



בנין הפקולטה למדעי היהדות
על שם ברוך ורחל רפפורט
THE BRUCE AND RUTH RAPPAPORT
FACULTY OF JEWISH STUDIES BUILDING



The Israel and Golda Koschitzky
**Department of Jewish History
and Contemporary Jewry**
Faculty of Jewish Studies
Bar-Ilan University

Department Newsletter

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Dear Friends

We've missed you! Normally, the department newsletter is published every year, but due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the disruption that came in its wake we were forced to delay publishing it until now. We are happy to present to you a summary of the department's activities during the 2020-21 academic years, the long and challenging time we all spent between lockdowns, quarantine, and the hope for a vaccine. Despite the restrictions and social distancing that were in place to look after our health and the health of our loved ones, together we were able to continue our exciting journey on the paths of Jewish history. "Zoom" won us over quickly and efficiently, home became the alternative to the lecture hall and international conferences were conducted from our armchairs. We hope that you looked after yourselves, and that from now on we will be able gradually to return to our full routine of activities, to the enjoyment of studies and research and especially to the personal meetings on campus for which there is no substitute. The department is marching forward into the 2021-22 academic year that we all hope will be filled with innovation and activity, and most importantly – with health and peace.



From the Department Chair, Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim

Dear Readers

The 2021-22 academic year has begun, and we have missed you all. We hope that you enjoyed the 2020-21 year, that was both challenging and intellectually provoking. We were also excited to greet our new students who joined us at the beginning of the current year. It is our privilege to have you all with us. This newsletter will summarize the extensive activity of the department during the past two years.

Despite challenges caused by the Coronavirus crisis, which affected many aspects of our lives, we were very happy that the 2020-21 academic year began efficiently, and remote studying worked well. Nevertheless, we anxiously awaited the day when we could meet again, faculty and students, all together, in the corridors of the department and in the classrooms, for genuine friendly discourse and research and not just through "Zoom". And that day finally came towards the end of the 2020-21 academic year!

I take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank the Koschitzky family. The department is named after the late Israel and Golda Koschitzky, and it is thanks to their family's very generous donation that we are able to hold extensive research activities for faculty members and research students. I would especially like to emphasize our help to research students with scholarships and funding of trips to archives and conferences, which recently restarted. Thank you very much, Koschitzky family, from the bottom of our hearts! In addition to this, the department has been blessed with several additional chairs that hold activities and support the research of our faculty members and our research students.

The results of this support can be seen by the increased presence of faculty members and research students in the various venues of academic discourse: conferences, articles in journals, books, in the central positions that department members hold in the diverse crossroads of scientific activity, and in the recognition they receive from their peers in Israel and abroad. For example – one of many – Prof. Yaron Harel who won the Prime Minister's Prize for Encouragement and Empowerment of Research of Jewish Communities in Arab Countries and Iran.

Sadly, the 2021-22 academic year opened with two dear faculty members retiring: Prof. Moises

Orfali and Prof. Meir Bar-Ilan, after many years of outstanding work in the department. On behalf of the whole department, it is my honor to wish you both long and healthy lives and many more years of prolific research work.

I am happy to announce that two new young scholars have joined the department, Dr. Yosi Yisraeli and Dr. Yechiel (Chilik) Weizman. A warm welcome to you both. We are sure that in joining us, the department will move forward to more and more enriching achievements!

In addition, I extend very sincere thanks to Prof. Kimmy Caplan, my predecessor, who served this department for the past five years. His dedication to the department, the academic faculty and administration, and especially to the students, is deserving of praise. Kimmy worked tirelessly and for the benefit of the whole department. I do not thank him because "I have to", but because I simply feel that he truly deserves the warmest thanks.

We owe the day-to-day intensive running of the department to the unending devotion and sensitivity of our experienced department coordinator, Ms. Cochava Akrabi and to Ms. Chen Avraham whose professional efficiency is outstanding, and whose bright personality is exceptional. We also owe much to Ms. Aliza Haiman-Edelman for her devoted work in maintaining the department's website, Facebook page and You-Tube channel that began this year to give us a small taste of the qualities of our researchers through short lectures. I am also grateful to the university administration for its encouragement and readiness to assist. Special thanks go to the outgoing Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, Prof. Yaron Harel, and the staff of the Dean's office headed by Ms. Maya Yonati for their great help. We owe this rich and fascinating newsletter to Prof. Yigal Levin and Dr. Uriel Gellman, without whose determination it would not have been published.

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter and send you all greetings for good health, and to you dear students, we look forward to a successful 2021-22 academic year, when, with God's help, the Corona crisis will become ancient history!

Yours,

Emmanuel



From the Outgoing Department Chair, Prof. Kimmy Caplan

Dear Readers

A stormy academic year is behind us, as well as the summer months and the Jewish Fall Holidays, and we started a new academic year in the shadow of the Coronavirus pandemic. The rhythm and fabric of our lives changed dramatically during the past nine months, and these changes caused significant damage. In addition, we have all experienced fears, uncertainty, economic stress and challenges, and disruption of significant aspects of our routine. It is tough to function in such a reality considering all the changes we experienced such as lockdowns. It is hard to maintain continuity in our studies, in research and in writing. I am amazed by the determination and commitment of our students, of Cochava and Chen who head the administration of our department, and of my colleagues, the department's faculty. You all pitched in, coped, and went out of your way not to surrender to the virus that threatens our personal, mental, familial, and economic stability. At the core of this success are understanding, attention, sensitivity, willingness to step out of our comfort zones and help one another, with kindness and good humor. I salute each and every one of you!

I recently ended my term as the department's chair, and now is the time to thank numerous people who assisted me in completing this five-year tough, challenging, and surprising journey. It is impossible to name all the wonderful men and women in various academic and administrative venues throughout the university. Nevertheless, taking the risk of an oversight for which I apologize in advance, I owe a great deal to my colleagues in the department for their cooperation, genial atmosphere and professional attitude, endless assistance and understanding, and constructive criticism; to the past deans of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, Elie Assis and Yaron Harel, respectively, and the staff in the Dean's office; to Amnon Albeck and Miriam Faust, Vice-Rector and Rector during my term, and the team in the Rector's office; and to Pnina Agassi, Avital Amar, Aaron Amit, Hanoch Ben-Pazi, Rami Bar-Kedem, Yehudit Baron, Rachel Chen, Gideon Fluse, Tamar Hershkowitz, Motty Huminer, Sima Kurtzberg, Israel Kruk, Kziah Levy, Rachel Levy Drummer, Ahuva Licht, Ayelet Magal, Yossi Mann, Maor Pinko, Orit Riger, Ofer Shragai, and Liat Winkler-Cadury.

Cochava and Chen are the only two who accompanied me throughout this period. Together we worked and struggled for the benefit of the department, our students, and our faculty members; we shared moments of frustration, missed opportunities, success, and satisfaction; we discussed numerous topics at length; and we laughed. The warm and welcoming atmosphere in our secretariat reflects who you two are, and the experience of working with you has been amazing. I feel privileged and blessed to have shared this wonderful work environment.

The encounters with you, dear students, were the highlight. The familiarity and ongoing contact with you all, is powerfully unique, wonderful, touching, exciting, and fascinating. This experience was reflected in a passing brief discussion in the corridor or in an in-depth discussion on personal and academic deliberations, in joint encounters with administrative bureaucracies, in attempts to solve various problems, in making progress in studies, and in completing them and graduating. I bid you all farewell with a tear in my eye and wholehearted good wishes for success.

My colleague, Emmanuel Friedheim, has begun his journey as chair of our department. Emmanuel, you know by now how intense and demanding a role this is, and you have entered it with a great deal of energy and goodwill and spirit. I am sure that you will learn from my mistakes and the issues I missed or overlooked, and with a fresh approach you will lead the department in new directions and innovation. My wholehearted good wishes to you for the best of success.

Department chairs come and go, and Yigal Levin, the editor of our newsletter for several years now is a pillar of stability. Thank you, Yigal, for your devotion, determination, and commitment, and to Uriel Gellman who joined him for this current issue.

Wishing you all a fruitful, successful, challenging, and enjoyable academic year.

Yours as always

Kimmy



Event Honoring the Outgoing Department Chair

On 13th September 2020 a tribute was held in honor of Prof. Kimmy Caplan, following the end of his term of office as department chair. The event took place in accordance with Corona guidelines in the Ferziger family garden in Kfar Saba. We thank them very much for their warm and welcoming hospitality. In honor of the occasion, the guest of honor wrote a special song about his experiences in the department, and his successor, the incoming department chair Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim, organized a Kahoot quiz that tested our knowledge of the long history of the Department of Jewish History

New Faculty Members

We welcome two new faculty members who have joined the department: Dr. Yosi Yisraeli whose specialization is the Medieval Period, and Dr. Yechiel (Chilik) Weizman who specializes in the Holocaust era.

Dr. Chen Sabag Ben-Porat has also joined our ranks and will teach a course in the Contemporary Jewry program, Dr. Mali Eisenberg will teach a course on Contemporary Jewish History in the o.2 Innovation track Master's program; and two post-doctoral fellows in 2021-22, Dr. Sivan Gottlieb and Dr. Yael Levy. We wish them all much success!

Dr. Yosi Yisraeli



My name is Yosi Yisraeli. I am a historian of medieval Spanish and Mediterranean Jewry. I recently joined the department's faculty, and I am pleased to introduce myself and my areas of interest.

I did my academic training in the School of Historical Studies at Tel Aviv University. From the very beginning I found a special interest in the Middle Ages and the complex relations between the Jewish minority and the Christian world that surrounded it: the legal and social tensions, the religious rivalry, the contacts between scholars, and the shared cultural reality from which both these religions emerged into modernity. I wrote my Master's thesis on the transformation of the inter-religious debate in the 15th century, given the rise of Humanism, on the one hand, and the evolution of anti-Jewish propaganda on the other. In the course of my research, I noticed the unique role that Sephardi converts played in shaping Christian scholarship and the inter-religious discourse. In particular, I was fascinated by the theological writings of the converted Bishop of Burgos, Pablo de Santa María (formerly known as Salomon ha-Levi) that, thanks to the printing revolution, became bestsellers by the end of the 15th century. In my doctoral dissertation I conducted a comprehensive analysis of his thought, which reclaimed Israel's pivotal position at the history and leadership of the Church – laying the foundation for the development of a 'converso theology' in Spain.

My studies seek to trace the Jewish sources that nourished this Judeo-Christian ideology, and to retrace its impact - not only among baptized Jews, but also among Christian scholars who found within it the guidelines for ecclesiastical reform. Through this trajectory, the Jewish-conversionist thought that emerged in Spain, I argue, made a critical contribution to some of the pathbreaking innovations (in philology, the study of the Bible, and historical criticism) that changed the face of religious reality in the Early Modern Period.

Since receiving my PhD, I have held two post-doctoral positions: in the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and in The Mandel-Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities and Jewish Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During this time, I taught a variety of courses and expanded my study of conversion and cultural creativity among Sephardic Jewry. Last year, I was a fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University, where together with a group of scholars from other disciplines, we examined the correlation between history and Jewish philosophy; and more specifically, the social and political circumstances that brought Jews to rethink and redefine their beliefs in new ways.

Now, excited and thrilled, I stand at the beginning of a new chapter in this continuous voyage into the depths of Jewish history and spirit. This time, not as a temporary guest, but as a member in the family of the Israel and Golda Koschitzky Department of Jewish History. I am impatiently waiting to get to know everyone, faculty and students.



Dr. Yechiel (Chilik) Weizman

I started my academic career at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where I received my undergraduate degree in Philosophy and Multidisciplinary Studies, and my Master's in Cultural Studies. At the same time, I started working in Yad Vashem as a guide and content developer and I gradually moved towards the study of the Holocaust, that had actually always been present in my family circles. Following my meetings with survivors of Polish origins I decided to research in depth the material and cultural consequences of the Holocaust and the way in which Polish society coped with the memory of the Jews and its relationship with Jews after 1945. These questions were the focus of my doctoral dissertation, that I wrote in the Department of Jewish History at Haifa University. The work examined what happened to synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in Poland after the Second World War, and how the Holocaust impacted the status of these institutions, on their social perception and cultural significance.

My current research deals with events in the Holocaust and their implications and in the fate of the Jewish communities in the periphery of Eastern Europe, from a micro-historical perspective. My research takes me to different archives all over the world, but also to field research. I am very interested in the way in which ethnographic research opens up new directions for understanding the Holocaust and its implications, both in the local and in the broader social and cultural context. Even though the Holocaust is at the center of my research, I see this period as part of the Jewish modern history, through focusing on the history of daily life, material culture and visual culture, and the interaction between the Jews and their neighbors.

When I am not occupied with the Holocaust or cemeteries, I try to do more optimistic things, such as touring Israel and the world with my wife Orly, cooking special foods, drinking quality coffee, riding my bike in the Jerusalem hills, watching Seinfeld, and listening to experimental Hazanut at full volume. I also have a collection of finger puppets of famous thinkers and in the past I did bungee jumping.

Dr. Chen Sabag Ben-Porat



Dr. Chen Sabag Ben-Porat started teaching a course on Communication, Digital and the Jewish World in our department this year. Dr. Sabag Ben-Porat is currently in the final stages of her post-doctoral research at the University La Sapienza in Rome. In 2020 she was a postdoctoral fellow at the Smart Institute at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Her areas of research focus on the sociological and political implications of the digital and new media field, and the implications of digital media on various social sectors. She has served for the past three years as chair of the research students' group of the Israel Communication Association, and she is currently a board member of the Israel Communication Association.

She completed her doctoral research in 2019 at Bar-Ilan University as a presidential excellence fellow and won the President's Prize for publishing academic papers during her doctoral period. Her study focused on the relationship between the public and parliamentarians on social networks in three countries: Germany, the United States and Israel, and was published on a variety of media and academic platforms. Her post-doctoral research deals with the new media uses in the religious and ultra-Orthodox sectors and as part of it she won a research scholarship from the Ministry of Education for research into internet uses in the ultra-Orthodox sector in Israel through distance learning during the Corona period.

She currently teaches at the Schools of Communication at Bar-Ilan University and Ariel University. She teaches courses on society and technology, political communication, media history, quantitative and qualitative research methods and media and academic writing.

Dr. Mali Eisenberg



A Master's program, called "Innovation" was opened in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry in the 2021-22 academic year.

The program offers its students knowledge in teaching and learning of innovative pedagogical technologies that are adapted to the 21st century. In the program I teach a course on "Topics in Holocaust Studies – Theory and Methodology", during which we discuss key questions, central documents in the history of the Holocaust, and methodological challenges. The course comprises modeling of teaching methods in the digital-virtual age. Learning is accompanied by virtual exhibits, joint learning, flipped classrooms, tours, etc. On a personal note, I would like to add that teaching in the department gives me a feeling of closure – I received my academic education in the department where I took my first steps and where I completed three degrees. The department shaped my path and my professional identity, and I have always seen it as my home. The different skills that I have acquired during my years in the Department of Jewish History have laid the foundation for my activity today both as an academic researcher and lecturer, and as an educator serving as the head of the History Forum in the Mofet Institute and as director of the Central School for Teaching Holocaust in the Masuah Institute.

Post-Doctoral Fellows



Dr. Yael Levy

I am happy to be a postdoctoral fellow in the department on behalf of the Halpern Center for Research of Jewish Self-Perception, headed by Prof. Debra Kaplan, and The Marcell and Maria Roth Chair in the History and Culture of Polish Jewry, headed by Dr. Uriel Gellman. I research Yiddish culture and American-Jewish history. I studied for my Master's at Tel Aviv University and completed my doctorate at the Hebrew University. My doctorate comprised researching the growth of the Hebrew and Yiddish press in the United States in the nineteenth century. My present project is focused on manifestations of despair and self-violence among Jewish immigrants in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. My research is based on the Yiddish press, archived material and literary texts. Through the sources I examine different aspects of the immigrant experience and point at hidden currents in modern Jewish history. As well as research, I also translate Yiddish poetry, and am about to publish an anthology of the works of the poet Debora Vogel.



Dr. Sivan Gottlieb

I completed my undergraduate studies at the University of Haifa in the History of Art and Communication. I did my Master's and PhD in the History of Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, both under the supervision of Prof. Sarit Shalev-Eyni. During my doctorate I was part of the President's Scholarship Program in the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School for Advanced Humanity Studies. My research dealt with illustrated Hebrew manuscripts. I am fascinated by manuscripts and enjoy studying and analyzing both the texts and images in these manuscripts. I wrote my thesis on a less-known Pesach Haggadah called "The Sereni Haggadah" which is in the Museum of Italian Jewry in Jerusalem, and my doctoral dissertation, that was approved in September 2021, deals with illustrated medical manuscripts from the late Middle Ages. I have a special interest in the visual language involved in the publication of scientific and medical manuscripts. My current post-doctoral work in the department, on behalf of the Halpern Center for the Study of Jewish Self-Perception headed by Prof. Debra Kaplan, deals in visual images, mainly diagrams in Hebrew manuscripts in the fields of science and philosophy. The aims of the study are to examine the transition and sharing of knowledge in their visual components, to examine the cooperation between Jews and their environment, the influences and changes made both in the texts and in the images. I live with my partner and three children in Moshav Ge'a in the south.

Retiring Faculty Members

In the 2020-21 academic year the Department bade farewell to three senior faculty members who retired: Prof. Meir Bar-Ilan, Prof. Moises Orfali and Dr. Yitzhak S. Recanati. We wish them many more years of scholarship and productivity, good health, and gratification. Prof. Bar-Ilan is an expert on the history of the Second Temple, Mishna and Talmud periods, he also studied Jewish customs in various cultures, rabbinic literature, numerology, and more. The farewell interview that we held with Prof. Bar-Ilan was published in the previous newsletter. Prof. Orfali is an expert on Spanish Jewry in the Middle Ages, a member of the Spanish Royal Academy, was Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, and dealt extensively with the Jewish-Christian dialogue. Before his retirement we held a comprehensive interview with him. Dr. Recanati taught a course on Israeli Communication in the Contemporary Jewry Program, and below we present his words of farewell from the department.

Interview with Prof. Moises Orfali

Prof. Orfali, can you please briefly describe your resume before you began your academic career? What significant landmarks in your life led you to a career as a researcher of Spanish Jewry in the Middle Ages?

I arrived at the study of Spanish Jewry in the Middle Ages through a personal interest in the religious and spiritual life of the Spanish and Portuguese *Anusim*. At the time it was the subject of a course that I taught during my years at the School of Basic Jewish Studies. My students were fascinated by documents from the Inquisition Trails, which describe the beliefs of the *Anusim*, from which one can learn about customs and values in Judaism. In fact, the experiences of my childhood in South America and afterwards in Spain, where I had to hide my Jewish identity on various occasions, awakened in me both an emotional identification with the subject and attracted me to study it. To tell the truth, the field of educational administration was also a subject that really interested me before I reached the university, and so it is no wonder that my first steps in academic studies were in educational administration as well as the history of the Jewish People.

How did you come to study at Bar-Ilan University, and specifically in the Department of Jewish History?

I registered for studies in the fields that I mentioned above both at the Hebrew University and at Bar-Ilan. I was accepted to both institutions and despite the fact that I had the option of living close to the university in Jerusalem with my family, I preferred the hardships of travel, out of interest of the special characteristics of Bar-Ilan University and the unique combination of Torah and science in the study programs that it offered. To start with, I studied educational administration as my major, and Jewish History as my minor. Despite the fact that I graduated with honors in both departments, eventually, as I said earlier, the subject of Jewish History was emotionally ingrained in me, and after advanced study in my major, I was accepted for a Master's in Jewish History from which I graduated with honors. At



the same time, I also studied for and obtained a teaching diploma in Jewish History. Those were the days when you could take as many courses in the university as you wanted, not like now when you have to pay for each extra course. I invested time in my studies in educational administration and I am not sorry for this, as over time I was able to apply some of the theories that I had learned in various managerial positions that I held in academia and in the Jewish community in Madrid.

Who were your most influential teachers?

In the Department of Jewish History, I found excellent teachers with special and diverse methods and didactics: Prof. A. Toaff and Prof. S. Schwarzfuchs, Prof. A. Zimmer and Prof. A. Bashan. All of them influenced me in different ways. From Prof. A. Soltman I learned Latin paleography so that I could read archival accounts, but it was clear that one course was not enough and so I had to go back to Spain to continue my studies in this field, That is where most of the general and church archives were to be found, and in which there was a lot of documentation on the history of the Jews of Spain. In Spain also I was lucky to study under devoted teachers, in the field of paleography with one of the greatest experts, Prof. Tomás Marín Martínez, and his teaching assistant, Prof. Ángel Riesco Terrero. The continuation of my advanced studies was at first in the Universidad de Barcelona where I studied for a further degree, writing a thesis tutored by Prof. Fernando Díaz Esteban and my doctorate under the supervision of Prof. Alejandro Díez Macho at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Both teachers are virtuosi with an international reputation. I completed both academic degrees in Spain and graduated with honors achievements that enabled me to begin work immediately in the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid - although it was for a short period, since at that time Prof. M. Eliav courted me for about a year to join the Facul-

ty of Jewish Studies, this time as a teacher, and I was not sorry. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the department for their support and cooperation throughout all the years that I taught there. I am taking a new road with a feeling of pride and satisfaction for my past work and with faith in the future of the department, despite all the changes and transformations that may occur following the terrible pandemic that is still affecting all areas of our lives.

For a while, you were head of the Department of General History. How did that happen? Did you teach there?

I came to the Department of General History at the request of the Rector, Prof. Yosef Yeshurun, and with the approval of the Central Senate Committee, because the department lacked a suitable candidate to head it. Retirement of senior staff on the one hand and the lack of the next generation on the other was the reason for this. At first it was decided that the dean, Prof. Joshua Schwartz, would be the official head of the department and Dr. Jacques Ehrenfreund would be the actual head. After this, not even one candidate was found in the department, and for the first time in its history, a lecturer from another department, the Department of Jewish History, was appointed. Choosing me was not random as the dean and the rector knew that for about ten years I had taught courses in the history of Spain and its colonies in the Department of General History at Tel Aviv University. Despite this, because I had come to head the department from another department, with which frequently has had disagreements, its members were skeptical at first of an "outsider", but eventually they found in me, in their words, "a wonderful department head" who for two years looked after their interests as though I was one of them. In addition to the ongoing management of the department I held seminars, training for history teachers together with the Ministry of Education and Culture, an international conference and also edited *Bar-Ilan Studies in History V: Leadership in Times of Crisis* (Ramat Gan, 2007).

In your opinion, what are the most important research projects that you have engaged in over the years? What do you see as your most important contribution in the research fields that you worked in?

In the field of religious and spiritual life of the *Anusim* of Spain and Portugal, my book (published by the Pontifical University of Salamanca Press, 1982) contradicts the theory of Prof. Ben Zion Netanyahu that the phenomenon of the *Anusim* in Spain, who kept their Judaism in hiding, is nothing but a wicked tale created by racist Jew hating monks, because most of them actually assimilated. His evidence is that of the *Responso* that condemns the *Anusim* and demands their re-conversion, but this is nothing but rhetorical and not evidence because even if a few hundred

out of thousands of *Anusim* have really converted, it would not turn the subject into legend. Moreover, from the rabbinic sources that Prof. Netanyahu referred to, I could track the emotions and ways of thinking of those same thousands of *Anusim* in light of the historical circumstances in the complicated ruling and their personal and social standing. I note that we did not find this internal information in the Spanish archival documentation, nor in the medieval or Inquisition sources, but only in the Hebrew sources that I discussed. I will also add that in another study of mine on the Inquisition of tens of *Anusim* who thought to conceal their Jewishness upon entering the Order of Saint Jerome in the Real Monasterio Santa Maria de Guadalupe, the enormity of the public scandal created when it was discovered (and I bring the statistics of the commandments that they kept in secret) was what led this prestigious Order to be the pioneer in applying "blood cleansing" laws on itself in order to clear its good name. In my book on the different uses that the Jews of Spain made of Logic from the Golden Age up to the expulsion (published by Granada University Press, 1997) I provided collections of manuscript sources for the study of the sages of Spanish Jewry and their culture, I reviewed and analyzed the sources and their authors, I updated those works that had been published and which were still waiting to be salvaged by the scholars, and I informed the reader what were the existing editions and in what languages. My biggest contribution is in the rich collection of assets that are a useful guide to interested readers, teachers, students and researchers. My study of the *Nomology* of Emmanuel Aboab (published by the Ben Zvi Institute, 1996) contributed additional information in the study of one of the central problems in the Spanish-Portuguese community in 15th century Western Europe: the perceptions of the Oral Law and rabbinic authority at that time, when the *Anusim* openly returned to Judaism. In a documented analysis, I uncovered Immanuel Aboab's interest in the writing of nomology, written in the ancient Spanish of the Spanish exiles – to prove the divine origin and authority of the Oral Torah and the legitimacy of the rabbinic leadership throughout the ages.

Regarding the relationship between Jews and Christians I did not bury my head in the sand and will elaborate on this later. Let me start by stating here while providing some examples of my contribution to my field of research, my approach to the charged issue of the Jewish-Christian controversy, mainly in Spain of the Middle Ages, a field that I taught and researched in a considered, respectful and impartial manner, as can be learned from my articles on the subject, and in which I stress the *Dialogus pro Ecclesia contra Synagoga*, in the prestigious journal *Historia*, in my comprehen-

sive essay on *Talmud and Christianity – the History and Motives of Conflict* (Barcelona, 1998) and The Portuguese edition of Hieronimus de Sancta Fide's "Contra Iudaeos" (published by the National Library of Portugal, Lisbon 2014).

You have won quite a few honors for your research and public work, both in Israel but mainly abroad. Can you tell us about those that moved you especially?

What moved me the most was my appointment in 2005 to the Real Academia de la Historia, a prestigious institution that King Philip V established in 1738 and gaining entry to which is very selective. No less than that is my appointment in 2015 to the Real Academia Española, a government scientific institution which also is very old, established in 1715 in imitation of the French Academy. One of the results of these honors and of my academic studies in linguistics was the founding of the National Israel Academy for Jewish-Spanish language (Ladino) with my colleagues in 2018.

Recently my family and I were very moved by an evening of study and music – a tribute to me on the occasion of my retirement that the Committee of the Sephardi Community in Jerusalem organized together with the National Authority for Ladino Culture, on 11th December 2019. At the end of the evening, I was presented with a special medallion, that was issued by the Israel Society for Medals and Coins to mark the four synagogues in the Jewish Quarter, known collectively as Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai. These synagogues were the center of the life – the heart of the Sephardi community in Jerusalem for hundreds of years. The medal was awarded for my life's work in teaching, in research and in publications in the field of Spanish and Portuguese heritage from the Middle Ages to the modern era

How would you sum up the changes that have occurred in your field of research over the years? In your opinion, are these changes for the best? Are changes needed in the way we teach and study the history of the Jewish people in general, and Spanish-Portuguese Jewry specifically?

Driven by a desire to innovate and evolve, over the years I expanded the types of research I conducted, both into other fields such as gender, about Doña Gracia Mendes and her work in the Republic of Ragusa, and on the bridal canopy as a way of preserving ethnic identity in the western and new world Sephardi community. In my view the changes were for the best, since dealing with the characteristics of ethnic identity in literary and historic genres of the Jews of Spain and of Ladino speakers led me to discussions on the collective memory and Jewish culture of people from Spain in the diaspora. Not for nothing was I asked to contribute the opening article about "The Sephardim, An Historical and Cultural Overview from 1492 to the Present", as an introduction to the well-known volume edited

by a colleague, a teacher and dear friend of mine, Prof. Aaron Demsky: *Pleasant are their Names: Jewish Names in the Sephardi Diaspora* (University Press of Maryland 2010). Three parameters formed the basis for expanding my historical studies in this field: the community institutions of the Jews who left Spain, cultural creativity, and their economic and social standing in the European diaspora, eastern countries and the New World. As a result of this I dealt with the Spanish acculturation of the Jews in the Maghreb countries including reference to the place of "*Heketiá*" as an expression of ethnic and cultural identity as expressed in my final research: "Aspects of Spanish Acculturation among Moroccan Jews", *European Judaism* 52 (2019).

Regarding your question about changes needed in teaching methods in our department, members of the various Curriculum committees during the last decades gave their opinions adjusted to needs and budgeting. As regards methods and didactics I would not stop demanding that students read and analyze primary sources. Knowing how to use the primary sources is knowing how to use precious tools for future research and allowing students to touch on more intimate studies of the subject and the period being taught. The decision to stop teaching the compulsory course on the Holocaust to all students of the department is in my opinion a fundamental mistake. It is important for all department graduates to take a course specifically on those horrific years, at a time when there are so many deniers of the Holocaust. The proof of the importance of teaching this subject is also stressed in the last letter of the National Academy of Sciences dated 11th September 2020 (signed by its president, Prof. Gili Cohen and Prof. Israel Bartal) regarding the implementation of recommendations made in the report on the state of Holocaust studies in research universities and colleges in Israel, a report that the department also received.

One of the areas that you worked in, on the public level, is the inter-religious dialogue, especially between Catholic and Jewish clergy. Can you tell us a bit about this field and about its importance?

There is no doubt about the importance of the issue to root out prejudices and hatred of Jews in all its forms. My public work on this issue started back in Spain during my work in the Student's Division of the World Zionist Organization and as head of the Cultural Committee of the Jewish community. I was asked at the time by the community heads to give a lecture at different ecumenical events both in Madrid and in the different provinces as a representative of the community – actually of Judaism – and the most successful lectures were on "Judaism – the mother of monotheistic be-

liefs;"; "The Torah of Israel and its universal values"; "Judaism and Health and Social Ideals". On my return to Israel, I joined the activities of the Israel Inter-Faith Association whose aims are to advance the understanding between peoples and religions through mutual respect and recognition. The perception is that understanding religions can and must be used as a source of solution to the problems and conflicts including ours in the Middle East.

I also gave a lecture on "The meeting of the three cultures" ("Encuentro de las tres culturas") at some of the annual meetings that Tel Aviv University used to organize, nearly all of them abroad, in conjunction with Spanish universities and local authorities; I gave several lectures at seminars of the Centro de Estudios Judeo-Cristianos as well as in similar centers in Paris and São Paulo. In Bar-Ilan University, at the request of the President and Rector, I was invited to lecture before cardinals and rectors of Catholic universities who were on an official visit to the university and sought to learn about its methods combining Torah and science.

Over the years, you have held a large number of administrative-academic roles: Head of the Department of General History, Head of the Department of Jewish History, Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies. How would you sum up the challenges you faced in each one of these roles, and what was, in your opinion, your chief contribution to the departments that you headed?

Over the years, I have indeed held various administrative-academic jobs. We have already spoken about my job as Head of the General History Department. I was privileged to be the Head of the Institute for the Study of Jews in the East, albeit for the short time of one year, but I was very happy with this appointment, since this institute was where I started my work in Bar-Ilan part-time with another part-time job in the department. It was challenging to hold an international conference on the Jews of Malta, when in those days there were no official ties between the two countries, although we enjoyed excellent and full cooperation with Malta, and the lecturers and a Maltese folklore group came to Bar-Ilan to appear during the event. I also published, together with a department colleague, the late Prof. Elliott S. Horowitz, a second volume on *The Mediterranean and the Jews, vol. II: Society, Culture and Economy in Early Modern Times*, 2002, and I also was privileged to be head of the Department of Jewish History, during an especially challenging time, where due to the financial state of the university, cuts across the board were made in all the departments and faculties, but thanks to internal maneuvers, we succeeded in keeping all our people and jobs. In those days I was head of the Center for Basic Jewish Studies, where I successfully spent the four years of my tenure working on three main assignments: moving to a

new building, from the Faculty of Jewish Studies building to the Nagel Building, equalizing the number of compulsory hours between male and female students and keeping the center in the Faculty of Jewish Studies when there was an option for it to be moved under the aegis of other faculties. The peak of my activity as academic director came during my two consecutive terms of office as Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies. During this time, also, there was a danger of cuts and termination of academic faculty members, but fortunately my predecessor, Prof. Joshua Schwartz, was able, instead of firing academic staff, to freeze research institutes, thereby avoiding the awful decision to remove academic staff from the workforce in the faculty.

You also served as Academic Head of the Zefat Academic College, when it was an academic branch of Bar-Ilan. How did you get to this? What contribution did you make there?

There was a tender for the position and it was an appointment of the Rector, and I won it. Although remuneration for the position was included in my Bar-Ilan salary, it came directly from the Council for Higher Education, since on the one hand the job had to be the academic arm of the university and on the other had to be supervisor of the Council for Higher Education. At this time the college was in the process of becoming independent (this was also the role of my counterparts in the other colleges) according to the requirements of the Council for Higher Education: that teachers who are appointed fulfil the academic requirements, with recognized degrees, and that the courses that they teach belong to the field of the department and are at the required academic level. Therefore, by virtue of my position, I participated with the right to vote with the members in the executive meetings and in the Supreme Academic Council of the college where important decisions were made regarding the running of the College. In the university I was subordinate to the director of the preparatory schools and colleges, at the head of which was the then Dean of the Faculty for Social Sciences, Prof. Shmuel Sandler. I dealt with examinations, appeals and amendment of grades, appointment and promotion of lecturers, changes in the study programs, future cooperation between the college and the university, the head of the Bar-Ilan disciplinary committee for, amongst others. Towards the end of my stint there and with the reduction in staff appointments from Bar-Ilan in the college I also had to take on the responsibility as head of the Department of Special Education of the university.

And what about the changes that have occurred in the academic system, all over the world, in Israel and in Bar-Ilan in particular? What is your view on "the collapse of the

Humanities” that has been discussed so much in the past few years?

Over the past few years, the academic system all over the world and in Israel has tended more towards studying STEM professions and less the Humanities. In Israel, there have been many discussions about the danger of the collapse of the Humanities, committees have been set up by the Council for Higher Education to deal with the problem and the recovery of this field, but the results are both that the number of professors in the Humanities continues to decline, there are no replacements when professors retire, budgets have been given and eaten away, and departments have shrunk and are in danger of disappearing altogether. The situation is very disheartening because the decision-makers talk about reinforcements and about acquiring highly qualified people but the investment in the Humanities are both few and do not give the desired-for results. Government plans such as setting up “Excellence Centers” or “Bringing highly qualified people back from abroad” have not been too successful and the erosion continues to gnaw away. Among the professions that have disappeared: Indian, Iranian and Armenian Studies, Assyriology, History of Africa, Semitic linguistics and the History of Russia and Eastern Europe. The situation is worrying because the result of the disappearance of fields of study means that undergraduate studies in the Humanities are becoming less focused and more general and interdisciplinary.

As someone who served in the past as head of the Department of Jewish History, what changes have occurred in the department since then, in the fields of teaching and research, in the students and generally? What do you think about these changes?

The state of Humanities in the country also resonates directly on our department, in addition to the fact that students today are practical and more down-to-earth regarding their choice of profession. The fields of study in the department have also been reduced, some have disappeared, and others are going that way with the retire-

ment of other faculty members. It is no secret that in the past two years we also suffered from a low number of students registering in the department. Over time there have been changes both in the fields of teaching and of research, in the number of compulsory introductory courses and the number of courses, especially the advanced ones, which elsewhere are called “pro-seminars”. Due to the restrictions and cuts that the university has determined for all faculties, institutes have been closed and activity in others have been curtailed. We can take comfort in the young energetic people who have joined the department in recent years and who make up a new and heartening workforce in the period of general degeneration of the Humanities, as well as the fact that the number of new students who registered for the department for the 2020-21 academic year increased.

And in conclusion, how do you see your life now, after finally retiring from teaching at the university? Will you continue your research? Are there areas which you want to revisit? Briefly, what will you do “when you grow up”?

There are those who say: “I am the master of my own time”. And I indeed started to feel the truth of this saying, when with the reduction in my various academic commitments, I felt more in control of my time to read, walk, enjoy my family, among other things. On the other hand, I will not be cured of the research bug. I have a number of research projects that my daily university life prevented me from getting on with. Also the invitations to different events and activities in the Royal Academies of Spain of which I am a member will definitely fill the free time that I have not had until now. I will continue to be a member of a number of editorial boards in Israel and abroad, as well as an external researcher in the University of the Balearic Islands – Institute of Hispanic Studies.

Prof. Moises Orfali, thank you very much for all the years that you dedicated to our department and for the time you devoted to this interview.





In Memoriam Dr. Refael Yankelevitch (1936-2022)

"Today – on my birthday, I can identify a situation in which past and present are connected by a momentary here and now. I thank God who brought me this far, and hope to continue in this existence for many more years of happiness and health together with you"

(Dr. Refael Yankelevitch on his 80th birthday, 2016)

Dr. Refael Yankelevitch, former head of our department, passed away on 2 January 2022, after a struggle with illness. He was born in Tel Aviv on 3 April 1936 to a family that was part of the Gerrer Hasidic community. He attended the Midrashiat Noam high school and began his military service in the IDF Chaplaincy, then transferring to the Air Force. He began his studies in the Department of Jewish History at Bar-Ilan in 1960, becoming a student of the founder of the department, Prof. Moshe Beer. In 1968 he completed his MA thesis on "The Attitude of the Sages to the Gentiles in the Land of Israel from the Destruction of the Temple until the time of Rabbi Judah Nesi'ah" under Beer's direction, expanding this topic as a doctoral dissertation on "Jews and Gentiles in the Land of Israel during the time of the Mishnah and Talmud", submitted in 1975. Prof. Menahem Stern, one of the greatest historians of the Second Temple Period, was one of the readers who approved his dissertation. Dr. Refael Yankelevitch became a leading scholar of Jewish society in the Land of Israel during the time of the Second Temple, the Mishnah and the Talmud. His publications dealt with varied issues such as the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, the struggle for the land, the demographic relationship between Jews and Gentiles, the history of Herodium, the Oniad temple, the causes of the Great Revolt, the importance of lineage in ancient Judaism, the origins of Bar-Kokhba, the impact of the Diaspora during the Second Temple Period, the Tiberian bath-houses and more. In 2006 he contributed an article on "The Department of Jewish History: From a Harmonic View to Many Voices" to a volume on the history of Bar-Ilan University edited by D. Schwartz. Besides his scholarly work, Dr. Yankelevitch was a beloved teacher, who mentored

countless students. He served as chair of the department in the 1990's and as head of Bar-Ilan's School of Basic Jewish Studies. Upon retiring in 2005, his student Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim organized a conference in his honor. At the end of this conference, Dr. Yankelevitch said the following: "The Department of Jewish History has been my home in the past decades. I am now completing the writing of two articles for the book on the history of Bar-Ilan at the request of the department chair, Prof. Moises Orfali: one on the history of the department, and the other on the scholarship of my teacher and master Prof. Moshe Beer, of good memory. I see these as a sort of closure to my task in the department. I thank my department colleagues over the years for their cooperation when I was chair of the department, and my colleagues the department chairs over the generations."

Dr. Refael Yankelevitch was a pleasant man, full of humor, beloved by all who knew him, who performed his task as department chair unpretentiously but efficiently, working for the advancement of the department and for the good of its members. May his memory be blessed.



Dr. Yitzhak S. Recanati: Parting Words from the Department



I came to the Contemporary Jewry program with a Master's in education, at the age of fifty-five. This was after a decade of work as a producer-editor at Israel television's Channel 1, where I focused on producing documentary and music programs. I had spent a decade as Director of the Maaleh School of Communications and Arts (and actually of film and television) in Jerusalem where I was privileged to be one of its founders. Up to the time that I came to study in the program I also worked in editing literature, language and producing Jewish music.

I enjoyed studying for my doctorate in Contemporary Jewry (even though it was not always easy...), both from the variety of courses and from the professional and empathetic feeling imparted by the heads of the program and the lecturers, and towards the end of my studies I wrote my doctoral dissertation on the relationship between religious Zionism and Screen Arts.

As soon as I received my doctorate, I was offered the chance to continue in the program, but this time as a lecturer. I then joined the teaching faculty in the department, teaching "Language and Communication in the Contemporary Jewish World", the course that I have taught since the 2010-11 academic year. I have given students a taste of the development and pattern of the Jewish press, Hebrew and Israeli, and of some basic issues in the interface of communications with Judaism. I brought with me to the course practical knowledge as a person who works in television, and as an editor and writer for children's and youth magazines, together with my academic knowledge.

Despite the fact that I only had a part-time position in the department I felt very privileged to teach there. I made sure to attend events, I felt at home and identified with it. In my view, this is an excellent academic department, that excels in aspects of organization and especially in human relations. I learn a lot from its faculty members and draw inspiration, encouragement and striving for excellence from some of them.

For about ten years now, I have been working simultaneously in research, in two different areas. On the one hand I have been studying the points of interface between the fields of media, art, society and education – more specifically television, film and the national modern-orthodox public press.

At the same time, I have been trying to trace performances of visual art in the Jewish sources. On the other hand, in my studies, I am researching the Jews of Thessaloniki in the twentieth century and their absorption in Israel.

With my retirement from the department, I wish our students and faculty progress and satisfaction. I plan to continue in most of my previous fields that are also my hobbies – among them, writing and editing, producing Jewish music and studying – and give more time, energy and resources to research.

Thanks to all of you.

In Memoriam Prof. Eliezer Bashan (1925-2020)



On 2nd May 2020, Prof. Eliezer Bashan, among the veteran faculty members, passed away. He was born in Budapest in 1925 and made Aliyah in 1935. In 1946 he joined Kibbutz Masuot Yitzhak in Gush Etzion, fell into Jordanian captivity in the War of Independence and later was one of the founders of the new moshav in the Shafir area. Bashan was one of the first students in the Department of Jewish History and in 1972 he completed his doctorate on "Freeing of Prisoners in Jewish Society in Mediterranean Countries from the Middle Ages to Modern Times", under the supervision of Prof. Haim Ze'ev Hirschberg. Until his retirement in 2002, Prof. Bashan taught and was a researcher in our department. He was a brilliant researcher of Jewish history in the Middle East and North Africa in the Modern Era, and over the years he published many articles and books in these fields. His research focused on the issues of society and economy, Jewish and non-Jewish relations, the Jewish community and its institutions, Diaspora and Israeli Judaism, community leadership, Jewish women in Maghreb countries, and more. In addition to his academic activity, Prof. Bashan contributed a great deal to promoting the heritage of Eastern Jewry in public roles, such as the Council for Torah Culture and the Council for the Inclusion of the Heritage of Eastern Jewry in the Ministry of Education. May his memory be blessed.



Conference to Mark 90 Years of the Founding of the Etzel

On 30th June 2021, the department organized a conference to make ninety years since the founding of the Etzel Organization. The conference took place in the Senate building on the Bar-Ilan University campus and was well-received by the public despite the fact that it took place at the height of the Corona pandemic. It was the first conference in 2021 that was actually held at Bar-Ilan University, with the participation of the Rector of the University, Prof. Amnon Albeck and the Dean of the Faculty of Jewish Studies, Prof. Yaron Harel. The first session of the conference dealt with the conceptual roots of the Revisionists and the relationship of Zeev Jabotinsky to the Etzel Organization. This was discussed by Prof. Arye Naor, Prof. Yechiam Weitz, Dr. Ofira Gruveis-Kovalsky and Mr. Yossi Kister. The second session was dedicated to the military aspects of the organization's activity up to the establishment of the State of Israel, and this was discussed by Dr. Tal Tov, Dr. Yaacov Markovitzky and Mr. Shlomo Nakdimon. The conference was arranged with the cooperation of the Jabotinsky Institute but completely organized by the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, by Dr. Yitzhak Conforti and Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim, Head of the Department.



“Ha’Meir La’Aretz” – Conference in Honor of Prof. Meir Bar-Ilan on the Occasion of his Retirement

On 16th January 2020, a conference was held in honor of the retirement of Prof. Meir Bar-Ilan after many years of research and teaching in the department. At the conference, entitled “Ha’Meir La’Aretz – Issues of Jewish Society and Culture”, 13 lectures were given on the core subjects of Prof. Bar-Ilan's research: history of the Jewish people in the Second Temple Period, the Mishna and the Talmud, and Jewish customs throughout the ages. The conference was opened by the then Rector of the University Prof. Miri Faust, and by the organizers, Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim and Prof. Yigal Levin, and all the lecturers were filmed and put on the University YouTube channel. Looking back, we see that this conference was one of the last academic events that took place with a live audience, before the Coronavirus outbreak.



The 15th International Conference on Jewish Names

On 5th October 2021, the 15th Conference on the Study of Jewish Names was held online. The conference organizers were Prof. Aaron Demsky, who, 30 years ago, established the Project for the Study of Jewish Names within the framework of the Department of Jewish History and has run it since then, and Prof. Yigal Levin. The conference was sponsored by the department and received the full support of the department head and of the department's secretarial staff. Eight scholars from Israel and abroad (France, Germany and the USA) gave lectures at the conference, including the former Israel Ambassador to Egypt, Dr. Jacob Rosen, and the screenwriter and director Ori Elon, creator of the successful series “Shtisel”, who is now a guest lecturer at the University of California in San Diego. About fifty participants viewed the conference in real time, and it was uploaded to the department YouTube channel and since then has been viewed by many more.

Two conferences will soon take place marking the retirement of two of our senior faculty. On May 12th we will hold a conference in honor of Prof. Aharon Gaimani and on June 23rd a conference honoring Prof. Moises Orfali. We look forward to seeing you!

 save the date



The Department YouTube Channel

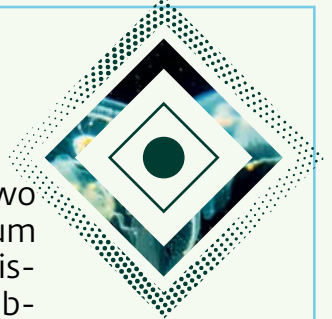
Congratulations! The department is proud to present its new YouTube channel that delivers short and fascinating lectures for all history buffs and to anyone who is interested in the rich past of the Jewish people "from the Tanach to the Palmach". The fascinating lectures are given by all the department's faculty members, and viewers can also find lectures that were given during our departmental colloquium and during conferences sponsored by the department. You are invited to visit it, to view and enjoy the excellent lectures, and of course to subscribe to it.

<https://jewish-history.biu.ac.il/node/1176>

The Department Colloquium in Memory of Prof. Yehoshua Kaniel

In the past two years two departmental colloquium seminars were held to discuss methodological subjects in order to enable research students to get into the "laboratory" of the historian researching Jewish history.

Lecturers from different universities researching Jewish history from all periods were invited. The lectures were transmitted by Zoom and department research students and faculty took part.



Department students on a field trip to Tel Dan

New Books Written and Edited by Department Members

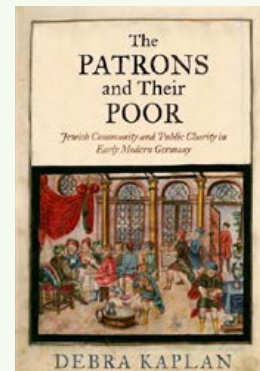
In the Humanities in general and in Jewish Studies in particular, publishing a new book is an important milestone for the researcher and for research. Recently several faculty members were pleased to publish new books, and we mention here a representative selection.

Prof. Judy Baumel-Schwartz has published several books over the past two years: *A Very Special Life: The Bernice Chronicles. One Woman's Journey Through Twentieth Century Jewish America* (Resling Press); *All Our Brothers and Sisters: Jews Saving Jews during the Holocaust* (together with Ilan Schneider; Peter Lang); *Her Story, My Story? Writing about Women and the Holocaust* (with Prof. Dalia Ofer; Peter Lang); *Goodbye America: Fifty Years of American Jewish Women as well as Immigration to Israel – A Collective Autobiography (1967-2017)* (with Barbara Getzoff-Schoenfeld; Peter Lang).

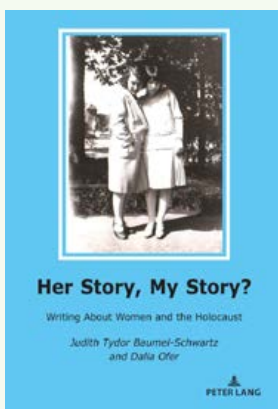
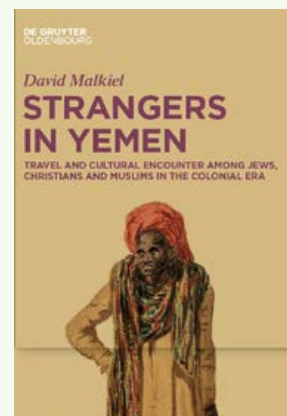
In November 2021 the book edited by Prof. Baumel-Schwartz and Prof. Shmuel Refael: *Researchers Remember – Research as an Arena of Memory Among Descendants of Holocaust Survivors – A Collected Volume of Academic Autobiographies* (Peter Lang) was published. She also participated in editing *Women Defying Hitler – Rescue and Resistance under the Nazis* (Bloomsbury Academic Press, London, 2021). At the time of going to print of this newsletter, another book has been published, edited by Prof. Baumel-Schwartz: *A Land, a Homeland – Fifty Years of Jewish Women's Aliyah from America – a Collective Autobiography (1967-2017)*, pub-

lished by the Herzl Institute for the Study of Zionism (Haifa University Press, 2021).

In August 2020, Prof. Debra Kaplan's book, *The Patrons and their Poor: Jewish Community and Public Charity in Early Modern Germany* was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. The book analyzes three Jewish communities between 1500-1750 using charity as a lens through which to explore Jewish communal life on a daily basis, including men and women, from the wealthiest patrons to the homeless poor.



A new book by Prof. David Malkiel: *Strangers in Yemen: Travel and Cultural Encounter among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Colonial Era*, is a study of travel to Yemen in the nineteenth century by Jews, Christians and Muslims. The travelers include a missionary, artist, scientist, rabbi, merchant, adventurer, and soldier. The focus is on the encounter between people of different cultures, and the chapters analyze the travelers' accounts to elucidate how strangers and locals perceived each other, and how the experiences shaped their perceptions of themselves.



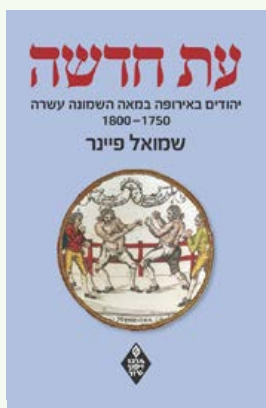
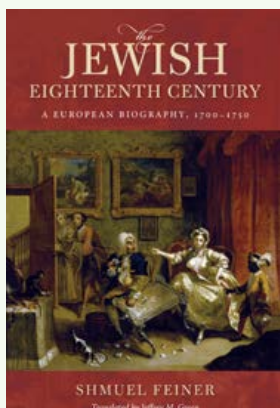
In September 2020, Prof. Aharon Gaimani's

new book, Rabbi Shalom Shabazi: Revelations from a New Manuscript in addition to Introductory Chapters on his Character, Time, and Pilgrimages to his Burial Site was published by Bar-Ilan University Press. The book presents a manuscript of piyyutim written by Rabbi Shalom Shabazi, some of which are prayers about the yearly cycle as well as piyyutim written following events that befell Yemenite Jews at the time. The book also includes chapters about Rabbi Shalom Shabazi's life and works and about the pilgrimages to his burial site.

In March 2021 Dr. Idan Breier's book, The International Age: International Relations in the prolonged Amarna Period (1200-1460 BCE), was published by Bar-Ilan University Press. This book examines international relations in an era of extensive political activity in the ancient Near East. The study is grounded upon a close textual analysis of numerous documents from the period in question, including chronicles, lists of campaign, correspondence, and international treaties.



In November 2020 Prof. Shmuel Feiner's book The Jewish Eighteenth Century – A European Biography 1700-1750 (Indiana University Press) was published. This is a translation of the first part of a wide-ranging book on the history of the Jews in Europe in the 18th century. In March 2021 the second volume of Prof. Feiner's book was published by the Zalman Shazar Center: A New Age: Eighteenth Century European Jewry 1750-1800, which completed Prof. Feiner's comprehensive and impressive research work in which he presented an integral historic and unique view of the process of modernization of European Jewry.



Outstanding Students

The President's Scholarships

Two research students in the department won the President's scholarship for 2020-21 and two more in 2021-22.

Elad Nahshon

I am 28 and I live in Kfar Saba. I got my BA in Jewish History and Middle Eastern Studies from Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and my MA in Jewish History from Tel Aviv University. My field of research is the Herut party and its attitudes towards Jewish religion during the years 1948-1972. My doctoral advisors are Prof. Yehiam Weitz of the Department of Jewish History and Prof. Nissim Leon of the Department of Sociology.



Omer Ahituv

I studied for my BA in Education at Herzog College and received my Master's from Tel Aviv University where I wrote my thesis on "Fasting in the Ashkenazi culture in the early modern period". For my doctorate, that I am writing under the supervision of Prof. Debra Kaplan, I plan to deal with Ashkenazi Jews who lived in Italy in the Early Modern Period. In my work I will focus on the life of Menahem Oldendorf who immigrated in the 1570s to Northern Italy from Germany, where he lived until the second decade of the sixteenth century. The many manuscripts of Oldendorf, who among other things worked as a writer, teacher and preacher, allow us a fascinating glimpse into the lives of those immigrants and the ways in which they reshaped their culture in this part of the world.



Dror Yahav

I live in Ramat Gan, married to Sharon who is studying for her Master's in the Bar-Ilan School of Education, and father of four. In my profession I write and edit books on Judaism, and recently my book: Just Wondering: Judaism at Your Pace was published by Maggid.



I started studying for my BA in the Open University during my army service as an officer in the Intelligence Corps. I registered for studies in economics but very quickly moved over to history, the field that has always attracted me. I started my MA studies in 2016 and was very impressed by the program on Contemporary Jewry that offered interdisciplinary courses that touched on history, sociology, education and Jewish philosophy. The MA studies were fascinating, and I was privileged to come across wonderful lecturers, among whom was the supervisor for my thesis, Prof. Adam Ferziger, with whom, over and above the support and push that he gave me, a warm and personal bond was formed.

My field of research is newly-religious Jews. Despite the fact that the subject has been widely researched, in my thesis I focused on the way that the Return to Judaism phenomenon is reflected in the prism of rulings of Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, who is the head of the Edah Ha-Hareidit. Despite his being anti-Zionist, Rabbi Sternbuch led the newly-religious Jews in South Africa during the 1980s, and so met intensively with a varied public. In my work I have shown how the meeting with newly-religious Jews influenced his rulings, and even to some extent his Halakhic attitude towards those who were not observant of Jewish law. For my doctoral thesis I plan to study more phenomena connected to newly-religious Jews and their influence on Israeli society.

Esty Shdeour

I have lived all my life in Jerusalem where I also acquired my earlier academic education, I studied musicology and education for my BA at the Hebrew University and later studied Information and Library Sciences at David Yellin College. I have been working in the Jerusalem College of Education as an information specialist in the graduate school and as a supervisor of seminal research papers in education in the undergraduate program.

My doctoral dissertation, supervised by Prof. Kimmy Caplan, combines two disciplines of personal interest: Ultra-Orthodox society in Israel and history of books. I intend to establish a developmental-historical picture of ultra-Orthodox children's literature in Israel from its origins in the 1940s, from a wide interdisciplinary point of view, combining theories and methods from a variety of disciplines: history, book history, history of reading and writing, children's culture, children's literature, library history, etc. During my research, I expect to come across fascinating people, sources and studies, as well as interesting and even surprising insights. I hope that my final dissertation will constitute a rich, coherent "biography" of ultra-Orthodox children's literature, contributing to the existing literature on ultra-Orthodox children's literature, ultra-Orthodox society in Israel, and book history.



Two of our doctoral students won a prize awarded on behalf of the University President and the Dean of the School for Advanced Studies, for publishing articles.

Alissa Abramov

won the prize for her article "Aliyah Challenges and Discourse of Identities: Northern and Eastern Caucasus Jews in Israeli Society", published in the journal Hagira. Alissa's doctoral dissertation deals with "An Era of Transformation: The Russian Occupation and the Communist Revolution as Turning Points in the lives of the Jews of the North and East Caucasus (1880-1940)", written under the supervision of Prof. Yaron Harel and Prof. Dan Shapira from the Department of Middle Eastern Studies.



Yael Escojido

won the prize for the article she wrote together with Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim: "Translation of the Torah into Greek in return for the Liberation of Jewish Slaves: A New Look at the Historical Background of the Prologue of the Letter of Ariseas", Zion, 86/3 (2021), pp. 355-398. The article is based on a chapter of Yael's doctoral dissertation, written under the supervision of Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim on the subject: "Study of Jewish Slaves in the Second Temple Period in light of Greek Sources – A Historical Aspect".



Ekaterina Oleshkevich is

the winner of the prestigious Sheindel and Pinhas Weller Prize presented to an outstanding doctoral student on behalf of the Zalman Shazar Center. The prize was given to Ekaterina for excellence and innovation in her doctoral dissertation on the subject: "History, Culture and the Experience of Jewish Childhood in Late Imperial Russia", under the supervision of Dr. Uriel Gellman. Her research deals with childhood among the Jews of the Russian Empire up to 1917. Through updated sociological and literary theories, Oleshkevich discusses perceptions of childhood and parenthood, inter-generational relationships, and patterns of authority in Jewish families, in the era when changes in Jewish life were far-reaching.



Chen Yannai won the 2020-21

Rector's Prize. Chen lives in Beit Dagan. She became interested in history while still in high school. When she decided to begin her academic studies, there was naturally a dilemma about choosing a more "practical" subject (psychology, law, communications) but she chose to follow her heart, and after preliminary interaction with the department faculty at the inquiry stage, she decided to study there. She combined my BA in the dual-track program with the Department of Middle Eastern Studies. This past year she started the direct track to a Master's with a thesis. She sees herself in the future integrating into the long-term academic track and pursuing a doctorate. At the moment the direction of research that interests her is the Holocaust in Arab countries. In the future she hopes to use the knowledge that she has acquired in research work or in the diplomatic service.



Ekaterina Oleshkevich also won the 2020-21 Rector's Prize for Doctoral Students.

We congratulate Ekaterina and wish her much success in her future research!

Dan Sheena won the 2019-

20 Rector's Prize. Dan, who studied in our department and in the Department of Arabic won the Rector's Prize for his study achievements. While studying for his BA, Dan earned a teaching diploma as well. Dan has been involved in informal teaching for several years, and was employed in the Ben-Zvi High School in Kiryat Ono as a history, Arabic and civics teacher. Dan prepares his students for the Bagrut exams in history and is very interested in the history of the Jewish people, mainly in the history of Zionism and the Second Temple Period.



The Prize in memory of Pinchos Churgin, founder of Bar-Ilan University and its first President, is awarded annually to a doctoral student at our department. The winner of the prize for 2019-20 was Dr. Yossi Hemi who wrote his doctoral dissertation on "Descendants of the Kingdom of Israel from the Assyrian Occupation until the Mishna in the Land of Israel: between History and Ancient Historiography", under the supervision of Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim. Yossi also gave the annual lecture in memory of Prof. Churgin on "Methodological Problems on Historical Retrieval of the 'Details of Pagan Cults' in the Literature of the Sages".



Winners of the Sarah Helena and Moshe Blam Foundation Prize

Four students won the prize of the Foundation in Memory of Sarah Helena and Moshe Blam. The foundation was established by families asking to commemorate the memories of Sarah Helena, a Righteous Gentile, and Holocaust survivor Moshe Blam. The foundation supports research of the Holocaust in particular and Jewish History in general. We asked them to tell us a bit about themselves.

Ekaterina Oleshkevich. My doctoral dissertation deals with the history of childhood, a field that fascinates and enthuses me especially as it purports to figure out how a new generation was shaped and how inter-generational communication came about. The period that I am researching - the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th - represents an era of many changes in the lives of the Jews in the Russian Empire and in Eastern Europe following modernization processes, and these processes deeply influenced family life. The perception of childhood and the practicalities of raising children also went through significant changes as part of the entry of Russian Jewry into the modern era. In my doctorate I plan to concentrate on the study of inter-family relationships and in the discourse of childhood, as well as studying the material culture of childhood.

Tomer Gadot. My MA thesis is titled "The Attitude of Torah Scholars from Muslim countries in Eretz Israel to the question of the secular leadership of the Zionist Movement (1895-1960)", written under the supervision of Prof. Yaron Harel. Most of the Torah scholars from Muslim countries during the period in question supported Zionism. Researchers who wrote about the worldview of Zionism tend to relate to Torah scholars' naivety and lack of familiarity with reality, arguing that this was the source of their support of Zionism and the basis for their tolerance its leaders' secular lifestyles. In my research I present different sources that show that the rabbis' support of Zionism was based on a rich spiritual worldview, rooted in rabbinic and kabbalistic traditions. My research is based on sermons, public speeches, and Halakhic literature.



Yoni Wieder. I was born in London and immigrated to Israel in 2010. I studied for several years at the Heichal haTorah and Mir yeshivot in Jerusalem, and completed a degree in modern history. Two years ago, I came to Bar-Ilan to continue my academic studies. My master's thesis, written under the supervision of Prof. Adam Ferziger, deals with the lineage of halakhic tradition in Eastern Europe in the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The main subject of my thesis is the book "Mishnah Berura", by The Chofetz Chaim. The study examines the historical background to the writing of the book, its reception, and the extent of its impact on the various strata of Jewish Orthodox society. Along

with my studies in the department, I work as an educational guide for young students from abroad who came to Israel to participate in Bar Ilan's one-year program, Israel XP at BIU.

Hagit Buchbinder. I graduated with a BA in Political and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and my MA in Contemporary Jewry at the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies. At present, I am completing writing my thesis in the Department of Jewish History and Contemporary Jewry, and plan to continue to work in this field of research. For the last ten years, I have been working at Yad Vashem Remembrance Center, with youth and soldiers. My thesis deals with autobiographies of female Holocaust survivors, published in the 1980s. Focusing on women's memories, will contribute a fuller understanding of Holocaust narratives. Since the death of my late parents, both Holocaust survivors, I have chosen to dedicate myself to the commemoration of the Holocaust and its historical research.

Drora Hayak. Winner of the 2021-22 Eliashar Prize for her master's thesis, on the history of immigrant children from Syria in the Israeli kibbutz, written under the supervision of Prof. Yaron Harel. The prize was awarded during the Annual Conference of the Eliashar Center for the Study of the Sephardi Jews in the Land of Israel, led by Dr. Dotan Arad.

Field Trips by Department Faculty and Students



Faculty Trip to Beer Sheva

On 1st July 2021, for the first time since the Corona crisis outbreak, we met for a guided tour at the ANZAC Memorial Center in Beer Sheva, that tells the story of the conquest of Beer Sheva by Australian and New Zealand troops during the First World War. After this, we held a department meeting in a restaurant in town to mark the end of the 2020-21 academic year.

Field Trips to Biblical sites

In the first semester of 2019-2020, before the Corona outbreak, Prof. Levin managed to take his students on two field trips. On the first, that took place in December 2019, they visited Tel Megiddo and other sites in the Jezreel Valley. On the way to Megiddo, they discussed the campaign of Thutmose III, King of Egypt, along the ancient route, stopped at Kfar Yama, where Thutmose held his "Council of War", and reached Megiddo via Nahal Iron. At the visit of the site itself, they discussed the development of the town from the Bronze Age to the end of the Assyrian Period and discussed the main biblical issues that arose from researching this site which is one of the most important archaeological sites in Israel. Later on, the students visited Givat HaMoreh and Har Tavor and talked about the battles which occurred there and which are described in the Book of Judges (Gideon and Deborah), and finally visited Tel Jezreel, one of the most fascinat-

ing sites in the area. In January, the students visited the area of Philistia and the Northern Judean Shephelah. They started the day at Tel Zorah following in the footsteps of Samson, visited "the old" Tel Beth Shemesh, where they were given a guided tour by Dr. Amit Shadman, Regional Archeologist for the Israel Antiquities Authority of the new archeological dig at the eastern part of Tel Beth Shemesh, on the other side of Route 38. When partial studies on campus were resumed after a break of more than a year, we ended the 2020-21 academic year with two more field trips. The first trip took place on 10th June 2021. We visited Tel Gezer, the Museum of Philistine Culture in Ashdod, Tel es-Safi/Philistine Gath and Tel Lachish, which has recently undergone extensive renovations. The second trip, that took place three days later, went to Tel Hazor and Tel Dan in the north.

On all of the trips, the students were able to visit sites that appear in the historical sources, to see how archeological and geographic-historic research adds to the knowledge that we have from the written sources, and to understand how researchers connect all the different types of information into extensive research. And of course, the trips are also a social and learning experience, that help connect the students both to the different fields of research, and to the department and the university itself.



Activity of the Institute and Chairs of the Department

The Samuel Braun Chair for the History of the Jews in Prussia

On 10th February 2020, the institute, headed by Prof. Shmuel Feiner, hosted the 14th Annual Workshop for Young Researchers in History and German Culture, together with the Department of General History. The purpose of the workshop was to reinforce contacts between those engaged in the field of German studies, to encourage an exchange of ideas and to enable young researchers a congenial platform to present their work. Research institutes in all the universities in Israel helped organize the workshop. Six research students presented their work, and six senior researchers responded to them.

The Institute's annual seminar, together with the Department Colloquium, took place on 2nd December 2020, on the subject "Seeing is Believing": a Visual Documentation and Research of German Jewry". The six lectures at the seminar dealt with the different aspects of visual documentation of German Jewry, and discussed subjects such as art and Jewish museums, archeology, poetry and music, synagogue illustrations, cinema, and more. Due to the Corona pandemic the seminar took place online.

The Institute's annual lecture was delivered by Dr. Stefan Licht of the National Library of Israel, on the subject: "If Judaism is a Tragedy – Let us Live it': the Jewish Identity of Stefan Zweig in his letters and works". This event took place online on 3rd November 2021.

The Arnold and Leona Finkler Institute of Holocaust Research

In April-May 2020 two digital books were published: "Creating a Memory" and "You chose life: Jews choosing life during the Holocaust and afterwards". The institute's international conference took place online, on 4th and 7th June 2020, with the New York Museum of Jewish Heritage on the subject: "Women in Auschwitz and in the Holocaust". A seminar to commemorate 82 years since Kristallnacht took place on 9th November 2020 and was dedicated to the research of women in the Holocaust, and marked "The General Day of Kaddish" on 10 Tevet and included, for the first time, a ceremony to award a new prize – the Krumholtz Prize – that was donated to the Holocaust Research Institute by Dr. Ronit Fisher, the daughter of the late Zvi and Augustina Krumholtz, in their memory.

On 8th March 2021 the Department, together with the Arnold and Leona Finkler Holocaust Research Institute and the Israel Police Heritage Center, held a seminar to mark sixty years of the Eichmann Trial. Prior to this, Commander Dr. Yossi Hemi, a graduate of the department, had published his book about Eichmann's interrogation by the Israeli Police: "Bureau 06: Israel Police Investigates Eichmann", published by the Israel Police Press.

At the same time, the Institute's seminars continued, with the participation of over 500 researchers, active in Holocaust education, commemorating the Holocaust, and heads of organizations who are engaged, amongst others, in the field of the Holocaust.

The Halpern Center for Jewish Self-Perception



During the 2020-21 academic year, the Halpern Center for Jewish Self-Perception conducted a research group of postdoctoral fellows under the guidance of the director of the center, Dr. Debra Kaplan. The research group examined the nexus between spaces and rituals in several Jewish communities between 1200-1900. Dr. Tzafir Barzilay and Dr. Ahuav Liberles-Noiman focused on medieval Europe. Dr. Moshe Yagur explored medieval Egypt, Dr. Yakov Mayer discussed imagined spaces and rituals of learning, and Dr. Hadar Feldman-Samet studied sounds and spaces in the Ottoman Empire. Prof. Kaplan also tutored a group of undergraduate students in the Excellence Program who met in the course of the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 academic years under the auspices of the Halpern Center, during which time they were exposed to a variety of different methods and sources for studying Jewish history.

Faculty News

Dr. Idan Breier was promoted to Senior Lecturer with tenure.

Prof. Debra Kaplan was promoted to Associate Professor.

Prof. Adam Ferziger was promoted to full Professor.

Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim was promoted to full professor

Congratulations – we wish you all much success for the future!

Prof. Yaron Harel was awarded the 2020 Prime Minister's Prize for the encouragement of study of Jewish communities in Arab countries and Iran. He received the award for his book *Beginning of Zionism in Damascus, 1908-1923* that presents the background and the circumstances that brought about the rapprochement of hearts to the Zionist idea in Damascus, in an interesting and innovative way.



Dr. Uriel Gellman was awarded the 2020 Prize in memory of the late Zalman Shazar, third President of the State of Israel. The prize was awarded to him for his book: *Emergence of Hasidism in Poland* that was published by the Zalman Shazar Center. The book examines the process of growth of the Hassidic movement in Poland – from a small group of mystics who saw in themselves the spiritual elite to the wider social, vibrant, dynamic and sweeping movement. Due to Corona restrictions, the prize ceremony and lecture took place on Zoom, and after the easing of the restrictions, a festive reception took place on 19 May 2021 in honor of the award at the residence of the Israeli President, Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin, with the participation of Hili Tropper, the Minister of Culture.



Dr. Yitzhak Conforti won the 2019-20 Rector's Award for Scientific Innovation for his contribution to the study of Jewish nationalism. His research on the cultural origins of Zionism is based on an in-depth study of nations and nationalism. Conforti developed a cultural approach to the study of the Zionist movement, which considers the influence of the early-modern cultural aspect with the historical and political context in which Zionism emerged. His book *Shaping a Nation*, published by Yad Ben Zvi (2019) examined three dimensions: the creation of a nationalist awareness of the Jewish past, the Jewish cultural impact on political Zionism, and the analysis of Zionist utopian thought. The study lays theoretical foundations for understanding the pre-modern cultural origins of Zionism that have not yet been explored, including the Bible.



Prof. Emmanuel Friedheim was elected member of the scientific board of the renowned journal *Revue Biblique* that has been published continuously for the past 127 years, by the French School of Biblical and Archeological Research in the Dominican Monastery in Jerusalem. For the past few years, the journal has been published by Peeters in Leuven, Belgium.

Prof. Adam Ferziger As joint founder of the Oxford Summer Institute on Modern and Contemporary Judaism, Prof. Adam Ferziger held two online conferences, each one lasting a few days, instead of the usual seminars that take place at Oxford University, and which could not take place due to Corona restrictions.

Dr. Idan Breier was appointed a Full Fellow at The Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. The Institute is considered a world leader in the study of the ethical aspect of human-animal relationships. The Institute publishes books on the subject as well as *The Journal of Animal Ethics*.