



THE CHAIM HERZOG CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES & DIPLOMACY

מרכז חיים הרצוג לחקר המזרח התיכון והדיפלומטיה • מרכז חיים הרצוג לدراسات الشرق الأوسط والدبلوماسية

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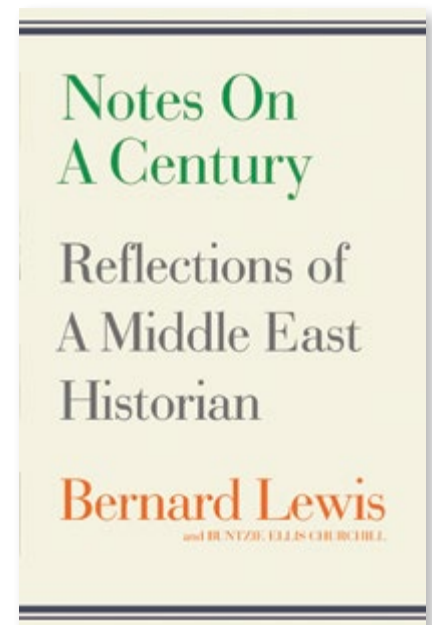
Bernard Lewis – Middle East Past in Today's Politics

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Chair, The Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies & Diplomacy

On the eve of his 102nd birthday, Prof. Bernard Lewis, one of the most famous historians of the Middle East, passed away. His academic writing, political outlook and public influence have undergone shifts and turnabouts during his long career. His important contribution to the academic and public discourse on the modern Middle East notwithstanding, much of his writings and work as a public intellectual has remained controversial, and rightly so.

At the beginning of his academic career, in the mid-twentieth century, his research reflected



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his skills as a historian mastering Middle Eastern languages and his ability to describe clearly complex processes that plague the societies studied. His books *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961) and *The Arabs in History* (1950) became required reading in academic circles and

were translated into Arabic and Turkish.

On the other hand, many of the books Lewis published in the last three decades of his life were general books meant to present historical and cultural processes spanning centuries. His view that the Islamic religion

* An earlier version was published in the Social-History Workshop, *Ha'aretz*, May 27, 2018.

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and Arab culture are essentially incapable of changing runs like a thread through these works, where decisive weight is given to witty philological analysis of religious texts. The processes of social and economic change affecting societies in the Middle East found hardly any expression in these writings. Two main arguments stand out in these publications, some of which have gained a wide readership. For one, there is a fundamental, immutable contradiction between the Western and the Islamic civilizations. Second, the main reason for the relative backwardness of Muslims and Arabs in comparison to Western societies is cultural and religious, and their attempts to adopt a modern way of life and democracy are doomed to fail.

Lewis's influence as a public intellectual has increased since the early 1990s. His followers have praised his publications and appearances at conferences and in the media. His impressive rhetorical ability and enormous charisma were appealing for those who also found evidence for his standing as a great historian in his ties to political leaders and generals.

Indeed, Lewis had many admirers in the political and security establishments, especially in the United States and Israel. His analysis of the Middle East was in line with the political outlook of the neoconservative camp in the United States, the leaders of which perceived it as an academic source of inspiration and an approval of their policies. In the wake of the terror attacks on September 11, Lewis's supporters have presented his views on a "clash of civilizations" as an accurate analysis of reality. His book *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (2003)

has become a bestseller and his article "The Roots of Muslim Rage", published in *The Atlantic* (September 1990) has enjoyed similar popularity.

Lewis did not hide his ties with the top brass of George W. Bush's administration, and especially with Vice President Dick Cheney. His advice to the administration contributed to the US decision to launch the Iraq war (2003). Testimony to his contacts with the Israeli security establishment was provided by Lieutenant General (res.) Moshe (Bogie) Ya'alon, who described how as head of Military Intelligence he consulted with Lewis, noting that the famous historian's analyzes made "a tremendous contribution to the security of Israel and the Western world". Ya'alon did not specify the manner and contents of this unique contribution.

On the other hand, Lewis's critics have pointed out that he is an enlisted intellectual whose publications are based on unfounded assumptions about the unchangeable nature of Islam and Arab culture and on his disregard for the role of the superpowers in shaping the governmental, economic and social order in the modern Middle East, and for their involvement in the establishment of authoritarian regimes that safeguard the interests of foreign governments and local elites. Lewis was rightly criticized for his disregard for internal struggles within Arab societies, the processes of change occurring there, and the authentic way in which universal values, such as freedom, equality, and social justice, have crystallized in broad sections of Arab societies. Lewis's critics have also exposed the resonance of his views on "the Arabs" and "Islam" in the rhetoric and policy

regarding the Middle East in the United States and Israel.

In his book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said presented Lewis as an example of a historian whose writing is based on essentialist assumptions and stereotypical descriptions of Arab and Islamic societies. The roots of the dispute over writing about the Orient in our time were fully exposed in the controversy between Said and Lewis. Yet, the dispute continues unabatedly, even after these two prominent public intellectuals have passed away.

Recent research and even publicist writing on the modern Middle East undermine the foundations of many assumptions on which the conservative Orientalist studies, including Lewis's publications, are based. There are innumerable examples showing that Arab societies are not a single cohesive unit and that there is a broad consensus in these societies with regard to national culture and the yearning for democratic rule, development and modernization. It has also become clear that like in other religions, there are heated debates about the interpretation of sacred texts in Muslim societies in general and in Arab countries in particular. The struggles and public discourse in these societies regarding the activities of movements such as the Muslim Brothers or militant Islamic groups (such as al-Qaida or the Islamic State) first of all attest to the hollowness of descriptions commonly used by conservative Orientalists referring to "the Muslims" or "the Arabs" as one unit in which millions of people are supposedly living outside the current *zeitgeist* and the challenges it poses internally and externally.

Lewis did not leave any research school carrying his

name that is identified with his work method. Although he has managed to publish dozens of books and articles, only a few of them can be considered as proper empirical studies. The great reputation he gained, even in academia, stemmed mainly from his status as a public intellectual, whose interpretation

has high resonance in public discourse and finds a sympathetic ear in government and security establishments.

His last book *Notes on a Century: Reflections of a Middle East Historian* (2012), he concluded with the following words: "I have loved my life. I have had a rewarding career...

Even those who dislike me or with whom I have heartily disagreed are usually interesting and sometimes even stimulating". Indeed, Lewis's career warrants a discussion of the controversial issues of how the Middle East should be studied and what the role of Orientalists should be in the public discourse. ♦

CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

Beer-Sheva and the First World War, 1917-2017

The first conference initiated by the Chaim Herzog Center this year marked the centenary of the British conquest of Beer-Sheva during the First World War. The conference titled "Beer-Sheva and the First World War, 1917-2017", was organized together with the Department of Middle East Studies and the History Department at BGU. The two-day conference opened in a festive, new-semester atmosphere. The conference hall was packed with a very diverse audience. Apart from students and scholars, many older residents of Beer-Sheva and journalists attended as well.

Prof. Billie Melman (Tel Aviv University) gave the opening lecture that focused on colonialism in Palestine in the years 1920-1948. She noted that this period was apparently the peak of the empires' power in terms of their expansion. Melman discussed the Mandate in the interrelation of colonialism and time; its interrelation with modernity and its modern characteristics; as well as the

intense preoccupation with the ancient past of the occupied territories. The connection between these three aspects points to the temporal dimension of the Mandate's epistemological system. The definition of the term 'mandate' expanded considerably in the studies on the Mandates in Palestine, the Mashreq, and Africa. Today the term is defined as a concept, as a method of control, a set of practices of domination by international agreement. In

the context of Palestine, the Mandate was part of the new world order. The temporal aspect of the Mandate has hardly been considered in the research literature; it seems self-evident requiring no explanation. Melman set out to examine the Mandate in temporal terms, from the conquest of Palestine until the British withdrawal, in particular the duration of the rule and the modernization of the region in order to discover the ancient past of the place.





Her central argument was that the Mandate regime's constant preoccupation and obsession with Palestine's ancient times, especially the ancient empires, was an integral part of the new colonialism. She traced the construction of Palestine in the way the British wrote about Palestine as being a site of imperial control and transitions.

The first session dealt with Beer-Sheva and the Negev in Ottoman times. **Prof. Nimrod Luz** (Western Galilee College) gave a lecture on the establishment of Beer-Sheva in Ottoman times and the creation of an urban, imperial, colonial landscape. He argued that the establishment of Beer-Sheva was an expression of a colonial conception on the part of the Ottoman Empire to increase its control by establishing a hegemonic cultural approach and by coopting the Arabs and Bedouins in the region. The city's landscape reflected an attempt to watch and control the city and its inhabitants. According to Luz, the identification of the Bedouin population with the city shows that the project succeeded. The planning of the city expressed an unequal relationship between the center and the

periphery, reflecting an attempt to strengthen Ottoman control and to create loyalty among the subjects to the regime in Istanbul and the sultan.

Dr. Ahmad Amara (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute) gave a lecture on the Ottoman front in the Gaza area and the developments leading to the establishment of Beer-Sheva. He sought to challenge the literature on the history of the Bedouins, their nomadism and pastoralism and argued that Beer-Sheva was a point on the Ottoman continuum that began about a quarter of a century prior to the city's establishment and was marked by a growing Ottoman presence in the region, including a calculated military one. The Ottoman administration sought to impose order in the region, which culminated in the establishment of Beer-Sheva. Amara called into question the assumption that prior to the establishment of Beer-Sheva the history of the Bedouins was characterized by violence and bloodshed, and showed on the basis of a number of legal cases that this was not necessarily so. He concluded by pointing out that the Ottoman Empire had a well-founded presence in the

region at various levels and that it should be understood that the establishment of Beer-Sheva did not necessarily constitute a beginning in the history of the Bedouins or the Ottoman Empire.

In his lecture **Omri Eilat** (PhD candidate, Tel Aviv University) sought to show that the urban development of Beer-Sheva was at an important economic junction during the First World War. The war changed Beer-Sheva's character from a frontier city, whose role was to conquer the wilderness and settle the Bedouin tribes, to an Ottoman military front command, from where the army set out to Egypt in an attempt to recapture it from the British. Eilat argued that in contrast to the economic depression experienced by the cities in Greater Syria during the war, Beer-Sheva was actually enjoying development under the auspices of the military government, including the construction of public buildings, electricity infrastructure, the development of the press, printing houses, the establishment of a school for crafts and agriculture for the tribal population in the Beer-Sheva area, and more. But this investment was in vain given the defeat in the war. The British dismantled the railway tracks to Beer-Sheva, and the inland development pursued by the Ottoman Empire in its last years was pushed aside by the interest of the British Empire in developing coastal cities and the European aspiration to create and develop the infrastructures of port cities. Eilat concluded by arguing that the British government cancelled and opposed any further development in Beer-Sheva and its surrounding area. In other words, the development of the city and the Negev stemmed from

Ottoman aspirations to conquer Egypt and moved along the seamline between completely military plans and military plans in combination with civilian ones for the development of the area.

The second session, titled "From the Balfour Declaration to the Mandate", was opened by the lecture by **Prof. David Katz** (Tel Aviv University). Katz dealt with Nahum Sokolov's 1919 book on the history of Zionism that formed the narrative of "pre-historical Zionism". In his book, Sokolov presented documents serving as testimony for pre-historical Zionism. He pointed to Englishmen who spoke about the return of the Jews to Palestine as part of a Christian messianic plan. He argued that in order to understand the Zionist movement, one must begin with its historical roots, that is, to start from the beginning. Katz noted that despite Sokolov's claims, the history of Zionism is complicated because the past is something foreign and therefore it is difficult to understand what historians have said or written. It is not at all clear whether it is important that someone in the past supported the return of the Jews to Palestine. Yet, certain thinkers in the nineteenth century held that things are only important in light of the historical understanding how they came about and of their historical roots. Katz concluded noting that Sokolov's book provides a lot of information on the concept of pre-historical Zionism and shows that he employed different approaches.

The next speaker, **Dr. Mansour Nasasra** (BGU) dealt with the British colonial police and the Bedouin tribes. He sought to understand how the British colonial police functioned in the Middle East and how this may be connected to the relation

between the Palestine Police and the Bedouins in the Beer-Sheva area. The material in the archives mainly consists of documents from the British colonial police forces operating for the purpose of border or population control. Nasasra argued that the colonial police were not so successful in the Beer-Sheva area. Border and population control was difficult given that the borders between countries were unclear or between the Bedouin tribes in the region of Jordan, Syria and Palestine on the one hand, and the local prism in the Beer-Sheva area on the other. The policing project was also driven by the desire to develop the British colonies and to control and rule. In 1931 the British decided to establish a local police force: the Palestine Police, in which Palestinian, British and Jewish police officers served. This step led to the establishment of the Bedouin police, some of whom were mounted on camels. Nasasra examined the diaries of three important figures in the Palestine Police and in the area. The diaries show that there was cooperation between

the governing Pasha and the patrolling police. The police stations that were built became important economic centers and had a political role in resolving conflicts between tribes. The police stations actually symbolized the boundaries of the area. Such a force was definitely a colonial element: Bedouin policemen were sent to suppress the uprising in Jaffa during the Great Revolt (1936-39). In conclusion, the mechanisms of air, land, and human surveillance brought from India to Iraq and from there to the borders of the British Mandate in the Middle East served as expression and employment of colonial tools – even by mobilizing the local population as in the suppression of the Revolt.

The last lecture of the session, presented by **Prof. Haggai Ram** (BGU), dealt with border crossing and trafficking, smuggling and consumption of cannabis in Mandate Palestine. Ram discussed cannabis in the context of the international control and prohibition regimes instituted by the League of





Guy Beiner presents his study

Nations between the two World Wars. In his view, these control regimes are a case of unintended consequences: intended to minimize or prevent the trade in cannabis, they did actually the opposite. Palestine, which had not played any important role in drug trafficking, became a central link in the supply of cannabis from Lebanon to Egypt. Egypt, the country with the largest cannabis consumption in the Middle East since the Middle Ages, used to import it from Greece. That smuggling channel was closed by the control regimes (the Second Opium Convention) and the abolition of the Capitulations. This led to a change in the supply routes to Egypt and during the Mandate Palestine became the most important passageway for the supply of cannabis in the Levant. In contrast to the Ottoman period, the creation of the Mandate states limited the free movement of the smugglers, who previously had not been considered as such. The emergence of Palestine as an important interim station in cannabis trafficking led to a huge increase in the cannabis consumption in Palestine, which

had previously been marginal – a development that worried the British. With regard to the Jewish Yishuv, Ram noted that due to the colonial concept of cannabis the Jewish population was kept away from consuming cannabis, which they perceived as a despicable Oriental-Arab custom.

The third session dealt with historiography and memory. **Dr. Iris Agmon** (BGU) gave the first lecture on the First World War and the end of the Ottoman Empire as a colonial self-fulfilling prophecy. The description of the “sick man on the Bosphorus” was accepted as a prophecy come true. The conclusions drawn after the First World War led to a missed opportunity in historical research. Agmon argued that historiography has divided the modern era in the Middle East that began in the second half of the eighteenth century too sharply into two periods: the end of the Ottoman period; and the colonial and national period. This binary division is reinforced by the historiographical construction of the First World War as the expected end of the Ottoman Empire. Agmon intended to show that it is a

mistake to perceive the First World War merely as a historical rupture. Moreover, it is also problematic to perceive the war as a time-out because it creates an artificial buffer between the end of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of nation states, making it difficult to consider the Ottoman period as important for the modern era. Politically, the dismantling of the empire and the establishment of nation states introduced far-reaching changes in the rules of the game that affected all aspects of life, but these changes did not happen at once. The lived reality in the region was still an Ottoman one and shaped by modernity as it began to emerge a century before the war. The Ottoman Empire had already entered the modern period long before its dissolution. Too few people are familiar with the legacy of the Ottoman Empire and its contribution to life today. With regard to the territories of the Ottoman Empire, many researchers see the colonial period as the starting point for contemporary studies because scholars have neglected to investigate the similarities between the modern periods of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

Prof. Guy Beiner (BGU) gave a lecture on memory and commemoration in comparative perspective. He referred to a statement by the spokesperson of the municipality of Beer-Sheva, who spoke about the centenary of “the liberation of the city”. There is a clear political statement in the phrasing. Every commemoration has a local heritage due to which it is seen and remembered the way it is. In the Beer-Sheva region there are a number of monuments and sites that symbolize the First World War and there is an

organization for the preservation of the war heritage that marked together with the JNF a trail that had been taken by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps during the war. There is also a commemoration legacy in a broader context. In Beiner's view, it is important to understand what was missing in the ceremony and in the memory, i.e. what was forgotten. Beiner argued that part of the British heritage was forgotten. For example, Allenby was excluded from the heritage of Beer-Sheva. The focus of the forgotten memory was to be the British military cemetery. The municipality of Beer-Sheva gave this cemetery as a gift to the British Commemoration Society. There one can see that almost all the fallen were from the UK: about 130 dead, compared to 30 from Australia and New Zealand. The soldiers from India are not mentioned at all. According to Beiner, the usual narrative is entirely Australian, and there is an illusion that most of the casualties were Australians. Although they were a small minority, they took over the commemoration narrative.

Prof. Eitan Bar-Yosef (BGU) concluded the session with his lecture on the British attitude to the centenary of the Balfour Declaration. He opened with a speech by British Prime Minister Lloyd George in December 1917, a few days after the conquest of Jerusalem. Lloyd George expressed his hope that



a hundred years later, that is in 2017, the events of the conquest of Greater Syria will figure more prominently in the memory than other historical events. Bar-Yosef noted that when we talk about the historiography and commemoration of the British front in the First World War, we first of all talk about the Western front, even though the year 1917 brings with it other fronts to the commemoration. He presented a basic survey of the commemoration events held in Britain in recent weeks. Drawing on the insights thus gained, he examined in how far these events were complementary or contradictory to the Balfour Declaration.

Bar-Yosef noted that Palestinians in Britain had launched a website calling on

the British to take responsibility for what the Balfour Declaration caused, that means, in their view, that the declaration allowed the establishment of a Zionist state or national home and severely infringed Palestinian national rights. Addressing the UN General Assembly in 2016, Abu Mazen referred to a Palestinian demand for the British to apologize for the Balfour Declaration, for which there was also a signature campaign. The British government made it clear to Abu Mazen that they would not apologize and declared that the British would proudly celebrate the event. Yet despite the talk of pride, the opposite seems to be the case. Bar-Yosef reviewed various events held in London against the Balfour Declaration. ♦



Photograph courtesy of Commonwealth War Graves Commission

In Shifting Story – Israel and the Developments in Syria and Lebanon

In light of the dramatic developments in Syria and Lebanon the Chaim Herzog Center organized a panel of leading experts on the subject hoping to contribute an assessment of the prospects to the public debate. The event took place in the hall of the Tzavta Cultural Center in Tel Aviv. The event was very well attended by public figures, experts, scholars, and members of the general public. **Prof. Yoram Meital** opened the evening and spoke about the repercussions of the end of the war in Syria, the day-after and the new beginning. One of the important questions to be addressed in the panel was the impact of the war on the society and the regime in Syria. Will the involvement of Syrian and other groups opposed to the Assad regime come to an end? How will the involvement of major regional and international actors such as Russia, Iran, and Hizballah be reflected in the post-war phase? The assumption that the Assad regime will allow them to operate on Syrian territory cannot be taken for granted and should therefore be discussed. And how will the end of the war affect the “quite” conflict with Israel – are the understandings reached in the 1974 agreement likely to be upheld? Are there new directions emerging that might be more suitable to the now altered circumstances at the Israeli-Syrian border?

The first speaker was **Brigadier General, res. Michael (Mike) Herzog**, senior Fellow of the Washington Institute and of the Jewish People Policy Institute. Herzog presented the

factual basis of the situation in Syria. In his opinion, it was too early to talk about the day after the war. There is a complex and multifaced variety of actors in the area: Assad, Iran, Russia, the USA, Daesh, Turkey, Israel and the rebels. Herzog referred to the vacuum in Syria, which Iran is trying to fill in a manner that is problematic for Israel. Iran has plans for its long-term presence in the region and is trying to establish an area of direct political, military and economic influence extending from Iran through Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean. It boasts that it dictates policy in the area and controls the border regions of Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon through Shiite emissaries and militias in each of the countries in order to build a regional legion and create a united front against Israel. In case of war, Israel will have to fight not only against Syria, but a comprehensive northern war.

A permanent Iranian military presence in Syria is intolerable for Israel. Israel drew its red

lines in light of the passivity in the international response. The Russians entered Syria due to American inertia. They respect Israel's red lines, but in Herzog's opinion, they have not the same interests as Israel. And one should not rely on them to remain quite every time Israel acts. Herzog concluded his talk by saying that while he sees differences of interests between Russia and Iran despite their cooperation, the question is how Israel enters this crack between them cautiously.

Major General, res. Amiram Levin considered what should be done in light of the current situation in Syria, which in his view is not stabilizing. In his opinion, the problem with ever increasing severity is actually an economic one. Given the hunger, health problems and the destruction, the desperate population in Syria, many of whom are refugees, does not seem to support the regime that is incapable of restoring any kind of reasonable standard



*Eyal Zisser, Uzi Arad, Mike Herzog, Amir Oren,
Amiram Levin, Ran Adelist, Yoram Meital*

of living. The Iranians are the only interested party currently working with determination to establish themselves in Syria. Iran is trying to enter the militias ostensibly to impose order, but over time they are liable to become corrupt and continue to oppress the population. In Levin's opinion, Israel must avoid mistakes and continue coordination with Putin and the USA. In addition, Israel should avoid a military confrontation with Iran as much as possible. In case of a confrontation, the Iranians will send Hizballah, and therefore most of the preparations for a potential military confrontation should be made against Hizballah.

Like Levin, **Uzi Arad**, former director of research in the Mossad and foreign policy advisor to the prime minister, thought that the situation in Syria is very complicated. Largely following the data presented by Herzog and Levin, Arad saw Iran as the aggressive expansionist force that is trying to expand its influence, while Israel is the defensive side that tries to prevent that. If Israel continues to do so, there will be a moment of escalation and therefore it must prepare itself and lay out its current policy ahead of that turning point. Moreover, Arad suggested to examine whether what Israel is currently doing is worthwhile in the long run. Israel's strategic goal is to prevent Iranian expansion and its repercussions for the country. The Iranians place their capabilities, which Israel considers to be red lines, in close proximity to Israel, thus amplifying the tangible threat. Israel needs to work out a very cautious strategy. In Arad's view, there are no such plans and it seems that Israel will continue on this rather adventurous path.



Eyal Zisser, Uzi Arad, Mike Herzog

Prof. Eyal Zisser (Tel Aviv University) addressed a question he was asked about the next war with Syria and Lebanon. Israel began the wars in 1982 and 2006 and therefore Zisser argued that if Israel does not want a war, there will be none, given he does not see any desire for war on the other side. Zisser agreed with Levin and argued that Israel has no strategy, but a tactic that sometimes succeeds and sometimes does not: In the Syrian context, it succeeded because Israel has not been dragged into the Syrian fray in the last seven years. A limited targeted attack in Syria is tactical rather than strategic. Zisser noted that if there had been a discussion in 2010 about the situation in the northern arena, we would probably have talked about stability and would not have believed that it could be otherwise. Although there have been cycles of violence and bloodshed in Lebanon, we have not known such events in Syria for the last thousand years. In Zisser's view, the conquest of Aleppo at the beginning of 2017 was a decisive event in the war in Syria, indicating that the Syrian state is in control of the state and of the war, even though it controlled only a quarter of the country. By now

it controls at least 90 percent of the country. In his opinion it will take time, but it will be sooner than anticipated that Assad and his men are back on their feet. In the moment of truth, despite of years of promises from the Americans and Israelis, those who actually came to his aid were the Iranians and the Russians.

Ran Adelst, a writer specializing in the Israeli intelligence and security community, agreed with Zisser that those who won the battle over Syria, Lebanon and Iraq are the Iranians. The Russians support Assad and Hizballah, and this is a situation that concerns the Israeli government. Adelst referred to the way the government handles the situation and to the question how a war may be prevented. In his opinion, the other side is capable of firing precise rockets and Israel is unable to stop everything. In fact, Israel cannot stop organizations such as Hizballah and Syria, so it may end up in another round of bloodshed. Adelst proposed to stop this dynamic by initiating an arrangement with Iran, Hizballah and Russia, a ceasefire that should be promoted by political means and quite dialogue, which may benefit all sides. ♦

Israel and Palestine 1948-2018

New Research

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel, the Chaim Herzog Center held a conference presenting new academic studies and a critical picture of the research currently undertaken in the field. At the conference, six books published last year were presented by the author, followed by a dialogue with a discussant. The conference opened in a festive new-semester atmosphere and was attended by many students and faculty members.

The first session opened with the presentation of the book, *Emptied Lands: A Legal Geography of Bedouin Rights in the Negev*, by **Prof. Oren Yiftachel** (BGU), **Prof. Alexandre Kedar** (University of Haifa) and **Dr. Ahmad Amara** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem). The book was published in 2018 by Stanford University Press.

Prof. Yiftachel presented the book as a critical study that is based on the conceptual assumption that the State of Israel has acted as a settler colonial society vis-à-vis the local Bedouin population. The Israeli approach corresponds to a legal doctrine that holds that everything that had existed before the arrival of the white man was nullified, thus creating a situation in which three quarters of the world was appropriated by Europeans. The authors' research question began as a response, since they heard that the Negev was "dead land" and that the Bedouins were defined as "squatters", whereas it was

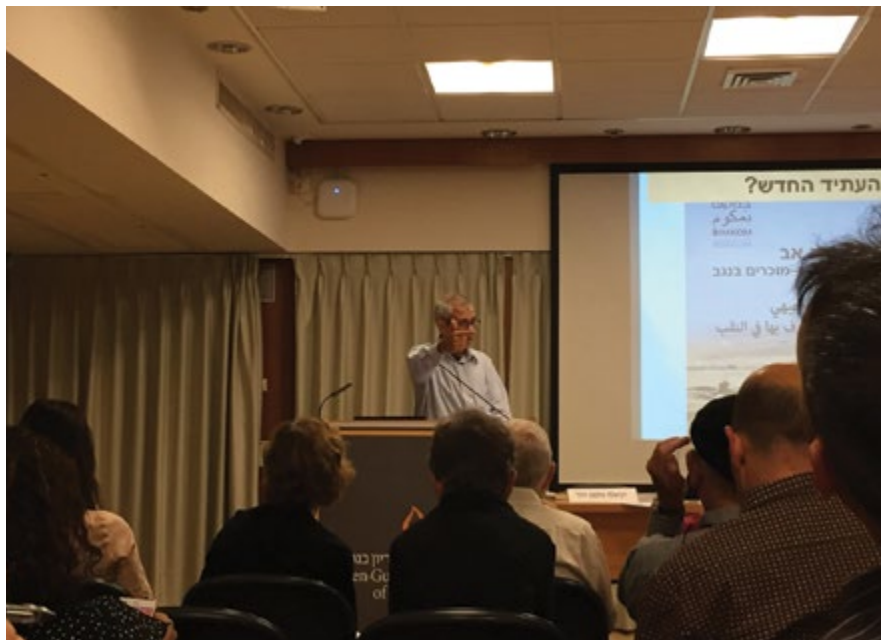
clear to everybody that the area was settled before 1948, that part of it was cultivated and some of the land belonged to the Bedouin tribes. There is no dispute that there were people who cultivated the land, but according to the legal doctrine the Bedouins were seen as invaders because they had not registered their land. According to Ottoman law, "dead land" is land that is not held by anyone and has not been allocated for use. As a result, the Bedouins lost in court where it was ruled that they do not inhabit their land. This is a colonial conception in line with what has been practiced in the global colonial space. In the Negev there are waves of demolitions of homes of people, who built them and who live on land, for which they have purchase deeds. Yiftachel concluded his presentation arguing that the Jews also came in good faith and have rights,

and that it is possible to rectify the situation and to fill the Negev again with inhabitants in order to create an equal space in which Arabs and Jews will live together.

The discussant **Dr. Erez Tzfadia** (Sapir Academic College) noted that there has been a wave of books in recent years dealing with Israel's policy toward the Bedouin community. The doctrine of "empty land" is taken for granted by many, while only a few are questioning it. The thesis of the empty land guarantees a monopoly on rights in the territory of Israel-Palestine. The novelty of the book is that it comes from historical geography and speaks of national affiliation. It appears that in recent years a local regional understanding has evolved among the head of the local government and the local bureaucracy regarding the need to change the attitude toward the Bedouins. Tzfadia noted that there have lately



Oren Yiftachel introduces his recent book



Yoram Meital discusses Recognition as Key for Reconciliation

been suggestions in this direction, such as attaching the unrecognized villages as “neighborhoods” to nearby recognized localities.

The second book discussed at the conference was *Recognition as Key for Reconciliation: Israel, Palestine, and Beyond*, edited by **Prof. Yoram Meital** (BGU) and **Prof. Paula M. Rayman** (University of Massachusetts Lowell). The book was published in 2017 by Brill.

Prof. Meital addressed the concept of recognition in the context of the Israeli–Arab conflict in general and of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in particular. The collection of articles published in the book is the product of a research workshop held in Boston in the spring of 2015. One reason for writing the book was the hitherto shallow discussion on the issue of ‘recognition’ and its implications for the positions of the parties. In the opening chapter of the book, Meital argued that a distinction should be made between ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ recognition. International law refers to thin recognition between states as

basis for a political system and for international law. Israel’s peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan and the Oslo Accords are an expression of this kind of recognition. In 2009, Prime Minister Netanyahu gave his Bar-Ilan speech, in which he made a conceptual turnaround, when he demanded from the Palestinians a thick recognition, namely that they recognize Israel as a Jewish state, as a condition for a permanent settlement of the conflict. Netanyahu succeeded in persuading President Obama to adopt a similar position, and this became also widespread in the American and Israeli public discourse. Since then the Israeli position has changed a bit and is now phrased as recognition of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Israel is prepared to recognize Palestinian sovereignty over part of historical Palestine on the condition that the Palestinians recognize the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people. This condition requires a thick recognition that far exceeds the recognition agreed upon in the Oslo Accords (1993).

Another layer was added in the negotiations at Camp David. In the wake of their failure the claim was raised that “there is no partner” and the rhetoric of these decision-makers was in line with the demand for a thick recognition.

Dr. Maya Kahanoff (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) referred to the article on recognition that she contributed to the book. Conflicts have behavioral and conceptual structural components and in order to move toward a solution, one has to focus on these components. As an integral part of their identity, nations and peoples have a basic need to be recognized by other nations. Recognition requires a process of change in attitudes; it is considered a basic component of reconciliation processes. Reconciliation processes are slow processes that begin before a peace agreement and continue afterwards, including the entire society that needs to change.

Kahanoff’s article deals with collective trauma, transformation, and reconciliation. The trauma affects everyone present and is inherited from generation to generation. Such groups suffer from anxiety and fear of a recurrence of the traumatic past. That is why they are more determined in their positions. Some talk about the trauma of the Jews who experienced the Holocaust, and on the other hand, about the Palestinians and the Nakba. The Palestinian pain is further compounded by the lack of recognition of their trauma. The effect of receiving recognition can enable a person to move toward corrective actions. Recognition of pain and suffering allows reconnecting a person to the genetic chain of human suffering as a common



Maya Kahanoff discusses her research findings

condition. Both parties to the conflict seek recognition of their pain and suffering as well as their legitimate rights. Kahanoff summarized the findings of two field studies she conducted: one study followed a group of Israeli and Palestinian teachers who met around the Nakba; the other followed two groups of Israelis and Palestinians who met in a forum of bereaved parents. She tried to understand the process such groups undergo.

In the first group, there was a feeling on both sides of a lack of recognition of their own trauma (Yad Vashem and a visit in a destroyed village); each side saw its own suffering, but could not see the suffering of the other. There were feelings of vulnerability and insult from either side. Each side sought recognition from the other side and at the same time was unwilling to grant recognition to the other side. The result was a radicalization of suspicion and fear. The Jews concluded that they had to defend their existence in the country. The Palestinians became afraid of what might happen to them. The conclusion was

that psychological difficulties transmitted from generation to generation make it difficult to initiate a dialogue. By contrast, in the second case study, people expressed their feelings and their pain and suffering, but at the same time also managed to accommodate the feelings of the other. The conclusion was that mutual recognition develops empathy for the other side.

The third book presented at the conference was *Redemption Now: The beliefs and activities of the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Israeli society* (Hebrew), by **Prof. Neima Barzel** (Oranim Academic College). Her book was published in 2017 by Hakibbutz Hameuchad.

Prof. Barzel sees her book as a personal and generational journey, tracing the formative years and the crystallization of the faith-based group until the mid-1980s. It deals with the concept of faith, not only in Gush Emunim. The book combines research and reflections and includes a chronologically arranged collection of material documenting the settlement enterprise. The faith-based group emerged in the early

1980s following the Yom Kippur War. They did not see the war as a setback in the process of redemption, but rather as a punishment from God for being stuck in material culture and for the failure to settle the land after 1967. According to them, all wars are a Mitzvah. Thus, against the background of the shock of defeat and the depression, the war was perceived as a milestone of sturdiness. Barzel addressed the Arab 'Other' in the faith-based perception and showed that the most prominent feature is the lack of references to the Arabs in the territories occupied in 1967, who are seen as temporary guardians of the land. The feeling in which they are entrenched is a sense of justice and exclusivity, and of deep roots in the fabric of Zionist culture.

Prof. Daniel Bar-Tal (Tel Aviv University) served as discussant and briefly summarized how that group of young people turned their ideological ideas into a vision. The people of Israel, the Torah and the Land of Israel bound together are at the center of religious-Zionist thought. Bar-Tal argued that Akiva Eldar and Idith Zertal's book, *Lords of the Land* (2004) and Barzel's book accurately depict what is happening today: The settlers are the lords of the land in Israel and in the West Bank. In his opinion, the settlers' future can draw on political support, and thus they are able to become the owners of the land. Bar-Tal spoke about the settlers' actions in pursuit of the realization of their vision, such as the promotion of a religious right-wing discourse, the silencing of organizations and institutions opposed to their narrative and ideas, the implementation of an ethics code or the fight against the New Israel Fund, as well

as the imposition of limitations on the power of the High Court of Justice and of the Attorney General. Thus, one can observe the realization of the idea from the 1960s. Another example is the army and the security forces that are assisting the group. The army is sacred in the eyes of religious Zionism, and therefore it serves as the executive wing in the realization of the program. Between 30 and 50 percent of the graduates of the officers' school (Bahad 1) are religious, which shows the high percentage of religious people in the senior command echelons of the IDF. Bar-Tal concluded his talk expressing concern about the future of Israeli society.

The second session opened with the presentation of the book *The Naqab Bedouins: A Century of Politics and Resistance*, by **Dr. Mansour Nasasra** (BGU). The book was published in 2017 by Columbia University Press.

Prof. Mustafa Kabha (Open University) defined Nasasra's book as a breakthrough, of great importance for the academic world and the public discourse. He noted the book's contribution

to our understanding of the macro level of Arab society in Israel and of the micro level of the Bedouin population in the Negev. The book laid the foundations for a new approach to studying the Negev and the Bedouin population. It was written as a dialogue between the macro and the micro levels. The Negev had been separated from the rest of the Arab territories. The book creates a synthesis between the written sources and oral history, which is an important tool especially with regard to the Bedouins in the Negev who pass on their traditions and memories orally. Hitherto we used to think that the tradition of the Negev is just tribal and exotic.

Dr. Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder (BGU), who served as discussant, focused on Nasasra's book as an example of a counter-narrative, a form of writing that seeks to decolonize. Abu-Rabia-Queder argued that there is injustice in research and interpretation with regard to Bedouin society, and that there is a need for different interpretive tools to analyze subaltern groups. Abu-Rabia-Queder

criticized Western research on indigenous populations for employing concepts and terms that are differently defined as they are understood by the indigenous peoples.

Dr. Nasasra noted the uniqueness of his study which used archival sources that challenge the existing research literature. He described the gradual Ottoman takeover of Beer-Sheva. Photographs that he found and examined also show the development of the town. In the Ottoman archives, he found documents dating back to 1916 that attest to the relationship between the Ottoman authorities and the indigenous population in Beer-Sheva. The documents he found show the dynamic developments in the region as well as the Bedouins' opposition to the central government. These findings undermine the unfounded central arguments about the Bedouins' lacking attachment to the Negev and to Palestine in general.

The next book discussed at the conference was *Nakba and Survival: The Story of Palestinians who Remained in Haifa and the Galilee, 1948-1956* (Hebrew), by **Dr. Adel Manna** (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute). His book was published in 2017 by the Van Leer Institute Press and Hakibbutz Hameuchad.

Dr. Yossi Amitai (BGU) described Manna's book as a systematic and comprehensive study, something unique in the genre of publications on the Nakba. According to Amitai, the book presents a picture to the Jewish reader that challenges the Jewish-Zionist narrative. Among Zionist right-wingers there are those who claim that there is no narrative and only one historical truth, but the book shows that there is a well-established Palestinian narrative.





Danny Rubinstein presents his recently published book

at the conference was *"It is Us or Them" – The Castel and Jerusalem, April 1948: 24 Hours that Determined the War* (Hebrew), by the journalist **Danny Rubinstein**. His book was published in 2017 by Books in the Attic & Miskal.

The book presents the 1948 War by focusing on the Castel battle and especially the killing of the venerated Palestinian commander Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini and its dramatic implications for the entire campaign. The writer and journalist **Odeh Bisharat** of the newspaper *Ha'aretz* spoke about the Palestinians' alienation from the Arab world. Rubinstein's book shows that the Palestinians had actually no significant Arab support and were left to their fate after the Nakba. In Bisharat's opinion, the power of Rubinstein's book lies in the fact that it presents the context and tells the story of simple fellahin and illiterate people, some of whom did not leave their village. **Danny Rubinstein** pointed out that the tension between Arab and Palestinian identities is at the background of his book. In his view, that tension emerged in the late 1930s and has continued to exist to this day. In his book, he sought to examine how the Palestinians perceived the Nakba. His research draws on stories and memoirs, which he received from Arab families who remained in Israel. ♦

Amitai referred to the story of the Nakba as one consisting of two narratives, one of which is not told. There is an Israeli-Zionist narrative, according to which the rejection of the partition plan involved an acceptance of a continuation of what happened in the Holocaust. The two narratives will not come together, but we need to create a reality in which both sides will recognize the suffering of the other and are aware of the existence of the narrative of the other side.

Dr. Manna pointed out that his book is not limited to the events of 1948. It deals with those who stayed or were deported and returned, in other words with those who survived the expulsion. His motivation

to write the book arose during his teaching experience. For decades Manna taught at Israeli and Palestinian universities and saw that there is no historical research literature dealing with those who stayed and were not expelled. The literature usually focuses on the refugees and the destruction, overlooking those who remained mostly in the villages or elsewhere inside Israel. Manna set out to examine why there was nothing written about them and then to find material and write a book telling the story of those who survived the Nakba. In this way he sought to tell the story of his own family and connect personal history with the general one.

The sixth book presented



Between Arabic and Hebrew Translation and its Challenges

In light of the growing interest in translation and its importance, the Chaim Herzog Center held a unique conference in cooperation with Maktoob, the Arabic-Hebrew Translators' Forum at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, headed by Prof. Yehouda Shenhav and Dr. Yoni Mendel. The aim was to discuss the history of translation, its effects on normalization, and its political contexts. Researchers and translators were particularly prominent in the audience. The conference was opened by the head of the Chaim Herzog Center, **Prof. Yoram Meital**, and by the head of Maktoob, **Prof. Yehouda Shenhav** (Tel Aviv University), who spoke about the importance of translation today in order to become acquainted with the culture of the Other. They noted the interest in the translation sector. Unfortunately, most people in Israel do not speak or read Arabic, and thus we find ourselves in a state of deliberate ignorance and collective illiteracy. The Translators' Forum seeks to display Arabic for Jewish readers. The work of the people in the Forum may even be seen as more important than the translations. The Forum, which includes Arabic-speaking translators alongside Hebrew-speaking ones, serves as a model for shared sovereignty.

The first panel dealt with the translators' personal aspects. The main speaker of the session was **Dr. Hannah Amit-Kochavi** (BGU). She dealt with the studies of translation and reviewed the history of



Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Yehouda Shenhav, Yoram Meital

Arabic-Hebrew translations, noting that there have always been translation activities, but they were weak. During her research she interviewed translators and even relatives of translators who had passed away, in order to investigate the correlations between the translators' personal and research backgrounds. Unlike other sectors in the translation to Hebrew, translations from Arabic would not have occurred had it not been for groups or individuals who swam against the current, even though they lacked prestige and had to promote their translations on their own. Amit-Kochavi examined the parameters of origin, education, and profession. All of the Jewish translators were born in Jerusalem. They were engaged in the revival of the Zionist movement, but perceived Arabic and Arabs as

part of the new national identity to be shaped. Some of them were descendants of Iraqi Jews and saw Arabs as neighbors and acquaintances, in contrast to people of European origins who saw Arabs as savages. With regard to education, Amit-Kochavi found that all translators had an excellent education in Arabic. There were maybe some ten translations that had been translated from other foreign languages and not directly from Arabic. It was found that the vast majority of the translators worked in other professions and that translating was sideline for them, which constituted for some of them a connection to their origins.

Until the establishment of the Translators' Forum, the Arabic-Hebrew translators had no permanent framework. Until then, translations were made individually or in pairs. Usually



Salih Ali Sawaed, Hannah Amit-Kochavi, Alon Fragman, Bruria Horvitz

translators held senior academic positions and contributed to the field. The translators belonged to distinctly defined frameworks and operated as a closed system. Many worked on their own. There was relatively little cooperation among translators of different origins compared to a relatively high level of cooperation among translators of similar origin. For example, Jews remained among themselves, and so did Druze, and there was collaboration among professors of modern Arabic literature. The Translators' Forum offers a novel egalitarian model.

The panel chaired by Amit-Kochavi continued with a discussion between three translators: **Bruria Horvitz** (Translators' Forum), **Salih Ali Sawaed** (Center for Educational Technology), and **Dr. Alon Fragman** (BGU). **Salih Ali Sawaed** noted that he spends most of his time translating and that he also works as interpreter from Arabic to Hebrew and vice versa. In his opinion, translation does not only require language skills, but also knowledge of the subject matter. The power of translations lies in their ability

to bring to the fore the fact that behind a translation there is something to learn. A translation uncovers people, their identities and backgrounds, and that is something able to undermine Jewish elitism. **Dr. Alon Fragman** talked about his attraction to Arabic since the day he first encountered the language. He gave credit to his parents who thought it important to know Arabic and used to buy Arabic newspapers at a kiosk in Tel Aviv. Fragman managed to realize his dream of becoming a teacher and pedagogue. During his studies for a master's degree, he dealt with language acquisition

and the examination of school translations and discovered them to be unprofessional. **Bruria Horvitz** said that she began to learn Arabic at the Reali School, where it was one of the distinctive subjects. She started to translate as a hobby for herself. In her opinion, translation also has rhythm and soul because one does not always find the equivalent word. A translation has depth, and therefore it is important to be familiar with the culture. Language skills alone do not suffice.

The second panel, titled "Translation and Normalization: The Political Context of Translating from Arabic to Hebrew", was shared by **Idan Barir** (PhD candidate, Tel Aviv University). In his opening remarks he noted that translations are seen as dangerous in Israel because they tear down the walls and acquaint us with the Other. Translations also create tensions for the people whom one seeks to translate. On the Arab side there is an opposing wave of fear and a desire to maintain distance, to separate, and to boycott.

In the first lecture, titled "'The Cultural Invasion' of Naguib Mahfouz's Salon (nadva)", **Prof. Yoram Meital** (BGU) spoke about





Anton Shulhut, Eyad Barghuty, Yoram Meital, Janan Bsoul, Idan Barir

his own experience in Naguib Mahfouz's literary salon which he attended several times in 2001 and 2002. When Meital was in Cairo, the playwright Ali Salem suggested to accompany him for a visit to Mahfouz's diwan, where he introduced Meital to Mahfouz and the other participants. A person sitting next to Meital, who later turned out to be the writer Yusuf al-Qa'id, expressed his dismay about inviting an Israeli to the diwan and explained his objection to the Israeli cultural invasion of the Arab space. To Mahfouz's question: "What are you afraid of?" al-Qa'id replied that the Israelis come, hear and then write what they want, including incorrect things. Mahfouz said that as an Egyptian, he does not feel threatened. He sees himself as belonging to Egyptian culture which gives him confidence and strength. It is a culture that has faced occupiers and invaders who were unable to impose their identity on the Egyptians. More generally, Mahfouz wondered what "Israeli culture" might be given that it was still in its infancy and that even the guest himself, i.e. Yoram Meital, had difficulties defining it.

Mahfouz emphasized that peace with Israel is in Egypt's interest. He pointed out that it is important to recognize Israeli culture, that there are Jews from Arab countries in Israel, and that Egyptians must work together with the Israeli peace camp. He raised a number of key points: In the debate over the normalization of the relations with Israel, there are high-quality writers as well as superficial ones explaining what "normalization" means. In Israel, the approach to normalization is problematic; for the average Israeli and most politicians the concept of the iron wall has gained the upper hand. Therefore, the kind of recognition we receive ignores the fact that there is a paradox in the Israelis' ethos. Israeli society is said to be clearly Western. As for Arab intellectuals, they live in authoritarian regimes and their criticism of normalization is actually an internal political criticism of the ruler's policy and indirectly of the regime itself. In Egypt it is commonly claimed that the government that signed the peace agreement is itself acting to prevent normalization. Intellectuals argue that the

government cooperates and exchanges intelligence with Israel in every respect in an unprecedented manner, while the intellectuals cannot be in contact with Israelis or visit Israel.

Meital mentioned Iyad Barghouti, a Nazareth-born writer and translator who referred to the normalization between Palestinian writers and Israeli cultural institutions. With the rise of BDS and the boycott in recent years, there has been a shift away from an absolute view on normalization. Barghouti reveals that writers ask new questions about normalization and its nature. In Meital's opinion, this process attests to changes among Arab intellectuals regarding normalization.

In her lecture, journalist **Janan Bsoul** dealt with the journalistic and cultural contexts of translations. According to her, an average Arab living in an Arab country sees Israel as a threatening and strange entity. There is peace on the political level, but not on the cultural one, and borders are reinforced. There have been changes recently and more and more works are translated into Hebrew. Israeli Palestinian writers talk about the difficulties to publish their works, and they always face suspicion due to their Israeli identity. In the wake of the disintegration of countries in the Arab world, formerly determined issues are now in flux, including the attitudes toward Israel and toward literary works. Moreover, many Arab writers do not live in their countries but in exile, which makes translation easier as well as the readers' access to it. Bsoul referred to Anton Shalhat, who cited 20-year-old articles that support translation and see it as a kind of dialogue between two cultures. In his



Huda Abu Mokh addresses the panel

opinion, a problem arises when the author is approached to ask permission to translate his/her text because that creates a direct connection to the media in the matter. In Shalhat's assessment, most reactions of Arab writers seeing translation as a kind of normalization stem from publications in Israel presenting translation as a step toward normalization. In Shalhat's view, not everyone objects to translation in the Arab world; the opposition is more against normalization.

The third panel was chaired by **Dr. Yoni Mendel** (Van Leer Jerusalem Institute) and was dedicated to the publication of Prof. Yehouda Shenhav's translation of Elias Khoury's novel *Awlad al-Gito – Ismi Adam* [Children of the Ghetto – My Name is Adam]. The first speaker, **Prof. Amos Goldberg** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem), noted that the book, dealing with the forgetting of the Nakba, was written exactly five hundred years after the establishment of the first ghetto. He referred to the multitude of fathers in the story and the abundance of intertextuality creating a compressed text that spreads all

over. The space of the ghetto in the Holocaust stands out in the multiplicity of intertextual spaces. Goldberg related to the issue of silencing and forgetting with which the novel deals. Khoury knows that the Holocaust and the Nakba cannot be compared and therefore it is not imitation. The Holocaust as well, is a language. Through intertextual mechanisms and techniques of imitation, the language appears to have an authority inspiring respect.

Prof. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin (BGU) addressed the novel's complexity. Khoury's novel raises fundamental questions about literature and the relation

between literature and history. Unlike in other books, Hebrew is present in the novel. The notebooks transferred into the book were written by a graduate of the Department of Hebrew Literature, that is a Hebrew-speaking intellectual. The history after 1948 is fragmented and broken. It is impossible to extract the traumatic memory that the book contains, the memory of expulsion and of what happened after the expulsion. The translation translates two experiences. What the Israeli reader reads is different from what the Arab reader will read. The book is difficult because it describes the trauma of the victim which is also related to the debate on the relation between literature and history. The Israeli debate deals with the question of guilt. But that does not interest Khoury. The question of guilt negates the experience of the victim. In Raz-Krakotzkin's view, the novel is a history book that attempts to extract testimonies although the victim has no documents. The last will of Adam Danun is his disagreement with the silences that they have imposed upon themselves. He is a man who has no place.

Dr. Huda Abu Mokh (Open University and Van Leer



Jerusalem Institute) edited Yehouda Shenhav's translation of Elias Khoury's book. She defined herself as an editor who is in the middle, that is, between the Arabic original and the Hebrew translation. On the one hand, she was enthusiastic about the translation and on the other, she wanted to be true to the original. The discussion of Shenhav's translation is complex. Khoury's book deals with the expulsion of the Arab inhabitants of Lod and the creation of a sort of ghetto there around the time of the establishment of the state. The novel is full of political angles, which is of great significance

in the translation between two languages the cultures of which are in violent confrontation. In terms of the power relations between Jews and Arabs after the establishment of the state of Israel, these relations are hierarchical and permeate the act of translating. A translation is a document through which one can assess the power relations between cultures. The translator's views and his/her attempt to add his/her voice to the existing discourse find expression in the process of translating.

Prof. Yehouda Shenhav spoke about translating as a joint work because no one is in full

command of the language. He sees translation as a collective project. Elias Khoury wanted the novel to be first translated into Hebrew before any other language. Shenhav found twelve factual errors and wondered whether Khoury had made these mistakes intentionally. Shenhav noted that the translation is not true to the original and that there are deviations. The Hebrew text allows for deviating tension between various forces in the process of translating, that means it is a separate work; that is the autonomy of the translation. The conflicts are deep and invisible. ♦

Arabic-Language Day in Memory of Prof. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh

In cooperation with the Division of Arabic Language and Culture at BGU, we dedicated this year's Arabic-language day to the memory of the late Prof. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (1930-1998). Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh specialized in the research on the religion of Islam and received the Israel Prize in 1993.

The event was open to the public and included parallel sessions and various activities related to the Arabic language. Israeli scholars gave fascinating lectures in their fields of expertise presenting Arabic culture to the audience. In addition, Arabic teachers and students conducted workshops for the public in which they illustrated the learning of the Arabic script and offered conversation circles allowing the audience to try to

talk in Arabic and be exposed to various dialects including the intricate ones of the Bedouins. Among the lecturers participating in the sessions were the following: **Dr. Daniella Talmon-Heller**, head of the Division of Arabic Language and Culture, presented a comparison between the Qur'an and the Tora in her lecture. **Dr. Yoni Mendel**, who has recently joined the faculty of BGU, spoke about Jews and the history of their relations to Arabic. **Prof. Avner Giladi** (University of Haifa) offered the audience a taste of Arabic literature analyzing a story written by the Egyptian writer Mahmoud Taymour. In his lecture he focused on the Arab patriarchal family, emphasizing the father-daughter relationship in light of the customs in Arab

society. The famous poet **Marwan Makhoul** spoke about Arabic poetry and its translation. **Prof. Nahem Ilan** (Ono Academic College) gave a lecture on medieval Jewish Arabic texts, such as halachic monographs, poetry, responsa, philosophy and literature, which contributed to the shaping of Jewish culture. The calligrapher **Yusuf Abu Madigham** spoke about Arabic calligraphy explaining and illustrating the manner it is done. **Dr. Alon Fragman** (BGU) dealt with the Arab Spring and the writings of Arab women, using the internet to voice their criticism of their lack of freedom in the Arab world. At the end of the event the audience was invited to watch a fascinating Arabic hip-hop show performed by the group SAZ. ♦



Modern Political Trials in the Middle East and Beyond

The Chaim Herzog Center in cooperation with Dr. Avi Rubin from the Department of Middle East Studies at BGU organized an international conference on political trials – a topic hardly ever dealt with in international conferences anywhere. Our goal was to examine the relationship between law and politics in the Middle East and beyond. We invited scholars from Israel and abroad who have studied political trials. **Dr. Avi Rubin** opened the conference pointing out that there are almost no conferences on political trials and proposed a theoretical and procedural framework. He pointed out that the definition of the term 'political trials' is fraught with complexity. Such a definition is all the more necessary in light of the huge amount of research in the social-legal field that shows the indivisible connection between law and politics in every aspect. The conclusions drawn from a critical view on the constitutional sphere further complicate the distinction between 'ordinary' and 'political' trials. In his opening address, **Prof. Yoram Meital**, head of the Chaim Herzog Center, moved from the theoretical debate to the discussion of case studies of political trials. In many studies the references to political trials pertain to the court rulings, or in some cases to the media coverage. Only very few studies of political trials deal with the events unfolding in the courtroom between the judges, the prosecution, the witnesses, and the defendants. Moreover,



very few have dealt with the correspondence between the events in the courtroom and the public discourse about them. In other words, only a few studies have been published about the rhetoric inside the courtroom and how it permeates, or is accessible to the public and is used in the structuring of the categories in which the government and its opponents perceive each other. In Meital's view, the construction of categories and the rhetoric should be addressed in the discussion on political trials.

The first panel, titled "Special Courts, Special Laws", was chaired by **Prof. Haggai Ram** (BGU). The first lecturer, **Prof. Taner Akçam** (Clark University) talked about the military tribunal on the Armenian genocide, operating in Istanbul between 1919 and 1922. When World War I ended with the Ottoman defeat, the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) lost its power and the succeeding governments launched criminal investigations

against the CUP leaders and members of the wartime government for crimes committed against Armenians. A special military tribunal was established in Istanbul and between 1919 and 1922, more than 60 trials were held trying approximately 200 defendants. In later years, both the trials themselves as well as the information and documents discovered during them were either forgotten or met with great suspicion. In his lecture, Taner shed light on some of the major objections raised against the trials at the military tribunal in Istanbul. These objections can be summarized briefly as follows: 1) the Ottoman legal system did not have the necessary standards for a just trial; 2) the trials represented "the justice of the victors" and were placed on the agenda for the sake of revenge; 3) the accused were tortured and their rights to defense were restricted or not at all recognized; 4) no witnesses were heard throughout the hearings;

and 5) one cannot rely on the documents originating in these trials because as the originals were lost and it is impossible to check their accuracy.

In his lecture, **Prof. Yoram Meital** (BGU) sought to understand political trials through the case study of the trial of Hasan al-Hudaybi, the second General Guide of the Muslim Brothers, that took place in Egypt in 1954. Two years after the coup in Cairo the regime was for the first time facing criticism from Egyptian society that focuses on why the army continues to hold the reins of power after the coup. This was a very serious political crisis at the time. The official discourse was that the army saved the country. In addition, the officers' regime made considerable use of emergency laws. Initially everyone supported the officers' revolution: the Muslim Brothers, the Communists, the liberals, and others. About a year after the revolution, a severe political crisis became discernible when the officers tried to enact a new constitution and agrarian laws and to impose a military government. During the crisis, the relations between the regime and the Muslim Brothers, who had initially been 'Abd al-Nasser's allies in the coup, deteriorated. Thus, friends became bitter enemies, and the political trails against members and leaders of the Muslim Brothers played a critical role in that process. These trials are the focus of Meital's latest book.

Prof. Mithi Mukherjee (University of Colorado) gave a lecture on law, colonialism, and sovereignty in nineteenth-century India. In January 1858 a British military commission in India set up by the East India Company's government tried and convicted the sovereign of

India, Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, for treason, rebellion, and waging war against the colonial state. This political trial came in the aftermath of a violent mass rebellion against British rule in 1857, which was recognized as the largest and most determined anti-colonial war that any European empire had faced until then. A threshold moment in the history of India, the trial, conviction, and banishment of Emperor Zafar announced the end of the Mughal Empire and the beginning of the British Raj under Queen Victoria.

Through an analysis of this political trial, Mukherjee explored the relationship between law, empire, and the discourse of sovereignty in nineteenth-century India. She showed that at this historic moment of the establishment of the British Indian Empire in 1858, it was in the language of law that the national sovereignty and freedom of the people of India were abrogated, and India turned formally into a colony. One of the first examples of victor's justice, it was in this trial that war as an act of violence was presented as an act of justice, necessary to restore "law and order" and

liberate the people. Henceforth, anticolonial resistance and war would by their very nature be "illegal" and criminal. This legal abrogation of the discourse of national sovereignty in the colonies and the translation of military victory and occupation into law went on to determine both the discourse of empire and that of anti-colonialism in the twentieth century.

The second panel, titled "Performance in Court", was chaired by **Dr. Lior Sternfeld** (BGU). In the first lecture, **Prof. Guy Beiner** (BGU) spoke about political martyrdom in Irish nationalist speeches from the dock. Throughout the long nineteenth century, the Irish nationalist movement, and in particular its radical republican wing, perfected the use of 'protests of Irish patriotism' in speeches at political trials. These were presented to the public in the anthology *Speeches from the Dock* (first published in 1867 and re-issued repeatedly in multiple editions), which was edited by three highly influential nationalist politicians and writers, the brothers T.D. (Timothy Daniel), A.M. (Alexander Martin) and D.B. (Denis Baylor) Sullivan.



Taner Akcam, Yoram Meital, Iris Agmon, Haggai Ram



Tatiana Borisova presents her recent study

This popular book became a canonical text in the struggle for Irish independence. Of the speeches reproduced in the collection, arguably the most memorable one is that of the pre-eminent political martyr Robert Emmet (who was tried and executed for leading a failed insurrection in 1803, just shortly after the formation of the United Kingdom). Inspection of this oratorical masterpiece reveals the effectiveness of rhetoric in a courtroom in which a guilty verdict is inevitable, yet a struggle for how the trial will be remembered by posterity is being waged. Similarly, popular reception of the speeches at the 1867 trial of the 'Manchester Martyrs' (three militant republicans, convicted for the killing of a policeman in a Fenian prisoner-rescue operation) trumpeted the subversive catchphrase 'God Save Ireland', which inspired the composition of a ballad that became an anthem for revolutionary activism.

Dr. Avi Rubin (BGU) spoke about legal formalism for political aims in the Yildiz case in 1881. In June 1881 a group of Ottoman senior officials

stood trial and were convicted for alleged complicity in the murder of the deposed Sultan Abdülaziz five years earlier. Among them was the world-famous statesman, former Grand Vizier and the leading reformer Ahmed Midhat Pasha. In his lecture, Rubin offered a socio-legal interpretation of the trial in light of recent scholarship on Ottoman legal changes in the nineteenth century. He argued that the trial of Midhat Pasha was the first modern political trial in the Middle East. The many breaches evident in the trial can be considered as such only when assessed against a certain context which he identifies as Ottoman legalism. This specific context was a new development in Ottoman socio-legal history, an outcome of some three decades of experimentation with new procedures and the gradual advent of a new legal culture.

The third panel, titled "Mores on Trial", was chaired by **Dr. Iris Agmon** (BGU). The presentation of **Prof. Tatiana Borisova** (St. Petersburg School of Social Sciences and Humanities) tackled the hero/victim issue in political trials. Her research

demonstrated that while the jurors' acquittal of the famous terrorist Vera Zasulich in 1878 has often been interpreted in terms of sympathy for 'a desperate girl', it was previously underestimated that legal and political claims also played an important role in the trial. The trial had a clear political meaning: Zasulich's attempt on Trepov's life was interpreted as an act of societal self-defense. Zasulich was presented as a victim of a society which could no longer tolerate arbitrariness by authorities. Thus, a true hero of the trial – terrorist Zasulich could be acquitted and celebrated as a victim. Her bloody attempt itself was sidelined in the process, her rebellion against "arbitrary actions of the state" was presented as an act of total despair. In Borisova's view, the case suggests that political trials seem to impose a script of victim/hero relationships to present a certain vision of the allocation of power in a society.

In his lecture **Dr. Amnon Yuval** (Seminar Hakibbutsim College) gave a comparative view on political trials in France and Britain during the 1790s. The two countries, the forefathers of Western liberalism and republican democracy, experienced a formative stormy period during the 1790s. Whereas France went through a dramatic political and social revolution, in Britain that was since February 1793 in a state of war against France, the government made great efforts to prevent such a possibility at home by suppressing rising demands for political reform. In both countries during this decade political figures of the opposition were charged with crimes such as "sedition", "conspiracy", and "treason". In France, thousands were sentenced to death by the "extraordinary" *tribunal*

révolutionnaire and were executed by guillotine, mainly during the bloody period of 1793-94. In Britain, the number of political trials was much lower, and the punishments usually less severe, but nevertheless radicals were harshly persecuted and suffered from silencing laws which had a political chilling effect.

It was this dynamic that made some of them call Prime Minister Pitt's policy "reign of terror", analogical in their eyes to the infamous Jacobin policy in France. Historian Clive Emsley called this comparison "ludicrous" and rightly emphasized several important differences between the two cases. To be sure, the number of people who were arrested, tried, convicted and executed is incomparable. Furthermore, whereas in France the government was revolutionary and defendants (allegedly) counter-revolutionaries, in England it was the other way around. However, and contrary to common assumptions, it seems that there were also some considerable similarities between the judicial systems in those two countries: the verdict

by jury; the political-ideological bias of the court; its effort to keep at least a semblance of fair and legitimate procedure; the possibility of defendants to be acquitted, even at the height of the Jacobin Terreur; and the melodramatic and performative speeches made by defendants during trials. By comparing the political trials in France and Britain during the 1790s, Yuval tried to draw conclusions regarding their legacy in the modern political and judicial culture in Western democracies. To date, such a comparison has hardly been made by historians.

The lecture by **Prof. Yigal Halfin** (Tel Aviv University) dealt with the Moscow show trials. These trials were a culmination of the Communist effort to judge the soul, divide humanity into the good and the wicked. We must move beyond the obvious point that Stalinist security organs closed ranks with Communist Party organizations to eliminate resistance and free thinking. More than just a tool in the hands of Stalin in implementing his repressive policies, the secret police encapsulated the revolutionary ethos. This

challenges the view of the purges of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) as the terrible outcome of a breakdown of the Soviet legal system. It was not the absence of a legalistic procedure but the presence of a moral agenda—the belief that history needs assistance in separating the good individuals from the wicked ones—that drove these events, showing how security organs reinterpreted the project of the hermeneutics of the soul so dear to the Party. Halfin tried to substantiate his claim that the investigation of the soul preserved its essential traits as it migrated from one institutional setting to another.

Even a cursory look at the evidence since the early 1930s suggests that grassroots meetings were busy above their necks in judging individuals. Party members were "warned", "reprimanded", or "purged", and this information was carefully entered in their personal files. While censures carried no legal sanction, it is important to emphasize that adversarial procedures were routine when an "individual case" was discussed; comrades assumed the role of prosecutors and defense attorneys, and "final words" were registered in the protocols. In one form or another, trials permeated all Soviet social institutions, from the NKVD interrogation rooms to the Central Committee plena, from public rallies with agitated participants yelling out verdicts ("Wipe out Zinovievists from the Face of Earth", "Death to the Enemies of the People") to the more intimate gatherings where friends and colleagues exposed each other as "untrustworthy" or "double-dealing". Even the diary was a court of sorts, perhaps the most important of them all – it was there that the individual examined his/her political conscience. ♦



Amnon Yuval concluding remarks

Israel and the Middle East: Political Processes and Challenges Marking the Centenary of the Birth of President Chaim Herzog Z"l

In cooperation with the Herzog family and Yad Chaim Herzog, the Chaim Herzog Center organized a symposium marking the centenary of the birth of **President Chaim Herzog Z"l**. The event was held at the hall of center of the Council for a Beautiful Israel in Tel Aviv, which is named after President Herzog's widow, Aura Herzog, may she live long. The atmosphere at the symposium was very dignified and impressive. The event was attended by a large audience. **Dana Weiss**, a well-known media personality, chaired the symposium, in which Brigadier General, res. Michael (Mike) Herzog, Prof. Shlomo Avineri, and **Ms. Shimrit Meir** participated. The event was opened by Knesset Member Isaac (Bougie) Herzog, who spoke in the memory of his father, recounting his life, his marvelous work, and his steadfast optimistic spirit.

Chaim Herzog was born in Ireland in 1918, to an observing Jewish family, yet went to a Protestant school. Just as human beings shape history, history also shapes human beings, and it seems that Herzog's biography embodies this: When he was still a child, his father taught him that he belongs to a people with a unique historical path destined to do good. He immigrated to Israel in 1935 as a youngster who believed in the right of the Jewish people and swore that he would be willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of his people

and his homeland. In Israel he joined the ranks of the Haganah, and the swearing-in ceremony in a dark basement was his first contact with firearms. On the eve of the Second World War, Herzog was in Britain, where he went to study law in 1938. In London he saw the greatness of the British people during the heavy air bombardments of the *Blitz*. He experienced the tragedy of the Second World War as an officer in the British army – the invasion of Normandy, the first division that crossed into Nazi Germany, and the liberation of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. In 1948 he encountered the same determination and devotion in the Jewish *yishuv* that fought for Jerusalem and the establishment of the state.

In his lifetime, Herzog was witness to the establishment of the State of Israel and thus the dream, on which he

was raised, became reality. Herzog built the Israeli military intelligence during the War of Independence and then went as an IDF attaché to America, where helped to establish the first military ties between Israel and the United States. He returned to Israel to serve in military command positions and was again appointed head of the IDF intelligence with the rank of major general. During the Six-Day War, he became known to the public through his broadcasts to the nation. After the war, he was appointed the first military governor of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

After his discharge from the IDF Herzog turned the world of commerce and industry, and law, and from there entered the diplomatic arena as Israel's representative to the UN. In this position, he left an indelible mark when he tore up the UN



resolution that defined Zionism as racism. Later he was elected to the Knesset and from there reached the peak of his career as the sixth president of the State of Israel. Herzog was President of the State of Israel for two terms from 1983 until 1993.

Chaim Herzog combined several worlds in his life and legacy. As witness to the Holocaust and the resurrection, he did not take the State of Israel for granted. He wholeheartedly believed that the State of Israel is destined to be the nation-state of the Jewish people and that it should be strong and at the same time democratic and aspiring to justice. He saw human rights and human dignity as supreme values and wished that Israel would fulfill the prophetic promise of being “a light unto the nations”. His autobiographic book, *Living History*, was published in 1997. The book deals with the historical events he experienced that shaped him as well as the State of Israel. It may undoubtedly serve as a complementary source for the study of the history and culture of the Jewish people in the diaspora and in the Land of Israel.

Drawing on his rich life experience, Herzog continued to strive for new goals. One of his projects was the establishment of the Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy at BGU. The center supports research on the Middle East and fosters the development of academic relations between Israeli scholars and their colleagues from the Middle East and around the world. In addition, it organizes international conferences, seminars, and workshops at which scholars and public figures discuss political, social, and cultural issues that pertain to the nations and societies of the



Dana Weiss, Shimrit Meir, Shlomo Avineri, Michael (Mike) Herzog

Middle East and the neighboring regions.

During the evening, the Chaim Herzog Center scholarships were given to MA and PhD research students. The award ceremony was followed by the symposium, in which President Chaim Herzog's son **Brigadier General, res. Michael (Mike) Herzog, Prof. Shlomo Avineri** (Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and the journalist **Shimrit Meir** participated. They discussed Israel's status in the regional context and the challenges it faces there.

A couple of points stood out in the range of issues discussed at the symposium. For one, it was noted that there is a paradox in Israel's security setup. On the one hand, Israel does not face any existential threat: there is no danger of an attack by regular Arab armies as was the case until 1973; its economy is strong; despite all problems, the peace with Egypt and Jordan is stable; Israel's relations with some Arab countries are developing; its alliance with the United States is solid; and it has good working relations with Russia and China. On the other hand, Israel finds itself in recurring asymmetrical

confrontations with non-state actors such as Hizballah and Hamas, which do not pose any existential threat to Israel but constitute a real strategic challenge. Iran is trying to build a very dangerous military front against Israel in Syria and Lebanon, especially since the Iranian nuclear potential, that is currently restrained, is on the horizon. Moreover, the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian conflict casts a shadow over Israel's long-term strategic situation.

Secondly, with regard to relations between Israel and the United States, it was emphasized that while it is clear that the Israeli government must maintain as good as possible relations with any American administration and that the satisfaction of the Netanyahu government with Trump's administration is understandable, Israel has been careful not to be perceived as an ideological ally of a government, from which most of the world's democratic countries distance themselves, rejecting the values it represents.

The third point discussed were the Russian–Syrian ties: The return of Putin's Russia to the Middle East in Israel's

backyard requires serious consideration. On the tactical level, the Netanyahu government did indeed deal with the matter properly and succeeded in building ties with Russia. But it is not clear how much strategic thought was given to the matter.

The fourth point discussed was the relations between Israel and the region, especially the

Palestinians and the future of the negotiations. It was emphasized that a positive change regarding Israel is clearly perceivable in the public discourse in the social networks and the media in the Arab world. Nevertheless, one should not assume that this change will translate into Arab pressure on the Palestinians in favor of Israel. As for Israeli-

Palestinian relations, despite and perhaps because of the existing pessimism about the chances of negotiations with the Palestinians, every Israeli government should at least keep a window open for political separation in future and not allow it to be closed, as it would make it difficult for a solution to be found in future. ♦

BOOK EVENTS

Panel Marking the Publication of Israel Gershoni's Book War of the Weak Nations: Egypt in the Second World War (Hebrew)

The Chaim Herzog Center in cooperation with the publishing house Resling and Tolaat Sfarim (Bookworm) in Tel Aviv organized an evening panel marking the publication of the book *War of the Weak Nations* (Hebrew) by **Prof. Israel Gershoni** (Tel Aviv University). The evening was held in a festive atmosphere and was particularly fascinating. The hall was completely full. The audience were scholars and research students. Gershoni's book examines the history of Egypt against the background of the Second World War and its influence, from a new perspective. Though a careful review of the Egyptian press, caricatures, belles-lettres and even movies, his study investigates how the war found expression and was interpreted from the perspective of the Egyptians. Gershoni's main argument is that the overwhelming majority of Egyptians, including the government and the various

parties, the intellectuals and the middle classes, the media, and the population at large, identified with the British and the Allies and rejected pro-Nazi and pro-fascist views.

The panel was opened by **Prof. Amy Singer** (Tel Aviv University) who congratulated Prof. Gershoni on his impressive achievement and emphasized his eminent status as scholar of Egyptian history, in particular regarding the first half of the twentieth century. **Prof. Orit Bashkin** (University of Chicago) gave the first talk focusing on the historical and historiographical memory that shows how the image of Egypt's past regarding Nazism and Fascism was shaped. In her view, Gershoni showed convincingly that the Egyptian elite was not pro-Nazi and favored democratic ideas. Bashkin spoke about the way Gershoni studied the society in Egypt, namely through the press, that is what Egyptians read and what the intellectuals read – discerning how Egypt



was presented before and after the battle of El Alamein. The examination of popular representations in caricatures and in movies is a major contribution of the book. In fact, the book shows that Egypt was different from Iraq, Syria or the Palestinians regarding what was happening in the World War. In Egypt there was an anxiety about the war that was unique to the country. It is particularly

interesting how an impressive nation imagined itself as a weak one. Bashkin referred to Gershoni's refusal to draw on British archives and noted that there are perhaps other voices in those archives (such as the Muslim Brothers) that might have been overlooked. She concluded her lecture by addressing a Jewish issue: at the end of the twentieth century scholars and intellectuals in the press in Egypt and the Levant were preoccupied with the issue of anti-Semitism, and it was interesting to see that when they wrote about Nazism and fascism, there was no reference to the Jews. Therefore, if we compare this period to the time of the Arab cultural revival (*al-nahda*), we find that the intellectuals of the *nahda* period were fairer with regard to the Jewish issue.

Prof. Yoram Meital (BGU) emphasized Prof. Gershoni's international reputation as one of the most prominent historians of modern Egypt as well as his remarkable mastery of a variety of sources for his research, as is reflected in his book *The War of the Weak Nations*. Gershoni succeeded in drawing readers closer to the way the war was "read" by the Egyptian *effendiya*. Meital pointed out that the book does not only deal with the press, but also addresses the heated debate about how the 1952 Revolution remembered, or actually rewrote, the image of Egypt's past. In his book Gershoni shows that there was great variety in public opinion at the time, and thus offers new insights. Another important aspect of the book is its defiance of the Orientalist discourse. Meital also referred to the essentialist claim that Arab culture and society are incompatible with democracy, a view that Gershoni's research



Celebrating Greshoni's War of the Weak Nations

helps to refute. Meital suggested linking the theme presented in Gershoni's book to the debate on democratization. To his mind, there are two issues not covered in the book: For one the arrival of Jewish refugees from Europe who, seeking asylum in Egypt, turned to the local Jewish community that granted them protection; and the other concerns the title of the book which presents Egypt as a weak nation. Meital noted that the book actually proves that Egypt did not act as a weak nation; on the contrary, Gershoni's research presents Egyptian society as one with a strong principled position.

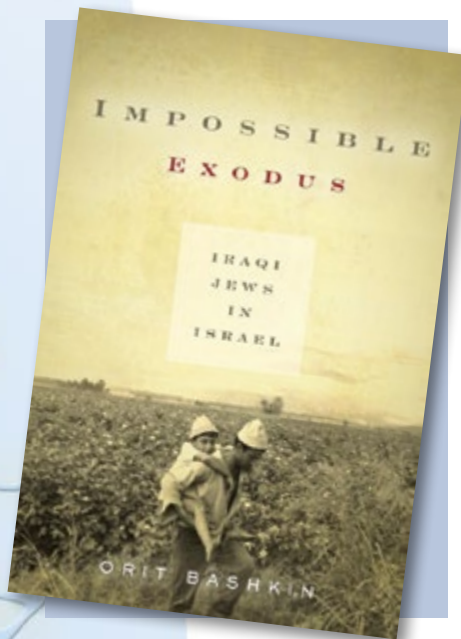
Prof. Israel Gershoni responded with great emotion to the discussants' lectures, noting that his book was not meant to deal with Jews. He spoke about the World Wars that shook the Middle East. When Hitler came to power and his influence in Europe increased, this had also a great impact on the Middle East. In 1939, before the war, it is discernable that there was propaganda speaking of a British enemy. Gershoni talked about what happened in Europe between 1933 and 1939:

about 200,000 Jews emigrated, about 30,000 were imprisoned in internment camps, some 20 committed suicide, and more. Gershoni showed that although the revolt in the Middle East caused casualties, only a few of the 700,000 Jews living in Middle Eastern countries lost their lives due to anti-Semitism. The Farhud in Iraq happened later. When one examines the Nazi propaganda in Egypt, it is clear that the pressure on the Jewish population was enormous. First of all, it seemed to the Jews in Egypt that Hitler was about to win. Moreover, the Arabic propaganda broadcasts on radio focused on virulent antisemitism against Jews (August and September 1941). Nevertheless, Jews were not murdered in Egypt for anti-Semitic reasons. In Gershoni's view, the Wafd and the Sa'ad parties protected the Jews, since it is inconceivable that under such incitement Jews would not be harmed if there was no one to protect them. In fact, whereas the Jews in Europe were persecuted and incarcerated in concentration camps, the Jewish community in Egypt continued to enjoy their regular lives in safety. ♦

Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel

The issue of minorities in the Middle East has been gaining momentum in recent years, and over the past decade we have witnessed a significant change in this trend.

Prof. Orit Bashkin (University of Chicago), a leading scholar on Iraqi Jews, examined in her latest book the history of the immigration of Iraqi Jews to Israel in the 1950s. Drawing on contemporary stories, memoirs and newspaper reports she traced the Israeli state's attitude and conduct toward the new immigrants from Iraq until 1967. Bashkin opened her book with the story of 'Ezra Susu, who was living in a transit camp. One day he went to a welfare office and committed suicide as a protest action. In Bashkin's view, the story of Iraqi Jews in Israel was one of migration rather than 'Aliyah', and the approach taken by the state toward that immigrant society was social engineering. The state institutions were staffed by people pursuing their plans and strategies, who wanted to determine where and in which positions the immigrants would work, and even control the number of children in a family, which the immigrants themselves opposed. Bashkin argued that the immigrants were more liberal than the state. Although they came from a country with a corrupt political system, it was a system in which elections were held, and in this sense their views were more democratic. Bashkin sought to understand the opposition to the state by groups that have not yet been studied, especially women and children. In her view, the institutionalized system



turned the immigrants' lives into hell, but they understood and learned how to use it for their own benefit. Her study sheds light on the strong opposition to the state, as for example with regard to the state's attempt to cut off the immigrants from the Arabic language. There is plenty of evidence and material in Arabic that attests to a rich Arabic culture, that only later diminished.

The first chapter of Bashkin's book is titled "Human Material", the term used by the Jewish Agency for such immigrants. In the chapter she dealt with the experience in the transit camps: the lack of no proper housing, the humiliation of moving into tin-sheds or shacks, no access to water, poor nutrition, no medical care, abortions and death caused by illness and the lack of treatment. Bashkin used the term 'transit camp' as association to a refugee camp. In the transit camp, rich and poor were living next to each other; important educators became characters ridiculed by

children in the camp; the social structures changed; rich women found themselves living next to poor ones, while they had to function against the background of their husbands' social decline. Although the social transformation gave rise to many quarrels, there was also solidarity among the immigrants, which mainly found expression in helping and protecting the children.

The second chapter deals with children in the transit camps. Bashkin pointed out that this was the most difficult chapter to write. There were articles in the Arabic press reporting what happened to children in the camps (who burned in tents or had accidents) and the consequences for children when did not see their parents, who had to work for long hours every day. Many children aged eight and nine went to work, mainly in agriculture and domestic services. The immigrants felt depressed and unable to adjust. Bashkin showed how schools in the transit camps, which were of poor quality, became important "agents" for the indoctrination of national holidays. Another aspect in the children's lives were the harsh winters: The state did not want to evacuate entire families from the transit camps, fearing that they might not return there, so they evacuated only children. On the one hand there was an act of solidarity when people hosted such children, but on the other hand, it was also a miserable chapter in Israel's history, when many people refused to host children from transit camps. Some asked about the child's ethnic origin, or others whether the parents are

religious. Meanwhile the parents in the camps were afraid that their children might disappear. The children “crossed borders”: for a short period, they visited homes with toys and warm rooms and returned to the camps at the end of the winter.

Immigrants in the transit camps were an important political force and they could vote. There were people from the transit camps who joined Mapai, like Shlomo Hillel. Mapam also needed votes from the transit camps, and the socialists joined the party. Iraqi immigrants also joined the Communist party. The immigrants mainly depended on state institutions and the Histadrut, which were controlled by Mapai (Namir, Golda Meir, Eshkol, and Yoseftal). In 1977, the Likud, headed by Menachem Begin, came to power with the votes of Mizrahim who had lived in transit camps. But it turned out that also Begin was infected by racism. His Herut party did not accept Iraqi immigrants as members because in their opinion there were no Iraqis fluent in Hebrew. The state did not recognize their degrees and professional training, and thus the immigrants could not get proper work, and their property was not returned to them either. Births were another example of discrimination: Initially the state preferred that women gave birth in the transit camps and offered a grant for those who did. Later the authorities encouraged women to give birth in hospital, but women were afraid that their children would be stolen. The opposition was expressed in songs against Ben Gurion and Histadrut institutions. Bashkin surveyed the struggles of immigrants, such as petitions they signed demanding the dismissal of a corrupt manager of one of the transit camps,



or calling for price control, or protesting against a specific tragedy. They organized hunger strikes and demonstrations in the 1950s that expressed strong opposition. The state's exploitation of the people living in the transit camps took various forms. Yet, these immigrants did not accept matters as they were but objected and tried to change the situation.

The Iraqis were settled in groups, and their identity was formed in distinction to other communities, not only Ashkenazim. There was nostalgia for the home and neighborhood in Iraq; and there were reports on what was happening there. Iraqi culture was preserved, including the use of Arabic. Iraqis used their Arabic to integrate into the state and its institutions such as the army and the Mossad, or as Arabic teachers in schools. Iraqi Jews operated the radio station Voice of Israel in Arabic and organized a theater in Arabic. Paradoxically, they used their Arabic in order to integrate into the state. At the same time, the Mizrahi issue was raised. The immigrants understood that they were Israelis and would not return to Iraq and that they

should integrate into society. Iraqi youngsters who had moved to kibbutzim wrote about discrimination they encountered there and outside the kibbutz. This finds expression in the literary work of Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas, Shalom Katav, and Avraham Ovdia. Bashkin emphasized not only the suffering, but also the heroism of the immigrants at the time.

The discussant **Dr. André Levy** (BGU) referred to the title of the book and noted that it reminded him of a book about the Moroccan immigrants written in the 1960s. Levy praised Bashkin's ability to discern subtle nuances and shades of behavior and to present these convincingly to the reader. In his opinion, Bashkin offers a broad view on the time, ranging from the people themselves to the political parties. Levy mentioned the category “Mizrahi”, which connects under one heading Jewish immigrants from Yemen, Iraq, Tripoli, etc. This creates tension since despite the similarities, there is actually no similarity given that they have no common history. This tension paralyzes the ability to speak effectively. By



André Levy, Orit Bashkin, Yoram Meital

contrast, Bashkin manages to speak effectively because the immigrants' fates were different.

There is no common culture. The category "Mizrahi" leads to opaqueness because it is

too general, whereas specific discussions turn out to be more persuasive. Another point noted by Levy is the manifestation of concealed violence. He argued that violence is not only a cultural phenomenon, but may also stem from the encounter with Israeli bureaucracy, as for example the violence employed by Moroccans against the bureaucracy in order to achieve their goals. Bashkin has shown the violence, the power of the bureaucracy and the oppression. There are almost no Ashkenazim in the book. There is the state, the socialist positions; the "actors" in the book do not appear as Ashkenazim, and therefore he thinks that these "shrieks" will not be heard. ♦

Panel on the Occasion of the Publication of the Poetry Collection Yamim Meshonim hem ele, Yafati

In recent years Israeli readers have been given a glimpse of Iranian culture, amid all the noise about the nuclear issue. This window has single-handedly been provided by the intellectual, journalist and translator **Orly Noy**. She has translated three wonderful novels and two books of poetry, each revealing various layers of Iranian life and the interface between literature, politics, poetry, and history.

A collection of modern Iranian poetry titled *Yamim meshonim hem ele, Yafati* [These are strange days, my beautiful one] has recently been published by KTAV Publishing House presenting some of the best Iranian writers, in Farsi alongside Orly Noy's Hebrew translation. On the evening of

the book launch at the Chaim Herzog Center, the audience could learn something about the wider context, with which the poems included in this important collection deal, and about the writers and their political, national and sexual identities. The seminar room was filled with an audience enthusiastic about the collection and the discussion that developed. The fascinating conversation between the speakers was only interrupted because it was time to leave in light of the late hour.

Orly Noy warmly thanked the Chaim Herzog Center and especially Prof. Yoram Meital and Dr. Lior Sternfeld, for hosting the event on the occasion of the publication of the poetry collection, which was very moving for her.



Beyond the obvious cultural field, modern Iranian poetry operates in both the political and the social spheres, as poetry at

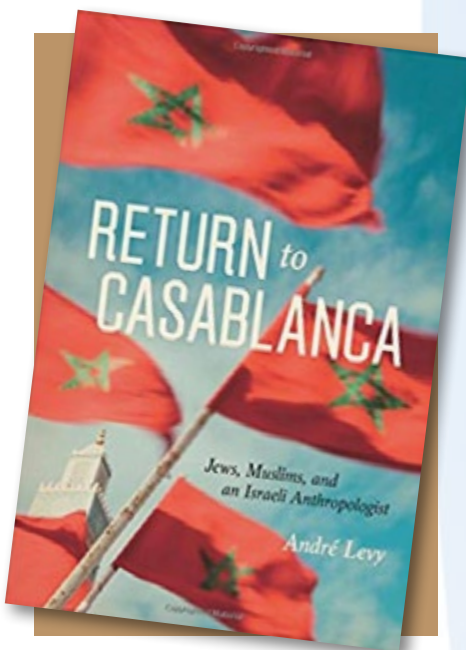
its best is supposed to do. The learned conversation, chaired by Dr. Sternfeld, made it possible to present the poems in their wider context and thus to provide a glimpse of Iranian society, which, unfortunately, is mostly treated with hostility and superficiality in the Israeli discourse. Orly Noy concluded the event, saying that the perception that one can learn about Iran through the works of its poets no less, and perhaps even more, than through the speeches of its leaders is not common in Israeli academia. Therefore, she was particularly happy about the event at the Chaim Herzog Center. ♦



Yoram Meital, Lior Sternfeld, Orly Noy

Return to Casablanca: Jews, Muslim and an Israeli Anthropologist (2015)

Prof. Yoram Meital (BGU) opened the event describing the abundant research published in the last decade on Jewish societies in Muslim countries. He stressed that Levy's research was in many ways pioneering and years ahead of current trends in the field. Meital noted that the issue of Jews who remained in their Arab homeland and chose not to immigrate to Israel has not been sufficiently studied. Despite their small numbers the issue of Jews still living in Morocco is significant and deserves scholarly attention. Levy does not only take the readers to a cultural conception as well as to the national context, but also moves beyond it. **Prof. Nir Avieli** (BGU) praised Levy's book and his focus on the small group of Jews who have remained in Morocco. Like Meital, Avieli also referred to the absence



of Jews in Morocco, since the fewer they are, the less scholarly attention they receive. In Avieli's view, the anthropologist André Levy's academic recordings are ethnographic writing and a very impressive achievement, published by University of Chicago Press.

The next speaker was **Dr. Orit Ouaknine-Yekutieli** (BGU) noting the inspiration that Levy has given her to study Morocco. In her lecture she tried to "read" Levy, the friend and teacher, both intellectually and poetically. In her opinion, Levy's book relates to many frameworks of Jewish-Muslim relations, aiming to bridge gaps in order to understand where there is disagreement. Levy has built a bridge between history and anthropology. He left Casablanca at the age of five; and in his book, he describes the blurry figures he remembers. He realized that there is a world that was lost and returned to Casablanca, participating in a heritage trip and undertaking field research on the Jews living in the city, while considering various methodological and anthropological issues. Among other things the book deals with the relation between homeland and diaspora. Ouaknine-Yekutieli



André Levy and Orit Ouaknine-Yekutieli

about Moroccan Jews in the past and present. Schroeter addressed the meaning of the words 'home' and 'diaspora' – a topic that he has studied as well. Relating to his Jewish-American origins, he noted that he has different assumptions and basic conceptions due to his origins that differ from Levy's Moroccan ones. Schroeter thanked Levy for his book which helped him to refine his own research and to gain a different personal perspective on the subject.

In his response at the end of the panel **Dr. André Levy** (BGU) spoke about the growing research on the Maghreb. Although most Jews have left Morocco, there is still some presence. That was the trigger that intrigued him about the issue of ethnicity. Years ago, he was criticized for his research on heritage trips. This silencing was a challenge flooding his earlier memories as a child that grew up without being able to read about his history. The texts he read in high school did not deal with Jews from the East. At first, he thought that the community was burying itself, but in time he realized that he was mistaken in his assessment. In the historiography of Morocco, colonialism seems to have existed and then disappeared.

Students and faculty members from various departments participated in the discussion. ♦

argued that its lack of a thesis allows the book to move between opposite arguments leaving the reader in discomfort and with different models, as for example regarding the connection between history and anthropology. It is possible to move between the stories. According to Levy, the book has no thesis since it is a journey on a variety of paths, including investigations and turnabouts. Yet, the journey has a form, content and even order, despite its appearance. While reviewing the chapters of the book, Ouaknine-Yekutieli traced nostalgia for the colonial era. Regarding Jewish-Muslim relations in Casablanca, the book shows that the attempt to separate and isolate failed because of the

space where Jews and Muslims meet in the Moroccan cultural context. The book also deals with the intergenerational relationship with parents who left Morocco and whose memories do not "mediate" toward reality. The parents' pre-nationalist reality has not been passed on to the children. The latter are a generation that talks about and deals with identity. The book focuses on the loss and the immigration to Israel.

Prof. Daniel Schroeter (University of Minnesota) noted that research like Levy's requires courage since it exposes layers of vulnerability and anxieties and has a dimension of self-discovery. In Schroeter's assessment, Levy succeeded very well and also added important knowledge

Robert St. John Prize Ceremony

Lecture by the 2018 recipient Josef Federman "Independent Journalism: An Uphill Struggle"

The Robert St. John Prize for 2018 was awarded to **Josef Federman**, AP Bureau Chief and Chairman of

the Foreign Press Association, an accomplished journalist who has covered developments in the Middle East for many years.

Under the auspices of the Robert St. John Chair in Objective Middle East Reporting, the Chaim Herzog Center invited

Federman to give a lecture during the award ceremony that was part of the events within the framework of the 48th Board of Governors meeting at BGU. **Prof. Yoram Meital**, Chair of the Chaim Herzog Center, opened the award ceremony and introduced the 2018 recipient. Federman's lecture, titled "Independent Journalism: An Uphill Struggle", offered a piercing analysis of the state of the media in the era of social media and "fake news".

"Thank you to everyone in this room for inviting me today and giving me this recognition. It is a huge honor and something I never expected. Many of you may not know that Robert St. John spent an important part of his career at the AP. That is just another reason why I was thrilled to accept this honor, and why the AP was so supportive", he said.

Despite painting a gloomy picture of the widening divide between Israelis and Palestinians in the 15 years since he joined the AP's office in Jerusalem, Federman is actually optimistic about the role of journalism these days.

"The news industry is one of the few professions where Israelis, Palestinians and foreigners all work together, as colleagues, committed hopefully to the same goal", he said, "The dozens of journalists covering this place may not agree on everything. But the combination of world-class journalistic standards, along with the insights a diverse staff can bring, hopefully provides a rich picture of what is going on here from all sides".

He outlined the dangers of social media's news feed – the "echo chambers" that show you only opinions with which you agree, the proliferation of fake news and sites parading as trusted news sources, as well as the drastic shift in

advertising revenue to social media platforms which has doomed many a newspaper to the dustbin of history in recent years. He stressed, however, that he remains enthusiastic about the future of journalism.

"I'd like to tell you why I'm actually optimistic, why in many ways we are in a golden age of journalism. You see, journalists are a stubborn and hard-working bunch, a stiff-necked people as we might say in this part of the world. And we are not ready to roll over".

"In this world of information overload, people are looking for sources they can trust. That is what sets apart places like *The Associated Press* and other traditional media sources. The AP has an unmatched global footprint, with bureaus in virtually every country on the planet. And most important, we have standards, extremely high standards. That means that information must be reliable. We check and double check our sources of information, and we tightly restrict our use of anonymous sources. We consult and collaborate and have intense internal debates. I like to tell my own staff that as important as it is to break a story, I would rather be right than be first. If something doesn't feel right, make another call and speak to another source before running with it", he said, explaining his editorial philosophy.

"Like other large organizations, we have people who work on "fact checks", looking at the veracity of claims by politicians", he continued, "It is no accident that our fact checks, and those at other news organizations, are extremely popular with readers. People appreciate information they can rely on".

"So while we face obstacles like never before, today's

generation of journalists is also reporting some of the best stories of our times. Look at the impact that places like *The New York Times* and the *New Yorker* had this year, by breaking the story of producer Harvey Weinstein and spawning the global #MeToo movement. Other Pulitzer Prize winners this year broke stories about Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election and the American opioid crisis. My colleagues at the AP were recognized for a series that showed the devastation wrought upon the northern Iraqi city of Mosul in the U.S. defeat of Islamic State fighters", Federman noted.

While the major news stories of the day are his bread and butter, "The stories that stick with me are the ones about individuals. About seven years ago, I took a ride to the town of Yokneam up north to write about a new program used to teach Arabic to Jewish Israeli schoolchildren. It turns out that for decades, in a country with a sizeable Arab population, most Israeli kids learned Arabic from Jewish teachers. I went to observe a program in which an Arab teacher was teaching Jewish kids her mother tongue.

"The scene was heartwarming. A young teacher, named Maram Afour, invited me into her classroom, and the kids absolutely adored her. Not only was she teaching the kids how to speak Arabic, she was teaching them about Arab culture, about Arab family life, about her children, about humanity. In her own way, she was breaking down all of those barriers that I spoke about earlier.

"Those are my favorite types of stories. Taking something small, like a classroom in a small town, and telling the world something bigger about

modern Israel. That is what journalism is. Putting yourself in someone else's shoes, seeing things through their eyes, and hopefully enlightening the world just a little bit more about this amazing, infuriating, gut-wrenching, tragic and uplifting place. These are the types of

stories you will never find on politicians' YouTube sites, and this is why I ask every one of you to encourage, and support and seek out good, objective and independent journalism", he concluded.

Federman mentioned that the AP archivists were quite

enthusiastic about locating materials written by or about Robert St. John, of which he had printed out a sampling. One find, he had printed and framed: A photo of Robert St. John with David Ben-Gurion, which will be sent to St. John's stepdaughter in Washington D.C. ♦

The Chaim Herzog Center Annual Scholarships Award

MA Thesis

Inna blach, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Reforms in Dagestan's Sharia courts in the first decade after the communist revolution (1917-1927)

Mayan Lalush, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Medical Discourse on Sex and Sexuality in early twentieth Century Egypt

Encouragement Scholarship:

Atar David, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
Nation Building, Social Contract and Food Subsidy in Egypt, 1919-1939

PH.D Dissertations

Noa Davidyan, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
'The Muslim Sisters section' in Egypt

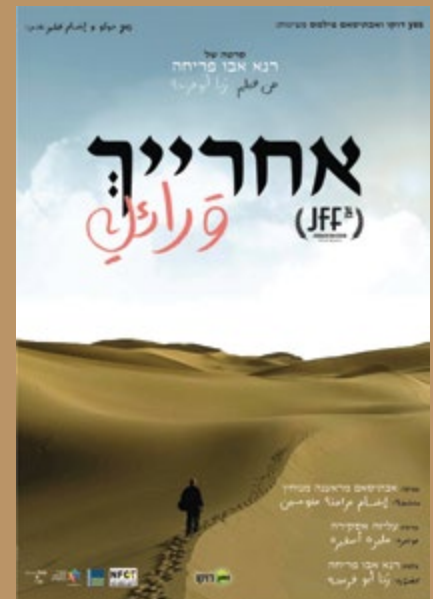
Eli Osheroff, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
The Palestine Problem, the Jewish Question and Forgotten Political Solutions: The Arab Perspective, 1920-1967

Jama'a Vol. 24

This academic year, 2018-2019, the interdisciplinary Journal of Middle East Studies, **Jama'a**, embarked on a new path, with half of its editorial board replaced, and with a new editor-in-chief, Haggai Ram, from BGU's Department of Middle East Studies. The new team is presently in the process of producing the journal's 24th issue, which will include original articles and book reviews written by both graduate students and established researchers. The issue is scheduled for publication in January-February 2019. The Journal's 25th issue will be a theme issue, dedicated to Jews and Christians in Muslim cultures. Jointly edited by Haggai Ram, Orit Ouaknine-Yekutieli, Director of the Herzog Center, and Menashe Anzi, from BGU's Department of Jewish History, the special issue will include original studies by members of the Forum for the Study of Jews and Christians in Muslim Cultures, which is led by Ouaknine-Yekutieli.



MOVIES - Screening and Discussion



NEWSLETTER 2018

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- ▶ Academic and Administrative Coordinator:
Dr. Sigal Goorji
- ▶ **Adi Burshtein**, Assistant

Conferences & Events

November 13-14, 2017

Conference: Beer-Sheva and the First World War, 1917-2017

December 13, 2017

Movie and Discussion: *In Her Footsteps* by Rana Abu Fraiha

December 17, 2017

Symposium: In Shifting Story – Israel and the Developments in Syria and Lebanon

December 27, 2017

Book Talk: *The War of the Weak Nations: Egypt in the Second World War* by Israel Gershoni (Hebrew)

January 8, 2018

Movie and Discussion: *Arab Movie* and Discussion by the Director Eyal Sagi Bizawi

March 13, 2018

Book Talk: *Impossible Exodus: Iraqi Jews in Israel* by Orit Bashkin

April 16, 2018

Conference: Israel and Palestine 1948-2018: New Research

April 30, 2018

Conference: Between Arabic and Hebrew: Translation and its Challenges

May 3, 2018

Arabic-Language Day

May 7, 2018

Book Talk: *These are Bizarre Days, My Beauty* by Orly Noy (Poetry Iranian Collection Translated into Hebrew)

May 8, 2018

Robert St. John Prize Ceremony, Key Note by the Recipient Josef Federman

May 23, 2018

Movie and Discussion: *The Ancestral Sin*, and Discussion with the Director David Deri

June 6, 2018

International Conference: Modern Political Trials in the Middle East and Beyond

June 12, 2018

Book Talk: *Return to Casablanca: Jews, Muslims and an Israeli Anthropologist* by André Levy

July 7, 2018

Symposium: Israel and the Middle East: Political Processes and Challenges – Marking the Centennial of the Birth of President Chaim Herzog

July 7, 2018

The Chaim Herzog Center Annual Scholarships Award

2017 2018