Dear Chavera,

This issue of the "LAPID" is the last for the year 2011 / 5771. The High Holidays are approaching, and we are all getting ready to receive the New Year in high spirits and in good health.

The theme for this issue of the Lapid newsletter is Renewal. In the section on Holidays, for example, you will find an article on the process of self-examination and personal change that characterizes the period from the beginning of the month of Elul until the end of Yom Kippur.

On the subject of "The Jewish World," we present an article on a form of Jewish art that has made a comeback: the decoration of the ketubah, the Jewish marriage contract.

The approach of Sue Ellis on “Ways to Refresh Long-time Volunteers” is definitely worthy of consideration.

In the section "Israel Touch," you will discover how Israel helps to empower women the world over, and read about an innovative project for bringing together Israeli at-risk youth from all sectors.

And last but certainly not least, the World WIZO Enlarged General Meeting (EGM) which is drawing ever closer, to be held at the Hilton Tel Aviv from the 15th-19th of January, 2012. The slogan of the EGM is: "CREATING A NEW TOMORROW." You will find an article about this upcoming event in the September WIZO Review. I would like to repeat again: There is nothing like participating in such a gathering in order to bring members closer, in order to recruit young members, in order to return home full of enthusiasm and commitment.

There is nothing like meeting chaverot from all over the world – As Susy Baron, then President of WIZO Chile, said: “Above all, the most significant thing for me was the spirit and personal warmth among all the chaverot, which was infectious...Some of the people with whom I spoke told me that they never imagined that WIZO had such power and intensity.”

There is nothing like hearing directly from leading personalities -- As Mercedes Ivcher, then Co-President of WIZO USA, noted: “I was especially impressed by the attendance of your distinguished speakers, including the State of Israel's President and Prime Minister respectively, who honored..."
There is nothing like visiting WIZO projects in Israel -- As Loraine Warren, Chairperson of WIZO.uk, summed up: “Seeing is believing. We couldn’t wait to get to our projects. Just to be there to see, feel and touch the core of our work...was worth the journey.”

These are just a few of the statements that we received following the last EGM which was, as you know, one of the largest ever, with close to 1,000 chaverot participating from all over the world.

And this time, as we informed you, there will be activities dedicated to WIZO Aviv participants -- a separate tour, workshops, and moving encounters in a spirit of "Future Leadership."

Dear Chaverot, we are here waiting for you. We always need you, and we need you now more than ever.

Together -- "CREATING A NEW TOMORROW."

Together, let us outline a bright new vision for our movement. The challenges are immense. Together we will find the way to face them.

We look forward to seeing you at the EGM.

Sylvie Pelossarf
Chairperson
Department of Organization & Education
World WIZO Executive
It’s the Event of 2012

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☐ Strengthen Israel Through WIZO?
☐ Be a Link in the Zionist Chain?

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HOLIDAYS

A New Year, a New Start: The High Holidays

Although the High Holidays themselves--the two days of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) -- occupy three days only, they lie within a web of liturgy and customs that extend from the beginning of the preceding Hebrew month of Elul through Yom Kippur. The focus of this entire period is the process of teshuvah, or repentance, whereby a Jew admits to sins, asks for forgiveness, and resolves not to repeat the sins. Recognizing the psychological difficulty of self-examination and personal change, the rabbis instituted a 40-day period whose intensity spirals toward its culmination on Yom Kippur, a day devoted entirely to fasting and repentance.

The Cycle Begins

The High Holiday period begins on the first day of the Jewish month of Elul. In the Ashkenazi tradition, during this month of soul searching, the shofar, or ram’s horn, is blown each morning except on the Sabbath, to call upon listeners to begin the difficult process of repentance. Also in Elul special haftarot -- prophetic portions -- focusing on consolation, acknowledge the vulnerability of an individual grappling with personal change. During the week before Rosh Hashanah, intensity increases as traditional Jews begin reciting selichot, prayers that involve confessing sins and requesting G-d’s forgiveness and help. On the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah, the selichot are chanted at midnight, rather than at their usual early morning hour.

A New Year, a New Start

The culmination of the High Holiday period occurs during the Ten Days of Repentance, which begin on 1 Tishri with Rosh Hashanah and end with Yom Kippur. During this period, human beings have the chance to tip the scales of divine judgment in their favor through repentance, prayer, and tzedakah (performing righteous deeds and giving money to charitable causes). Not only is Rosh Hashanah the Jewish New Year, which commemorates God’s creation of the world, but also the Day of Judgment, when God remembers and judges all human deeds. Except on Shabbat, services are punctuated with the call of the shofar, which according to Maimonides, is saying, “Awake, you sleepers, from your slumber...examine your deeds, return in repentance, and remember your Creator.” Human beings are believed to be in mortal danger at this time, with their lives hinging on the decision to repent. Only those who choose to forego sin are inscribed in the symbolic “book of life” that is a central liturgical image of Rosh Hashanah. On the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, the theological bent of the morning services is reinforced in a concrete way during the Tashlikh ceremony, during which individuals symbolically cast away their personal sins by throwing breadcrumbs into a flowing body of water. This action is accompanied by the recitation of biblical verses that evoke the human
capacity for repentance and the beneficence of Divine forgiveness through the metaphor of casting sins into the depths of the waters.

**Repenting and Returning**

The Sabbath between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called *Shabbat Shuvah*, the Sabbath of Return, or Repentance, after a verse from the *haftarah* declaring “Return O Israel to the Lord, your G-d” (Hosea 14:2).

The transition to Yom Kippur begins in the hours preceding the evening onset of the festival with the recitation of the first *vidui*, or communal confession of sins, at the afternoon service. Some Jews choose to go to the *mikveh*, or ritual bath, to purify themselves before the holiday. The striving toward inner purity is also reflected in the white outfits traditional for the day. In traditional congregations, men will don a white robe called a *kittel* over their holiday clothes. In some congregations, both men and women might choose to wear white garments to symbolize this quest for spiritual purity.

Within the Ten Days of Repentance, Yom Kippur is the pinnacle of intensity, moving toward the decisive moment at its close when G-d is imagined as sealing the books of life and death. The day’s total focus on spiritual concerns is exemplified by fasting and abstaining from everyday activities such as bathing, sexual relations, and the wearing of leather shoes.

The liturgical day of Yom Kippur, known as the Sabbath of Sabbaths, begins with the *Kol Nidre* service immediately prior to sunset. The heartrending poems and prayers of the *Machzor*, the prayer book used for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which express the themes of repentance, human frailty, and humility before God, combine with the *nusah*, or musical style of the service, to express the momentousness of the day.

Liturgical elements that distinguish the Yom Kippur services include a recounting of the Temple service on Yom Kippur, a description of the suffering of rabbis martyred by the Romans, and the reading of the Book of Jonah. The day closes with the *Neilah* service, during which penitents pray before the open ark, with one last chance to repent before the book of life is sealed. The very name of the service, *Neilah* (locking) refers to the imagery that the gates of repentance, open during the High Holidays, are now shutting. A lengthy sounding of the shofar, called a *tekiah gedolah*, releases the Jew back into the realm of the everyday, bolstered by a final echo of the call to repentance.

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We're all familiar with the Jewish custom of dipping an apple into honey and eating it on the night of Rosh Hashana. All Jewish customs have Torah, historical and traditional origins, though many of them may be now somewhat obscure due to the passage of time and the circumstances of the long exile of Israel.

So why the apple? Is not placing honey on the piece of challah bread that we begin the meal with sufficient to symbolize a sweet year? What is the special symbolism of the apple that makes it the fruit that most graces our Rosh Hashana table?

The sophisticated doubters amongst us have stated that the apple is used because it is the fruit that was most available in all of the areas of the world of the Jewish exile. However, such reasoning begs the question and misses the entire point of the reasons for the preservation of Jewish customs. Jewish customs come to reinforce Jewish identity and memory. They serve to remind us of our special responsibilities and duties toward G-d and man. They reinforce our sense of solidity with all previous Jewish generations, and provide an effective method of transmitting our tradition and heritage to our children and grandchildren.

One of the tragedies of the alienation of many Jews currently from their heritage is their ignorance and non-participation regarding Jewish customs. Thus, the custom of the eating of the apple dipped into the honey on the night of Rosh Hashana does have a special traditional significance over and above the ready availability of the fruit at this season of the year. And it is this special significance of memory that enhances the beauty and even the sweetness of the custom.

Fruit of Affection
One of the fruits to which the Jewish people are compared to in Solomon's Song of Songs is the apple. "As the apple is rare and unique among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved -- Israel -- amongst the maidens (nations) of the world."

The Midrash informs us that the apple tree puts forth the nub of its fruit even before the leaves that will surround and protect the little fruit at its beginning stage of growth are fully sprouting. The Jewish people, by accepting the Torah with the statement that "we will do and we will understand" -- placing holy action and observance of Torah commandments even before understanding and rational acceptance -- thereby imitated the behavior of the apple. Thus, the apple became a Jewish symbol, a memory aid, so to speak, to the moment of revelation at Sinai.
The apple also served to remind the Jewish people of their enslavement in Egypt and their deliverance from that bondage. Again, according to Midrash, the apple served as the fruit of affection between husband and wife during the long and painful period of abject slavery. It provided them with hope for the future and the determination to bring a future generation into the world, despite all of the bleakness of Jewish circumstance. The apple therefore also became the symbol of the Jewish home and family, of optimism for a brighter Jewish future, of the tenacity of Jewish spirit and determination.

**Garden of Eden**

It is interesting to note that in general society, the apple is assigned the role of the fruit of temptation in the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The apple therefore became the symbol of human weakness and downfall, even of death itself.

However, the Talmud, when listing the possible "fruits" that may have been products of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, does not include apples in that list. The "fruits" mentioned are wheat, figs and grapes.

There is one Jewish source for an apple being that fateful fruit, quoted in Midrash, but it does not have the weight of authority that a statement in Talmud possesses. The Christian world, for unknown reasons, adopted the view of that Midrash and all Christian art, story and religious tradition for the last 1,500 years has given the apple a bad name.

Not so amongst Jews, where the apple retains its positive symbolism and has its place of honor on our Rosh Hashana table -- as a harbinger of a good, sweet and holy year for us all.

**Hey Honey!**

Another favorite food staple in the Jewish home during the High Holy Day season is honey. Traditionally, from Rosh Hashana until after Sukkot, honey is served with every major meal. It is smeared on the bread over which we recite the "Hamotzi" blessing, the sweet apple is dipped into honey on the night of Rosh Hashana, sweet baked goods are baked with honey, and honey is used in the preparation of foods such as glazed carrots and sweet desserts.

Aside from the caloric disaster that this custom entails, one is really hard pressed to find a negative thing to say about honey.

The custom of honey on the Jewish table during the High Holiday period is an ancient and universal Jewish custom. It is already recorded in the works of the Babylonian Geonim in the 7th century, and probably dates back to even much earlier times. It is no exaggeration to say that Jews always seemed to possess a sweet tooth.

The obvious reason for the use of honey on our table at this time of the year is the symbolism of our desire for a "sweet new year." Sweet means dear, precious, enjoyable, satisfying, serene,
secure and something most pleasing. Well, that about sums up our hopes and prayers for the new year, and therefore honey serves as our representative in expressing these fervent hopes and prayers.

However, honey represents more than sweetness per se. It is one of the attributes of the Land of Israel which is described in the Bible as being a land that "flows with milk and honey." Thus honey on the table always reminded the Jew wherever he or she resided of their ancient homeland of Israel and of the Jewish attachment to its history and holy soil.

Actually, the honey referred to in the land flowing "with milk and honey" is not the common bee honey that we use today, but rather describes the honey of biblical times that was primarily produced from overripe dates. Even today, here in Israel, date honey is produced and sold, though the overwhelming majority of honey on the market comes from bees.

**Is it Kosher?**
The use of bee honey as a permissible kosher food raises an interesting halachic question. The general rule is that food products that are derived from non-kosher creatures are never considered to be kosher for Jewish use as a food. Bees are a non-kosher species of insect life, and therefore one would think that the honey that they produce within the sacs of their bodies would also not be kosher. Yet we find in the Bible that bee honey was eaten without compunction -- the story in the book of Judges of Samson and the bees producing honey on the lion's carcass being only one such example.

Why is honey different from, say, milk from a camel that remains non-kosher, since the camel itself which gave the milk is a non-kosher animal?

The rabbis of the Talmud studied the problem and decided that the sac in the bee that contains the honey is halachically considered to be only a storage place of the honey, and neither it or the honey produced are an integral part of the bee's body. By contrast, the milk-producing organs and the lactating process of the camel are an integral part of the camel's circulatory and digestive system, and thus the camel and its milk product both have the same status of being non-kosher.

The same logic applies to permitting the use of resinous glaze in kosher products today, even though the product originally comes from the body of the insect sac which is found on the trees of rain forests. There too, the sac that contains the glaze and the glaze itself are not considered to be an integral part of the body of the insect itself.

Its symbolism of sweetness in life, its connection to the Land of Israel, its role in halachic discussion, decision and precedent concerning its kashrut, all have combined to make honey a "Jewish" food. The use of honey as a food is certainly one of the more enjoyable customs of Jewish tradition. May its symbolism of sweetness truly be a harbinger of delight for the good year for us all.

http://www.aish.com/h/hh/rh/48959531.html
ORGANIZATION

Ways to Refresh Long-Time Volunteers

Those of us in the northern hemisphere are concluding the “lazy, hazy days” of summer -- a great time to think about ways to refresh everyone, including ourselves. One potent form of recognition is to ask someone to give advice or input. It is flattering to the person and a truly effective way to get knowledgeable feedback on a wide variety of things.

Invite volunteers who have been with you for over a year to take a break from their regularly-scheduled tasks and do a short special assignment. The change of pace will be welcome and affirms that each volunteer has much more to contribute than the single position she fills. Here is a starter set of ideas for activities that can be done in 30 minutes to two hours.

- Pair off volunteers from different units or doing different work. Have each spend an hour observing the other, learning what's going on in another part of the organization. Then hold a meeting to find out what surprised or impressed them about the other's work - and consider using those comments in your next recruitment campaign.
- Consider using the above idea by pairing volunteers from your organization with volunteers in another organization. Such an "exchange program" can be fun or at least interesting, and opens the door to possible new perspectives on everyone's work.
- Ask volunteers of varying longevity to look at the materials you use in orienting new volunteers, make sure all the facts are up to date, and recommend new things that might be added.
- Review your volunteer handbook, if you have one, in the same way.
- Ask all volunteers to record an audio clip sharing what the best thing is about volunteering in your organization (and give you permission to use it, with or without their name).
- Now, way before the end of the year, invite suggestions for fun ways to celebrate the December holidays and the New Year. Note that International Volunteer Day is December 5th - how would your volunteers like to commemorate that?
- On a selected day, ask volunteers to use their cell phones or digital cameras to snap photographs of themselves and other volunteers at work. Collect these and post an album to a photo-sharing Web site as a "Day in the Life of Volunteers in Our Federation." When it's ready, make some lemonade and invite everyone to see the slide show projected on a screen. (You can then use these shots in all sorts of recruitment and recognition presentations.)
- If you have a good spot near your building, hold a series of volunteer meetings outside (in the shade). Invite everyone to bring folding chairs and use the change of environment to spark new ideas on some strategy you are hoping to implement in the next few months.

There are many ideas like this. The point is to do something out of the ordinary, yet clearly useful -- And to have some fun!

Susan Ellis, Energize, Inc., http://www.energizeinc.com/
SUCCESSFUL JEWISH WOMAN

Yona Elian-Keshet: First Lady of the Theater

Yona Elian-Keshet is an actress in Israeli theater, film and television. She often serves as mistress of ceremonies on official occasions, including the Israel Prize ceremony. Born Yona Galitzki in 1950, she notes that she was part of the generation that tried at first to shake off its Diaspora heritage.

“I grew up in Jaffa, in a family of Polish Holocaust survivors. The Holocaust, more than any other thing, was what shaped my world as a child. The anxieties, the fears, the constant feeling that everything could end in an instant.

“In today’s terms, one could say that we were poor. Very poor. But everyone around us was like that, so we didn’t really feel it. There was the awareness that if you bought olives today, then you wouldn’t buy cheese. All the time you had the feeling of being worth less than the rich children from Tel Aviv. In “Nostalgia isn’t what it used to be” [an evening of songs and stories that she and her husband staged together in 2003 and continue to perform], I tell about the time that we walked, all the children from the neighborhood, to a party, and they kicked us out because they said that we weren’t suited to be with the children from Tel Aviv. That is an insult that I carry with me to this day. That is where the drive, the fighting spirit, the strength, the challenges come from. Everything comes from there.”

Yona studied in high school in Tel Aviv, served in the IDF, and learned theater and psychology at Tel Aviv University. A year after concluding her university studies, in 1971, she acted in the play “Biography” in the Cameri Theater. Her breakthrough was a year later, in the film "Nurit", directed by George Ovadia. During the production of this movie she also met Sasi Keshet, her future husband. They married in 1973, have two children, and live in Ramat Aviv.

Yona Elian-Keshet has acted in numerous plays in the Cameri, Habima, Haifa, and Beersheba Theaters as well as in private theaters, and in recent years she has been one of the regular actresses at the Beit Lessin Repertory Theater. Plays in which she has performed include “You Can't Take it With You”, "The Housemother", "A Flea in her Ear", "Midsummer Night's Dream", "Twelfth Night", "The Caucasian Chalk Circle", "The Odd Couple", "Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "Tartuffe".

In the 1970s and 1980s, Yona Elian-Keshet was also considered an Israeli movie star. She has appeared in fifteen films, including "Nurit", "The Other Side", "The Jerusalem File", "My Name is Shmil", "Diamonds", "QB7", "Lend Me Your Wife", and "Dream Square". For her performance in the latter she received honorable mention at the festival of Montpellier, France.
In the 1980s Yona Elian-Keshet participated, along with her husband, in the children’s show “3, 4, 5½”, and emceed three weekly shows for adults. Over the years she has taken part in several television series, appearing most recently (2011) in “Question Marks”.

In 2008 Yona Elian-Keshet and her husband joined Radio Haifa to present a regular culture program, "Invitation for Two". That same year, they put out a DVD together called "Yona, Sassi and Panda-and-a-Half", based on the works of poet Hayim Nahman Bialik.

HUSBAND and wife team Yona Elian and Sasi Keshet are an unusual couple in the entertainment industry, as they remain completely supportive of each other and are obviously still in love after more than 30 years of marriage. The two often work together, and when one is on stage, the other is frequently in the audience. When asked the secret of their durable marriage, Elian quipped: "I simply can't get divorced from Sasi. Every time I think that we're going to become part of the [divorce] statistic, we get another offer to work together, so there's no point in getting divorced. It's really problematic." Keshet, though very much a star in his own right, presents himself to the radio audience as "Yona Elian's husband."

When asked if being the First Lady of Beit Lessin Theater is a dangerous place for an actress, a “comfort zone”, she replied: “Not really. Every day I am put to the test anew. Each evening the audience gives me grades and I can never give in to myself, I must fight. What is true is that today I know that there is someone who is looking out for me in the theater, and that is a good feeling. An actress needs a guiding hand...Never before did someone look out for me. It is important to know that my loyalty is rewarded, and I do not think that this will bring about atrophy, because in any event I do not leave myself alone. Every time I say to myself anew that this is my last role. This is because sometimes I feel that I have no more strength left. I make great demands on myself, and to give 100% of yourself all the time can be exasperating and burdensome.”

As someone who has acted in not a few hits, how do you cope with 400 performances of the same play?

“Most of the time we are on the road. Out of 400 performances of “Alma and Ruth”, at least 300 were outside the home theater. It is exciting and touching to see the huge amount of love for the theater that exists in this country. Look, the circle of spectators has expanded and it is a great joy when there is a wonderful audience and the theater flourishes. I have always been an audience’s actress. I require the love of the audience, and my loyalty is to the audience first of all.”

You have called reality shows ‘the enemy of the arts’, but to paraphrase Shakespeare, they also theoretically hold a mirror up to reality. Why are they so threatening?

“Art is not just holding a mirror up to reality. Art takes you one step up from reality and enables the soul to spread its wings and fly. Once, on television, you could see Barbra Streisand, [Israeli singer] Yehudit Ravitz, Frank Sinatra and [Israeli singer] Arik Einstein. Today you see people who do
not know how to sing. Once, on television, you could see Laurence Olivier playing on the stage in London. Today you see people who stammer while playing themselves, who believe that they are actors. It is ridiculous. Once you could see performances by Nuryev, Barishnikov, ‘Bat Dor’ [Israeli dance company] and ‘Kol Demama’ [Israeli dance company which includes hearing impaired dancers]. Today, people who don’t know how to dance, dance on a program that is absurd.

“Art is supposed to take you to the edge of your ability; that doesn’t occur in reality shows. There is television that simply distracts you, and there is television that widens your horizons.”

A chance encounter illustrates her standing in Israeli culture: On the way out of the house, she stops alongside an elderly woman in a wheelchair, who wants to compliment her on her roles over the years. Elian-Keshet stops everything for a moment and trades compliments with the elderly woman.

“More power to me?”, she says to the woman who is older than her by about 30 years, “More power to you!” That is Yona Elian-Keshet. Always the diva, but always the same polite little girl from a poor family in Jaffa.

There is no doubt that in her age group, Elian-Keshet is the undisputed queen of theater actresses in Israel, certainly in everything connected to the love of the audience. And she is a true star of the theater, built almost exclusively by the stage.

“I don’t see my life without the theater. Almost all my life...revolved around work, and it was hard and exhausting and destabilizing. Even so, I would not give up one moment. It is a lifelong love. There is no substitute for it.

“The direct encounter with the audience, the ability to undergo an entire process every night with you, the actor, in control. Every evening I try to bring the truth to the stage and to truly experience everything, and I am also rewarded in real time. This is also a part of my personal therapy. On the stage, when everything connects and you are totally lost within the moment, and you feel that the entire audience is with you totally, breathing with you, becoming excited with you – that is an amazing moment.

“All the feminine passion that there is for getting dressed up in different clothing I indulge in onstage. When I do buy something, I try to buy quality clothing, mainly from abroad. The most expensive dress I have in the closet is by a famous designer. I bought it in Paris, for my son’s wedding. It cost about 2,000 Euros.”
“I had guilt feelings when I bought it, but with great effort I succeeded in overcoming them. It was something very moving for me. Me, the little girl from Jaffa, with poor parents, buying such a dress! Along with the guilt, there was a moment of pride.”

“I have been working since I was a child. It was always clear to me that one has to get up in the morning and go to work. As opposed to what is customary today among the young, I didn’t look for myself after the army. I started to work full time the day after high school, and two days after the army I was already at University. I think that this comes from the same childhood in Jaffa. Sasi, on the other hand, is from a kibbutz, and had a normal upbringing. His parents didn’t go through the [Holocaust]. I think that as a result of this he has something more healthy, quiet and calm. With regard to money, the division between us is like that of Herzl and Ben-Gurion. I am Herzl, good with ideas. He is good at implementation. Now we are producing our new performance together, and it is great fun.”

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The ketubah (plural ketubot) is the standard marriage contract that Jewish law requires a groom to provide for his bride on their wedding day. It is intended to protect the woman, primarily by establishing the man’s financial obligations to her in case of divorce or widowhood. In addition to the financial clauses, the text of the ketubah outlines other obligations undertaken by the groom, including traditional conjugal rights such as food, clothing and shelter. The exact date when the ketubah became a central part of the Jewish marriage ceremony remains unknown. It is a rabbinic institution, not a biblical one, and goes back to Talmudic times (70-500 C.E.). It has been in the home of every married couple no matter what their social status and no matter what the geographical location. The rabbinic authorities considered it so basic to Jewish marriage, that a couple was prohibited from living together without one. Traditionally it must be signed by two witnesses and then read aloud in Aramaic during the marriage ceremony. It is a public document to which the entire community is witness.

Since the ketubah is read during the marriage ceremony, and thus publicly displayed, a tradition of decorating it evolved in many Jewish communities in different parts of the world. Though the text is primarily the same in all Jewish communities, no one style characterizes the art of the ketubah. Different Jewish communities adopted styles and even shapes for their ketubot that were characteristic of their localities and often reflected the artistic traditions of the countries in which they lived.

The decorated ketubah is a traditional Jewish art form that dates back to the early Middle Ages in Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Ketubot (Hebrew plural form of the word) were made on parchment or paper with watercolor or tempera paints, ink, and metallic leaves and powders. The artwork includes calligraphy and decorative borders or symbolic illustrations.

The industrial revolution ushered in a decline of all handcrafts including manuscript illumination, which fell out of use. In recent years, however, the art of the ketubah is enjoying renewed popularity both within and outside the Jewish community. New updated texts including Reform Jewish, renewal of vows and universal wedding vows have transformed the ketubah in some circles into a romantic reminder to the married couple of the promises they've made and the love they
share. The *ketubah* is often framed and hung above the marriage bed. Its beauty and symbolism are meant to safeguard the sanctity of the marriage.

*Ketubah* decoration not only adds beauty and meaning to what otherwise would be a rather dry legal document, it has much to teach about the individuals and the communities for whom they were produced. Italian *ketubot* reflect the openness of Italian Jewry to the rich artistic heritage of its surrounding culture. The illumination of marriage contracts from Muslim lands reflects their cultural and religious norms. No human figures appear in the decorations. Instead the themes are drawn from the plant and animal worlds. This is in keeping with Muslim (and Jewish) sensibilities which frown on the artistic depiction of humans lest it lead to idolatry. The only Jewish communities from which we do not have hand decorated *ketubot* are those of Eastern and Central Europe. According to the scholars Shalom Sabar and Vivian Mann this is because among Jews in these geographical areas, known as *Ashkenaz*, *ketubot* were viewed as rather standard, legal documents, and were all identical.

Rabbinic law does not stipulate a specific language for the *ketubah*. It was meant to be understood by the parties involved and was written in Aramaic because during the period when the text was standardized, most people understood Aramaic. Today it is still in Aramaic though most Jews no longer speak or understand it. Indeed, many couples today have their *ketubah* written in Hebrew or a combination of languages.

![Modern ketubah (Norman Slepkov, 2006). Manuscript, ink, paint, pencil and chalk on hand-stained paper.](image)

Art of the Ketubah: Decorated Jewish Marriage Contracts, Yale University / Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/digitalguides/ketubah.html
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www.normansketubot.com
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ISRAEL TOUCH

Israeli Training Center Empowers Women from Developing Nations

The Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center is one of Israel's many avenues for improving the lives of disadvantaged peoples in Africa and Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Oceania and the Middle East.

Israel has had a big influence on early childhood education in Nepal, reveals Yvonne Lipman, the spokesperson for the Golda Meir Mount Carmel Training Center (MCTC), named after Israel's first and only female prime minister.

After embarking to the African continent over 50 years ago, Golda Meir recognized the great need there, and through the Israeli international development organization - MASHAV - decided that instead of giving fish to Africans and other disadvantaged populations, she would give them the expertise to fish for themselves. That is an example of sustainable thinking decades before the idea came into fashion in the rest of the Western world.

Since then, Israel has impacted the lives of millions of people in developing nations through its training programs in agriculture, education and medicine.

Out of the MASHAV model, and begun by Meir herself, was the women's training center in Haifa's Carmel Mountain area. This is the same region where a ravaging forest fire gripped the nation on December 2, 2010. But at a conference at the end of May 2011, more than 70 women leaders from 38 countries met to discuss the topic of 'Science, Technology and Innovation: Education and Training for Women and Girls.'

It's no secret to anyone, including the United Nations, that women can be a powerful force of change in developing societies. They are the support network that glues people, families and societies together. But they can also lead companies and countries. Tap into training women, and you can change the world from the ground up, as the center's motto indicates.
Taking their motto to the classroom and field
The women at the event were world leaders in their own right, also representing three major development organizations including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). They came to celebrate the 50th anniversary of a program to which women have been invited for training from more than 140 countries.

These women have participated in training seminars either in Israel or in their cooperating countries. The MCTC training encourages the women to build support networks among themselves, and in some cases the trainees continue the work of the center by implementing teaching programs in their home countries. The center provides custom-made workshops and programs based on need and request.

"We were founded by Golda Meir in 1961 after a visit she made to Africa and she realized the absolute necessity of helping women over in the African nations to become independent. Israel had reached its independence in 1948," says Lipman, "and so could act as a living laboratory for the newly emerging states."

"On a visit there Meir saw there was a desperate need to help get the women trained and to do something with their people. Together with Mina Ben Zvi, and Swedish Ambassador to Israel Inga Thorsson, they founded the Mount Carmel Training Center. The founding of the Center was marked by an international women's conference, and we are now holding the 27th women leaders conference. That's the chain," Lipman explains.

Between those 27 biennial meetings, she says, 17,000 people have passed through the training center. "We have four major themes, which are early childhood education, income generation, community development and gender equality."

Trained in Israel, leading internationally
Isn't feminism dead? "We were into gender equality before it came into the UN agenda in Mexico in 1975. Israel was there way before the rest of the world," Lipman says. "We are not talking about feminism. We are talking about women leaders."

At the conference, she says, woman after woman gets up to describe how women in their countries are still not getting higher degrees, but working as teachers and civil servants.

The Golda Meir Carmel Training Center for Women in northern Israel
One of these leaders is Stella Tamang from Nepal, a Buddhist in a Hindu nation, who first came to Israel on a training course in 1979 and has stayed in touch since with all the other women from Nepal with whom she trained. These women today are very influential in the early childhood education system in Nepal, says Lipman.

"What Israel - what the MCTC - gave them has strongly influenced early childhood education in Nepal," she notes.

MCTC was also on the scene giving psychosocial support to children in countries hit by AIDS from the earliest days of the epidemic. On the home front, it provides programs for developing the potential of women locally. "We give Palestinian and Israeli women intensive weekends for...building new realities," she concludes.


Helena Glaser speaks at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center
In September 2011, Helena Glaser, President of World WIZO, was invited by the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center to deliver a lecture on "Combating Domestic Violence the WIZO Way" within the framework of an 18 day international workshop entitled “Violence Against Women and Children”, organized by MASHAV.

Participants from Argentina, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guatemala, India, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Peru, Russia, Serbia, Thailand, Ukraine and Vietnam learned from Helena about the various aspects of WIZO's work, which is based on the concept that in order to break the cycle of violence, a comprehensive long term multi-faceted solution including legislation, education, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation is required.

This is not the first time Helena has appeared at the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center. On March 8, 2011, Helena was invited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to sit on a panel on the Empowerment of Women within the framework of a special International Women's Day seminar about equal access to education, training, science and technology for ambassadors, other members of the diplomatic corps and their spouses.
Clowning For a Higher Purpose

A new youth convention in Israel this summer attracted Muslims, Christians and Jews who aim to set a new global social agenda through circus arts.

Israeli Muslims, Jews, Ethiopians, Russians, Druze, Christians, youth-at-risk -- and acrobats and clowns from an assortment of foreign countries -- juggled, flipped, clowned and unicycled their way through the inaugural Youth Circus Convention in the Old City of Acco (Acre) from July 19-21, 2011.

This unusual "Circus Arts for Social Change" project is the dreamchild of Hanita-Caroline Hendelman, director of the Israel Circus School and the Association for the Development of Circus Arts in the Galilee town of Kfar Yehoshua.

By interacting through the medium of circus arts, she explains, "we worked together for three days in climbing the walls imposed by culture, social circumstances, religion and faith, which separate us from open, friendly relationships."

Hendelman tells ISRAEL21c that her partner, David Berry, suggested calling the event "Climbing Walls." This is an apt image for a circus convention, but it also acknowledges that walls between cultures and nations can more easily be climbed than broken.

With zero budget and only three months of preparation time, Hendelman managed to get pledges of participation and guidance from circus artists in Norway, France, England, Switzerland, Hungary, Germany and the United States.

The schedule included a wide range of circus workshops and master classes in areas such as acrobatics, acrobalance, juggling and manipulation, unicycle, equilibrium, clowning, movement, rhythm, dance, drumming and improvisation.

Hendelman planned a colorful schedule of performances by youth circus groups and artists and a public street circus in the old port of Acre.

Addressing conflicts through circus
The circus school, based in a renovated community center since 2002, offers year-round professional training and provides a medium for meeting and communicating through circus arts. One of the association's main projects is bringing together Jewish and Arab schoolchildren and
youth at risk. Hendelman works with Israeli partners including the Galilee Circus of the Galilee Foundation for Value Education; Circus Maghar in the Druze town of Maghar; and Efshar Acheret (Another Possibility).

"I think art has the biggest potential for healing that I know of," Hendelman says. "The Israel Circus School is a fully artistic and professional school for adults and children, but we involve all our students in our various multicultural projects."

When she got word that the school and association's British benefactors would be visiting in August, she began planning a modest convention at the site to demonstrate the association's accomplishments. But she soon decided something bigger was called for.

"As long as we are small, working quietly in place, we can only do so much," Hendelman explains. "As the world tumbles around us, what can we do? People answered our call and I realized a body of people care and wanted to take it a step further. To do that, you have to do something a bit more substantial."

She is hoping the convention will kick-start a local and international network "focused on building a new socio-political agenda through innovative and creative means of resolving conflict situations and...creating a society that cares; honors and respects all its members; educating young people towards circus arts activism; and sharing, enjoying and enriching each other with the wonders and richness of circus arts."

The event’s poster design was donated by an American graphic artist. An aerialist in Denver staged a fundraiser for the event.

"Gestures are coming internationally," says Hendelman. "Artists are saying, ‘Let's do something to improve our society.’ This is only a pebble, a first step to what I envisage as building a new social agenda in all aspects of life."

‘We can really move mountains’

Hendelman estimated that there were about 250 workshop participants and thousands of spectators under the circus tent. The event was televised to Israeli, European and American viewers. "This convention is a miracle, that in a short time with no budget, we are getting the gift of this beautiful space, the support of the Acco Council and hundreds of circus artists from Israel and overseas," she says.

Afterwards, all participants were invited to start planning the next steps. Because to Hendelman's way of thinking, all the tumbling and clowning has a much higher purpose.

"Art has an important mission as an agent for change, to spark inspiration and open people's hearts to one another. Art has no boundaries or walls; it joins all people. Even with no budget at all, if our minds are clear and our intention is right, we can really move mountains."

The next Youth Circus Convention is scheduled for July 15, 2012.

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