Dear Chavera,

We are now midway through WIZO’s 90th anniversary year, celebrating our achievements on behalf of Israeli society. The articles in this issue of the Lapid newsletter were chosen with this in mind.

At the World WIZO Meeting of Representatives, just concluded, we had the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts from people who owe a great deal to WIZO, as well as from WIZO volunteers – including two who are 90 years old! – to whom WIZO is indebted. Film clips from WIZO’s past, as well as articles in “News from the Past”, gave us a chance to review our history, see how much we have done, and how we have progressed.

Of course, we also plan for the future. The 2010 WIZO Aviv International Seminar, earmarked for young WIZO women with leadership potential, was held in November. It was a big success, due both to the energetic, committed delegates and the program, which included, for the first time, a video workshop to improve their ability to speak in front of an audience. Each year anew I am touched and amazed by the caliber of our Aviv Seminar graduates and their passion for WIZO.

Now we look forward to the World WIZO Enlarged General Meeting, to be held a year from now (January 15 – 19, 2012), at which we hope to see at least a thousand WIZO members in attendance. May the year ahead be one of continued celebration, continued commitment, and continued success for all of us in WIZO.

With best wishes,

Sylvie Pelossof
Chairperson
Department of Organization & Education
World WIZO Executive
Aviv Message

Dear Friends,

Today, as opposed to years ago, we live in a fast moving world where technology provides us with instant communication that allows us to work more productively and effectively.

As we all know, WIZO was born ninety years ago and we should never forget that this organization was founded when Israel didn’t exist as a State. One of our most important missions is to communicate and instill Zionism, the love for Israel, and the need to support it, among many other things.

My generation was born with an already established and respected Israel. We never lived with the threat, as our ancestors did, of not having a state for all Jews.

As young women, living in the Diaspora, G-d has given us the opportunity to live our Zionism and to get to help Israel through WIZO. The impact that WIZO has had on my life, and on the lives of numerous people that we have been able to help out and support, is invaluable.

To be able to grow as an organization and ensure the mission of WIZO, it is important for us as Aviv members to express our needs in the organization. Succession planning needs to be an important element of our strategy. We must foster increased involvement of the younger generation with the current leaders of today. Incorporating young leaders should be part of our culture to insure the legacy of our organization.

Let’s exhort our members from all the different Federations to participate in our Seminars and meetings in Israel; let’s extend our hand to organize and receive visitors in our centers in Israel; let’s proudly disclose what we do and what our mission is; let’s celebrate our success...

We are WIZO!

Vicky Fidanque
Aviv Representative to the World WIZO Executive
SUCCESSFUL JEWISH WOMAN

Hanna Levin -- “I have always come back to WIZO.”

The late Hanna Levin had many loves: love for the Land of Israel, love for the Jews, love for the IDF, love for Israel’s tradition and culture, love of music, love for the residents of the city of Rishon LeZion – and love for WIZO. She saw in voluntarism one of the most exalted values in the building of a Jewish society. In this interview, first published in the WIZO Review in 1967, we meet Hanna Levin at her best.

“In 1923,” Hanna reminisces, “I arrived in Palestine fresh from the Conservatoire of Music in Odessa. I made my new home in Hadera where I lived until I married the son of one of the founding families of Rishon le Zion.”

Hanna Levin was caught in a whirlpool of activity from the moment she moved to Rishon le Zion in 1928. She begins her working day when she leaves home at 7:30 every morning, often returning late in the evening. This has been the pattern of her life for over three decades, says Hanna, with a smile lighting up her broad, open face, “ever since I was elected as chairman of the WIZO group in Rishon le Zion thirty-eight years ago. Whatever I have done since then – and I have done very many things – I have always come back to WIZO. The training I received from WIZO has guided me throughout my public life. I have always acted on the conviction that social and public work should be completely above party politics; one’s only aim must be to do what is best for the State, for the Jewish people and for the individual.”

Watching Hanna Levin at work in her office at WIZO headquarters – she is Chairman of Israel’s WIZO Federation since 1962 – unperturbed by incessant phone calls, inquiries, and with a desk piled with matters demanding her attention, one wonders how she maintains her famous composure.

Hanna’s warm, womanly appearance belies the fact that a military career dominated her public work for a number of years. When war broke out in 1939 she helped to set up the country’s first welfare services for both Jewish and non-Jewish soldiers in the British army. A firm believer in the tenet that equal rights for women also means equal obligations, she was among the first women from the Land of Israel to join the A.T.S. (Auxiliary Territorial Service) in 1942. For four years she served in the British Army, rising to the rank of lieutenant.

At the end of the war the Yishuv was faced with the countless problems posed by the returning soldiers. Hanna Levin was appointed one of the directors of the Resettlement Head Office of the Jewish National Council (Vaad Leumi). “The problems of rehabilitation,” recalls Hanna, “ranged from finding homes for the demobilized soldiers, many of whom had been Youth Aliyah wards before entering the Army, to providing extensive vocational re-training projects for the numerous hard-core cases.” Her special concern was the resettlement of the 4,000 women who had served in the A.T.S. and the W.A.A.F. (Women’s Auxiliary Air Force), a task for which her WIZO training had rendered her eminently suited. So much so, that she became affectionately known as “the mother of the A.T.S.”

Hanna Levin had hardly rounded up the work of the Resettlement Office when Israel’s War of Independence called for more service and dedication, especially from well-tried army hands. She was the first woman to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces. She was attached to G.H.Q., and served as Chief Recruiting Officer of “Chen” (the Women’s Force). She is still an active member of the Veterans Organization of both World War II and of the War of Independence. Mrs. Levin, however, regards her army
service as an interlude dictated by the emergencies of the period; the constant and chosen threads in her life have remained her interest in civic affairs and in WIZO’s program of work which she believes to be one of the country’s best examples of cooperation in communal activity.

As a member of the local council of Rishon le Zion for some twenty years – she was the city’s mayor from 1956 – 59, the first woman in Israel to be elected a mayor – Hanna Levin maintains that municipal affairs offer ideal scope for the abilities and interests of women. “Municipal problems,” she says, “are at rock bottom the daily problems that affect women’s lives – it is, after all, they who are deeply concerned that their children should have adequate parks and playgrounds; it is in their interest that their town should be clean and well-lit.” She wonders why younger women in Israel do not seem to be attracted by communal and civic work; she maintains that, unlike the women of her generation, the women of today are turning more and more to paid professional careers and thus have little time for voluntary public service.

In 1964 she was elected Chairman of the Israel Organization for Social Welfare, affiliated to the International Social Welfare Organization. Her public service has brought her into a man’s world – most of the committees on which she serves (except, of course, in WIZO) consist of “five men and one woman.” Hanna Levin takes her place easily and competently in this world, but on Fridays “I am my own balebooste (homemaker) – baking, cooking and preparing for the whole week and for the many friends who know that Shabbat means ‘open house’”.


Hanna Levin joined the Hebrew Women’s Organization, later to become WIZO, immediately upon her arrival in Rishon le Zion in 1928 (For decades she served as the Chairperson of WIZO Rishon le Zion at the insistence of the members of the group). Shortly afterwards, she was elected a member of the Executive of WIZO Israel, where she held many different positions, including National Treasurer and Vice-Chairman. In 1946 she was elected as a member of the World WIZO Executive, and for many years was Chairman of the World WIZO Building Department. In 1962 she was elected Chairman of WIZO Israel, a position she held for nine years. When she stepped down, she took on the post of Head of the Absorption Department, traveling the length and breadth of the country. Upon the death of her husband, she sold her home and her orchard in order to establish a day care center for 120 new immigrant children, and a WIZO Club for new immigrant women.

Hanna Levin was one of the great women who actually turned her beliefs into reality. All her life she made do with little; and she gave all her energy, her enthusiasm and her money to others. Hanna became a legend in her lifetime, and when she lit the torch at the traditional Independence Day Eve ceremony in 1984, the announcer declared: “There is no one more worthy than she, and there will be no one like her.” She passed away in 1985, at the age of 88.

Sources:
Shula Braudo, letter to Ma’ariv newspaper, December 3, 2004
Hanna Levin, World WIZO Publicity Department, September 1967.
ZIONISM

WIZO Absorbs New Immigrants

The accounts of WIZO’s activities in absorbing new immigrants before and after the establishment of the State of Israel are numerous. We have chosen three “samples” for this 90th anniversary issue of the Lapid newsletter.

Helping new immigrants in Kadima

After the Second World War, in 1946, the first wave of new immigrants, Holocaust survivors, arrived in Kadima. At that time, there was already a WIZO branch in Kadima, and Batya Reznik was its Chairperson. The families that arrived needed support, and it was clear that the women of WIZO would come to their aid, both financially and emotionally. (For some of them, Kadima was only a way station. Others remained in the village for the rest of their lives).

One young woman, a “graduate” of the concentration camps who had not had the opportunity to learn from her own mother how to run a household or care for children, gave birth to a baby girl but became depressed after her delivery and refused to care for her. All the WIZO women in Kadima came to visit her, to encourage her, and to teach her what her mother would have taught her, had she lived. Slowly she learned how to cope, and eventually succeeded in raising a family of three children.

Following the War of Independence, from 1948-49, a second wave of aliyah arrived in Kadima and the surrounding area, this time from Morocco, Tunis, Persia, Iraq, Romania, and Poland. A very large transit camp – around 900 souls in tents – was established in the village. The new immigrants required assistance, training – and clothing. The head office in WIZO Tel Aviv sent sacks of clothing, donations from the United States. Batya and her fellow WIZO chaverot were given a small room in a warehouse in the village where they opened the sacks, sorted the clothes and sold them, for a symbolic fee -- ½ lira or 1 lira -- to the new immigrants, so that they would not feel like charity cases.

In the winter of 1950, the impossible occurred: snow fell in the center of the country! The tents of the new immigrants in Kadima, located in a relatively sheltered area, withstood the storm; but in nearby Pardesiya, the tents blew away. A number of children from the transit camp in Pardesiya were sent to WIZO Kadima. The WIZO chaverot took the children into their own homes for the winter, so that they would be warm and comfortable. The Reznik family hosted a boy from Tunis, who remained in contact with them, continuing to visit them every summer until he was drafted into the army. [As told by Batya Reznik’s daughter, Mira Reznik Nagor]

WIZO Savyon adopts Beit Nehemia

The following testimony describes the massive assistance that the members of WIZO Savyon tendered to moshav Beit Nehemia in the 1950s, when the fedayeen (bands of Arab terrorists) began to infiltrate into Israel and implement acts of terror:

“On the Jordanian border there was a totally new settlement, which today is called Beit Nehemia. All the people there were immigrants from Persia who didn’t know Hebrew and were not up to date on what was happening in the country. After the fedayeen killed one of the people there, everyone wanted to leave. The stronger ones fled to Jaffa, but those who had no other options stayed at the settlement and were miserable. Ben-Gurion turned to WIZO and asked if our branch could adopt Beit Nehemia, in order to help them put down roots in Israel. The WIZO Head Office appealed to the Savyon branch, because we were closer to Beit Nehemia, and we agreed.
“Our chaverot traveled to Beit Nehemia to see what the place was like. Everything was very muddy, there was no kindergarten and everything was abandoned. There was one woman living there who spoke Persian and was able to serve as a translator. I appealed to the Ministry of Education and asked that they open a kindergarten there, but I was told that if there were not 11 children of kindergarten age, they would not be able to open a kindergarten. Most of the children there were very small, so we decided to buy a shack and open a kindergarten ourselves. Then a problem arose: where would we find a preschool teacher? A bus came into the settlement only once a day, and there were no cars, so we volunteered to transport the preschool teacher there and back. Besides this, the children were wet and shivered from the cold. We decided to buy boots with warm linings and slippers for each of them so that they wouldn’t arrive wet at the preschool. We started working with the women as well. We saw that they didn’t have clothing, so we collected clothing in Savyon and sold it to them for a symbolic fee, so that they would feel that they were buying and not getting something for free.

“There was a very talented young woman there, whom we sent to a course for training youth counselors, because every counselor we brought, didn’t stay in the place. She, as someone who lived there, had good relations with the local youth, and she knew the language. And she did organize the youth. Next to the kindergarten there was an empty space on which we wanted to build a playground, but that, of course, cost a lot of money. During the same period children of Bar Mitzvah age arrived from South Africa for a visit to Israel. They helped us plant trees in the park and they persuaded their parents to help us to get the money to finance the playground. Afterwards, we established a women’s club and taught the women to cook using the products that were available in Israel, because they were used to dishes for which they needed spices that were unavailable in Israel at the time. In the women’s club we taught them to make cakes, we had parties, we taught them Hebrew, and melded them into a united group.”

WIZO organizes professional training and employment for new immigrants

“The Department for Home Industry was a lifesaver, mainly for the aliyah from Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the countries of North Africa. The people who arrived were not professionals in the realms required then in Israel, but they were outstanding in crafts like making lampshades. The Yemenite immigrants were exceptional as silversmiths and in embroidery, so we decided to open three WIZO stores: in Tel Aviv, in Jerusalem and in Haifa, where their products would be sold. The Yemenite silversmiths were unacquainted with modern work in silver; therefore we organized training for them and made it our business to have them combine their tradition with modern motifs. These stores were lovely. I remember, for example, that in Ma’alot there was nothing to make a living from at all. The women didn’t know how to sew, so we brought sewing machines, distributed them among the houses and taught them to sew. We made contact with hospitals and with the army and they bought the sheets and towels that the women made from us. I remember that it was hard to carry all the merchandise to the homes because it was heavy, so we transported it in trucks to our club and from there the women came to take the materials on wagons pulled by donkeys. When the economic situation improved a bit and we felt that the women were bored doing the same thing all the time, we decided to supply them with work of another sort and they started sewing pretty aprons that sold very well.” (Shula Braudo, 2004).

ORGANIZATION

THE FINE ART OF MENTORING

As you read this, bear in mind that mentoring is a tool that can be used not only by one person, but by one group -- or one Federation -- to assist another.

A mentor can be an invaluable asset to the personal and professional development of a new volunteer, making her a more effective and committed member of the organization. Mentoring is both demanding and rewarding.

A mentor serves as teacher, coach, and experienced friend. She takes her mentee “under her wing” and assumes responsibility for her development. This does not only involve imparting information and technical knowledge; in many cases, it also includes inculcating the values of the organization and emotional support. It is a unique relationship: in a manner of speaking, a mentor is an “organizational godmother” for her protégée.

Such a relationship is not easy to nurture, and not every experienced volunteer is equipped to play the role. This being said, an organization that encourages mentoring can go a long way toward bolstering its human resources. Organizational structure is strengthened by the mentoring process and the healthy, positive climate it creates.

What, precisely, does a mentor do? She accompanies the newer volunteer during the initial period of her acquaintance with the inner workings of the organization, and is actively involved in the establishment of her new organizational roles. A mentor helps her protégée chart long term goals, and encourages her to develop her natural talents and skills.

To be effective, a mentor should have a vast repertoire of experience in her field of expertise. For instance, those who mentor potential leaders need to have adequate experience as leaders themselves, and hopefully have received formal leadership training.

What, then, do mentors offer to their protégées that formal training sessions cannot provide? For one thing, mentors can use their personal experiences as a teaching tool, as well as setting a personal example. Moreover, mentors are capable of helping their charges to resolve problematic issues, using their abundant knowledge and experience in the field. Nor does a training program always prepare newer volunteers to face unexpected challenges. Since they usually work one-on-one or with very small groups, mentors can match their guidance to the personalities of their protégées and the complexity of the tasks they undertake.

A mentor need not be an immediate superior or even, for that matter, a member of the same committee. With a mentor from another area, politics need not creep into the relationship, which should, in any event, be less autocratic and more compassionate. While the individuals involved may hold differing personal points of view, this should not affect the relationship.

A mentor grooms her protégée to take on a higher level of responsibility and overcome obstacles. She must prepare her to tackle organizational roadblocks, power games, bad will, resistance and similar challenges.
When their joint goals have been met, it is the duty of the mentor to formally end the relationship, and to ensure that its termination does not affect her protégée’s achievements. Some mentoring relationships end according to an agreement within the organization; others may end prematurely if they do not work out well. If it is successful, the mentor-protégée relationship can become true friendship, extending well beyond the formal mentoring process.


**More thoughts on Mentoring:**

“Mentoring is an honorable and necessary profession that connects the wisdom of the past with the new and creative ideas of the future. The legacy of a mentor is not to clone a replica of his or her own thoughts and conclusions, but rather to provide an environment that fosters growth and original thinking on the part of those being mentored. The freedom to explore must be encouraged, as well as an ongoing search for new and better ways to assist others in their own personal journeys toward becoming future mentors to those who will follow. Mentoring must not be concerned with the imposition of caution, but rather with the opening of doors to freedom.

“Cloning is not mentoring. You can't be a true mentor unless you are willing to release the one being mentored to fly on his or her own. You may hope that your ideas will be continued, but the successful mentor will be more pleased with creative innovation than passive continuation.

“At the heart of mentoring is trust. Trust that the mentor is more interested in the one being mentored than in his or her own ego. If that sense of trust is not present, the mentored one will never feel free to fly like an eagle catching the updrafts and soaring to new and unexplored heights. Instead, she will be tethered to the mentor's version of what she should know and do and think. While the mentor can and will provide a model, there should be a clear message given that there will be many ways to reach a chosen goal. Share your views and how you came to have them, but leave the stage clear for new ideas and practices to emerge.

“Most importantly, see mentoring as a responsibility and a privilege. As you are mentoring, think of the future not the past. You as a successful mentor have an important duty to perform for [the] future. Accept the views of a new generation, help them find the threads connecting them to the strengths of the past, and let our rich legacy move on...continuously renewed, expanded and refreshed, and as exciting as ever.”

EXHIBITION

“Fire in My Heart” – The Story of Hannah Senesh
Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, October 13, 2010 – August 7, 2011

Among Israel’s most important heroes is Hannah Senesh, who died by firing squad in 1944 at age 23. This first-ever major exhibition tells how this Budapest-born poet, diarist, and author of the hymn *Eli, Eli* discovered her love for the Land of Israel, how she volunteered for a mission to rescue downed Allied fliers and Jews from Nazi-occupied Hungary, and how she became an enduring symbol of courage and determination.

The first major museum exhibition about Hannah’s life, a life that has inspired books, plays, and films, occupies 3,500 square feet. The story told in the exhibition begins in the cosmopolitan Budapest of the 1920s and 1930s, exploring Hannah’s home life, education, and religious beliefs as part of a bourgeois Jewish family; it shows how her priorities changed after 1937 upon encountering anti-Semitism, and how she became a Zionist. The exhibition follows Hannah to the WIZO Agricultural School of Young Women in Nahalal and uses her own words to portray her physical and spiritual life there and at Kibbutz Sdot Yam. Hannah’s mission, imprisonment, trial and execution are narrated through the words of her acquaintances, family, and friends who were witness to these tragic events. The exhibition concludes with a section describing Hannah’s legacy.

Hannah’s nephews, Eitan and David Senesh, helped make the exhibit possible by entrusting the Museum with many artifacts and documents never before seen in public. Eitan says, “As an Israeli who was born, educated and raised in the sovereign state of Israel, I believe that Hannah's life story, the values she embodied, and her way of life should be brought to the attention of young people throughout the world. I believe that by presenting the materials she created and left for us through an exhibition at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, we can achieve this goal.”

The exhibition also includes multi-media displays and films produced for the Museum by Roberta Grossman, director of *Blessed is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh*. An award-winning filmmaker with a passion for history and social justice, Ms. Grossman has written and produced more than forty hours of documentary television. Her work has been shown on A&E, PBS, and AMC.

Museum of Jewish Heritage Deputy Director Ivy Barsky says, “We feel privileged to have this opportunity to tell Hannah’s story. Her life and idealism will resonate with younger audiences who will be inspired by her courage and her will to change the world. Hannah’s eloquent poetry and prose will move visitors of all ages. Finally, Hannah’s story serves as an example of Jewish response to the Holocaust—bold initiative and action against all odds.”

Source:
Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust
http://www.mjhnyc.org/hannah/about.html
INTERNET INFO

TAKING A LOOK AROUND WIZO

Sixteen Federations, along with World WIZO, have websites. There are also WIZO chapters and groups with independent websites of their own, or screens that can be accessed via links from their national websites. Most Federations have sites in their native languages, with a few also providing some information in English.

WIZO Federation websites are as varied as the Federations themselves. Some are “state of the art”, with slide shows, slick graphics and easy-to-access information. They include links to WIZO publications, photo galleries, calendars of coming events and ways to donate or become WIZO members. One website even boasts an interactive map. Others are more modest, but still manage to include a great deal of information and attractive, high-quality photos. Some Federations supply only a single page of information; others are embedded within their country’s Jewish community websites. Many include links to the World WIZO website, as well as other sites of interest to their members.

We invite you to surf your way around WIZO!

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1920 was a banner year in many respects. In 1920, modern radio and television transmission were invented -- as were cars with combustion engines, traffic lights, the band-aid and the hair dryer. And in 1920, in London, WIZO was founded.

What was happening in Eretz Israel at that time? What, especially, were women involved with in the state yet to be born when WIZO was born?

The Third Aliyah had begun the year before, with the end of World War I. Of the new immigrants, 36% were female. In 1920, Ottoman rule ended as the British took control of Eretz Israel. In March, Arab nationalists attacked new Jewish settlements in the north. Yosef Trumpeldor died in the attack on Tel Hai. Both men and women were killed in this battle.

But the casualties among women were not only on the battlefield. Pessia Abramson, member of a collective, trained at the first all-woman agricultural training farm at Kinneret, worked in the settlement of Merhavia, and led the struggle to take women out of the kitchen and into responsible organizational work. She joined the first permanent cooperative settlement in Palestine, Tel Adas, with her husband. “But among these pioneers, starting a family was a betrayal of ideals. After bearing two babies, she was slighted by her female comrades. Weakened by childbirth and illness, unable to play her full part in the work of the cooperative, and with her husband constantly absent on missions, she shot herself.”

Thankfully, there were other women who did not succumb to despair. Yokheved Bat Rachel, who came from a wealthy family, immigrated in 1920 from Russia, bringing with her ideas of gender equality. Lilia Basevitz, whose family was also well-to-do, worked as a librarian in the Red Army and was imprisoned for Zionist activities before she came on aliyah the same year and joined Kibbutz Ein Harod. Rosa Welt-Straus (1858-1938), chairperson of the newly formed “Association of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Israel”, was one of many women who came from the U.S. in the 1920s and laid the foundation for women’s equality.

In her studies of gender in pre-State Israel, Dr. Bat-Sheva Margalit Stern found that, as noted above, the role of women was not exactly as liberated as Zionist legend has it. Nevertheless, largely unsung heroines such as Ada Fishman Maimon contributed greatly to improving the status of women and to the significant role that women would take in the fields of labor and social affairs. According to Dr. Stern, Ada Fishman Maimon, who was a leader of the women's labor movement in Eretz Israel and a pioneer of women's rights, was one of those who achieved the most for women in pre-State Israel. From 1913 to 1920, she was a member of the Central Committee of the Hapoel Hatzair worker's movement and in 1920, she was a delegate to the Prague Conference where the federation between Hapoel Hatzair and Youth of Zion was established. She participated in the founding convention of the Histadrut (General Federation of Labour in Israel), also in 1920, and served on its executive committee, where one of her prime achievements was to raise the issue of women (the female labor force comprised 20% of Jewish workers). Of the 87 delegates to the Histadrut when it was founded, 4 were women, but they were not delegates of women’s groups. "Women were not represented as women in the Histadrut Federation of Workers, so Fishman and her colleagues threatened that if they were not given representation, they would create a separate organization.
This was a real threat to unity. The Histadrut gave in and the Moetzet Hapoalot (Council of Women Workers) became the elected apparatus of women workers in the Histadrut."

Another outstanding woman who arrived in Eretz Israel in 1920, at the age of 60, was Henrietta Szold. She came to take charge of the Medical Unit, soon to be renamed the Hadassah Medical Organization (HMO). As a woman and an American, she was doubly an outsider in the Yishuv, which was dominated by Eastern Europeans. She remained for three stormy but productive and innovative years, although her insistence on American standards and work habits was stoutly resisted, and labor circles resented what they perceived to be medical imperialism. Gradually, however, coworkers and the public were won over.

From 1918-1926, controversy over women’s suffrage was one of the main political concerns of the Yishuv. In 1920, women obtained the vote in elections to the Yishuv “Parliament,” Asefat ha-Nivharim (Elected Assembly, the governing body of the Yishuv), despite rightwing opposition. Women’s parties participated successfully in all four elections to the Asefat ha-Nivharim between 1920 and 1944. According to activist Sarah Azaryahu, two women’s parties—the Association of Women (which for technical reasons was listed under this name but in fact was the Union of Hebrew Women for Equal Rights in Eretz Israel) and the Progressive Party participated in the 1920 elections to the first assembly, and seven of their members were elected, two from the Progressive Party and five from the Association of Women. An additional seven were elected from the two labor parties. The fourteen women elected to the assembly of three hundred and fourteen members constituted 4.5 percent of the total members.

Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, wife of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, second President of the State of Israel, was a founder of Achdut Ha’avodah Labor Party (The General Labor Organization) and Moetzet Hapoalot (The Council of Women Workers). She also established a plant nursery in Jerusalem to train pioneer women for work on agricultural settlements and for the reforestation of the hills of Judah and Jerusalem, where trees had been cut down by the Turks to fuel the army trains during World War I.

In 1920 Rachel Yanait took part in the Achdut Ha’avoda convention in Kinneret, where the decision was made to set up the Haganah, the defense force of the Jewish community. She was one of the first activists of the Haganah in Jerusalem in the 1920-1921 Arab uprisings and continued as a member of the staff in the city. She was also a member of the plenary forum of the Va’ad Leumi (National Council), where she was the first to propose setting up a Hebrew port in Tel Aviv.

We can take pride in the women of pre-state Israel, who, while WIZO was being formed, helped to shape the nation it was to serve.