



Bar-Ilan University

The Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry

Department Newsletter no. 5 February 2017

From the Department Chair, Prof. Kimmy Caplan:

Dear Students, Administrative staff, and Faculty,

As we simultaneously conclude the Jewish annual cycle and begin anew, please permit me to summarize some of the events and achievements over the past, intensive year. Many projects have borne fruit over the last twelve months above and beyond the courses offered and other routine activities.



For example, we are gradually integrating the Contemporary Jewry Program into our department. Students focusing on the modern period may now enroll in

courses in this program and vice versa, without any bureaucratic challenges. In addition, we have mounted an impressive display of books published by department scholars in our main corridor, which includes those published by our graduates – a source of much pride. We completed the renovation of a seminar room that will serve our masters and doctoral students. This room, generously made possible by the financial support of the Koschitzky Fund, as well as funds allocated by the Rector and President, was recently inaugurated. We thank Moti Mishan for his special efforts to help us complete this initiative. We coordinated an international conference last December honoring Professor Dan Michman upon his retirement.

It is hard to express the gratitude that we owe the Koschitzky family, who founded the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Fund for our department. Without their generous financial support, we could not have assisted our graduate students and supported the development of their necessary language skills, supported faculty members' scholarly endeavors, renovated the departmental room, or held worthy conferences and events. Dear Koschitzky family, I represent our department in thanking you wholeheartedly.

We are part of a complex organizational system that demands intensive cooperation with the Faculty's staff, its administrative head, and the Dean. We owe a great deal to Ms. Maya Adar, and Professor Elie Assis for their ongoing attentive ear, sound advice, and crucial assistance.

All the daily performance involves endless logistic and administrative work, which is led wisely by our Administrative Coordinator, Cohava Akrahi, with the devoted assistance of Nicole Messika. This intensive work is conducted for the most part behind the scenes, and deserves much appreciation and gratitude. I would like to thank my colleagues, the department's academic faculty, for a year of cooperation, much good will and assistance, patience, sensitivity, and wise and constructive criticism.

Over the past year we invested many efforts to improve and upload the department's website and its appearance and visibility in the social media. Aliza Haiman took this challenge upon herself in a professional manner, with ongoing energies, devotion, determination, and patience. Thanks to her work, our

site is up-to-date, and our Facebook page has been revived and revitalized.

We recently parted sadly from Professor Mordechai Eliav, one of the founders of our department and one of those who shaped its character, who passed away at the age of 96. Another retiree, Professor Amnon Altman, also passed away recently. We bid farewell to Moran Sitton who was part of our administrative team and wish her the best of luck. At the beginning of this year Rabbi Professor Ben-Zion Rosenfeld retired, after teaching in our department for several decades. We held an academic event marking this occasion on February 1st, and I wish him well and all the best.

Finally, special thanks to Dr. Yigal Levin who once again led the production and publication of this bulletin. We began with renewal and will conclude with it; a few days before Rosh Hashanah, Dr. Debra Kaplan gave birth to a girl. Our warm wishes to Debra, her family, and daughter. Dear students, we are meeting in the classrooms, the corridors, and the paths on campus, please continue to bring with you the energies and curiosity of a newborn that explores the world. Wishing you all a happy and blessed year, Au revoir!

I hope you enjoy reading this bulletin,

Kimmy

Retiring Faculty: Professor Benzion Rosenfeld



Prof. Benzion Rosenfeld, one of our most respected faculty members, retired at the end of last year. Before doing so, Prof. Rosenfeld answered a few of our questions.

Professor Rosenfeld, could you tell us about

the path that led you to the academic world?

I grew up in Givataim, and after graduating the Kfar Haro'eh Yeshiva High School I began studying at the Kerem Beyavneh Hesder Yeshiva, which was the first of its kind. I did my military service in the Paratroopers, and later studied at the "kolel" in Even Shmuel, where I was ordained as a rabbi. After moving with my family to Bene Berak, I began teaching at the Blich high school in Ramat-Gan. I never really considered an academic career, but in 1971 I began a degree in the Talmud Department at Bar-Ilan, which was designed for Yeshiva graduates. That was my first exposure to the academic world.

How did you end up in the Department of Jewish History?

This happened by chance. My friend Naphtali Stern convinced me to come with him to a seminar on the period of the Mishnah and the Talmud led by Professor Moshe Ber, who founded the Department of Jewish History in 1956. He said that Prof. Ber was looking for students with a background in Talmud. I came, studied and connected with Prof. Ber, who convinced me to

study for an additional degree in Jewish History, and I ended up doing both my MA and PhD under his supervision. As part of my studies, I also learned Greek, Latin, German and additional courses in general history and in Classics.

What hardships did you experience during your studies?

The studies themselves were not terribly difficult, but there were two hardships that I had to contend with. The first was making a living. When I began my studies I was not young, and I already had a wife and kids, so of course I had to work. I studied in the "kolel" for five years and received a stipend, but that was not enough. I continued to teach in high school and eventually became an inspector for the ministry of education. I also began teaching in the department while I was still working on my dissertation, but finally Prof. Ber told me that I had to choose, and I left the school system and concentrated on my academic work.

The other main hardship was reserve duty. I served in the Paratroops reserves, and back then we served over 70 days of reserve duty a year. 1973, the year of the Yom Kippur War, was of course a total loss, but even afterwards we served a lot, and most of our professors, who had not served in the army, did not really understand the difficulties. Fortunately, I handed in my dissertation just a few months before the Lebanon War broke out in 1982.

So you continued with your graduate degrees in the Department of Jewish History?

Yes, I connected with Professor Ber and served as his assistant for many years. I wrote my master's thesis on differences in customs between the Land of Israel and Babylonia. My dissertation on R. Yehoshua ben Levi, was praised highly, and some faculty members from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem wanted me to move there. I almost did, but in the end I remained at Bar-Ilan.

Do you consider the fact that you received all of your training at Bar-Ilan and then continued to teach here a problem? Would it have been better to move elsewhere, to learn different approaches from different teachers?

Not necessarily. I must say that I am very proud of Bar-Ilan in general, of the department in particular, and of the fact that I was trained here and have since trained generations of students and

scholars. It is true that Bar-Ilan suffered in the past from a negative stigma, but we have proven that the scholars that we have trained are top-notch, and our department is now a leader in the study of Jewish history. I feel that I received good training in languages and in exposure to various fields at Bar-Ilan. Of course I also collaborate with people from other institutions. In today's world of communication, such collaboration is much easier than in the past.

Was the transition from the world of Torah into academia difficult?

First of all, I have never left the world of Torah. I still function as the rabbi of a community, I teach and rule on halakhah. I even have an advantage over other community rabbis, because I am not dependent on my community for my livelihood, so I do not face inappropriate pressures from them. In any case, both as a rabbi and as a professor, I always put being a human being first.

On the academic side, obviously at first I found the differences between scientific and Torah approaches difficult, especially since I studied the ancient periods, where such differences are felt most. But in time I developed a more balanced view. Of course there are differences. If, for example, we find a contradiction between the way something is described in the Jerusalem Talmud and the way it appears in the Babylonian Talmud, the Yeshiva approach is harmonistic, to find a way for both to be correct. The academic approach is more critical, assumes that only one can be "correct", and that we must ask which tradition is earlier, which copied what, which has changed, which is more "reliable". These are the rules of the game, and as an academic scholar I accept them. When I operate within the Torah sphere, the agenda is different, as are the methods. But in any case, I'm an adherent of the "moderate" critical approach, and understand, if we continue the previous example, that sometimes the Babylonian Talmud does have valid historical information. It's ironic that academia, which is supposed to be open-minded, finds it hard to accept that a person can engage in both Torah study and academic research. I'm happy to say that this is changing, and that there is more openness on both sides.

What do you think that you and others of your generation contributed to the field?

Scholars of my generation, who entered the department in the 70's and 80's, brought in a fresh attitude, you might

say a more "Sabra" spirit. Additionally, our approach was more critical than that of the previous generation, although there were various degrees of critical thought as well. We were also more aware of the need for interdisciplinary approaches. Perhaps because of my military experience, I spent a lot of time in the field, examining the geographical, archaeological and wider historical background of the periods that I studied, and this opened up new areas of thought. In time, I began using social-science research methods, taken from sociology, economics and more. Today this seems obvious, but back then it was considered innovative. But in the end we should remember that we are historians, and we must remain focused on time, place and space.

What changes occurred in our department during the years in which you taught here?

First of all, the department's areas of interest changed. In the past, we focused more on antiquity, especially since this was the expertise of Professor Ber, who was one of the department's founders. This changed over time. We took in good scholars who worked on other periods, and they raised their own students, and the department gradually shifted in that direction. The combining of the Biblical period with that of the Second Temple, Mishna and Talmud harmed both periods, which was a pity. Beyond that, the number of students has changed. There was a time when we had many more students. The drop in numbers has caused a lowering of standards. We have dropped our demands for foreign languages and field trips, as well as other things which may have been justified at the time but in the long run harmed the training we offer to our young scholars.



On 1 February 2017 the department hosted a conference in honor of Prof. Ben-Zion Rosenfeld's retirement. Colleagues from Israel and abroad presented their research on various aspects of the period of the Second Temple, the Mishna and the Talmud, as did several of Prof. Rosenfeld's former students. The conference was well-attended throughout the day.

What do you see as the reason for this?

Much has been written and said about the drop in the number of students in Judaic Studies, including Jewish History. This is a nation-wide, even world-wide trend, which of course hams us. But closer to home, two things happened. The first was the founding of the Department of Land of Israel Studies in the 1970's. This was a new department, that offered topics that were attractive to students, and they bit into areas that were traditionally ours. Unfortunately, some of our department heads at the time tried to fight them instead of looking for ways to cooperate, and lost. This changed in time, and I supported cooperation.

The second development was the growth of academic colleges; not the "general" colleges that pretty much ignore the humanities, but actually the colleges of education, especially those meant for the religious sector such as Herzog, Orot, Machon Lev and Givat Washington. In Bar-Ilan there is a tendency to look down at them, but they offer serious programs, and a lot of the students who should have come to us go there. The same happened when Ariel University opened, and began attracting scores of students who would have otherwise come to us.

Beyond all this, Bar-Ilan did not plan for the future. When I was young, Bar-Ilan was attractive because it was the center of the country, the Tel-Aviv area had a young population, and transport to Bar-Ilan was convenient. I came here because it was convenient. Today, the population of the Tel-Aviv area is aging, neither the train or route 6 come near us, and parking in the area is impossible. Bar-Ilan did not look for ways to solve these problems. There is also a lack of scholarships for young people. I served on a number of committees that addressed these matters, but there was little we could do. Young people voted with their feet and went elsewhere. Today everyone understands that we have to make a bigger effort, and that this includes financial resources for such things as the planned new dorm towers.

Within the university, which for years has been run by natural sciences faculty members, we are not really appreciated. As department chair and as a member of various committees, I had to deal with constant attempts to cut budgets and faculty, to combine or close down departments, to deny faculty members

advancement because of budgetary problems. And then they wonder that we have no students! For example, when a proposal to close the Department of Classical Studies came up, I pointed out that in every self-respecting university in the world, including Harvard and Oxford, Classics are at the center of the academic tradition. It would be unthinkable to give them up at Bar-Ilan. Or when it was suggested that the departments of Jewish History, General History, Bible, Talmud and others be combined into one unit, as was done at Tel-Aviv University, I had to explain to a certain committee that each department represents a distinct academic discipline. They would not have dreamed of combining the departments of chemistry, physics and life sciences, just because they all deal with the same chemical substances. All of the university's departments should work together in order to strengthen the university, so that it can face the challenges that lie ahead.

What do you consider to be your main contribution when you served as department chair?

I became head of the department during a time of crisis, and my first task was to stabilize the department. In the academic field, I emphasized the organization of academic conferences, especially international conferences. I pushed members of the department to organize conferences and helped them find funding. In my view, such conferences are important in making the department better known in the academic world, they help the faculty members make connections which can be important in advancing their careers, and they expose our students to top scholars from other institutions. The department should continue doing this. I also made an effort to recruit good graduate students, and we experienced significant growth in this area. And of course, I dealt with faculty promotions, recruitment of new faculty, and the development of future programs.

On the administrative side, I brought in the generous contribution of the Koschitzky family, despite the opposition of certain parties, who later changed their minds. Today everyone acknowledges that the Koschitzky fund gives the department what little financial independence it has, and it enables us to distribute scholarships for students and research funding for

faculty, to fund conferences and other activities, and is a great blessing all around.

I should also mention that since I had served on many of the university's committees, I could use my ties there to help the department in various ways.

And finally, what are your plans for the coming years?

Happily, my mental age has not caught up with my biological age. Despite the fact that I will no longer be teaching at Bar-Ilan, I will still be conducting research, advising students and writing. I have several books that are in various stages of writing and publication. I have also received several offers from institutions that want me to teach, and I will probably go in that direction as well. But my main focus will be research, and now I will hopefully have the time to try new directions that I have been thinking of. I also intend to continue with my public activities.

*Professor Benzion Rosenfeld,
thank you for speaking with us,
and best wishes for the future*

The Department Seminar in memory of Prof. Yehoshua Kaniel

The department seminar operated this year under a new format. Instead of the familiar weekly gatherings, we got together every few weeks on Tuesday evenings, as what was also a social gathering of our graduate students. The sessions were devoted to methodological innovations in historical research. At each session, the speaker spoke about his or her "desktop" of tools that he or she uses in working with various sources. Among the speakers was Professor Mordechai Zalkin, head of the Department of Jewish History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, who spoke of his new research on the rabbinate in Eastern Europe. Professor Yoram Bilu, Israel Prize Laureate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, discussed the use of Sociological and Anthropological methodologies in the research of the past. Professor Yuval Harari of the Department of Jewish literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev spoke about Jewish magical practices in antiquity. In an event held together with the Institute for Holocaust Research Rami Neudorfer, a graduate student, presented his study of the Kovno Ghetto.

In Memoriam

As mentioned above, two of our long-serving professors passed away this past autumn.

Professor Emeritus Mordechai Eliav

passed away in September at the age of 96. Professor Dan Michman wrote the following in his memory:

I have known Professor Eliav for half a century. I was a second-year student of Jewish history at the Hebrew University and my father, the late Dr. Yosef Michman, initiated the establishment of the institute for the study of Dutch Jewry. He was looking both for scholars who researched the Dutch community, and for students who could collect and process the documentation. Prof. Eliav was working on his book on Love of Zion and the German Jews, which was published three years later (and which is one of the most use-tattered books in my library). Although his main interest was the contribution of the Jews of Germany to the settlement of the Land of Israel in the 19th century, a topic on which he contributed many important studies, in this case he also wished to include the Dutch angle. He studied the merchant organization that funded the Dutch-German *kolel* in Jerusalem, which was centered in Amsterdam. My father made him a member of the institute, and he gave lectures and published in the institute's series of studies on Dutch Jewry. As a student who was just beginning his study of Dutch Jewry with my father, I met him often in the dark rooms of the central archive of Jewish History in the cellar of the Popick building at the Givat Ram campus, often together with Prof. Shimon Schwartzfuks.

Several years later, in the mid 1970's, as I was finishing my PhD and looking for a permanent position, it was Prof. Eliav, who was in charge of the modern period in the department of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan, together with the head of the department Prof. Moshe Ber, who decided to give me a position – and to steer me into the study of the Holocaust. Shortly after my arrival in 1976 it was again Prof. Eliav who “forced” me to give a public lecture on the Tenth of Tevet Holocaust Memorial Day. That lecture was published two years later in a collection of studies on the Holocaust edited by Prof. Eliav, and that was my first published article on the Holocaust. During my first years in the department I served as his assistant, and learned from him. I will not surprise anyone when I state that he was critical and extracting, with colleagues, students – and assistants. And I must add that this was all because of his love of scholarship and his commitment to scientific precision and to the responsibility of a scholar to his topic and to his readers. He hated sloppiness and set high standards. I learned this from him. I owe Prof. Eliav a great debt for his influence on my development as a scholar.

But Professor Eliav's main contribution was not to me personally. His main contributions were to the study of the history of the Jews of Germany, Austria and the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, especially Jerusalem. He wrote a number of ground-breaking books on these topics. His 1960 book, based on his dissertation, on Jewish education in Germany during the *haskala* and emancipation is a basic book to this day, both for German-Jewish history and for the study of modern Jewish education. In his books about Jewish settlement in the Land. Professor Eliav was a dedicated Zionist. He was a member of the

founding generation, one of those who laid the foundations of what we have today. Because of his dedication to the future of the Jewish People, he considered its past, especially its recent past, so important. The modern roots of education, enlightenment, Torah and *Derekh Eretz*, love of Zion and Zionism – all of these were important to him as parts of Israeli society. In the 1950's he was active in the youth and education department of the World Zionist Organization, and was able to influence Jewish education in Diaspora communities as well.

He also felt the great pain of the Holocaust. After the Holocaust he was active in education among the survivors and in bringing them to Israel. In the 1960's he edited the book *Ani Ma'amin*, published by Mosad Harav Kook, which included sources and testimony of people of faith during the Holocaust. This was a groundbreaking book which became a basic sourcebook and was used widely within the religious-Zionist public – such as in *Bene Akiva* – and beyond, in Holocaust memorial ceremonies, and was published in several editions since.

Professor Eliav passed away after a long life, leaving future generations a legacy in writing and in teaching, from which people who did not know him in person will be able to continue to learn. May he rest in peace.

Professor Amnon Altman

passed away on Shmini Atzeret, on the eve of the present academic year, at the age of 81. Dr. Idan Breier wrote in his memory:

Professor Altman completed all of his degrees at Bar-Ilan University, and taught here for decades, until his retirement. He held a joint appointment in the departments of Jewish and General History, and was one of the founders and members of the S.N. Kramer Institute of Assyriology at Bar-Ilan.

Professor Altman's doctoral dissertation, written under the late Prof. Pinchas Artzi, dealt with the land and kingdom of Amurru in the years 1500-1200 BCE. He investigated the complex process of the establishment of a semi-sovereign state along the Syrian-Lebanese coast under Egyptian domination of the area. He then published a number of studies on the political history of Syria, as a battleground between three empires: Mitanni in northern Mesopotamia, Hatti in Anatolia and Egypt. This led to his groundbreaking book, *The Historical Prologue of the Hittite Vassal Treaties: An Inquiry into the Concepts of Hittite Interstate Law* (Bar Ilan University Press, 2004). This in turn led to *Tracing the Earliest Recorded Concepts of International Law: The Ancient Near East (2500-330 BCE)* (Brill, 2012). An even more recent book, on international treaties, will be published in Hebrew by Mosad Bialik.

In his teaching, Professor Altman used to translate ancient documents into Hebrew so that his students could read and discuss them in class. His extensive use of visual aids such as slides (many years before the use of Powerpoint and similar aids were common) made learning with him a memorable experience. Professor Altman's intellectual honesty and personal modesty earned him the respect of his colleagues, students and all who knew him.



Prof. Altman's books on display at the central library

Post-Doc in the Department – Dr. Levi Yitzhak Cooper

Dr. Levi Yitzhak Cooper, a native of Melbourne, Australia, rabbi and prolific writer, completed his PhD in the faculty of law at Bar-Ilan University. His research focused on Hasidic leaders who were also rulers on halakhah, and he studied the thought of Rabbi Hayim Elazar Shapira of Munkács.

After completing his PhD, Dr. Cooper went on to post-doctoral fellowships at the faculties of law at Bar-Ilan and Tel-Aviv Universities. During the 2015-16 academic year Dr. Cooper was a post-doctoral fellow in our department, through the Inter-University Academic Partnership for the study of Russia and Eastern Europe (IUAP). He co-taught an interdisciplinary class on "History and Halakhah" with Dr. Uriel Gellman, which included students from our department and from the Faculty of Law.



Dr. Cooper's research interests are the history of law in the modern period, law and literature, and Jewish law and its wider intellectual, cultural and legal background.

Italian Rectors at Bar-Ilan

On June 1st a delegation of rectors from Italian universities visited Bar-Ilan. They met with Prof. Amnon Albeck, the Vice Rector, representatives of the International Office and Research Authority, as well as with faculty members whose research involves the society and culture of Italy. Our colleague, Prof. David Malkiel, who specializes in the culture of Italian Jewry in the Middle Ages and early modern era, participated in the visit, and, like the other faculty members present, spoke briefly



about his research on Italy and about his views on the possibilities for collaboration between Israeli scholars and Italian cultural institutions.

Gathering in Honor of Yaron Harel

On January 29th 2016, members of the department met at the Jerusalem residence of Prof. Kimmy Caplan for a social gathering honoring Prof. Yaron Harel, who completed his term as Chair. Speeches were made in his honor, Cohava read words of farewell, and of course there was plenty to eat and to drink.



Department Faculty Visit the National Police Academy

On June 9 2016, the department faculty visited the National Police Academy near Bet-Shemesh. They were guided by Yosi Hemi, lieutenant commander of the Police Heritage House, who is writing his dissertation in the department under the guidance of Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim. The department members toured the training facilities, the lecture halls and the memorial sites.



Cohava's birthday

On November 16, 2016, some of the department members gathered to celebrate with Cohava Akrabi, our Administrative Coordinator, her birthday. The department chair surprised Cohava with a birthday cake and wine. This was also the first event to be held in the department's new faculty/graduate student room.



Outstanding Students

Maayan Ben-Meir

received an award for excellence from the rector.

Tirtzah Kapah

received an award for excellence from the dean of Jewish Studies.



David Kalontarov

who is writing his Master's thesis under the guidance of Prof. Yaron Harel, received a prestigious research grant from Yad Hanadiv to enable him to study the Jewish sources in the archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan, pertaining to the history, culture, literature and folklore of Bukharian and Ashkenazi Jewish communities in Central Asia. The majority of these documents in Russian, Bukhori, Hebrew and Yiddish have never been studied or published, and remain unknown to scholars and the general public. The purpose of the project is to create archival descriptions of collections in the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan according to the Yerusha Data Set and to submit them to Yerusha.



Lilach Turjeman

who receives the university president's stipend for outstanding doctoral students and is writing her dissertation on Rabbi Natan Amram under the direction of Prof. Aharon Gaimani, has received a research prize from Machon Ben-Zvi for the research of Eastern Jewish Communities and the Ministry of Education.

The book written by
Dr. Nava Vasserman



I have Never Called My Wife: Martial Relations in Gur Hasidim, which was published by the Ben-Gurion Institute, was awarded the Ish-Shalom prize for first books by Yad Ben-Zvi. A ceremony took place in May.

Tirza Markowitz

who is writing her dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Moshe Rosman on the topic of "The Construction of Jewish Life in Ego-Documents Written by Orthodox Women Shoah Survivors in Israel", received a prize from the the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism. In her research she is analyzing the unique characteristics seen in the description of Jewish life as it appears in about 40 memorial volumes written by female orthodox Jewish Holocaust survivors, who live or lived in Israel.



Dr. Michal Shaul

won this year's Shazar book award for the best book in Jewish history. The book, entitled *Beauty for Ashes: Holocaust Memory and the Rehabilitation of Ashkenazi Haredi Society in Israel, 1945-1961*, is based upon the doctoral dissertation she wrote under the supervision of Professors Kimmy Caplan and Dan Michman. The prize was awarded at a well-attended and beautiful ceremony that took place at the official residence of the President of the State of Israel.



Faculty News

Professor Aharon Gaimani and Prof. Yaron Harel were promoted to the rank of Full Professor.

Dr. Dotan Arad

was a member of the "Erez Biton Commission" for the enhancement of the status of Middle Eastern Jewish tradition in the education system. Dotan was a member of the sub-committee for history headed by Prof. Aharon Maman, which presented the minister of education with a thick volume of its findings and recommendations.

As of this year, Dr. Arad is a member of the editorial committee of the new journal "Yuvalim: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Geniza Research".

In June 2016, Dr. Arad participated in two conferences in the UK. The first was held at the Center for Hebrew and Jewish studies in Oxford University, and Dotan's lecture focused on the attitude of Jews towards the Muslim environment in Mamluk Egypt. The second was held in the John Rylands Research Institute in the University of Manchester, and Dotan's contribution dealt with the communal life, especially the welfare system, of the Jewish community in Cairo in the 16th century. Both universities have important Genizah collections, and Dotan took the opportunity to undertake research on Genizah fragments in these collections for his next publications.



Prof. Gershon Bacon

was appointed editor-in-chief of Gal-Ed, an international journal for the study of Polish Jewry, published by the Institute for the Study of Polish Jewry and of Israel-Polish Relations at Tel Aviv University. He replaced Prof. David Angel of New York University.

Prof. Meir Bar-Ilan

lectured on "Tattoos in Jewish Tradition" at the "Unframed: Tattoo Conference" held on June 29-July 1, 2016 at the Edmond de Rothschild Center in Tel Aviv.



Dr. Guy Bracha



won a research grant from "The Forum for the History of the Land of Israel and the Jewish People" for his research: "The Journal which was born from the Jewish Nahdah – An Arabic-Zionist Journal in Syria and Lebanon". His research examines through the Jewish journal *al-'Alam al-'Isra'ili*, and the social network of the Jewish intellectuals who wrote in Arabic. The Forum for the History of the

Land of Israel and the Jewish People is a research group which conducts conferences and symposia. In addition it provides research grants for outstanding students and researchers in order to promote research in its fields of interest.

Dr. Bracha also participated in several international conferences, among them, "The Jews of the Middle East in the Shadow of the Holocaust", which held in Jerusalem by Yad Vashem and Yad Ben-Zvi, "Si c'était Jérusalem", held in Jerusalem by Schibboleth – Actualité de Freud, and "Between Colonial, National and Ethnic Networks: Elmaleh and his Counterparts, 1900-1967", held at Tel-Aviv University.

Prof. Shmuel Feiner

continued to bring together his academic work and the world in which it exists. In a keynote address at a conference in Hamburg on the state of Judaic Studies in Germany over the past 50 years, he pointed out the unique contribution of Israel to the field, as opposed to centers in Europe and in the US. At a major event that took place at the Berlin Jewish Museum to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Leo Baeck Institute, he emphasized the humanistic and liberal values of the Institute in Jerusalem, values that are constantly put to the test in our contemporary world. As a guest speaker at an interfaith forum in Bern, Switzerland, he spoke of the struggle of Moses Mendelssohn for religious tolerance. And at a meeting of the Mediterranean Institute for Enlightenment Studies held in Istanbul and focused on democracy, he participated in a session at which the key speaker, Prof. Örsan Öymen spoke about Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of democratic and modern Turkey, while Prof. Feiner spoke of the revolutionary aspects of the Jewish Enlightenment.

Prof. Adam Ferziger



received the National Jewish Book Award in the category of research of American Jewry for his book *Beyond Sectarianism: The Realignment of American Orthodox Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2015). In this book he offers new insights on the divisions within American Orthodoxy, which, he claims, has changed since the 1990's.

Among other things, the book looks into the "Ultra-Orthodox" community's changing approach towards involvement in the wider Jewish community, towards the challenges of feminism, and towards the attempt to attract Jews who are less observant into participation in community life.

Prof. Ferziger also received a translation grant from the Fanya Gottesfeld Heller Center for the Study of Women in Judaism for his study of American Modern Orthodoxy's attitude towards feminism as seen in his article "Feminism and Heresy: The

Construction of a Jewish Metanarrative”.

Prof. Yaron Harel

spent the spring semester as a guest researcher at New York University. In August he participated in an international conference on Jews in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa, which he co-organized in Cape Town, South Africa, as chair of the academic committee of the Dahan Center.

Dr. Debra Kaplan

published her book in Hebrew: Strasbourg: Jews, Christians, Reformation, by the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History.



Prof. Moises Orfali

was one of six Israeli academics who were elected to the Royal Academy of Spain. This was a historical decision, since this was the first time that Jewish experts on Spanish-Sephardic culture and languages were appointed to the Academy, and in fact the first time that Jews were appointed since 1904. The Royal Academy announced that this was the end of a historical injustice. Altogether eight non-Spanish members were elected, six from Israel and one each from Italy and from France.

Prof. Orfali wrote that “the election is recognition by the Royal Academy of Spain of the importance of the academic study of the languages and history of Spanish Jews. This is not just an election of Israelis and Jews to the Academy, but also recognition of the Jews’ loyalty to Spanish culture since 1492. In these times, when there are attempts to boycott Israeli academics, the decision by the Spanish Royal Academy is of special significance”. We should add that election to this prestigious body is for life.

Prof. Moshe Rosman

spent part of last year as a scholar-in-residence at Yale University, where he delivered the prestigious Arffa Lectures on the topic of “Constructing Jewish Gender”. He was also a visiting professor at Wroclaw University in Poland, which awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contribution to the study of Polish Jewish History. This past summer Prof. Rosman was a visiting researcher at Harvard University, where he worked on his study of Jewish women in Poland and Lithuania. He also completed his first year as co-editor of the journal “Zion”.

This year he is leading a research group on “Jewish Women’s Cultural Capital from the Late Middle Ages until the First World War” at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Professor Moshe Rosman’s last class

After over three decades of teaching in our department, Professor Moshe Rosman taught his last class on January 20, 2016. His wife Lynne, one of their children, Meir, our department’s administrative manager, Cohava, current and past students, and a few faculty members coordinated a surprise marking the moment. Tamar Schechter, Gershon Bacon, and Itzchak Conforty all spoke in a personal and very moving tone, and Moshe responded likewise.



Professor Aaron Demsky Honored

On February 2, 2016, a ceremony was held in Jerusalem, at which Prof. Aaron Demsky, who retired from our department several years ago, was one of four people honored by the Schocken Institute and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, “for their extraordinary contributions to the State of Israel and in celebration of the 50th anniversary of their ordination from JTS”.



Student Field Trips

The students in Dr. Yigal Levin’s classes participated in several field trips to biblical-period sites around the country. In the photo: students grinding hyssop at Neot Kedumim.

