

Lapid

World WIZO
Department of Organization & Education

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Dear Chavera,



How appropriate that this, the 100th issue of our Lapid newsletter, falls during the celebration of WIZO's 90th anniversary.

WIZO's 90th year also poses a challenge for the World WIZO Department of Organization and Education in its preparations for the 2010 WIZO Aviv International Seminar, to take place from November 14 – 18 in Tel Aviv. How exciting it would be to have 90 participants – one for every year of WIZO's existence – in attendance! Only you, members of WIZO Federations around the world, can make this dream come true.

The interaction, the exchanges of ideas, the visits to WIZO projects, the sharing of feelings and experiences -- the opportunity for young WIZO chaverot from all Federations to meet and participate in a full program touching on most elements of WIZO's work -- instills a very strong sense of commitment to WIZO in the women who take part. It is in the best interest of each Federation to enable chaverot with leadership potential to attend the Seminar.

In honor of WIZO's 90th anniversary, this issue of the Lapid features an article on the WIZO Rebecca Sieff Center for the Family in Jerusalem. We believe that this is a fitting occasion to highlight the exceptional work that WIZO is doing in Israel's capital city.

We are poised at the beginning of a New Year. At this time I would like to wish you and your family a year of health, of prosperity, and of the realization of your aspirations and goals.

May the past year with its sorrows end, and a New Year with its blessings begin.

With warm regards,

Sylvie Pelossof
Chairperson
Department of Organization & Education
World WIZO Executive



IN HONOR OF WIZO'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY

**NOW MORE THAN EVER
LET'S GET TOGETHER!**

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WIZO'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY

Serving Jerusalem: The WIZO Rebecca Sieff Center for the Family

It is amazing to consider how many peoples' lives in Jerusalem have been changed for the better as a result of their contact with the WIZO Rebecca Sieff Center for the Family. Since its founding 86 years ago as the Jerusalem Baby Home, this multifaceted institution has adapted itself to the changing needs of the city, and expanded its services to include not only infants and children, but adults (notably women), youth and the elderly.

The Early Days

The establishment of the WIZO Baby Home in Jerusalem, which was one of the first institutions in the country for children without homes and families, was a consequence of the period, and an answer to the needs of the time. During the days of the First World War, Jerusalem was abandoned to famine, disease, and a growing mortality rate, mainly among children. The city was emptied of men, who were drafted; and neglected children ran through the city streets unsupervised, while their mothers labored for long hours outside the home. In the hospitals, grownups and children were hospitalized together, with hardly any suitable medical equipment or staff available.

In this situation, an urgent need arose for a day care center for homeless children and infants where something could be done to save their lives. The WIZO Baby Home was established in the Sha'arei Hessed neighborhood of Jerusalem in 1924 by the legendary pediatrician of pre-state Israel, Dr. Helena Kagan, aided by Miriam Sacher and Lady Hadassah Samuel of British WIZO, with the objective of providing a warm home environment for these neglected infants and children. It functioned, among other things, for the benefit of babies whose bitter fate prevented them from growing up within their families.

From its inception the institution moved from one house to another and from one neighborhood to another, and as the number of children grew, so did the problems. In 1944 Miriam Sacher and Matilda Kennedy-Marks, both sisters of Rebecca Sieff, purchased a beautiful plot on a hillside in the Bet Hakerem neighborhood of Jerusalem, and in December 1945 the cornerstone was laid for a new center there. With funds from the WIZO Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, two large central buildings were erected on the new site, and Davidson Park was donated and established alongside. In 1955, the buildings were completed. No less than two thousand visitors, including 400 members of British WIZO, arrived for the dedication ceremony. Important personages who took part included the President of the State of Israel at that time, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi; then-Prime Minister Moshe Sharett; the Chief Rabbi at that time, Isaac Halevy Herzog; and Rebecca Sieff, President and founder of World WIZO.



Laying the cornerstone for the WIZO Jerusalem Baby Home, 1945.
WIZO Archives

The uniqueness of the WIZO Baby Home

The WIZO Baby Home was the first home for children who had been abandoned by their parents soon after their birth, and who were waiting to be adopted. It absorbed the children of immigrants, including newborn babies, and children of single parents who were destined for adoption, as an interim stage prior to their full absorption into the community. Three kindergartens and a day care center operated. Some infants stayed at the WIZO Baby Home day and night, and some of them returned to their homes at the end of the day.

Asthmatic children who lived in the coastal plain received special treatment in the WIZO Baby Home asthma ward. In addition, a ward was established for sick children following orthopedic operations that required a long period of convalescence. They received treatment and rehabilitation at the WIZO Baby Home. Children afflicted with polio (there was a polio epidemic in Israel in 1953) who needed additional treatment that their parents could not provide for them, were treated in a special ward. There was also a ward for children with rheumatic fever. From 1958 a day camp was conducted for the treatment of children with rheumatic fever and children with diabetes.



Dr. Helena S. Kagan (R) and her sister-in-law, Rachel (Cohen) Kagan (L), at the opening of the WIZO Jerusalem Baby Home in 1955. WIZO Archives

Alongside the medical wards was special a school with two classrooms, in which the children took a course of studies appropriate to their age and grade. In the afternoon hours they learned arts and crafts, drawing and singing. The WIZO Baby Home also had a children's library, housing 3,000 books and run by a professional librarian, which was also used by children living nearby.

At the WIZO Baby Home there was a school for nurses and caregivers who did their fieldwork in the wards of the WIZO Baby Home, and lived in its dormitory. Studies lasted nineteen months, during which the students acquired knowledge and basic concepts regarding the care of sick and healthy children.

The "Well Baby Clinic" (*Tipat Halav*) and the clinic for pregnant women were established in 1960 as a special project which gained momentum under the supervision of Dr. Helena Kagan. Two doctors and two registered nurses worked there.

Over the years, thousands of infants and children were exposed to social opportunities and studies, and were strengthened by the attention, constancy, love and happiness that were showered upon them there.

A WIZO girl

Gila Kraus was brought to the WIZO Baby Home soon after her birth. The time was the Second World War, and her mother worked as a caregiver at the WIZO Baby Home. Gila is a "WIZO girl," and even got her name from the nurses in WIZO in 1940. "I took my first steps, I uttered my first words, in this house," Gila said. "My mother worked as a caregiver in WIZO and I was by her side. Caregivers who were her friends, Holocaust survivors, kibbutzniks and city dwellers, worked with her -- for all of them, WIZO was their home. I still remember Nurse Rosa Wollstein, may she rest in peace, who took care of me when I was small. I was a sick child, in very bad shape. Rosa took me under her wing and did not leave me until I got better and regained my



Sister Rosa Wollstein with toddlers on the roof of the Jerusalem Baby Home in Baka. WIZO Archives

strength. This was how she treated all the babies. Every infant was dear to her heart. I still remember my birthday party in the Home. In my mind's eye I see the giant cake that sat in the middle of the table, the laughing children dressed in holiday clothes, and the family atmosphere that reigned there. This was my home for nearly five years, until I went to kindergarten,” said Gila.

Gila Kraus closed a circle when she returned to work at the WIZO Baby Home in 1962. In the beginning she worked in the children's orthopedic unit, and when the school for young women was established, she worked there for 20 years. In 1994 she returned to WIZO as a volunteer and founded a library for the workers. In 2005 she was a counselor for Ethiopian immigrants, training them to be WIZO day care center caregivers. For Gila, Bet Hakerem continued to serve as a home, both physical and emotional, as she did her volunteer work for the community.

The Center Today

Today the Rebecca Sieff WIZO Center for the Family serves thousands of residents from Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Activities take place seven days a week during most hours of the day. Hundreds of people visit the Center during the week, and many pray in the neighborhood synagogue located there on the Sabbath.

The WIZO Rebecca Sieff Center for the Family maintains:

A day care center with nine classrooms, for children from six months to five years. There are a total of approximately 300 babies and children attending this facility, which operates from 7 am to 4 pm. The day care center is a second home for the children, and provides them with warmth, security, a supportive environment, education and enrichment.



WIZO Secondary Vocational School

WIZO Secondary Vocational School: This project, unique in Israel, is operated in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. The school is attended by students whose age varies from 16 ½ to 18 years old (or 21 years old, in accordance with special education legislation). These students have been expelled from their schools, and the WIZO Secondary Vocational School offers them a second chance. They can choose to study office management, hairdressing, or culinary skills. When they finish their studies, the students receive a diploma from the Ministry of Labor stating that they have completed 12 years of school.

Year-long training course: In this framework, young people can acquire a profession in office management and hairdressing. This program is designed for people looking for a short-term program, which is practically

non-existent in the regular education system.

Professional training for adults: The center provides two main courses in office management and early age education. One is for people referred by the Ministry of Labor (soldiers, for example) or who are looking for employment. The second course is designed for people working in private companies and public organizations.

Pedagogical Study and Information Center: This Center trains workers in the field of early education. WIZO has five centers of this type throughout Israel. The Center provides training courses focusing on new

educational concepts for day care center directors and workers. In addition, there are aids to help with creative work, including guidance and examples of how to prepare games and booklets.

Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Violence in the Family: The Center provides guidance, treatment and various services to women victims of violence in the family who choose to remain at home. It also offers therapy to violent men who are willing to rehabilitate themselves. In addition, WIZO runs a 24 hour hotline for women suffering from violence, and another hotline for violent men.

The Center initiates professional encounters with people and entities dealing with violence in the family, including teachers, police officers, and social workers. Volunteers working at the center welcome the families and provide them with emergency counseling.

Looking toward the future

The vision of the WIZO Rebecca Sieff Center for the Family is to absorb more and more families and to extend its services on behalf of a better society in Israel. It has played, and continues to play, a deeply significant role in the lives of countless families in Jerusalem, and contributes, in this way, to the progress of the State of Israel. All members of WIZO can take pride in the accomplishments it has achieved.



HOLIDAYS

New Beginnings

Rosh Hashana presents a puzzle. It is a celebration of a New Year and a fearsome day of judgment at the same time. How are we to understand this contradiction?



Rosh Hashana is a paradox. On the one hand it is a celebration -- the sweetness of a new year, along with festive clothes and special foods. On the other hand it is a day of judgment: "Who will live and who will die?"

There are more puzzling elements to Rosh Hashana. The holiday includes the first and second of the Ten Days of Repentance, culminating in Yom Kippur. And yet, the prayers of Rosh Hashana mention nothing about repentance. There is no confession of our sins, no regret about the past, no recriminations. So, is Rosh Hashana a day of repentance, or not?

We know it's a day of judgment. And if we are being judged for our behavior this past year, then we'd expect to see at least a few repentance days coming before the day of judgment, not after.

And why are we judged on the first day of the new year? Wouldn't it be more fitting to be judged at the end of the previous year? Some way to celebrate a Happy New Year -- go on trial!

All these inconsistencies demand further investigation.

SPIRITUAL ENERGY

Every holiday in the Jewish year has a certain spiritual energy and potential which is responsible for creating the holiday. In essence, every year we travel through the cycle of holidays and come again to that same point in time, and to that same event which happened on this date with its spirit and potential intact.

For instance, on Passover we come around to the time of freedom from bondage. All aspects of G-d's revelation and redemption are available to us again each year, as they were when the Jewish people left Egypt. Other holidays follow the same pattern.

So, what about Rosh Hashana? What historical event happened on this day? Are we commemorating anything? What's the energy inherent on the first day of Tishrei?

In the prayers of Rosh Hashana we get a hint:

This is the day of the beginning of Your creation, a memorial of the first day ... today is the conception of the world.

It seems that the world was created on Rosh Hashana!

Tradition tells us that man was created on this day, and this is where our calendar begins. We date back to Day One of creation of man.

This is the day of the beginning of creation, as Rabbi Eliezer said: "In Tishrei the world was created." (Talmud, Rosh Hashana 27a)

There is a dispute about this in the Talmud. Was the world created on Rosh Hashana, or on Passover? The *Tosfot* (Medieval commentators) resolve the issue:

Rabbi Yehoshua says differently from Rabbi Eliezer that the world was created in Nissan (the month of Passover) but these and these are words of the living G-d. And we should assume that in Tishrei, the thought to create came up in [G-d's] mind, but it was not brought into creation until Nissan. (Tosfot Rosh Hashana 27a)

What could this mean? Does G-d have a mind? Can something come up in His mind and take six months to "gel"? To plan out and execute? G-d is above time, and the concept of time wasn't even created until the fourth day of creation, along with the sun and the moon! This cannot be a literal description of events. What then is the lesson being taught through this resolution of the creation-day dispute?

G-d obviously didn't sit and mull over His grand plan to create the world from Rosh Hashana till Passover. Rather, G-d created the *concept* of the world on this day, the blueprint, the plan, the idea. This day is a day meant for conception anew, a re-creation, a "pregnancy" of a plan, not for the execution. This is the inherent energy which we can tap into every year.

Every Rosh Hashana we enter into that primal event of pre-creation once again, that time before all time began. There is a planning anew of the world -- in essence. We don't exist in the past at all -- there is no past on this day; the world has not been created yet!

We can begin to fathom the intensity of this idea when we return to one of our earlier questions. Why is there no repentance on this day? No regret, no mention of sins? Because there is no past to regret and repent for. We are recreated today from scratch, with an empty slate.

A NEW PLAN OF ACTION

The prayers on Rosh Hashana focus instead on G-d's reign, on G-d's renewal of His kingdom for another year. G-d judges His world and the creatures within it on this day, determining their worthiness of existence and their status and circumstances for the New Year.

Since this judgment is not based on our past, for we are "new," pastless beings on this day, what then is it based on? How does G-d decide whether we are signed in the Book of Life?

We are expected on this day to conceive of a plan, to engage in a vision of the future, to have ambition and desire to take an active part in the Almighty's supreme kingdom in the coming year. And this is what the judgment is based on.

To the extent that we can remove ourselves from our past limitations, and reach for the stars, see ourselves as new beings involved in a new and ambitious plan for reaching our ultimate destiny, as individuals and as a nation, to that extent we have chosen life and have, in fact, signed *ourselves* into the Book of Life for the coming year.

Dina Coopersmith, www.aish.com

The Fast of Gedalia

One day after Rosh Hashana is a fast day, commemorating a tragedy in Jewish history. What relevance does it have for us in the 21st century?

The day after Rosh Hashana marks the Fast of Gedalia, one of the "minor fast days" in the Jewish calendar year. The fast begins in the early morning at dawn, and ends in the evening at dusk.

What is the meaning of this fast, and why does it occur during the intermediate days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?

THE STORY OF GEDALIA

After the destruction of the First Temple 2,500 years ago, the majority of the Jewish people were exiled to Babylon. The conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, eventually eased some of his harsh restrictions and allowed some Jews to remain in the Land of Israel. He even appointed a righteous Jew named Gedalia to administrate the territory. Gradually, more Jews who had escaped from the horrors of the war into neighboring countries began to return to their homes in Israel.

Gedalia was realistic about the limitations of Jewish sovereignty. He understood that for their own self-preservation, the Jews in Israel needed to cooperate fully with the nation who had conquered their land. But this political subservience was intolerable to some Jews. A man named Yishmael ben Netaniah, spurred on by jealousy and foreign influence, arose and ignored the King of Babylon. On the third of Tishrei, Yishmael treacherously killed Gedalia as well as many other Jews and Babylonians.

ANSWER ON YOM KIPPUR

In the aftermath of Gedalia's murder, the Jews feared reprisal from the King of Babylon. They thought to flee to Egypt to save themselves. But since Egypt was a morally corrupt society, the Jews were in a quandary -- weighing the physical threat against the spiritual danger. So they turned to the prophet Jeremiah, who was secluded in mourning, to ask for advice.

For an entire week, Jeremiah pleaded with G-d for an answer. Finally, on Yom Kippur, he was answered. Jeremiah called the Jews and told them to stay in Israel and everything would be alright. G-d was planning to make the Babylonians act mercifully toward the Jews, and before long, all the exiled Jews would be permitted to return to their own soil. But, Jeremiah told them, if the Jews decided to go to Egypt, the sword from which they were running would kill them there.

Unfortunately, the prophet's words did not penetrate, and the people refused to believe. All the Jews remaining in Israel packed their bags and went down to Egypt. They even kidnapped Jeremiah and took him with them! Now the destruction was complete; the Land of Israel was completely barren.

You can guess what happened next. A few years later, Babylon conquered Egypt and tens of thousands of Jewish exiles were completely wiped out. The lone survivor of this massacre was Jeremiah. His prophecy had become painfully true.

The initial event -- the murder of Gedalia -- has been likened to the destruction of the Holy Temple, because it cost Jewish lives and brought an end to Jewish settlement in Israel for many years. The prophets therefore declared that the anniversary of this tragedy should be a day of fasting. This day is the third of Tishrei, the day immediately after Rosh Hashana.



LESSONS FOR THE FAST OF GEDALIA

Lesson #1 -- The Jewish people had sunk to one of their lowest levels in history. The Temple was destroyed, the majority of Jews were exiled, and things looked hopeless. But G-d changed their desperate situation and had the righteous Gedalia appointed. Yet Gedalia was murdered by a Jew and all hope was wiped out.

It was at this point that Jeremiah prayed to G-d for some insight and assurance. This was during the 10 days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. This story is memorialized to teach us an important message for these days: No matter how far away you are, you can return and G-d will forgive you.

Lesson #2 -- The Jews who went to ask Jeremiah for advice were subconsciously sure that G-d would give the answer they wanted to hear. So when G-d answered differently, they rebelled. Yet these were not evil people. What happened?

Though these Jews were in one sense dependent on the will of the Babylonians, they were unwilling to be dependent on the will of G-d. The lesson is that attaching oneself to G-d means following Him at all times, not just when it happens to coincide with what you want.

A good rule in life, when faced with a tricky moral dilemma, is to ask yourself: "What would G-d say? What does He want me to do?"

Lesson #3 -- When one Jew murders another, it is a deep, terrible tragedy, which can have enormous historical repercussions. There is no excuse for such violence. Do we have philosophical and political differences? We must work them out with calm and tolerance. It is the only acceptable way.

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Nivin and Rabbi Shraga Simmons, www.aish.com

SUCCESSFUL JEWISH WOMAN

Ruth Ben-Israel: A Fresh Perspective



Professor Ruth Ben-Israel studied at the Academy of Applied (Decorative) Art in Paris. Family needs obliged her to study law and to develop a legal career instead of an artistic one. Consequently, she became a prominent and leading professor in Labour Law and Social Security - so much so that in 2001, Professor Ben-Israel was awarded the Israel Prize for legal research.

In 2005, at the age of 74, Professor Ben-Israel felt a strong need for renewal, to gain a fresh perspective, and an urge to realize herself in a new and different way.

The life history of Prof. Ben-Israel, like the history of her family, is deeply rooted in the settlement of the Land of Israel. Ben-Israel's forebears include Israel Bak (1797–1874), who settled in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter in 1837. One set of grandparents, Abba (1872–1960) and Sarah Ne'eman, were among the founders of the first Hebrew city, Tel Aviv, while the others, Zerah and Yokheved Mosheli, were among the founders of Neve Tzedek, the first Jewish neighborhood in Jaffa.

Prof. Ben-Israel, along with her family -- her husband Gideon and their two daughters -- also contributed to the settlement of the Land: first when they lived in the Negev from 1955 – 1970 and lent a hand to the building of Beersheba, the first Hebrew city in the Negev, and afterwards, from 1971 – 1980, when they went to live in the first new house built in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem after its liberation.

Ruth Ben-Israel, an expert in labor law, social equality, social security and the status of women, received the Israel Prize for legal research in 2001, becoming the third member of her family to win this distinguished award, alongside her brother, Professor Yuval Ne'eman (b. 1925, Israel Prize 1969) and her cousin, Professor Hayyim Harari (b. 1940, Israel Prize 1989).

Ruth Ben-Israel was born in 1931 in Egypt. Her family returned to Palestine in 1935 and she grew up in Tel Aviv. Prof. She was educated in Tel Aviv and is a graduate of the Herzliya Gymnasia. In 1949 she joined the Israel Defense Forces, serving as a squad commander, later becoming an officer. She served for about a year at the Women's Corps training base, and for a further year in the navy as an officer in its Women's Corps as well as the deputy commander of the Stella Maris base in Haifa.

Upon her discharge in 1951, Ben-Israel traveled to France where she studied at the School for Applied Arts in Paris and also earned a diploma in French language and culture from the Sorbonne. She completed her studies in 1954 and worked in the arts after her return to Israel, establishing the Meshakem carpet company for Yemenite embroidery and Persian carpets, which opened branches in Dimonah and Ofakim. Forty new immigrant women, who spoke twenty different languages, supported themselves through the factory in Beersheba, and many additional women workers were employed in the branches in Dimona and in Ofakim.

Her professional shift to the field of law came about almost by chance when her husband, attorney Gideon Ben-Israel (b. 1923), retired from his law practice upon being elected to the fourth Knesset in November 1959. Ruth Ben-Israel, who was by this time the mother of two daughters, Marit and Savyon, began to study law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in order to carry on the practice, choosing to specialize in labor law since her husband dealt with labor relations in professional unions. While Gideon was secretary of the Workers' Council and a member of the Histadrut's coordinating committee, Ruth decided to concentrate on the academic aspect so that there would be a common topic in their work. She obtained both her LL.B. and LL.M. degrees *magna cum laude* and in 1975 also completed a Ph.D. degree, all at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

In 1977 she joined the academic staff of the law department at Tel Aviv University, becoming a full professor in 1986. She served as associate dean of the law faculty from 1985 to 1990 and as dean in 1990–1991. She was appointed to the Alain Pohair Chair in Labor Law in 1989, and in the year 2000 became Professor Emeritus.

From 1978 Ben-Israel wrote the volume on Israeli labor law published by the *International Encyclopaedia for Labor Law and Industrial Relations*. In 1983 she was a visiting professor at New York University's law school and from 1984 was a member of the American Arbitration Association. From 1985 to 1995 she was a member of the international board of the International Labor Law and Social Security Association (ILLSSA). Between 1992 and 1998 she was a member of the international board of the International Industrial Relations Association (IIRA).

Ben-Israel's extensive publications include nine books, two monographs in encyclopedias, and numerous articles. Her books have become basic texts on labor law in Israel. Furthermore, her books and articles are quoted in legal rulings and legal literature published in the Western world.

When Ben-Israel received the Israel Prize in 2001, the judges—Professor Yitzhak Zamir, the committee chairman, and Professors Sinai Deutsch and Ruth Lapidot—cited the fact that Ben-Israel was not only a world-renowned expert famed for her profound research and value-based writings, but also that she had done a large amount of practical work in the field. The judges also noted her book on collective agreements, her research on the right to strike in Israel and in the world, and her book on equal opportunity and the prohibition against discrimination in the workplace—all examples of her in-depth and wide-ranging writing, which combines much knowledge of various legal methods with a profound understanding of legal process and the social problems it seeks to solve.

"My scientific approach was based on my socially oriented worldview, on my awareness of the need to ensure the social standing of the worker as a person and on my deep belief in the justice of the welfare state. These were consolidated during the fifteen years of immigrant absorption which I experienced in Beersheba, alongside my spouse Gideon, who was the Secretary of the Workers' Council and later the representative of the Negev in the Knesset." This is how Prof. Ruth Ben-Israel sees the basis of her academic work.

She did not close herself up in an academic ivory tower, and, all her life, combined public involvement with her research activity, aspiring to contribute to society and the community through the application of the professional knowledge she had acquired. To this end she served voluntarily, for eight years, as a consultant on labor legislation to the Labor and Welfare Committee in the Knesset headed by MK Ora Namir. During the period of her consultancy Prof. Ben-Israel was very actively involved in the legislation of a number of important labor laws, such as the minimum wage law and the equal opportunities employment law. Subsequently, she was involved in the Committee for the Status of Women in the Knesset, including legislation on the prohibition of sexual harassment and the amendment to the law of equal rights for women. Prof. Ben-Israel filled the position of Public Representative in the National Labor Court, was a member of the steering team of the Namir Commission on the Status of Women and served as Chairperson of the Committee appointed by the government on the Promotion and Participation of Women in Government Service.

Her efforts did not go unrecognized. Besides the Israel Prize in Law (2001), Prof. Ben-Israel was awarded the Barnive Prize in Labour Law (1988), the Minkoff Prize for Excellence in Law (2000), and the Israeli Bar Prize for Women in Law (2001).

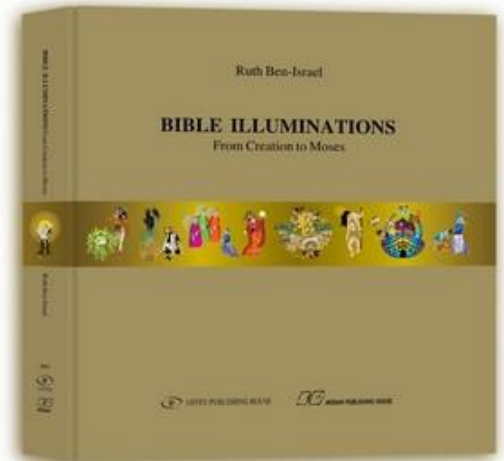
Then came the turning point: "In 2005 I became 74. I thought that the probability existed that I would have another ten years of activity at my disposal. I felt that I was not capable of continuing to occupy myself for another ten or twenty years with what I had been involved with until now..."

Professor Ben-Israel underwent a professional transformation. She began painting Old Testament stories, using the computer for this purpose.

Professor Ben-Israel was enchanted by the fact that the uniqueness that the computer "brush" creates offers innovative qualities, which are unparalleled among traditional painting tools. The new qualities of the digital "brush" enable the provision of a new perspective to the Old Testament paintings which could not be provided in the past.

The Old Testament stories painted by Professor Ben-Israel are presented in series, each of which relates to a specific biblical scene. The scores of topics she has treated include Ruth, the Garden of Eden, the Story of Creation, and Desert Wandering. Her artwork appears on ceramic plates, bowls and tiles, and she has illustrated an album for singer Kobi Oz.

In 2010 the book "Bible Illuminations, From Creation to Moses" was published by Geffen and Modan Publishing Houses. The book contains over 200 of her digital paintings.



Professor Ben-Israel's public activity, too, reflects her current concerns. Presently, she chairs the Council of Israeli Museums, and since 2006 she has been a member of the administration of the Suzanne Dellal Center for Dance and Theater. She received the key to the city of Tel Aviv in 2009, the city's 100th anniversary.

In mulling over the decision to change careers so late in life, Prof. Ben-Israel noted: "There was a certain point which weighed on me and made it hard to start a new occupation. The difficulty was emotional. While in my traditional field I had reached senior status and was a leading figure, it was clear that in a new field of endeavor I would begin at the bottom of the ladder. The significance of this was a lowering of professional status, the need to conquer anew my place in a new constellation which was unacquainted with me, and because of this totally unaware of my abilities and skills. I weighed one against the other, the advantage of renewal versus the disadvantage of starting over. The die was cast clearly toward the advantage. The possibility of the refreshment and enjoyment of learning and of expression in a new realm overcame the fear of loss of prestige."

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www.ruthbenisrael.com

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ZIONISM

I Was There In Color: Fred Monosson's Movies from the Beginning of the State

It is astounding how much the addition of color changes our perception of the past.

In our mind's eye, all our images of the early days of the establishment of the State of Israel, including the War of Independence, the first IDF parade, and Operation Magic Carpet, are in black and white, because they were all filmed in black and white. But a rich Jewish American businessman traveled all over the country back then with one of the first advanced color film cameras in the world. In dozens of hours of rare footage in living color, from the pre-State years until after the Six Day War, he brought all those black and white years to life.

The gentleman was Efraim Monosson, from Novogrudok, Belarus, who came to be known in Brookline, Massachusetts, as Fred Monosson.

Fred came to America from Belarus in 1906 with his mother, Bathesheba Rabinowitz Monosson and his siblings after his father, Abraham Monosson, had been murdered.

He took advantage of the opportunities afforded him in America, learned manufacturing and was a union leader. Later, he became a wealthy entrepreneur and industrialist. He owned the Cosmopolitan Manufacturing Company in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which allowed him to indulge in his very special and remarkable hobby of 16mm color cinematography.



Fred Monosson
(Monosson Archives)

For those who could afford the special cameras along with all the film needed, the projector and cost of processing, the world became their oyster. In the case of Fred Monosson, the outcome of his obsession with cinematography was a series of wonderful color films taken at some of the most important events to occur in the twentieth century in Jewish history, especially the creation of the State of Israel. He traveled far and wide to capture events of note in the Jewish world.

The reams of films which were stored in Fred Monosson's basement became known to the outside world when he passed away in 1972. A fifty-five minute documentary film entitled "I Was There In Color" has since been prepared by Avishay Kfir, Director, and Itzhak Rubin, Producer.

When he first saw the films, the director couldn't believe his eyes. The dozens of hours of color films contain footage of many significant events in the history of Israel, events that had never before been seen in color. People easily identifiable on these color films include a very young Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Sadeh (head of the Palmach), as well as British Mandate soldiers walking the streets of Jerusalem.

Besides filming these events in Israel, Fred Monosson traveled to Europe and filmed the Red Army in Berlin tearing down ruined buildings shortly after the end of World War II, the Reichstag building still smoldering, and death camp survivors in the displaced persons camps. He also traveled to Dachau and Auschwitz and took movies in color, probably the only color films of those places known to exist. In one scene, containers of Zyklon B, the deadly gas, can be seen stacked next to Crematorium 1.

Israel TV's Ilan Rokach reported: "Color footage that no one knew existed was shot at dozens of historic events, and time and again the cinematographer appears, having asked someone to hold the camera for a

second and film him with the soldiers, with the Prime Minister, a foot away from Golda [Meir], a step behind [Shimon] Peres...”

Monosson was bald, wore a suit even on the hottest days, and always had a carnation in his lapel.

President Shimon Peres recalled: “I never saw him in a bad mood. He was always happy, always cheerful, willing to lend a hand... the jovial American who had come to lift our spirits.”

Fred Monosson seemed to be everywhere. At the port of Haifa he filmed British soldiers capturing illegal Jewish immigrants, forcing them onto a deportation ship directly to camps in Cyprus. Then he followed them by plane and filmed them in the deportation camps.

During the War of Independence he was back in Tel Aviv, filming people sitting in Café Piltz, enjoying their coffee and cake while the war was raging 25 kilometers away.

Miriam Finder Tasini marveled: “As I watched [the film] I could not believe how he managed to pick up the everyday life experiences of those of us who lived there. When I was a little girl it was a special treat to eat ice cream with my mother at Cafe Piltz, where she often met her friends. The pictures did manage to capture that life just went on even as one war followed another.”



Ben-Gurion escorts
President Weizmann
(Monosson Archives)

When the War of Independence ended, Monosson filmed a ruined Jerusalem, its new border marked by a temporary barbed-wire fence.

At the first IDF parade in Jerusalem, in April 1950, Fred Monosson sat next to Golda Meir and David Ben-Gurion. His acute journalistic sense prompted him to point his camera at Ben-Gurion as he gently took the hand of elderly President Haim Weizmann and escorted him to his car. He also filmed the bare, desolate mountain where Herzl's remains were buried. Monosson danced with the immigrants who came on the “Magic Carpet” from Yemen, and that same year went to Marseilles, where he filmed Moroccan Jews on their way to Israel, and later in the transit camps.

Following the Sinai Campaign in 1956 he boarded an Arkia plane and flew south, among the first people to visit the Sinai. He filmed Egyptian prisoners, and El Arish, in color, as well as Sharm A-Sheikh. After the Six Day War he recorded the processions of visitors to the new areas, and Chief of Staff Rabin's victory speech on Mount Scopus. After the great victory he returned to America, his mission completed.

The films provide a vivid memoir of those exciting times when Israel found its footing as a nation. It brings to life so many events, which are truly enhanced by being photographed in color. Fred Monosson's film legacy has enriched us with these vibrant images of the past.

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JEWISH WORLD

Southern Italy Rediscovered Forgotten Jewish Heritage

The Italian region of Puglia is historically one of the most important, but least known areas of the Jewish Diaspora. As Europe celebrated its tenth Day of Jewish Culture, Puglia launched its first Jewish festival.

The European Day of Jewish Culture, which took place in 2009 on Sunday, September 6th, was established 10 years before to help Europeans discover and celebrate their Jewish heritage. All 27 countries in the bloc - from Portugal to Turkey, Norway to Greece - participate with their own events.

As Jewish culture goes, the Puglia region, located in the "heel" of Italy, has a lot to explore.

"Jewish presence was very important here in past centuries, before they moved east," Victor Magiar from the Union of Italian Jewish Communities told Deutsche Welle. "There were few communities but they were very active, not just in terms of religion and tradition, but also in science and culture."

The first community of 8,000 Jews in Puglia dates back to 70 AD, during the Roman Empire. In the 16th century, Spanish domination decreed their expulsion from its territories, including southern Italy. Yet the region's Jews had already left their mark in such fields as medicine, astronomy and alchemy.

Puglia is the meeting point between East and West, said Magiar. "It also played an important role in the escape of many Jews in World War II," he added. "They gathered here in camps before setting sail for Palestine. Golda Meir got married in a camp here."

Looking for the positive



The Aragonese castle in Ontranto hosted parts of the Puglia Festival

The new festival in Puglia, which ran from Sept. 6 -10, 2009, was the fruit of years of research into the Jewish history of some of the locations in the region. These places served as venues for theater performances, concerts, art exhibitions, discussions, film screenings and photographic exhibitions during the week.

"This [was] a chance not just for Jews to rediscover their history but for all Italians too," said Magiar. "It [was] a celebration of the South of Italy, which is often considered only in its most negative aspects."

He emphasized that the festival focused on Jews in a positive way, rather than continuing discourse on the Holocaust.

A lot of work was done renovating old Jewish buildings, such as synagogues and ritual baths. The festival organizers hope that it will also encourage the few remaining Jews in the region to revive traditions and explore their culture, together with other Italians.

"This event is a good seed," said Nichi Vendola, the president of the region of Puglia. "I hope it will help bring back the spirit of cooperation, solidarity and sharing among people here. (These are) the only real 'antibodies' that can chase away fear of diversity and pull down the barbed wire of prejudice."

Dany Mitzman; Editor: Kate Bowen. September 5, 2009. Deutsche Welle, <http://www.dw-world.de>

ART

On The Wall

Tel Aviv's street artists have created a street-art scene as exciting as that of any other major city, and are beginning to earn global recognition for their work.

There are two major factors at play here: the government, which unlike any other advanced democracy, has yet to clamp down on illegal street art; and the Israeli public, which is generally apathetic to graffiti so long as it is inoffensive and attractive. The latter phenomenon may stem from the relaxed attitudes in the Middle East, as well as the day-to-day risks facing citizens: if you're worried a member of your family could be dead tomorrow, you're less inclined to be concerned by a work of graffiti – in fact, you may even be pleased to see a pretty piece of impromptu art adorning the shutters of your local mini-mart.

Indeed, the artists apparently feel this way, too. The street art scene is still relatively young here. The graffiti scenes in New York and London emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. Israel is a latecomer – with a graffiti culture less than a decade old – but it is catching up fast.

Big money

Opponents of street art see it as a stain on society, and say it looks messy and even leads to high crime rates. Some governments have adopted the “broken windows” theory, coined by New York officials in the early 1980s, which alleges that graffiti brings about urban decay. While some politicians have seized this theory in an attempt to make electoral gains, Israeli politicians haven't jumped on the bandwagon. Illegal street art has not yet been demonized here; it's simply viewed as a “kids” activity, which to a large extent, it still is.

But there's big money in this “childish” pastime. The plethora of Israeli galleries that represent local artists for international clientele, and the new, profitable social enterprises set up by philanthropic-minded entrepreneurs to cultivate the country's emerging artistic talent, are now taking an interest in artists who have traditionally worked on the streets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa. The price of their work is climbing, a trend that can be credited to the hugely successful street artist Banksy and the Lazarides Gallery in London. In spite of that, Israeli street artists are doing something authentic, not just in the context of Israel or the Middle East, but the world.

Some of the biggest street artists working in Tel Aviv at the moment are Know Hope, Ame72, Klone and Zero Cents, all of whom are beginning to gain international recognition. They are all young, skilled artists, committed to what they do. They are also starting to sell their works for substantial sums of money here and abroad.

Know Hope, 22, is an artist and a former skateboarding enthusiast. His latest work depicts a slouching, stylized character. Born in the United States to artist parents, he immigrated to Israel 12 years ago. His career is now beginning to go global, and he is represented by galleries in Israel, London, Los Angeles, New York and around Europe.

Know Hope describes his birthplace, Southern California, as “distant and superficial”. “Tel Aviv often feels small and congested, but it's a great city,”



Street art by Rami Meiri

one he feels attached to. “It is also really easy to paint [the streets] here compared to the States,” he adds.

Know Hope tells stories through his work by using the same character, iconography, nuances and metaphors. These features also help make his art very accessible. He creates much of his work at home and later pastes it to the walls – one of the quickest ways for a street artist to work.

He believes living in Israel adds an interesting logic to his art – posting work in Gaza is different than doing so in Illinois, he notes. While he says religious ritual and tradition influence his work, so do television commercials.

By doing art in the street, you are a collective reality – something that doesn’t happen in a gallery, Know Hope explains. In a gallery you take an empty white space and create your own environment, while on the street you take something that already exists and add to it. “Art done on the street interacts with its environment,” he says.

Not surprisingly, he also believes people would rather see a painting in the street than a gray wall, and thinks people react differently whether you’re holding a spray can or a paintbrush, even though you can technically produce the same thing with both.

The Lego guy

Ame72 is also a full-time artist who does illegal street art, and is selling his work around the world. His use of a Lego-esque character has earned him the name “Lego guy”. A short stroll around central Tel Aviv street reveals both his illegal and commissioned creations.

Ame72, who is clearly enthusiastic about the value of what he does, often uses stencils, much like Banksy, and freehand spray paint. Says Ame72: “We have got the tools to send out a positive message of peace...it’s a necessity! Whatever happens, there’s always going to be pain and hurt...I try to make stuff that makes people smile.”

Klone, another prolific artist working on the streets of Tel Aviv, is known for his iconic “predator” character, which is featured in much of his work. The predators at first appear unreal, but “by looking at them deeper, you will always see something of yourself,” Klone says.

Like Know Hope, Klone frequently works with paste-ups. He notes that his art is not influenced by Judaism, but by everyday life and people. Therefore, he walks everywhere, in order to fully absorb the city. Klone views creating street art as providing an important service, as it is a way to expose more people to art and serves as an alternative to what he refers to as “the only graphic expression the Israeli government and municipalities provide its citizens with – advertisements.”

Rami Meiri, an Israeli mural artist, says artists working illegally on the streets contribute positively to the urban landscape, and adds that they are helping to expand the boundaries of art in general, as some of the most exciting local artists are now taking to the street to gain recognition.

One cannot help but feel, after speaking with these local talents, that as a progressive society, Israel should invest in its street artists, as it does in its young entrepreneurs. They remind us of the signs of life that are often forgotten in our concrete jungle. Indeed, these are people who have the power to make our daily walk to work, and perhaps our lives, just a bit brighter.

Source: Demian Smith, “On the Wall”, *Ha’aretz* newspaper, September 17, 2009, www.haaretz.com. The author is a British-born graffiti artist.

ISRAEL TOUCH

Israel: “Birding Superpower”

At least 500 million birds pass through Israel's skies twice a year during the migration season. In the fall, they make their way south to Africa and in the spring they return to Europe to mate and reproduce. Israel is located on a central migratory path, attracting both professional and amateur birders, photographers and experts from all over the world to see this natural wonder.



Bird watching and the institution of birding have grown out of the exciting migration phenomenon, the understanding that the birds are a global asset and that mankind is responsible for preserving it for the next generation.

Israel has become a "birding superpower" and an entire recreation culture has been born of the love of the birds, nurturing bird appreciation among both locals and tourists.

Bird lovers visiting Israel enjoy a variety of events and activities. Scattered along the migration route are several main bird watching sites, starting with Lake Hula in the Upper Galilee, through the Beit Shean Valley's Kfar Ruppin, Jerusalem and the Arava desert north of the Red Sea port city of Eilat.

These centers include telescopes and conduct guided tours. The most important of Israel's several bird research centers is Tel Aviv University's International Center for the Study of Bird Migration at Latrun, which uses radar to track the birds, and updates the birds' movements on the center's website.

Migration, a biannual event, has become the focal point for a large number of activities and special events that take place in many locations in Israel during the migration period, promoting bird watching as one of Israel's popular tourism attractions.

One can hike in the birds' tracks, enjoy guided tours of their habitats, hear lectures on ornithology, watch documentaries on migration, attend bird photography workshops in nature, and actually ring birds for research purposes.

In the Israeli fall and spring, one only has to raise one's eyes skyward to see the crowds and formations crossing the region. With the horizon full of flocks, it is well worth while to stop at the popular birding sites and nature reserves to see the birds landing and seeking food, rest and a place for the night. The birds attract dozens and even hundreds of birders, binoculars in hand, watching the greatest show in town. Join the experience and learn about the cranes, storks, falcons, eagles, wagtails and pelicans and 300 more birds that visit Israel every year.

The Hula Valley Bird Watching Site

A prime Israeli bird watching site is located in the Hula valley, a unique ecosystem of regional and international importance.

Until the 1950s large parts of the Hula valley were covered by the Hula Lake and its adjacent swamps. The project for draining the swamps contributed to settlement in the area and to the addition of large areas of agricultural land, leaving the central lake area as a nature reserve where fauna and flora characteristic of the area could remain.

Visitors to the Hula Valley can see the plants and animals that are indigenous to the area as well as migrating birds. Films and audio-visual presentations which tell about life in the area 50 years ago are shown in the visitors' center.



At the beginning of the 1990s a section of the valley became flooded again as the result of heavy rains. It was decided to develop the surrounding area and to leave the flooded section as it was. The new site - *Agmon HaHula* -- became the second home for thousands of migrating birds that pass through the area in the autumn and spring, as well as the home of many native birds, making it a popular sight for bird-watchers from Israel and abroad.

The *Agmon HaHula* has walking paths, observation points, and telescopes for observing the thousands of birds that inhabit the site. Visitors can also go on guided tours that offer explanations about the birds that inhabit the Hula Valley.

Sources:

Bird Watching, Israel Ministry of Tourism, www.tourism.gov.il

The Hula Valley – Bird Watching Site, Haaretz newspaper, March 25, 2008 – courtesy of the Israel Ministry of Tourism (www.goisrael.com).