to the founding of the Likud in 1973. Tsachi is an educator and high-school history teacher in Nahariya, and wished to convey that "as a resident of the periphery, it is important to me to encourage higher education among students from this area, and especially to encourage the study of Jewish history".



Tsachi Solomovich receives prize from Ms. Karni Mitz, daughter of Dr. Alex Refaeli, one of the founders of the Etzel, whose family donated the prize in his honor

The prize in memory of Prof. Pinchos Churgin, founder of Bar-Ilan University, which is awarded annually to a student who writes his or her doctoral dissertation in our department, was held on January

16, 2019, as part of the department seminar. This year's winner was Dr. Hagit Amrani, who wrote her dissertation on "The Portuguese Jewish community in Tunis as Reflected in Ketubot in the Marriage Register of the 18th and 19th Centuries", under the guidance of Prof. Moises Orfali.



Dr. Hagit Amrani at Churgin prize event

At a ceremony held on June 17, 2019, four department graduate students received research prizes from **The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism**, and from the head of the center, Prof. Yael Shemesh of the Department of Bible.



Hadas Gabay, who is writing her M.A. thesis under the supervision of Dr. Mor Presiado on "It Was Only from Nature that I Knew How to Draw" – The Art of Esther Lurie".



Rina Strick, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Judaism, who is working on her PhD under the supervision of Dr. Aharon Gaimani and Prof. Rachel Sharabi, on "The Role of Jewish Women in the Family and the Community in Yemen and Their Influence as Agents of Change in the Modern Era".



Yitzhak Malka, who is writing his PhD under the supervision of Prof. David Malkiel on "The Biblical-Philosophical Doctrine of Rabbi Ovadia Sforno".



Tehila Perl, Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Judaism, writing her PhD under the supervision of Prof. Adam Ferziger and Dr. Rivka Neria Ben-Shahar on the subject of "Integration and Inclusion Challenges – Perceptions of Haredi Institution Principals".

On April 4, 2019, the former state archivist Dr. Yaacov Lozowick spoke with our department seminar. Dr. Lozowick, who recently ended his term as the head of the state archive, told our graduate students about the state archives law and its implementation, about the possibilities for the use of the state archives for research, and about the administrative and legal challenges that he faced in the fulfillment of his duties.



Students on field trip to Tel Dor

Institutes and Chairs in the Department

The Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research, which is now headed by Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz, has expanded and changed its activities. Prof. Baumel-Schwartz has organized four international research fora, and the institute held eight different scholarly activities over the year: conferences, book launchings, a film screening and more.



Prof. Baumel-Schwartz at exhibit opening in New York, with the shofar that her father brought out of Auschwitz

In a joint meeting of **the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research** and the department seminar that was held on December 12, 2018, Dr. Rachel-Sheli Levi-Drumer, the university's academic secretariat, lectured on "Macedonian Jewry during the Holocaust and After – A Personal Story", based on her own journey to Jewish sites in that country (which has since adopted the name "Northern Macedonia"). The guest lecturer was introduced by institute head Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz, and attended by Dean Prof. Yaron Harel, department chair Prof. Kimmy Caplan, and department faculty and students.



On January 27, International Holocaust Memorial Day, Prof. Baumel-Schwartz was one of the keynote speakers at an event dealing with contemporary antisemitism held by a combination of groups - Amutat Dorot Hahemshech, Yad Vashem, the institute and others - at the Cameri Theater in Tel Aviv.



On April 30, 2019, in commemoration of Holocaust and Martyrs' Memorial Day, the institute held a screening of the film "Black Honey, The Life and



Poetry of Avraham Sutzkever", the Yiddish-language poet who spent the years of the Holocaust in the Vilna Ghetto, was then taken to Moscow, and eventually came to Israel.

The annual lecture sponsored by **the Samuel Braun Chair for the History of the Jews in Germany** was held on April 2, 2019, as part of the department seminar. At this meeting, Prof. Elisabeth Hollender of Goethe University in Frankfurt lectured on "A Liturgical Turn in Ashkenaz? Methodological Considerations".



On May 29, 2019, the Chair held a conference on "Jewish Travelers in Germany", in which six scholars presented their work, covering German-Jewish travelers' literature from the late Middle Ages through the 21st century.



Prof. Shmuel Feiner (head of the chair) and Dr. Yaakov Kohler from the department of Jewish Philosophy were granted a Research Grant from the rector's office for their work on the topic: "Religion and Secularization in German Jewry in the 18th - 20th Centuries".

Dr. Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, the main researcher of the chair, published a book which she edited: *Bertha Pappenheim - A Woman's Right: A Selection of Writings on Feminism and Judaism* (Carmel and BIU press). A book-launching was held at Bar-Ilan on November 27, 2019.



The Marcell and Maria Roth Chair in the History and Culture of Polish Jewry, together with the Israel Historical Society, hosted the **Bi-Annual Workshop for Young Researchers from Israel and Poland on the History of Polish Jewry**. The workshop, organized by Dr. Uriel Gellman, was held at Beit Daniel in Zichron Ya'akov on 25-27.6.2018, and was attended by doctoral students and post-docs, who spoke about their work. As part of the workshop, senior scholars from Israel and Poland discussed the future of Jewish Studies in Poland in light of recent political events in Poland. Prof. Moshe Rosman gave the keynote lecture the politics of the Historiography of Polish Jewry.

Department faculty in "escape room": The department faculty and staff celebrated the end of the academic year at the "Mystory" escape room complex, where they met for a couple of hours of fun before sitting down to a festive dinner. The event was organized by the department chair Prof. Kimmy Caplan and the office staff members Ms. Cohava Akrabi and Ms. Chen Avraham.



Field Trips: Students in Prof. Yigal Levin's classes (and other as well), had the opportunity to visit a number of historical and archaeological sites, mostly those that relate to the biblical period. This year, they visited Tel Megiddo, Tel Dor and the "Mizgaga" (glass factory) museum in Kibbutz Nahsholim, the antiquities of Beth-Shean, Mount Gilboa, Tel Shiloh, Tel Arad and Tel Beer-Sheva. These field trips contribute greatly to the students' understanding of the historical material, are an important learning experience, and also a lot of fun!



students in the field and at the "Mizgaga" museum.

Faculty News:

Dr. Dotan Arad and Dr. Uriel Gellman were both promoted to the rank of senior lecturer with tenure. Congratulations to them both!

Dr. Dotan Arad was the recipient of the "Am Ve-Olam" prize of the Shlomo and Bella Bartal Fund for outstanding academic articles published in Hebrew, for his article on "Destruction and Memory: The Destruction of the Damascus Synagogue in Collective Memory", published in *Zion* 81 (2016). The committee that chooses the prize winners is made up of members of the Israel Historical Society. The prize was awarded to Dr. Arad in a ceremony that was held at Ben-Gurion University on March 5, 2019.



In February, Dr. Arad was appointed as head of the Oded and Toni Eliashar Center for the Study of the Sephardi Jews in the Land of Israel. The center, which operates under the auspices of Yad Ben Zvi, promotes research on the Sephardic communities in the Land of Israel and disseminates that research to the general public. The center organizes conferences, documentation and cataloguing of manuscripts, and funds scholarships for research students. In September the center held a successful conference on Sephardic Jews in the Land of Israel in the seventeenth century, during which scholarships were awarded to outstanding students. In November, the center kicked off a new research forum, which

brings together scholars of Ottoman Jewry and of the Sephardic communities in the Land of Israel during the British Mandate Period. Forum members meet every month and a half for a lecture by one of the members and for a discussion.

Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz became the Director of the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research and revolutionized the institute, projecting its vision as "creating communities" and "making a bridge between the generations" by emphasizing both research and visibility. The institute created 4 international communities and have made 8 major conferences and events this year. Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz travelled to New York in May to meet with members of these research forums and also was at a special pre-opening of the Auschwitz Exhibition ("Auschwitz: Not Far Away, Not Long Ago") at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, to which she returned in late September in order to bring the exhibition a shofar (on long-term loan) that her father had brought out of Auschwitz, and which had remained in the family ever since. Over the summer, she met with forum members in Oxford, London, Geneva and Bern.



Prof. Baumel-Schwartz with the Shofar and with Dr. Ruth Westheimer

Dr. Itzhak Conforty was appointed to the board of directors of the Association for Israel Studies for 2019-2021. The AIS is an international scholarly society dedicated to the academic study of all aspects of the State of Israel. The AIS holds an annual conference and publishes the international journal *Israel Studies Review*.

Prof. Shmuel Feiner was elected as chair of the board of directors of the Historical Society of Israel, being the first member of our department to be elected to this office. He was also appointed to serve as one of the editors of the journal *Zion*, replacing Prof. Moshe Rosman, who completed his term as editor.

Prof. Feiner received a research grant from the Israel Science Foundation (ISF) for his study on "Renewal and Conservatism in an Age of Cultural Transformation: The 'Second Chapter' in the History of the Haskalah Movement in Europe, 1797 – 1823". One of the most perplexing phenomena in the history of modern Jewish culture is the apparent "rebirth" of the Haskalah in the nineteenth century. This "rebirth" appeared after the Haskalah movement seemingly reached an endpoint in the waning years of the eighteenth century. The proposed research project will focus on this "second chapter" in the history of the Haskalah movement, between its presumed collapse in Berlin, and its impressive development in Galicia and in the Russian Empire.

Prof. Adam Ferziger was elected to serve a three-year term on the board of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS).

Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim was chosen to serve as one of the editors of the French journal for Jewish Studies *Revue des études juives*.

Dr. Debra Kaplan was elected to serve on the board of the Historical Society of Israel.

Prof. Yigal Levin participated in a meeting of students from the departments of Jewish History, Bible and Land of Israel Studies on the topic of "the place of faith in the life of a Bible scholar", organized by Dr. Tova Ganzel, that was held on May 22, 2019. The meeting, in which Prof. Jonathan Grossman of the Bible department also participated, was meant to provide students with the opportunity to ask, and the hear, about matters relating to faith and scholarship.



Prof. David Malkiel, who was on sabbatical during the Fall semester of 2018-2019, spent two periods of time in Pisa, Italy. In November 2018 he taught two seminars for graduate students and faculty, concerning travel to Italy in the Middle Ages and early modern era, while in February 2019 he taught seminars on Benjamin Tudela and on medieval Hebrew manuscripts; the latter took place in the Michelangelo reading room in Florence's Laurenziana library. In May 2019 he taught an intensive graduate course on Maimonides in Budapest's Central European University.

Prof. Moises Orfali received a medal from the Committee of the Sephardic Community in Jerusalem and from the National Authority for Ladino Culture, "for his life's work in teaching, in research and in publications in the field of the heritage of Spanish and Portuguese Jewry in the Medieval and Modern Periods".

Prof. Adiel Schremer was the recipient of the rector's award for scholarly innovation, as reflected in two papers that he published last year. In the first, Prof. Schremer suggested that the "Minim" against whom the sages of the Babylonian Talmud struggled were actually the Mandeans, rather than the early Christians as is usually assumed. This suggestion then reopens the discussion on the identity of "Metatron", which has been much discussed over the ages. In a second article, Prof. Schremer proposed a systematic outline of the history of the sages, from their first appearance as a group through the end of the Mishnaic Period, while contesting various views that consider the sages to have been a marginal group that had no real influence on contemporary Jewish society.

