

*January 2012*

**Dear Chavera,**



In honor of the 25<sup>th</sup> World WIZO Enlarged General Meeting (EGM), taking place in Tel Aviv from January 15 - 19, it was decided to devote this edition of the LAPID to the theme of the EGM, "Creating a New Tomorrow".

As those of you participating join us here in order to show your support for WIZO, your solidarity with Israel, and your commitment to the Jewish people, we in the World WIZO Department of Organization and Education wish to provide you with information and tools to assist you in your work.

Among other topics, the articles in this issue deal with mentoring; coping with change; inventing the Jewish future; and the spiritual and practical aspects of Tu Bishvat, the New Year of the Trees, which falls on February 8<sup>th</sup> this year.

I wish all those chaverot who come to take part in the EGM a warm welcome, fruitful deliberations, and an inspiring stay in Israel. I also wish you, and those chaverot who, unfortunately, were unable to join us, success in using the material we have provided here.

This is the last issue of the "Lapid" newsletter to be produced during my term of office as Chairperson of the Department of Organization and Education. The past eight years have been both demanding and rewarding, as our department worked toward its goals of increasing membership, cultivating leadership, and promoting WIZO's younger generation. Though I plan to continue to be active in WIZO in the future in other ways, I will always remember these years as being stimulating and inspiring.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sylvie Pelossof".

Sylvie Pelossof  
Chairperson  
Department of Organization & Education  
World WIZO Executive

# HOLIDAYS

## Tu BiShvat - A Time for Hidden Beginnings

As the holiday of Tu BiShvat -- the New Year of the Trees -- is approaching, we would have expected to see the trees in their full green glory crowned with ripe radiant fruit. Wouldn't it at least be fitting to celebrate the New Year of the trees around Passover when the buds are just opening to express the beginning of their new life?

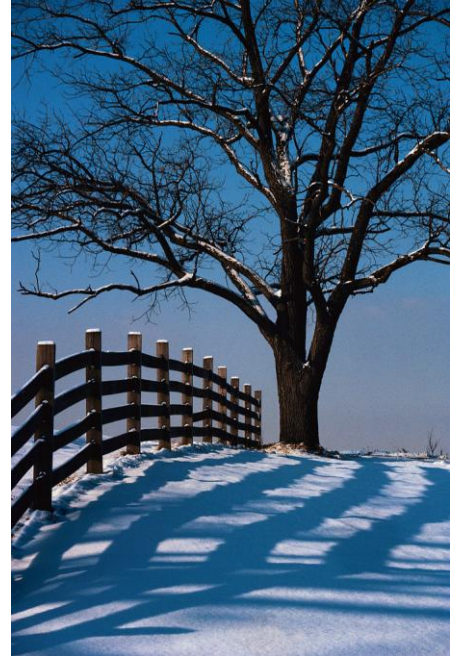
Yet, the New Year of the trees is celebrated at the time when all the fruits and leaves have fallen and the tree stands bare and naked. When the cold and dark envelopes Nature with its muddy cover. The secret of Tu BiShvat gently whispers; *"when everything looks dead, dark and murky -- life, light and glory are hiding just below the surface."* The time when nothing seems to be happening on the outside is the beginning of the richest inner life.

The fact that the peak of winter is selected to mark the New Year of the Trees reflects the Jewish outlook to begin the day with its preceding night. During the night and dark times of our lives it is only faith in a better tomorrow that gives us the strength to keep carrying on. It is this faith that has nurtured the Jewish people throughout our troublesome history of anti-Semitism, suppression and pogroms.

Gardening and planting also help strengthen our faith in a better future. The first order of the Mishna is called "seeds" because it deals with the many Torah laws connected to planting. When the Talmud (Shabbat 31a) designates a name depicting the character of each of the six orders of the Mishna, the order of "seeds" receives the name faith (*Emunah*).

The medieval Torah scholar and poet Yehuda Halevi in his book "The Kuzari" notes that the seed actually decomposes completely before it is transformed into a tender plant. He compares this with the fate of the Jewish people who became completely decomposed and scattered before the ingathering of the exiles and the rebuilding of the Temple. On a personal level, we can learn from the nature of seeds that when things seem most dark and devastating it is only the dark before the dawn. The more hopeless the situation, the closer is its gratifying solution.

In my own life I continuously draw on the faith I receive from the decomposing seeds that get transformed into small saplings in my garden. Many people can testify that it is the crises in their lives which they can thank for their great personal renewal and growth. If not for the difficulties we experience and the decomposing depression of feeling potentially unfulfilled, we would have never taken the initiative to make important changes in the direction of our lives. To this day when times are rough I remind myself how great new beginnings surely are just around the corner.



The secret of Tu BiShvat teaches us to view crises in Israel, USA and the rest of the world in a new light. Instead of losing faith and giving in to the feelings of depression and despair, we need to realize that although we can no longer hold on to the walls that are crumbling down, the fallen structures give way to building new and infinitely higher strongholds. They teach us that we cannot rely on the ephemeral values of financial success; rather we must rebuild our world founded on everlasting spiritual values, placing G-d in the center of our aspirations for true morality. May the decomposing seeds of the present darkness take root in new and richer soil, and may we enjoy the fruits of the renewed perfected world.

By Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

The author, a native of Denmark, is Founder and Director of B'erot Bat Ayin College. For more than two decades, she has taught Bible studies with special emphasis on women's issues in Israel and the United States.

The Jewish Magazine, February 2009, [www.jewishmag.co.il](http://www.jewishmag.co.il).

# ORGANIZATION

## SEVEN GOOD REASONS FOR MENTORING



There are numerous reasons why establishing a leadership mentoring program in your organization may be one of the smartest things you can do, but here are seven good ones:

1. Attract and retain the best people. Some studies have shown that the presence (or absence) of a *mentoring program* means more than money to the decision to accept a job offer or remain with an organization.

2. Modeling teaches more. Many of the core skills, attitudes, behaviors and ethics of leadership are best learned by modeling rather than in a formal classroom. Mentoring allows your best people to

model good leadership and offer practical guidance to your future leaders.

3. Mentoring encourages excellence. Mentoring is exceptional for its capacity to encourage excellence both in mentees and in those who mentor. While it might be expected that mentees might acquire insight and wisdom through working with a good mentor in a mentoring program, experience demonstrates that mentors also gain from the interaction. Mentors frequently explain that their role prompted them to review and reassess their assumptions and clarify their thoughts as they explain things to their mentee.

4. A well set-up leadership mentoring program enables you to recognize and reward your best people. By establishing an appropriate selection process for both mentors and mentees and providing the right framework to support this process, you can ensure that participation in your mentoring program is sought by your best people, rather than perceived as a chore or a burden. Don't take chances with this part of your program set-up as it is one of the critical requirements for its success.

5. Build confidence and self-esteem through personal growth. Mentoring fosters not only professional growth but also personal growth, and can develop confidence in handling new situations, improve understanding of different approaches to a situation and enhance self-esteem for both mentors and mentees.

6. Improve cross-functional or interdepartmental communication and networks. Mentoring relationships are not usually set up between individuals with line management responsibilities. By establishing mentoring relationships between people from different areas of your organization,

greater understanding and improved cross-functional communication readily follow. Some organizations have found this benefit to be one of the most unanticipated yet valuable company-wide impacts of their whole mentoring program.

7. Foster a culture of contribution. Fundamentally the process of mentoring another always represents a generous gift by a busy person. It is a gift that can typically only ever truly be repaid in kind, over time, when the mentee in turn mentors someone else. As such, mentoring amplifies in its impact by embedding values such as respect, generosity and contribution within the culture of the organization. This is arguably the ultimate and most powerful impact any intervention might have.

By Kerrie Mullins-Gunst

<http://www.kmgconsulting.com.au>, <http://leadershipskillcenter.com>.

# “Our Iceberg is Melting” – Implementing Change

Deal with change well, and you can benefit immensely. Deal with it poorly, and you may cause difficulties for yourself and others.

“All too often, people and organizations don’t see the need for change. They don’t correctly identify what to do, or successfully make it happen, or make it stick. Businesses don’t. School systems don’t. Nations don’t,” maintain John Kotter and Holger Rathgeber, the authors of *Our Iceberg is Melting*.

John Kotter has studied the challenge of change for decades, and has distilled specific steps that bring about successful change.

## *The Eight Step Process of Successful Change*

### *Initial Preparations*

#### **1. Generate a Feeling of Urgency.**

Generating a feeling of urgency is the first and most vital step in successfully implementing change. Words are not sufficient; actions must be taken that will impress people with the need for change and get people saying, "We must do something!"

#### **2. Assemble a Core Group.**

In the past, change was slower and took place on a smaller scale. Today, one person cannot effectively handle large scale, fast-paced change alone. Therefore, any effective change initiative requires a core group composed of authoritative, efficient leaders. It is vital to get the best people in place -- those who are deeply committed to the change in question, who are respected throughout the organization, and who have the clout and influence to push for change.

### *Determine What Must Be Done*

#### **3. Build the Vision for Change and the Plans to Implement it.**

Awareness is high and the core group is ready to lead...but in which direction? While creating a shared need and urgency for change may push people to act, it is the vision that will point them in the right direction. It is necessary to provide a relevant vision, and make it work for effective change. This means moving beyond theories and numbers to address people’s creativity and emotions.





### *Implement Change*

#### **4. Communicate for Comprehension and Commitment**

Communication is all-important. Once the vision and the plan for its implementation have been developed, they must be communicated to everyone within the organization in order to achieve comprehension and commitment. Sending clear, believable and sincere messages about the nature of the change makes for true, emotion-based commitment, which sets the stage for getting people to act. Communication efforts should be continuous during the push for change.

#### **5. Enable Action by Others.**

Eliminate as many barriers as possible to enable those who want to make the vision a reality to do so. This empowers a broad base of people and gives them the opportunity to take action. The removal of obstacles is intended to inspire, increase optimism and build confidence around the implementation of change.

#### **6. Generate Early Victories.**

Create some clear, unmistakable successes as soon as possible. These promote faith in the change effort, reward the hard workers emotionally, silence the critics, and foster momentum. Organizations often take on large-scale projects with an eye to a big final result. Sometimes a gap develops between successes reported and perception of progress, which undermines credibility. By generating small, early victories, progress is achieved and people are inspired.

#### **7. Keep the Pressure Up.**

Don't stop! The process is not complete until the desired change has been deeply embedded in the organization. Wave after wave of change must be instituted until the vision is a reality. In successful efforts, people build on this added momentum to make the vision a reality by keeping urgency up, and a feeling of false pride down; by eliminating unnecessary work; and by not declaring success prematurely.

### *Make It Permanent*

#### **8. Institute a New Culture.**

Now, it seems as if the end of the change process is at hand. However, backsliding often occurs when the new behavior does not become tradition, the typical way 'things get done around here.' By instituting a new, supportive, and sufficiently strong organizational culture, the change should be maintained. A supportive culture provides roots for new modes of operation.

### ***The Power of a Fable***

These eight steps for implementing change are described in detail in John Kotter's classic award-winning book, *Leading Change*, and given concrete applications in *The Heart of Change*, which he wrote with Dan S. Cohen. But the most convincing case for his approach is presented in *Our Iceberg is Melting*, a story he co-authored with Holger Rathgeber in which a colony of Emperor penguins cope with change:

"Our method is showing, much more than telling, and showing with the method that has helped more people learn over the centuries than any other single technique: the fable.

“Fables can be powerful because they take serious, confusing and threatening subjects and make them clear and approachable. Fables can be memorable, unlike so much of the information that bombards us today and is forgotten tomorrow. They can stimulate thought, teach important lessons, and motivate anyone – young or old – to use those lessons. In our modern, high-tech world, we can easily forget this simple yet profound truth.



Spencer Johnson, M/D., author of *Who Moved My Cheese?*, writes in his introduction: “If you know much about the setting in which he and his co-author Holger Rathgeber have placed their story – Antarctica – you’ll see that life for their penguins is not exactly as you would find it in a National Geographic documentary. Fables are like that. If you think a fun story with illustrations must be for young children, you’ll soon see this book is about real-life problems that frustrate nearly everyone in organizations.”

*Recommended reading:*

John P. Kotter and Holger Rathgeber, *Our Iceberg is Melting*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2005.

John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996.

John P. Kotter and Dan S. Cohen, *The Heart of Change*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

*Recommended websites:*

[www.ouricebergismelting.com](http://www.ouricebergismelting.com)

[www.theheartofchange.com](http://www.theheartofchange.com)

[www.johnkotter.com](http://www.johnkotter.com)

John Kotter is the leadership and change guru at Harvard Business School. He is the author of eleven books that have been honored or have become business bestsellers.

Holger Rathgeber is a modern global manager. He works for Becton Dickinson, one of the world’s leading medical technology companies.



# SUCCESSFUL JEWISH WOMAN

## Ruth Gavison: Reviving Liberal Zionism



How fitting that Ruth Gavison, a legal expert in the areas of human and civil rights and constitutional law, awarded the Israel Prize in 2011, was cited for grappling “exhaustively and courageously with forming Israel’s identity as a Jewish and democratic state.” She received the prestigious prize, considered Israel’s highest civilian honor, at a national ceremony in Jerusalem in May, on *Yom Ya’Atzmaut*, Israel’s Independence Day.

Born in Jerusalem in 1945, Gavison is an academic superstar. She trained at Hebrew University and Oxford, has taught for short stints at Yale, University of Southern California and Princeton, and has been a beloved Hebrew University law professor for decades and one of Israel’s most respected authors, lecturers and media commentators.

Hailed for her integrity and judgment, she was one of five leading Israelis appointed to the Vinograd Commission that investigated the 2006 Lebanon War.

A co-founder of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel over 35 years ago, in 2005 she undertook what may be her most ambitious project. In founding Metzilah, the Center for Zionist, Jewish, Liberal and Humanist Thought ([www.metzilah.org.il](http://www.metzilah.org.il)), Gavison is trying to revive liberal Zionism; she is forging a Zionist center that explains why we need a Jewish state even in our cosmopolitan age, and how a Jewish democracy can thrive in harmony with universal values, featuring a respected Arab minority, a humane immigration policy and enough public Jewishness in the state to keep its uniqueness without becoming stifling, coercive or excluding.

“It is puzzling that even in Israel itself Jews hesitate to describe themselves as Zionists,” Professor Gavison told me recently in Jerusalem. “Israel was founded as the culmination of Zionism. Yet today many doubt Israel’s legitimacy, especially as the place where Jews exercise their right to self-determination. Zionism is the only form of nationalism singled out as racism. Israel cannot survive if its own citizens doubt its legitimacy.

“Many Israelis are the victims of the amazing success of Zionism,” she said. “They take for granted the existence of the one place in the world in which Jews enjoy political independence and where Hebrew culture is the primary public culture. But we cannot afford to do that.”

She noted that in asserting that Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, there are at least four “distinct — and controversial — statements” in that simple sentence.

“Jews are a people, not just a religion; being dispersed among different countries and cultures is bad for both Jews and Judaism; Jews have the same legitimate national rights as other people; and the location where those rights are to be expressed is Zion.

“The essence of the Zionist argument is that to express a national identity to its fullest territory is basic — you need a majority culture not just a minority culture where you are in constant

conversation with the host culture,” she continued. “Jews are remarkably adaptive and for a long time could survive as a minority culture, especially with the religion as a locus. But in today’s world, it is much harder because much identity is secular, cosmopolitan, nation-based. While most Jews no longer need a safe haven physically — in terms of identity, Israel offers a unique opportunity, especially for a non-religious identity.”

Zionism and Israel’s welfare are naturally critical questions for Jews living in Israel. However, Gavison emphasizes that these issues are also relevant for Jews who live elsewhere, especially if they are not religiously observant yet wish to maintain their Jewish identity and transmit it to their children. Jewish national culture, she explains, can provide guideposts, values, meaning as we pass through defining events in our lives.

“You need an answer to what your Judaism means and why it is important,” she said. “American identity is broad but thin — you can’t just be American, most people seek other affiliations as well. *Tikkun olam* (repairing the world) is not enough. Affirming the Jewish component of your identity permits you to become part of an ancient tradition that has miraculously survived and revived its independence. Feeling a part of a community with a past, a present and a future is an important aspect of such meaning.”

Understanding the power of place, and the need for a Jewish majority to express itself, somewhere, Gavison has defended the idea of a Jewish state as normative, sanctioned by history, compatible with democracy, typical of many nation-states.

“Peoples are entitled to states of their own on the territories on which they sit,” she explains. “Israel is the place where the Jewish people can realize their right to national self-determination. “Israel is not a neutral state, but a national one. This is fully compatible, and should be pursued, with meticulous attention to minority rights.”

Gavison doesn’t stop with rhetoric. *Metzilah* publishes thoughtful position papers, rooted in history, sharpened by philosophy, sanctioned by international legal precedent. A recent one explains that with the Law of Return, Israel, like most democracies, “conditions” immigration to achieve specific national goals. An earlier essay demonstrated how Israeli Arabs can have full individual rights and enjoy significant collective rights while functioning within a majority Jewish culture.

For understanding that Israel can be both Jewish and democratic — and working to make that happen; for teaching how Israel’s Jewish majority and Arab minority can each find fulfillment; for tackling tough questions without hiding behind easy answers; for being an exceptional teacher to the masses while making it all seem so normal; for showing how Zionism can use the rights Jews have like all other nations to create something special; and for navigating messy questions with wit, honesty, clarity and lots of heart, I designate Ruth Gavison one of my favorite Zionists.

Adapted from an article by Gil Troy The author, a professor of history at McGill University in Montreal, is the author of numerous books, including “Why I Am a Zionist: Israel, Jewish Identity and the Challenges of Today.” The NY Jewish Week, March 22, 2011. <http://giltroyzionism.wordpress.com>

# JEWISH WORLD

## WIZO Heroines in France

In terms of numbers, the proportion of Jewish women active in Jewish underground organizations in occupied France during World War II is impressive. Of some six hundred members, two hundred and forty—approximately forty percent—were women.

No women's organization in the strict sense of the word existed at the time, except for a branch of WIZO in Paris, headed by Juliette Stern, who was both politically and socially aware.

Like the unexpected events that caused tens of thousands of Jews to flee from the north to the south, creating a situation for which no one had planned, the resumption of Jewish public activity similarly occurred without prior planning and was completely improvised. This process was made possible by the appearance of people, including quite a few women, who had not previously been among the leaders' group but now displayed a welcome initiative and spirit of volunteerism.

### Juliette Stern (1893–1963)



Juliette Stern was one of the comparatively small numbers of Zionist activists among French Jews in Paris. At the beginning of the 1930s Stern visited Palestine and upon returning home established a women's club, Kadimah, which studied the history of the Zionist movement. In 1935 the club merged with another small organization, Jewish Women in France for Palestine, to establish a branch of WIZO, of which Stern was appointed director-general.

In January 1942, when the Office for Jewish Affairs (Commissariat Général aux Questions Juives, CGQJ) under the Pétain government decreed the closure of all Jewish community institutions (except for religious communities) and their replacement by the umbrella organization UGIF (Union Générale des Israelites de France), Stern was appointed a member of that organization's leadership. She took upon herself the management of Branch Number 5 of the UGIF.

Some of the children who were arrested and imprisoned in the Drancy camp together with their parents were handed over to the UGIF by the Germans. Branch Number 5 lodged them in one of the dormitories it administered. The children were defined as "stuck," meaning that they could not be transferred to another location, since their final destination was back to Drancy and deportation. Branch Number 5 also dealt with "free" children, who were homeless for various reasons. The UGIF dormitories could house up to four hundred children, but Branch Number 5 had a larger number of charges. Instead of enlarging the dormitories' absorption capacity, Stern decided, contrary to German orders, to transfer the children to non-Jewish families and institutions. Members of WIZO and social workers, several of whom were not Jewish, found hiding

places for the children, ensuring their welfare and paying a monthly fee for their lodging. These activities were carried out in secret and at great risk. By using accounting ruses Stern diverted UGIF funds to meet expenses, in direct violation of official orders. Joseph Antignac (1895–?), the secretary-general of the CGQJ, suspected her and in spring 1943 contacted the commander of the Gestapo's Jewish department, Heinz Röthke (1912–1966), asking him to begin an investigation. Instead of doing so, the Gestapo arrested the employees of UGIF's Branch 5, including their manager, Joséphine Getting. All were deported and murdered.

At the time of the arrest, Stern was attending a funeral. After this tragic event, she collaborated with the members of the Jewish underground, arranging details of the "kidnapping" of the "stuck" children from the dormitories. However, at the end of July 1944 there were still children, including "free" ones, in the dormitories when the Gestapo arrested and deported two hundred and fifty of them.

WIZO was responsible for more than a thousand children, all of whom were saved, as were those who were "kidnapped" by the Jewish underground.

### **Léa Raich 1901 – 1987**

Léa Raich was born on June 10, 1901 in Paris, to Maurice Frimond and Sophia Rappoport. At her birth her parents, of Russian origin, were among the Jewish families who were deeply rooted in France.

In 1930, she joined, together with her sister, the *Union des Femmes Juives pour la Palestine* (Union of Jewish Women for Palestine – UFJPP). Yvonne Netter was one of the initiators of this organization, founded in 1918 in Paris. Active in Strasbourg and Marseille as well, the Union of Jewish Women for Palestine supported the creation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. It is with this purpose that the Union raised funds to purchase and plant trees and to maintain of a school and a day care center in Palestine. Léa Raich became the General Secretary of the Union in 1933.

In 1935, the Union became WIZO France due to the impact of Rebecca Sieff, founder and President of World WIZO. Before that, the Union had merged with Kadima, created by Juliette Stern; and with a group of Jewish women in Strasbourg called *Ghalei*. This new organization, WIZO, was, from then on, the most important Jewish women's association in France.

Louba Fildermann was the first President of WIZO France. Juliette Stern was her General Secretary and Léa Raich was Assistant General Secretary. During the four years before the war, Léa worked to promote and develop WIZO in France. She contributed to the creation of new branches all over France; she organized courses in Hebrew and Jewish thought, as well as rallies against the Nazis and against the Mandatory Government which ruled Palestine. The war froze this development: WIZO was dissolved in France, and a few of its members started to work underground.

Léa Raich left Paris to be in the provinces. In August 1941 she came back to Paris with her family, together with Juliette Stern. She worked at the General Union of the Jews of France, created by the

Germans after the dissolution of all other Jewish organizations. Juliette organized an underground service meant to take care of children within the framework of her work in WIZO. From July 1942 to August 1944, Léa devoted herself to taking care of children whose parents had been deported to concentration camps. She placed these children via her contacts with the Resistance Network, mainly with Marie-Madeleine Fourcade of the “Alliance” group, which often helped to save the lives of Jewish children. By assisting these children Léa acquired the skills of a social worker “in the field”; later this became her profession. At the end of the war, Léa and the former leadership of WIZO worked to seek out the children whom they had hidden and put them in the care of Jewish families and Jewish children’s homes.

Once this mission was accomplished, WIZO set about reorganizing itself. In 1947 Juliette Stern became president of WIZO France, and Léa took the post of General Secretary. She completed her studies and became a professional social worker at the age of 50.

Léa, with her outstanding organizational gifts and great devotion, contributed to WIZO’s international efforts for helping toward the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. She did not spare any effort, any advice, and traveled a great deal to promote this cause. In 1954 WIZO France had approximately 10,000 members in 100 branches, of which 12 were in Morocco, 28 in Algeria and 6 in Tunisia. After the independence of these countries was declared, the women who had been WIZO members in North Africa and had relocated to France contacted Léa in order to continue their WIZO work there.

Léa also served as Vice President of the World Jewish Congress. She used the services offered by this organization, as well as those of the House of Europe and the World Movement of Mothers, of which she was a member, to facilitate the integration of the repatriated North Africans in France; and to facilitate the aliyah of women who chose to live in Israel.

At the end of the 1960s, Léa reduced her activity after having supported Israel during the Six Day War in 1967. In 1970, for personal reasons, she resigned as Secretary General of WIZO, after 23 years in this position. She became Vice President, while Yvette Fayman and Evelyn Blumm, who she had trained, succeeded her as General Secretaries. In 1964, Léa was nominated an Honorary Life Member of the World WIZO Executive. She died in Paris on April 23, 1987 at the age of 86.

### **Mila Racine (1919–1945)**

Mila Racine was born in Moscow on September 14, 1919 and immigrated to Paris together with her family. She was a member of Young WIZO in Paris. On the eve of the occupation of the city by the German army, the family fled to southern France. Simon Lévitte, the director of the EIF (Eclaireurs Israelites de France) scouting movement, brought Racine to work in the documentation center he established in the town of Moissac (in the Tarn-et-Garonne district), near the youth movement’s dormitory. When the south of France was occupied in November 1942 and Lévitte moved the documentation center to the city of Grenoble (Isère), in the Italian-



occupied area, Racine also moved to Grenoble. From that time the documentation center was operated both by the EIF and by the Zionist movement MJS (Mouvement de la Jeunesse Sioniste). After the Germans overran the Italian-occupied area in September 1943, the MJS assembled a group of activists who volunteered to smuggle children and young people across the Swiss border. Racine was a major activist in the group, but on October 21, 1943, she was arrested by the German border police together with the children she was guiding. All of them were taken to the Gestapo compound in the city of Annemasse, adjacent to the border. She succeeded in concealing her Jewish identity and was deported to Ravensbrück. The children were rescued by members of the underground.

On March 30, 1945, Mila Racine was killed in an aerial bombardment.

Anne-Marie Gentilly, "Léa Raich 1901 -1987", *Revue de la WIZO*, No. 223, 1987, pp. 25-28.

*The Saga of a Movement*, WIZO 1920 – 1970, published by the Department of Organisation & Education of WIZO, Tel Aviv, 1970, "France", pp. 47 – 65.

Dictionnaire des femmes juives en France: [www.afmeg.info/squelettes/dicofemmesjuives](http://www.afmeg.info/squelettes/dicofemmesjuives).



# Inventing the Jewish Future

*"The future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed."* William Gibson

*"The best way to predict the future is to invent it."* -- Alan Kay



Jewish learning and life today, and almost surely tomorrow, take place against the backdrop of a community and a society far more diverse and driven by personal choice than we ever imagined possible. Digital technology gives each of us access to a wealth of information and entertainment literally in the palms of our hands. Organizations and institutions can no longer command or expect our loyalty and support unless they can deliver something of tangible value for our lives. We have the capacity to self-organize, and we do so in myriads of ways that make most of us true cosmopolitans – members of multiple communities with global perspectives.

All of these changes and many more make it evident that we cannot continue to offer our youth and adults the Jewish education of the past and expect it to work. Don't get me wrong. Jewish education has not "been a failure," as it's sometimes depicted. The Jewish education system that we built in the 20th century has had notable successes, and many of the institutions that represent its backbone – day schools, summer camps, even synagogues – are vital assets that will surely play a continuing important role in the future. But, it is also true that Jewish education as we know it today falls short of what we need in several crucial respects. The symptoms of Jewish education's ills are well-known: the large numbers of young people who are never engaged or who drop out as soon as they pass Bar or Bat Mitzvah; the perception among many that what they have learned is irrelevant and even erroneous; the "drop off" syndrome that sends a clear message about the (un)importance of Jewish education, regardless of what parents say.

More important than these symptoms, however, are the underlying causes, because these provide the key to changing the current reality. At the top of the list is the difficulty that Jewish education has had adjusting to our world in which learners and families expect to be active choosers and even co-creators of their learning experiences. Jewish education is still "provider-driven." The voices of learners and parents are too little heard, perhaps because of an assumption that they really don't want serious learning. But, this gives our learners and families too little credit and turns too much Jewish education into a kind of "force feeding."

Also problematic is the tacit, but widespread, identification of Jewish education's goal as one of forestalling assimilation, of making Jews "more Jewish." Stronger Jewish identity will certainly be an outcome of good Jewish education, but it will be embraced as learners discover that Jewish tradition and Jewish community can help them live richer, fuller, more purposeful lives. Too often

today our curricula focus on a narrow range of skills and rituals without connecting these to the larger issues that animate genuine concern and conversation and the larger world in which we comfortably live.

Finally, Jewish education today remains...turf-ridden. Even where outright competition is avoided, there is still little communication and coordination across institutions and domains. Innovations and learnings from one arena – say, day school or camp – are not readily picked up in others. Students and families, instead of being actively assisted in weaving multiple experiences in diverse settings into a continuous fabric of Jewish learning, are left to make their own way through what must often seem like a maze of institutions and programs as they seek the most appropriate experiences out of which to construct a meaningful and satisfying Jewish journey.

The good news is that this picture is changing. Slowly but surely, we are pulling Jewish education into the 21st century. The future is already here; we are inventing it. Increasingly, we see programs and settings that are breaking new ground, experimenting with new modes of learning, reaching new populations, and connecting Jewish learning to a broad range of Jewish and human experiences. What is needed now is to pursue these pathways self-consciously and systematically, to ensure that today's "cutting edge" becomes tomorrow's norm.

Some things, happily, don't change. People still seek meaning in their lives; they still want to be connected to others and to purposes beyond themselves; they still want to feel in control of their lives, able to affect what matters to them. Our task today is create Jewish education that allows learners to draw on the riches of the Jewish tradition to pursue the unchanging in a rapidly changing world. It's an exciting challenge, one that many are taking up with vigor and creativity. I invite you to join us in inventing the Jewish future.

*By Dr. Jonathan Woocher (excerpts)*

*The author is Chief Ideas Officer of JESNA (Jewish Education Service of North America), and director of its Lippman Kanfer Institute: An Action Oriented Think Tank for Innovation in Jewish Learning and Engagement.*

Posted by Jacob Berkman, October 29, 2010, <http://blogs.jta.org>

## INTERNET INFO

### Bikkurim – an incubator for new Jewish ideas

[www.bikkurim.org](http://www.bikkurim.org)



רֵאשִׁית בְּכוֹרֵי אֲדָמָתְךָ תָּבִיא בֵּית ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ

*The first of the firstfruits of your land  
you shall bring into the house of the Lord.*

(Exodus 23:19; 34:26)

Bikkurim: an Incubator for New Jewish Ideas energizes and enriches the North American Jewish community by finding innovative Jewish ideas and nurturing them to organizational sustainability. Matching entrepreneurial drive with organizational know-how, Bikkurim transforms the dreams of visionaries into a tide of initiatives that contribute meaningfully to Jewish life and expand the nature of Jewish community.

Bikkurim facilitates ongoing conversations between the committed promoters of new ideas and the established institutions of the organized Jewish community.

Since its founding in 2000, Bikkurim has provided over a half million dollars in in-kind support to a total of 28 new Jewish organizations. Currently, 5 groups are in the incubator. Bikkurim participants receive free office space and professional support while in residency in the incubator, a period which may last for up to 5 years.

#### Goals:

- Help new ideas grow, flourish and become sustainable over time by nurturing innovative projects through the initial stages of organizational development.
- Facilitate cross-fertilization, collaboration, and community-building among Jewish social entrepreneurs.
- Promote interface between new Jewish ideas and the established Jewish community.
- Foster and cultivate entrepreneurial energy in the Jewish community by advancing specific initiatives and promoting the field as a whole.

# ISRAEL TOUCH

## Tu BiShvat at Mikhmash Training Camp

A special event was held on Tu BiShvat at the Border Police Training Camp at Mikhmash by the KKL-JNF Education Division. Soldiers, bereaved families, Diaspora Jewish youth and Israeli students participated in planting an ecological grove in memory of Border Police casualties. The trees will be irrigated with treated waste water from the base processed by a treatment plant established on the base with help of KKL-JNF.

The new grove brings with it a significant contribution in various realms: It brings new life in place of desolation, rolls back the desert, takes advantage of the trees' ecological contribution to reducing global warming, prevents environmental pollution from raw sewage spills, helps obviate the need for expensive fresh water resources, creates a recreation and rest area for the soldiers and their families and establishes a memorial site where families can remember their loved ones.

Among those participating in the ceremony were Yael Shealtiel, KKL-JNF's CEO and Major General Israel Yitzhak, commander of the Border Police.

"This joint KKL-JNF and Border Police project manifests above all the tie between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel, which is the essence of Tu BiShvat", said Shealtiel. "Tu BiShvat is the holiday of the Land of Israel. It focuses on our homeland's soil and the preservation of nature. IDF soldiers represent true Zionism by safeguarding the State."

The desert hills surrounding the base, which is located northeast of Jerusalem, were a befitting backdrop to the event. The usually arid desert was covered with some patches of green in honor of Tu BiShvat.



Yael Shealtiel and Major General Israel Yitzhak plant a tree.  
Photo: Tania Susskind

Major General Israel Yitzhak told those present that Tu BiShvat is a holiday of renewal and growth, with the new grove growing and developing in the spirit of the holiday. "There is nothing that manifests permanence more than a tree", said the commander of the Border Police to his soldiers. "We all aspire for the day when we can lay down our arms, cease fighting and sit under our vines and fig trees".

The event marked the gathering of various groups, all constituting a portion of the rich mosaic that forms the People of Israel. The Border Police planted saplings together with young Jews from the US and UK having arrived in Israel for a few months as part of "Young Judea" in the US and FZY in the UK. They were joined by students from the Branco Weiss High School in Beit Shemesh who

were excited about the opportunity to visit a military base and plant trees with soldiers. The Planter's Prayer was read by a bereaved father, Hanania Peretz, and Natasha Rosenfeld, a young American. The joint activity strengthened the bond between all these groups.



Natasha Rosenfeld reads the Planter's Prayer  
Photo: Tania Susskind

The unique relationship between KKL-JNF and the Border Police has been in place for the past 4 years within the framework of Project "Homeland Landscape", a KKL-JNF educational project aimed at enabling youth from Zionist movements from across the world to enjoy the KKL-JNF program. Every movement was given its own forest, and its members come to the site throughout the year to cultivate it. Currently, about 20 organizations participate in the program which also includes mobile educational vans that conduct activities in the realms of Zionism and ecology. The Tu BiShvat event is one of the culminating events of this joint activity.

Yirmiyahu David, the project director, explained that when youth work at the site and plant trees with their own hands, a real connection with the land is established. According to him, the Border Police absorbs many new immigrants and hence the natural affinity to this unit. This link has become so mutually meaningful that the Border Police basic training program includes a mandatory day with KKL-JNF.

Alon Shefi, representative of the bereaved families, spoke of the green color of the Border Police uniforms and berets. "When the Border Police green meets the KKL-JNF green, only good can come out of it. We came here today to create new life in memory of those who fell."

Ruth Shamor, who lost her brother after the Six Day War, noted that planting a memorial grove at a Border Police base proves that the bereaved families have not been abandoned and their fallen sons have not been forgotten.

The memorial plaque was unveiled by bereaved father Talal Madakh, the father of Tali'a, a Druze soldier who fell in action. After the plaque was unveiled, all the participants proceeded to plant trees. Trees were planted both by soldiers who defend Israel's borders, Israeli high school students, and young people from abroad who may make aliyah, who may live here and even possibly serve in the IDF some time in the future.

Maxine Ullmann came to Israel from England with members of FZY. "To plant a tree in Israel is a different experience than planting one in England. Obviously, here, trees are needed much more. We have a strong bond with Israel but it has grown even stronger today."



Aaron Tankel from the US came over with a Young Judea delegation and mentioned his special relationship with KKL-JNF. "In the US, there are Blue Boxes in which we place our contributions. I understand the importance of a financial contribution but truthfully, coming over to plant a tree with my own hands is a far deeper experience. When I return to the US, I'll always know that something of me is left behind in Israel.

The Israeli youth also viewed the visit to an army base and the joint activity with soldiers as an unforgettable experience. Maria Kol-Zion from Beit Shemesh, age 17, said that she plants a tree every Tu BiShvat. However, this time, there was something special to this holiday. "Generally, soldiers are occupied by war but today, they actually gave life," said the young woman.

As for the soldiers, undoubtedly they were delighted to have a break from the training routine and meet young contemporaries from different places. Moshe Gu'ata, a soldier from Lod, expressed his delight that the base's surroundings will be greener thanks to the grove. "When the trees grow, it will be a pleasant place where one can relax", he said.



Ma'or Gilbo'a, a soldier from Givat Ze'ev, said, "As soldiers, we safeguard the country so that citizens can sleep peacefully in their beds. However, if one wishes to safeguard the country for many years to come, one needs to plant trees."

At the end of the planting, participants watched an impressive presentation by Border Police soldiers who displayed their skills in storming, firing, shooting at targets and camouflaging themselves. The young visitors were also involved as they practiced shooting paintballs at targets.

Afterwards, on base, the young people from abroad met new immigrant soldiers who came from France, Sweden, Australia and Russia. They told of their decision to make aliyah, to serve in the IDF and contribute to the country. They also spoke of their pride in doing the above and of the difficulties involved in overcoming absorption challenges. At the end, the participants were asked how many intend to make aliyah. Dozens of them raised their hands.

The exciting day concluded with a joint Tu BiShvat Seder where participants discussed the significance of the holiday, sang Israeli songs and ate dried fruits as part of the tradition of the holiday.

Ahuva Bar-Lev, KKL-JNF – Information and Publications, [www.kkl.org.il](http://www.kkl.org.il) . January 24, 2011.

Credit : KKL-JNF, Information & Publication Department. Photos by Tania Susskind.