

From the Department Chair, Prof. Kimmy Caplan:



Dear Readers,

The academic year began and we are happy to welcome the students who joined us, pursuing undergraduate and graduate degrees. It takes time to adjust to the department's climate and beat, to settle into a routine, to become acquainted with the faculty members, and to discover the qualities of historical-critical thinking. I am convinced that the tools that we acquire in our studies in the department are useful and important for situations in life far beyond the academic scene.

The past year highlighted the exceptional teaching abilities of our department's faculty. Dr. Debra Kaplan was awarded an outstanding lecturer prize by the university, joining another three faculty members who won this prize over the past decade. It is not by chance that all those who studied and continue to study with Debra note that this intensive and fascinating experience remains engraved in their memories. Moreover, our department was announced as the outstanding department in teaching across the entire university! This recognition of excellence and the prize that goes with it, is awarded by the Vice Rector, Professor Amnon Albeck. It is based primarily upon student evaluations of all of our courses, and attests to the highly positive appreciation of our faculty's teaching skills. I salute my colleagues with much admiration for this achievement; continuing to sustain outstanding teaching qualities is no less a challenge than winning this award, and we are committed to doing all that we can to achieve this goal.

The broad scholarly activities of our department's faculty members and graduate students expresses itself in multiple ways. Research proposals, master's theses and doctoral dissertations are well-received by senior scholars in Israel and abroad, faculty members and graduate students publish articles and books, lectures are delivered by both graduate students and faculty members in academic conferences, and some of our faculty take an active role in the public discourse as well.

We owe the ability to carry out most of these academic activities to the fund endowed by the Koschitzky family, named after Israel and Golda Koschitzky, in addition to several endowed Chairs that are held by members of the department. Dear Koschitzky family, we are ever so grateful!

The day-to-day functioning of the department depends on intensive administrative work, made possible thanks to our administrative staff, led by our highly regarded administrative director, Ms. Cohava Akrabi, with the assistance of Ms. Chen Avraham who joined us recently. We owe a great deal to Ms. Aliza Haiman for her dedication to the updating and upkeep of our website and Facebook page. Thank you all wholeheartedly. I thank the administrative staff of the University for their constant attentiveness, willingness, and assistance, and we owe special gratitude to the staff of the Dean's office led by Ms. Maya Yonati. This is an opportunity to wish the best of luck to our incoming Dean, Professor Yaron Harel, a member of our department, to thank the former Dean, Professor Elie Assis, for his unique and inspiring devotion. If not for Professor Yigal Levin's insistence and devotion this newsletter would have never appeared; we are all indebted to him for this rich and very interesting issue.

I wish you all an enjoyable read, and to my colleagues and our students a challenging and successful academic year.

Yours as always, Kimmy



Retiring Faculty



Prof. Zvi Zohar, an expert on Middle Eastern Jewry and on the legal aspects of Jewish community life, who joined our department as part of the program for Contemporary Jewry, retired last year. A conference marking his achievements and retirement was held on December 31, 2017 and January 1 2018. This

conference featured about 20 papers delivered by leading scholars from various institutions, some of them former students of Professor Zohar. Sometime later, Prof. Zohar sat down with us for an interview.

Prof. Zohar, could you please tell us a little about your life before entering the academic world? Where you grew up, what schools you attended, and what you believe were the main influences on your life?

I was born in the United States. In the 1940's my parents were active in the religious-Zionist youth movement "Hashomer Hadati", and made Aliya in 1958 when I was nine. I attended the state-religious "Moriah" elementary school and then "Zeitlin" high school, both in Tel Aviv. My Talmud teacher in 9-10th grades was Rabbi Shimon Friedlander (father of Yehuda Friedlander, who was later rector of Bar-Ilan University). He taught me to love Torah study in general, and especially the Halakhic sections of the Talmud. I also studied Middle-Eastern studies under the legendary teacher Dr. Dov Iron, who taught me to appreciate both the Arabic language and Islamic culture, and to respect the Arab-Muslim culture that surrounds us, despite "the conflict". One of my best friends in those days was Yitzhak Askof, now Rabbi Dr. Yitzhak Askof, who had made the difficult journey with his parents from Aleppo in Syria, after his father had been accused (apparently not without justification!) of helping others escaping Syria and making Aliya. After high-school I enlisted quite naturally in the IDF intelligence corps, and served in what is now called "Unit 8200" but was then called "515". When I arrived there as was told that the unit's name comes from the fact that among the soldiers who served in it there were 500 Iraqis and 15 Ashkenazim. I'm not sure that that was really the ratio, but there were a lot of people whose families had come from Middle-Eastern and North African countries, including many Iraqis, who played an important role in the development of the IDF intelligence corps. My studies at Zeitlin and my

military service, together with the education that I received from my parents, who combined practical Zionism with a religious lifestyle and respect for all human beings, were the main influences on my life.

Given your Ashkenazi origin, what brought you to dedicate your academic life to the study of the Jewish communities in Islamic countries and their rabbinic leadership?

True, my father was born in the United States, and while my mother was born in Jerusalem in the late 1920's while her parents were trying to make their home there, they ended up having to return to the US. My grandparents arrived in the US from Eastern Europe in the late 19th century as very young children. My interest in the writings of the rabbis in Islamic lands in modern times was not a result of my family background. But the meetings that I had with people whose families had come from Middle-Eastern countries, both when I was in high school and then during my military service, left me with a deep impression. I learned that in many cases, their attitude towards Jewish culture, towards the Torah and its commandments, was different from what I had been taught in school, in ways that I found to be interesting and compelling. My teachers taught me that there was a clear dichotomy between "religious" and "secular" people, and that it was important to be in the right "camp" and to be wary of those who did not belong to that camp. But I saw that for people who had come from Islamic countries, things were different. When I asked one of my high school teachers why this was so, he answered "they are weak". No one could tell me, who were the rabbis from which these people had learned their unpolarizing attitude. So I decided that "when I grow up" I would find out.

What did you do after your military service?

In 1971, when I was about to finish my service, my commander, the late Yoel Ben-Porat, said that "if I care about the state" I should stay on in order to ensure its security. I answered, that the security of the state is not an end in its own right, but a means to achieve a purpose, and that that purpose was the existence of a worthy Jewish society in Israel. Since I wished to investigate the base values for such a society, I intended to study in a yeshiva. He replied, that if I was going to abandon the security of the state, I was a traitor. I was not convinced, did not stay in the military, and went to a yeshiva. Since my younger

brother (now Prof.) Noam Zohar had begun to study at Yeshivat Hakotel as part of the hesder track, I went there as well. But since all of the other students there were several years younger than me, I soon moved to Yeshivat Merkaz Harav, where there were more post-army students as well. Among my fellow students were Meir (Marty) Lockshin, who later became a professor of Bible at York University; Rabbi Dov Berkowitz, Rabbi Prof. Yigal Shafran and others. I came to the yeshiva in order to learn Talmud, but I also became more aware of the ideology behind Merkaz Harav. At this stage I began to understand what I saw as the huge difference between the broad horizons that Rabbi Avraham Kook had envisioned in the “central world yeshiva” that he wished to create, and what was happening in practice among those who considered themselves to be his successors. I remained there for about a year and a half, until the beginning of the Yom Kippur War, but when I returned after half a year in the army, I felt that the yeshiva’s cultural horizons were too narrow for me, and decided to begin studying in the university.

I should mention, that while I was still at Merkaz Harav I began to work at seminars conducted by Gesher, which had just begun operating its joint seminars for religious and secular youth. At the time, Gesher was practically secret, because both religious and non-religious schools did not encourage their students to participate in its activities. Therefore many of those who came to the activities were young people who refused to “toe the line”, and who showed an impressive independence of thought and intellectual and cultural curiosity.

Both your master’s thesis and your doctoral dissertation dealt with the Halakhic rulings of rabbis from Islamic lands in modern times. What motivated you to research halakhic issues?

My yeshiva studies confirmed what I had already learned from Rabbi Friedlander in high school: that the core of Jewish Torah intellectual work is Halakhah. In addition, Halakhah determines the proper lifestyle for the individual and for the community. It was clear to me that the study of Halakhah is the key to understanding the world of the rabbis and the way in which they dealt with the reality in which they lived. When I wanted to study for my master’s degree, I felt that I was not sure of the proper disciplines with

which to study what I was interested in, so I went to the Institute of Contemporary Judaism at the Hebrew University, with its interdisciplinary approach. The instructors there told me that the topic that I wanted to research was very interesting, but that they had no one who dealt with the Halakhic literature of rabbis from Islamic lands in modern times, and that I would have to learn things on my own. And so it was.

In addition to your MA studies at the Hebrew University, you also began studying at what was then a new institution, the Shalom Hartman Institute. What made you want to study there?

A year before I began to study in Jerusalem, Rabbi Dr. David Hartman established an institute, which was actually a new sort of beit midrash. The students there at the time were yeshiva graduates, mostly from yeshivot hesder, who loved learning Torah, but very much did not like being told that there were questions that could not be asked in the yeshiva. Without anyone actually defining it, their aim was to learn Torah in a way that would utilize the full depth of human knowledge. Torah study in depth, but without thought control. This was David Hartman’s vision, and the students that came there were independent thinkers with very impressive learning abilities. The weekly class sessions in the beit midrash were given by the students in rotation. There were not a lot of students, so that each one led the class about once in three months. Each of these classes were well prepared, and many of them eventually became



academic articles that were published in various fora, when the students themselves became senior academics. I became very attached to this way of learning, and it is reflected in much of my own research and writing. Actually, aside from my academic activity, my ties to the Hartman Institute continue to this day.

When and how did you come to teach at Bar Ilan?

My degree from the Hebrew University “tagged” me as someone who had been trained in the Institute for Contemporary Jewry. As a scholar, this was wonderful, because it meant that I could combine different disciplines without having to give up certain



types of sources or certain methodologies because they were outside my discipline. But when I looked for an academic position, people kept telling me, "what you are doing is very innovative and interesting, but you do not belong to our discipline (of Jewish History/Talmud/sociology/anthropology)." Well-meaning people promised things that they could not keep. I taught for a few years in Beer Sheva, in law schools and so on, until, in 2000, Bar-Ilan decided to open a program in Contemporary Jewry. Then university president Prof. Moshe Kaveh asked me to lead this program. And so I arrived at Bar-Ilan.

How is it that for most of your time at Bar-Ilan your position has been divided between the faculties of Law and Jewish Studies?

After two years I could not continue in Contemporary Jewry, the very existence of which was not supported by some of the relevant departments. But because there were people in the university who knew me and valued my work, it was decided that I would teach in the Faculty of Law, and they expanded their definition of "Jewish Law" so that it included research on modern Halakhah. I also taught in the program for the study of Jewry in Islamic countries, which at the time was outside the Department of Jewish History. Only years later, when both this program and the Contemporary Jewry program were integrated into the Department of Jewish History, and after some of the department's "old guard" had retired, I began to teach in what became the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry.

How did you manage with your inter-departmental appointment, between Law and Jewish History? Did it make things more difficult for you, or did it open up new possibilities?

Looking back, the fact that my position was divided between Law and Jewish Studies worked in my favor. First of all, within the Faculty of Law I could focus more on the Halakhic material, while in Jewish History I could emphasize the historical and social aspects (of course I always combined the Halakhic and social material, but in different measures). Secondly, although this interview is for the newsletter of the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, I must admit, that the divisiveness and infighting that were typical of the Faculty of Jewish Studies and the Department of Jewish History for so long were totally absent in the Faculty of Law. Thus, during those years it was

the Faculty of Law that was an island of stability, of proper conduct and of good will for me. I should add that I continued to serve as a senior researcher at the Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, where I could continue do things that interested me.

How do you define yourself? A sociologist? A Historian? A scholar of Halakhah?

As you can see from all the above, I do all that I can to avoid the pitfalls of disciplinary definitions. My main area of research is way in which halakhic leadership dealt with the social, legal, cultural, and other changes that occurred in the communities in which they lived and worked. Especially in the challenges of modernity in Islamic lands during the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as other issues such as the developing halakhic attitudes towards conversion. But I have also written about such matters as liturgy (the rites of the High Priestly service on Yom Kippur), sociology and more.

Could you tell us about some of your work outside of the university, and even outside of academia?

First of all, I should mention that within Bar-Ilan, besides my teaching and research in the faculties of Law and of Jewish Studies, I also had the privilege of dealing with matters concerning the Jewish Diaspora. About a year after I arrived at Bar-Ilan, I was invited to establish "The Rappaport Center for Assimilation Research and Strengthening Jewish Vitality". The center was established at the initiative of Mr. Baruch Rappaport (who had also donated the funds for the building of the Faculty of Jewish Studies), in order to better understand the problems faced by small and mid-size Jewish communities. I belong to those who believe that we should welcome any Jew who wishes to live in Israel – but we should also feel responsible for and try to aid any Jew who wishes to live abroad and to maintain Jewish life abroad. The center's activities included maintaining ties with small communities – mainly in Europe – and helping them strengthen their Jewish activities; original research about various aspects of Diaspora Jewish life (which were published by the center in a special series); and organization of annual conferences on different relevant topics. I acted as head of the center for ten years, until it closed because of Mr. Rappaport's advanced age, since he could no longer provide the funding for the center and the university did not have the motivation to find alternative funding. But my years as head of the center gave me great satisfaction, opportunities to get

to know various communities, and to help scholars conduct research on topics that are often ignored by Israeli scholars. Besides that, I have also been in various initiatives meant to teach the public about the richness and relevance to this day of the writings of the rabbis from Islamic lands in the modern period.

What changes have you seen over the years in the academic world in Israel, and maybe in Israeli society in general? What are your feelings about these changes?

In the world of academic Jewish Studies I can say that the rigid disciplinary divisions, which, as far as I understand, originated in the German university system, has broken down over the years since I was a student. This happened despite the opposition of the older generation. Much of the credit goes to the Hartman Institute, which was the pioneer in this area, and then through other batei midrash, some of which were established by people who started out at Hartman. Others competed with Hartman but adopted its holistic approach, which brings in many different perspectives. I think that this is a very positive development.

As far as Israeli society, I can see two seemingly contradictory trends. On one hand, there is a growing rhetorical polarization which is fueled by social media, where people can express themselves in ways that are extreme and inflammatory, and then having influence on the press and other media, that feel that they too must use extreme language in order to stay relevant. I think that this polarization is very negative. On the other hand, I see an opposite trend – a process by which the majority of the Jewish population is joining a common working center. Many in the Haredi community are much more “Israeli” than they were when I was in high school. On the other hand, the “secular” public is much less militant in its opposition to Jewish tradition and culture that it was in the first decades after the founding of the state of Israel. When I was in high school, many secular people used to declare “I am an Israeli, not a Jew”, and there were no “secular batei midrash” except perhaps at the Oranim seminary. The “national-religious” public was much more boring and conformist, without all of the diversity that exists today. The only people who had both the title of “rabbi” and a PhD were old men who had come from Europe. Today, in contrast, there is an ever-growing number of knitted-kippa-wearing rabbis, who consciously combine academic study and

Torah, and enrich their religious world by doing so.

Finally: you officially retired more than a year ago. What have you done since then? Do you have plans for the future?

I retired at the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year. I then spent half a year in the US, teaching at Brandeis University. I got to know new aspects of the American Jewish community, both in the “Shaarei Tefillah” congregation in Newton, MA, and in various other Jewish organizations to which I was invited to speak on both the east coast and the west. I am writing a book in English about the development of Middle Eastern rabbis’ views on conversion in the modern era, which will combine two areas of research that have occupied me for a long time. A volume that I co-edited with Professors Amichai Radziner and Elimelech Westreich on various aspects of the thought of Rabbi Uziel will soon be published. In my opinion, Rabbi Uziel was one of the great rabbis of the 20th century, but has not received the recognition that he deserves. I have several additional projects in various stages of work, which I wish to complete. I also intend to cooperate with various people, to whom the issues of Halakhah, conversion, and the heritage of the rabbis of Middle Eastern communities are important. If G-d will give me health of body and spirit, I hope to continue with all of these – and yes, to also spend quality time with my wife Avigail, and to see my children and grandchildren a lot. Amen.

Professor Zvi Zohar, thank you for this conversation, and much success for the future.





The University President's Stipend for Doctoral Students: Ekaterina Oleshkevich

Ekaterina (Katia) Oleshkevich came to us from Russia as a PhD candidate and recipient of the university president's stipend for doctoral students. We asked her to tell us a little bit about herself:



I was born in 1992 in Novocherkassk in the south of Russia. I received my undergraduate and master's degrees in Oriental and African Studies at Lomonosov Moscow State University (MSU) where I studied Jewish Studies and Hebrew. My BA and MA theses written under the supervision of Prof. Arkady Kovelman focused on the research of rabbinical literature and explored the image of R. Shimon b. Yohai in the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds.

After receiving my BA, I worked as a research fellow in the Schneerson Library, the branch of the Russian State Library at the Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center in Moscow — a prominent collection of Hebrew printed books that once belonged to the Chabad leaders. My research in the Schneerson Library was focused on the provenance of the books as well as on the history of their everyday life, i.e. the ways the books were used, treated, etc. In the framework of this provenance research, I worked on identification of the books featuring different provenance signs of the Schneerson Hasidic dynasty.

My PhD research project is devoted to the history of Jewish childhood in the Pale of Settlement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I seek to explore the attitude towards children within the family as well as the inner world of the nineteenth century children.

I know eight languages besides Russian, including some extinct languages, and I translate books from English and German to Russian. I am also fond of sports, Irish dancing, rock climbing, mountain skiing and boxing.

Outstanding Students:

At a ceremony held on June 4, 2018, two of our students, BA student Roni Lehman and MA student Elisheva Friedlander, received the rector's award for outstanding students.

We are proud of both of them!



Roni and Elisheva meeting with Department chair Prof. Caplan

Two outstanding graduate students received prizes from The Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism, in a ceremony on June 5, 2018:

Elisheva Freidlander is writing her MA Thesis with Dr. Debra Kaplan on the topic of "'She Shouted Before Us in the Beit Din': Jewish Women and Communal Authority in Alsace-Lorraine, 1648-1791".



Leah Klatchko is writing her doctoral dissertation with Prof. Yehiam Weitz on the topic of "The Women of Mapai: The Female Knesset Members of Mapai, from the First Knesset in 1949 until the Electoral Defeat of 1977".

Yitzhak Malka, who is writing his doctoral dissertation on Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno under the guidance of Prof. David Malkiel and is also a lecturer at the Efrata College of Education, spoke at an international conference that was held in Hamburg, Germany, on Sforno's philosophy as a source for Jewish-Christian dialogue. Malka spoke on the way in which philosophy is reflected in typography and letter-shapes.



Institutes and Chairs in the Department

Department alumnus Dr. Alexander Avraham received the IJG's Chava Agmon Prize for Jewish Genealogy

Dr. Alexander Avraham, who completed his PhD under the guidance of Prof. Aaron Demsky, has been awarded the 2018 Chava Agmon Prize of the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy, which is given for unpublished research that expands the horizons of Jewish genealogy. Dr. Avraham's study is entitled "Historical Implications of Jewish Surnames in the Old Kingdom of Romania". For it, he assembled and analyzed a database of over 28,000 surnames, including phonetic and graphic variants, used by Jews in Romanian-speaking lands from the 16th century until the end of WWII in Romania (1944). The resultant dictionary of Romanian and Romanised surnames, expected to be published with the study in 2019, will be a valuable work-tool for Jewish genealogists and family historians. Dr. Avraham has been Director of the "Hall of Names" at Yad Vashem since 1988, and Director of its "Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names" since 2000.

Polish Jewish History Revisited: A Conference in Honor of Gershon Bacon and Moshe Rosman

On November 7-9, 2017, the department held an international conference, in honor of Professors Gershon Bacon and Moshe Rosman, both experts on the history of the Jews in Poland, who retired last year. The evening keynote lecture was given by Prof. David Engel of New York University. Over the following two days, a total of seven sessions dealt with such topics as the social and economic history of Polish Jewry, Hasidism, the Rabbinate, relations between Jews and others and modern Polish-Jewish historiography. Prof. Rosman summarized the first day of lectures, and Prof. Bacon summarized the second. Altogether there were over 20 papers, given by scholars from different universities in Israel, in Poland, in Germany and in the United States. The head of the organizing committee was Dr. Uriel Gellman from our department.



At the conference: Professors Caplan, Bacon, Gellman and Rosman

In a joint meeting of the **Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research** and the department seminar that was held on May 9, 2018, PhD candidate Sylvia Hershcovitz received the Sara Plager-Zyskind and Eliezer Zyskind prize for her dissertation on the Association of Zionist Women in Romania (ACFE) in the years 1919-1948. The ceremony was followed by a lecture by Dr. Amit Varshizky of Tel Aviv University on "The Metaphysics of Race: Nazi Ideology between Science and Belief".

Sylvia Hershcovitz,
Prof. Dan Michman and
Dr. Amit Varshizky



The annual lecture sponsored by the **Samuel Braun Chair for the History of the Jews in Germany** was held on March 21, 2018, as part of the department seminar. At this meeting, Dr. Stephan Wendehorst of the Faculty of Law at the University of Vienna lectured about the career of German-Lutheran historian and champion of Jewish emancipation Christian Wilhelm von-Dohm (1751-1820) as a lawyer.



On June 6, the chair held a conference on letters and correspondence as a historical source.



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 Receives Award for Excellence in Teaching

In a ceremony that took place on May 28, 2018, the department received a university-wide award for excellence in teaching, based on student evaluations of all of its courses in the previous year. The award included a special budget for a day of social activity for the department's staff and faculty.



Prof. Friedheim receives certificate of excellence for the department

Dr. Debra Kaplan: Outstanding Lecturer

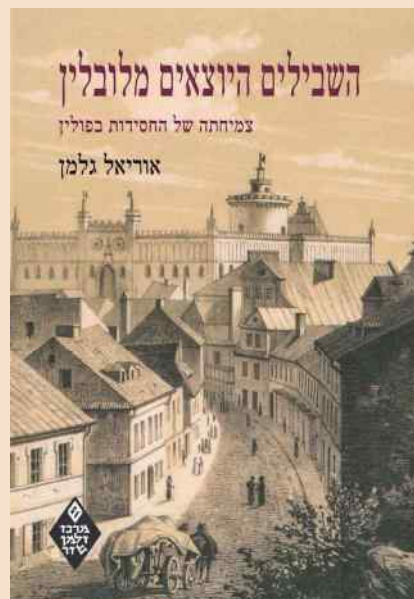
In a ceremony held on 28 May 2018, the Rector of the University awarded Dr. Debra Kaplan a certificate and prize following her being elected outstanding lecturer. This certificate reflects the students' ongoing high regard and esteem for Dr. Kaplan's teaching qualities.



New Book by Uriel Gellman

Uriel Gellman's new book, *The Emergence of Hasidism in Poland*, was published by the Zalman Shazar Center. The book, whose title in Hebrew is actually *The Paths that Extend from Lublin*, presents the social and cultural history of the Hasidic movement in Poland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The book explains how a small group of mystics became a massive religious and social movement, whose influence continues to this day. The book revolves around the lives of the Hasidic movement's leaders, especially the lives of Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, the "seer" of Lublin (1745-1815) and his disciples, set against the background of their time.

The Emergence of Hasidism in Poland examines the greatest innovation of the Hasidic movement, the Hasidic leader, the Tzaddik or Rebbe. The book describes the way such leaders emerged, and their "courts". The book looks at questions of leadership: should the Tzaddik be only a spiritual guide and teacher, or also a miracle-maker? What sort of relationships should he have with his different groups of disciples? The book reexamines the image of Polish Hasidism, especially that of Peshischa, and shows that it was the rabbinic leadership that made the Hasidic movement into what it is today.



On October 10, 2018, the department members participated in a chocolate-making workshop, which was held in the home of Mrs. Cochava Akrabi and led by chocolatier Irit Bernstein. The department members created pralines and chocolate cookies, and went home with lots of fattening goodies! The workshop was funded by the prize that the department received for excellence in teaching.



Department members at chocolate workshop

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 awarded on May 7, 2018, as part of the department seminar. This year's winner was Dr. Evyatar Zanbar, who wrote his dissertation on "The Roman Provinces in the View of the Land of Israel Sages in the Days of the Mishnah and Talmud: Historical, Geographical and Cultural aspects", under the guidance of Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim. At this meeting, Dr. Zanbar lectured on "Rabbinic Sources: What Happened Happened?"



Dr. Evyatar Zanbar

On January 25, 2018, the department members had an unforgettable experience at the "Na-lag'at" center in Jaffa. "Na-lag'at" is a non-profit arts and cultural center that represents a meeting place between deaf, blind and deaf-blind individuals with the general public, and operates a theater, workshops and a restaurant. Our department members participated in a pottery workshop in total darkness, and then enjoyed a meal that was served by waiters who are sight and hearing-impaired.



Creations of our department members

On May 23, 2018 the Chief Rabbi of the Karaite Jews in Israel, Hakham Moshe Yosef Firrouz, visited Dr. Dotan Arad's class on the Karaite Jews during the Middle Ages. Hakham Firrouz spoke about his doctoral dissertation, which deals with the movement of the intellectual center of Karaism from Jerusalem to Byzantium in the 11th and 12th centuries, and then answered students' questions about the religious codes, education and traditions of Karaite Jews.



Dr. Dotan Arad and Karaite Chief Rabbi Hakham Moshe Firrouz

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 the Israel Museum, Ramat Rahel, Tel Shiloh, Mount Gerizim, Samaria (Sebaste), Megiddo, Mount Tabor, Tell es-Safi/Philistine Gath and Tel Adullam. 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 Roman forum of Sebaste, the site of Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.



Farewell and Welcome

In light of some of the changes in our faculty, the department chair Prof. Kimmy Caplan wrote the following words:

After teaching for fifteen years in the program for Contemporary Jewry, Prof. Lilach Lev-Ari is leaving us. Lilach's main position is in the Oranim College, where, besides teaching, she has held several significant positions. Despite this, she taught in our program year after year, showing a level of commitment and professionalism that is worthy of praise. Lilach, your leaving is our loss. Thank you for all that you contributed to the program for Contemporary Jewry, and on the modest and pleasant way in which you did all that you did.

Lilach's field of expertise was contemporary demography and sociology, and the person who will try to step into her shoes will be Dr. Maya Shorer-Kaplan (no relationship to either myself or to Dr. Debra Kaplan). Maya completed her doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Prof. Sergio DellaPergola and she researches contemporary Jewish demography and sociology, especially those of Latin American Jews. Maya will take over Lilach's course, and, in addition, will teach a class on Latin American Jews, communities that were not represented in the department curriculum thus far.

Dr. Debra Kaplan is spending this academic year at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and will only be teaching in our department part-time. In order to fill the need for courses on the medieval period, we are hosting Dr. Tzafrir Barzilay, who completed his PhD at Columbia University in New York under the guidance of Professors Adam Kostó and Elisheva Carlebach, writing about the accusation of Jews as poisoners of wells. The class that Tzafrir will be teaching will focus on Jewish-Christian relations.

Lilach, farewell and thank you once again; Maya and Tzafrir, welcome and much success in your teaching.

And we, on our part, asked our two new faculty members to introduce themselves:

My name is Maya Shorer-Kaplan.

I studied at the High School for Negev, Desert and Environmental studies at Sde-Boker. During my military service, I was responsible for diagnosing and determining the suitability and the qualitative abilities of candidates for military service. I completed my BA, MA



and PhD at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The case study for my PhD dissertation was the Jewish population that originated in Uruguay and – due to immigration between the years 1948 and 2010 – now resides in various countries, Israel and the US included. Though it was focused on a specific population, my research has a potential for diagnosing and implementing a wide array of theories and insights on migration, culture and identification, and transnational connections and contexts among the studied population. As part of my work I created a new database, which included about 1500 people living in 17 countries, as well as oral documentation materials.

The research field of Contemporary Jewry is an intellectual and academic integrative project that deals with existential issues and challenges of Israeli society and Jewish peoplehood. It is a valuable project, which I feel a commitment to pursue within a research framework. In the coming year, as part of this journey, I will teach the course: "Contemporary Jewry issues: Demography, Sociology, Emigration and Identification" and the course "Migrations and Collective Identification in Latin American Contemporary Jewry". And of course, I will learn from my students as well. Another important and valuable detail – I am also a mother of five sweet girls.

My name is Tzafrir Barzilay, I am married and father to a son, and live in Givataim. This year I will teach an undergraduate seminar on Jewish-Christian Relations during the High and Late Middle Ages. I began my academic studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where I graduated in General History and in the Amirim Program in the Humanities. In my graduate studies, also in Jerusalem, I focused on medieval Europe, and especially on the way in which the Black Death and the crisis of the 14th century influenced the treatment of minorities. I then continued my doctoral studies at Columbia University in New York. My dissertation dealt with the accusations of well-poisoning that were aimed at minorities (especially Jews, of course) in 14th and 15th century Europe. I tried to understand how such accusations developed, why they



Faculty News

were aimed at certain minority groups, and why they eventually disappeared. I based my research mostly on archival sources: trial documents, royal and municipal laws, and correspondence between officials that dealt with investigating and prosecuting suspects. Through my research of these “technical” sides of accusing and persecuting these minorities, I managed to arrive at a new understanding of the social dynamics that made such accusations possible.

Since completing my PhD about two years ago, I have been part of a research group called “Beyond the Elite: Jewish Daily Life in Medieval Europe”, sponsored by the European Research Council (ERC). The group, led by Prof. Elisheva Baumgarten at the Hebrew University, is trying to build a more detailed picture of Jewish life in Medieval Ashkenaz. Within this framework, I continued my work on ties between Jews and Christians, focusing on day-to-day interactions, which were usually peaceful, rather than on conflict and persecution. I am especially interested in ties and texts that relate to water-sources. What information did Jewish and Christian neighbors exchange by the well? Were there differences in the ways in which Jews and Christians acquired water for drinking, cooking and bathing, and did these differences influence the way they viewed water as a resource? How did these differences influence the way in which each religion used and conceived of water, both in their theology and their popular cultures? These questions will remain central in my research for years to come. I look forward to learning and to teaching them together with the other instructors in the department, and wish us all an enjoyable and fruitful academic year!



A student in Prof. Levin's class practices Cuneiform writing

Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz finished her term as head of the School for Basic Jewish Studies on October 1, 2018. At the same time she also finished her tenure as head of the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism, and took over as head of the Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research, replacing former head of the institute, Prof. Dan Michman.

Prof. Kimmy Caplan was promoted to the rank of Full Professor.

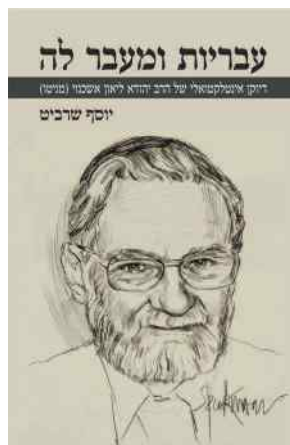
Prof. Caplan's book, *Amram Blau: The World of Neturei Karta's Leader*, published by Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi and the Ben-Gurion Research Institute, won the 2018 Shapiro best book prize of the Association for Israel Studies.



Prof. Caplan making chocolate

Dr. Yossef Chravit is the author of *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*, Idra, Tel Aviv. 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. Rabbi Askenazi lived in a time in which western culture was undergoing an identity crisis, militant Islam was

on the rise, and the Jewish People were in the process of recovering from the terrible Holocaust and re-emerging as a nation in its own land. “Manitou” was like a bridge over the chasm of modern identities – a bridge between holy and profane, between tradition and modernity, between east and west and between individual, national and universal identities.





Prof. Adam Ferziger was appointed a member of the board of the Association of Jewish Studies (AJS).

Professor Ferziger served as co-convenor for the 5th Annual Oxford Summer Institute on Modern and Contemporary Judaism, which took place in early July at the University of Oxford. The theme of this nine-day international workshop was "Gender and Judaism: Perspectives from the Study of Transnationalism and Comparative Religion," and brought together 15 scholars from Europe, Israel and North America who work within a range of academic disciplines - history, religion, sociology, gender studies, mysticism, law, philosophy, and communications. In addition to orchestrating the event, Prof. Ferziger delivered a paper on gender and the American Orthodox rabbinate, and ran a text-based session on gender, religion, and the Israeli Army.



Prof. Ferziger was invited to South Africa, where he lectured at the University of Cape Town, as well as at a national conference of Jewish educators in Johannesburg and served as scholar-in-residence at two leading synagogues.

Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim served as a member of a dissertation defense committee at the Sorbonne University in Paris in December 2017. In the same month, he also participated in an international conference on Philo of Alexandria (Les études philoniennes – regard sur cinquante ans de recherche – 1967-2017), also at the Sorbonne. In June of 2018 he delivered a paper at a conference in the University of Lausanne on the topic of Family Solidarities in the Production of Ideas and Texts.

In addition Prof. Friedheim was appointed as one of the editors of the journal *Revue des Etudes Juives*, which has been in publication for nearly 140 years!

Dr. Uriel Gellman delivered a public guest lecture at Rutgers University, in which he spoke about the book which he co-authored: *Hasidism: A New History*. Dr. Gellman also participated in an international conference on the history of Polish Jewry that took place at the same university.

Prof. Yaron Harel spent the spring semester as a visiting professor at the Diane and Guilford Glazer Institute for Jewish and Israel Studies in the Department of Philosophy at Nanjing University in China. Besides giving lectures in his area of expertise, Prof. Harel also spoke to students of religious studies on various Judaism-related topics, such as the meaning of the Passover holiday.

At the request of the host institution, Prof. Harel and his wife Tammy co-taught a Hebrew class for research students. The 20 participants showed a high level of interest in the Hebrew language, the Jewish People and the State of Israel.



Prof. Harel was elected to serve as dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, and began his term as dean in October 2018. This is an excerpt of the things that he said following his election by the faculty council:

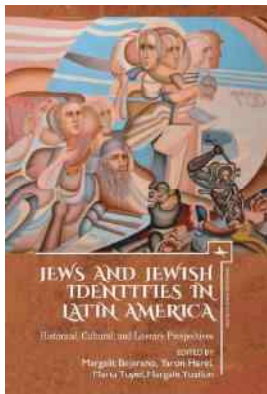
"I submitted my candidacy for the position of dean after a long period of deliberations. My great love for research and teaching is no secret, and I did not have any ambition for this position, given the fact that a job like this one demands near-total commitment. My decision to stand for election came first and foremost because of members of the faculty who conveyed their belief and their hope that I would be able to work for the development and advancement of the faculty. I do not consider this job to be one of power, but rather both a privilege and a moral obligation. A privilege to serve the faculty members,



New Dean
at chocolate workshop

some of whom are my teachers and friends, and to give them a collegial and supportive working environment, one that will enable each and every one of them to concentrate their efforts on their research and teaching, in the knowledge that administrative matters are in good hands. The moral obligation is that of someone who was a student in this faculty from his first day in the university, and is now a full professor in the same faculty."

Prof. Harel is a co-editor of *Jews and Jewish Identities in Latin America: Historical, Cultural, and Literary Perspectives*, together with Margalit Bejarano, Marta Topel and Margalit Yosifon, published by Academic Studies Press. This collection of articles constitutes a major contribution to the growing field of Latin American Jewish studies, offering different perspectives on the social, political, and cultural development of Jewish communities in the area.



Dr. Debra Kaplan was awarded an ISF grant for a project entitled Mapping Daily Life in Early Modern Western Ashkenaz. The project focuses on how individual men, women and children used the various spaces that comprised a Jewish community, and explores the growing regulation of those spaces by communal authorities, a process that intensified over the eighteenth century. The project asks how specific geographic landscapes, such as ghettos,

ports, and the countryside, affected the ways in which Jewish communities were constructed.

Professor David Malkiel is the head of a research project called "Ambassadors of Holiness", which is funded by the Israel Science Foundation. This research project by investigates the encounter between stranger and host, a well-known subject in the social sciences, from the perspective of Jewish history. The case study concerns the voyage of the rabbinic emissaries from the Land of Israel to Jewish communities in the Diaspora to raise funds for the Yishuv.

Prof. Moises Orfali published a new annotated edition of *The Hem'at ha-Hemda Commentary on the Pentateuch* by R. Shet ha-Rofe ben Yefet of Aleppo who lived in the 13th century, and was one of the early rabbis of Syria. This new edition, which was published by Tel Aviv University, is based on two existing manuscripts, one housed at Bar-Ilan, and the other at JTS in New York.



Prof. Adi Schremer was awarded a grant from the ISF, together with Dr. Benjamin Katzoff from the Talmud Department. The aim of this grant is to complete Saul Lieberman's scientific edition of the Tosefta. Lieberman's edition includes only the orders Zeraim, Moed and Nashim, while the first part of Nezikin was published after his death. Prof. Schremer and Dr. Katzoff intend to complete the edition through the end of Nezikin. This project is their second joint project; they previously researched remaining manuscripts of the Tosefta from the Cairo Geniza and in the bindings of books found in Europe.