

NAMAT

Woman

Changing Lives for
90 Years!



Spring 2016

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NA'AMAT

Woman



Oded Halahmy

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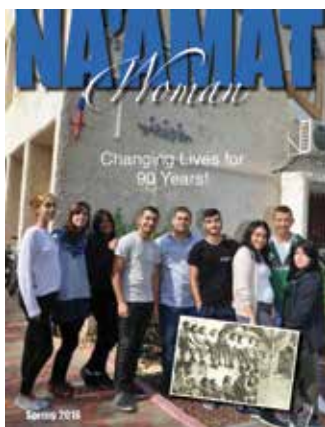
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Our cover:

Then and now —
Rahel Yanait Ben-Zvi
talks to students at
a NA'AMAT agricultural
school in 1944; and
today's students at
a technological high
school in Holon.

Photo by Rivka Finder; small photo
from the NA'AMAT USA archives.

Mission Statement

The mission of NA'AMAT USA is to enhance the status of women and children in Israel and the United States as part of a worldwide progressive Jewish women's organization. Its purpose is to help NA'AMAT Israel provide educational and social services, including day care, vocational training, legal aid for women, absorption of new immigrants,

community centers, and centers for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence. NA'AMAT USA advocates on issues relating to women's rights, the welfare of children, education and the United States-Israel relationship. NA'AMAT USA also helps strengthen Jewish and Zionist life in communities throughout the United States. NA'AMAT USA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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President

Dear Haverot,

NA'AMAT USA has much to celebrate this 90th Anniversary Year — 90 years of continuous support for our sister organization NA'AMAT Israel.

We've been part of NA'AMAT from the early days when women who had made aliyah to pre-state Israel established what grew into one of the world's largest women's organizations. Truly "Pioneer Women" (our own early name), they were Israel's first feminists, determined to get out of the kitchen and work side-by-side with the men in building the Jewish state and the labor movement. Our partnership has truly enriched both our Israeli sisters and the women of NA'AMAT USA.

Working together since 1925, we have sustained and expanded our broad network of social services, educational facilities and day care centers throughout Israel. For 90 years, we have advocated for the rights and well-being of women, children and families in both Israel and the United States.

This year is very special as NA'AMAT USA clubs, councils and area offices across the United States fill our calendars with activities and events honoring the nine decades of our unique organization. We celebrate our volunteers and staff who have shaped NA'AMAT's growth and direction both here and in Israel.

We pride ourselves on being the go-to organization for Israelis in need. In just the past year we have met the challenge of fulfilling the many requests from NA'AMAT Israel: renovations and increased security for our day care centers, professional training and university scholarships, major funding for our technological high schools and special programs for our youth villages Ayanot and Kanot. We have supported services

for women through the Circle of Life and Chai campaigns. And now we've launched our major 90th anniversary project — a women's health center in Sderot, modeled after our successful facility in Karmiel. This is indeed a pioneer undertaking for Sderot, long bombarded by rockets from Gaza.

We would not have been able to accomplish so much without you, the haverot of NA'AMAT USA. You have brought energy and enthusiasm to the challenges of funding and nurturing these first-rate services and programs. Our 90th anniversary activities — from small fundraisers to large community events — build growing awareness of our work.

Our new national office staff has increased the impact of our work in developing and supporting many new membership and public relations opportunities through social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Watch for our redesigned website, soon to be launched, and new membership and fundraising brochures in the next few months. An engaging 10-minute video about NA'AMAT USA is now available.

With a fresh look and easy navigation, the website (www.naamat.org) will include news you can use — photos, information about our services in Israel, organizational updates, special features and newly designed donation forms. You'll be able to download current and past issues of our award-winning magazine, *Na'amat Woman*, convenient for sharing with friends, family and potential members.

I hope you've enjoyed the Spotlight series of interviews with NA'AMAT Israel's professional staff members who have been featured in What's Up With NA'AMAT?, our national email newsletter, and on the website. We'll continue to spotlight NA'AMAT's women of action on the website — features that can be used for your newsletters, programming

and publicity.

We can all take pride in the great response in dues collection this fiscal year, with reminders sent directly from our national office membership department. Our 90th life membership sale — only \$180 until June 30, 2016 — is bringing in many new life members.

We look forward to two major events this landmark year. The first, our highest honor, bears the name of the woman who led NA'AMAT USA in the early 1930s — Golda Meir. This May, NA'AMAT USA will be privileged to present our Golda Meir Humanitarian Award to United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. At the ceremony and reception in Washington, D.C., Justice Ginsburg will be honored as a long-time champion of equal rights and justice for all.

Las Vegas is on the calendar for July 29-31, when we celebrate the culmination of this special year and install our new national board for 2016-2019. You should have received material in the mail, and additional information and a registration form are in this issue (see pages 18-19).

As this is my final column for *Na'amat Woman*, I would like to thank you for your energy and your devotion to our organization during my six-year tenure. It has not been without some bumps, but with your encouragement and willingness to support change. NA'AMAT USA continues to be a vital organization, 90 years young — meeting the changing needs of a diverse Israeli society.



Elizabeth Raider

NA'AMAT USA

At 90, Still the Wellspring

by JUDITH A. SOKOLOFF

In 1925, half a century before the rise of the 1970s feminist movement in the United States, the members of Pioneer Women (now NA'AMAT USA) firmly asserted the right and obligation of women to participate fully and equally in the social movements shaping America and the Land of Israel. More specifically, the seven founders believed that only in an autonomous women's organization would they be able to fully realize their potential and assume greater responsibility for Poale Zion, the Labor Zionist movement, as a whole.

The catalyst for the founding of Pioneer Women was an urgent request, in 1924, from Rahel Yanait (later Ben-Zvi, wife of the second president of Israel) for a loan of \$500 to build a well on a girls' agricultural training

farm she had established in the dry hills of Jeru-

salem. Aware of their Labor Zionist commitment, Rahel turned to her haverot in the United States. The little trees were dying and needed water, Rahel wrote. In the process of raising the money (the equivalent of \$6,800 in today's dollars), her friends realized they could play a compelling role in developing institutions in Palestine that emphasized the specific place of women in building the Jewish homeland with the guiding principles of social justice and cooperation.

Their partners-to-be were already working on this task. Four years earlier, in 1921, Moetzet Hapoalot (the Working Women's Council) had been founded in Palestine to train women to share in the work of the pioneering society. The dignity of labor and return to the soil were central tenets in the Labor Zionist credo. The money to build a well (hence, "The Legend of the Well") was just the beginning. The constantly growing network of activities run by Moetzet Hapoalot (now NA'AMAT Israel) required ongoing aid, and women

Labor Zionists in America pledged both their financial and moral support. To best accomplish

their goals, they broke away from the larger male-dominated Labor Zionist movement and, in 1925, formally launched The Pioneer Women's Organization of America.

As dedicated Labor Zionists, the founding members sought to create an organization whose primary focus was supporting activities that increased the role of women in rebuilding Eretz Yisrael, elevating their public image and protecting their rights. At the same time, they were dedicated to advancing social progress and a just society in the United States.

Pioneer Women "also emphasized the importance of women in the American Zionist enterprise and provided a forum for working-class Jewish immigrant women who sympathized with the aims and ideals of socialist Zionism and the fledgling Yishuv," notes historian Mark Raider in his book *American Jewish Women and the Zionist Enterprise*. "In time, the organization opened up new channels of communication between the Palestine labor movement and the Jewish community in America. It became a significant force in American Jewish life and played a central role in American Zionism in the



On these pages, then and now: NA'AMAT educational and day care facilities.

Photos from the NA'AMAT USA archives

decades preceding the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.”

In 1930, Moetzet Hapoalot created Irgun Imahot Ovdot, the Working Mothers’ Organization, to organize the wives of workers. They believed that all working women had rights. Even if women worked “only” at home, Moetzet Hapoalot considered them self-employed workers. Its first goals were mutual assistance and encouraging family life in which “there would be no disparity between word and deed, and in which father and mother would both embody and uphold the pioneering values of our working society,” wrote Ada Maimon in her 1962 book *Women Build a Land*. She was a founder of the Working Women’s Movement, was elected to the first Knesset, and founded Ayanot Youth Village in central Israel, still thriving under the supervision of NA’AMAT.

Thousands of women volunteers worked to raise money to support institutions for maternal and child care. Immigrant absorption became another important facet of Moetzet Hapoalot’s work as waves of newcomers arrived after World War II. With an ever-growing demand for educational and social services, the organization expanded its facilities for day care (today serving more than 20,000

Israeli Arab and Druze women and children were also developed.

The missions of the Working Women’s Council and the Working Mothers Organization later melded into one entity: NA’AMAT (Movement of Working Women and Volunteers). Soon after, in 1981, Pioneer Women changed its name to Pioneer Women/NA’AMAT, reflecting its close ties and identification with the goals and aspirations of NA’AMAT. Five years later: “We are now NA’AMAT USA” trumpeted the front cover of *Pioneer Woman* magazine, soon to be renamed *Na’amat Woman*.

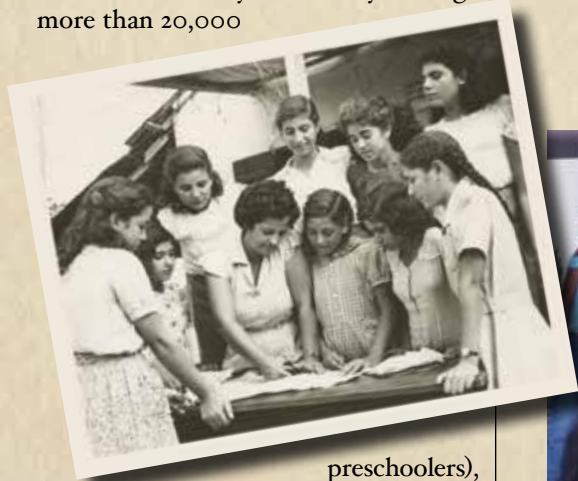
As Israel grew and flourished, NA’AMAT continued to work to elevate the status of women in all areas of life. It established legal aid bureaus and centers for the prevention and treatment of domestic violence and fought sexual harassment. NA’AMAT increased its advocacy for women’s rights in the Knesset and judicial system and conducted media and public awareness campaigns to

help achieve its goals. It ran workshops for women’s leadership training and for empowerment in the labor market and political system. The organization implemented seminars to increase women’s self-awareness and self-assertiveness and to educate women about health issues and parenting. It provided scholarships for women’s higher education. All these programs continue today.

Ninety years after its founding, NA’AMAT USA’s partnership with NA’AMAT Israel remains vital. With compassion, perseverance and a strong commitment to social justice in a democratic society, the movement has risen to meet the challenges of Israel’s turbulent history — through waves of immigration, war and peace, internal conflicts, economic highs and lows and changing governments. NA’AMAT USA continues its unbroken record of staunchly standing up for Israel and speaking out for women.

A remarkable legacy. Mazal tov, NA’AMAT USA!

Judith A. Sokoloff is the editor of Na’amat Woman.



preschoolers), vocational and agricultural training and women’s hostels and clubs. The establishment of community centers, especially in development towns, provided the educational courses and cultural activities important for social integration. The organization developed a network of alternative high schools for disadvantaged and at-risk teenagers (today there are 18 schools). Educational services for



We and Our People

On the first page of what appears to be the debut issue of The Pioneer Women, dated February 1926, is an editorial expressing the Zionist passion of the founders of NA'AMAT USA. Published by the Woman's Organization for the Pioneer Women in Palestine, with more pages in Yiddish than English, the journal cost 10 cents.

The Jews are remaking Palestine into their national Homeland with a zest and a spirit which is the admiration of the world. The impoverished land responds to the magic touch of idealism, and colonies and industries spring up where no one would dream of seeing them.

Friend and foe are witnessing the miracle of cultured men and women

laying the foundations of a new commonwealth, tilling the soil, working the quarries, building the roads, draining the swamps — everywhere proving excellent farmers, enthusiastic workers, skillful builders.

Women take their places in the very front ranks of the pioneer workers, not alone as wives, sweethearts or sisters of the men, sharing equally the common joys and labors, but as independent groups.

Cooperative farming settlements made up entirely and exclusively of women reveal to the astounded observer what the "weak" sex can do when once it rises to the spirit of the times.

Girls bred in comfort and intended for the usual run of life in

the narrow
world of
class
and sex

distinctions, have come to Palestine to give of their best that the Homeland may prosper and that they themselves may be spiritually free.

Palestine, the eternal dream and hope of our people; Palestine which has kept us united and active through centuries of the greatest trials, is now, through its rebirth as a Jewish center, infusing a new spirit into us all — those who are fortunate to be of the pioneers and those who can only help morally and financially.

Work alone will make us free. We are gaining in force, in courage, and in self-reliance because of what we are accomplishing for and in Palestine. We take pride in what we do and we are happy because we are doing it.

It is a source of the deepest satisfaction to us Jewish women to know that we are of help to the people and that we are proving equal to the hardest tasks. The woman pioneer in Palestine is the pioneer of Jewish womanhood the world over. It creates a new type of woman by creating a new type of commonwealth.

In this spirit we have founded our organization for the women Pioneers of Palestine. We can never hope of ever being able to discharge our debt of gratitude for the





blessings those women bestow on their people and every one of us; what we can and must do is to lighten their task by sending material and equipment.

And we will carry their message far and wide amongst our sisters in Jewry, that many may gather under our banner — to free themselves and to free their people.



The first Pioneer Women convention, in 1926, articulated the following goals:

- To help create a homeland in Palestine based on cooperation and social justice.
- To give moral and material support to the Moetzet Hapoalot.
- To strive through systematic cultural and propaganda work to educate the American Jewish woman to a more conscious role as co-worker in the establishment of a better and more just society in America and throughout the world.



Stories of the Talmud

It's a Male-Female Thing, Then and Now

by SUSAN REIMER-TORN

There are hundreds of quirky tales tucked into the pages of the Talmud. Known as the aggada, these cryptic stories push a lot of hot buttons: A vulnerable patriarchy, rabbinical rivalries, ruptured friendships, crises of faith, internal conflicts, men's egos and the cutthroat politics of the Talmudic academy are frankly exposed. Aggada also has a lot to say about the multi-textured way men feel

about women and the often unspoken way women feel about men, both in Talmudic times — and in our own.

The Talmud is a multi-volume literary achievement, compiled by Jewish scholars over some 700 years (between 200 BCE to 500 CE), which greatly elaborates on earlier stories and laws from the Torah and the Mishnah. In both the Jerusalem and Babylonian versions, its pages usher us into a male dominant

civilization with an abiding concern for piety as codified by laws that are being debated “live” within its pages. The Talmud is comprised of two strands — the legal discussions are known as halacha, while the aggada offers stories and fragments of stories that reveal much about the folklore, customs and even superstitions of their time. It is the aggada, interspersed in the legal discussions, that reveals the human states, personal pref-

Illustrations by Avi Katz





erences and emotional concerns that influence how life is lived. Get ready for a surprising dose of self-doubt, shame, greed, envy, narcissism, lust, ambition as well as grandiosity and its flip side — human fragility.

These mini literary gems, with their unusual candor, provide an entertaining break in ponderous legal discussions. But scholars such as Moshe Halbertal point out the practical component to aggadic stories: “They illustrate, comment on and even bring up exceptions to the law. Moreover, by doing so, they offer profound and nuanced insight into what it means to be human.” When we focus on gender relations within Judaism, then and now, the stories reveal key factors such as personal psychology, a concern for the balance of power as well as the fine line between law and social tradition and the interchange between the two.

These stories provoke all kinds of questions: Why do some Jewish men insist, then as now, on the exclusion of women? In what way do women threaten the status quo? How have women always influenced men in spite of — or because of — our marginalization? Are there ways for women to claim equality or sustainable power? Do all religious men share the same views on gender?

Aggadic legends reveal that men feel threatened by women's power, which is largely contained in their sexual allure.

What are the conflicts in Jewish life between the men-only realms of study and prayer and the more prosaic demands of domesticity? Aggadic stories provide a context in which to reevaluate all these still vital controversies in our religious and communal lives.

The world of our sages rests on a built-in, male dominant hierarchy — God is to man as man is to woman. In the Talmud, we see the exclusion of women from the central activities of study, prayer and leadership in both theory and practice. As if to justify the inequality, rabbis are forthright with offensive remarks about the female gender. “Don’t speak to women,” they warn their colleagues and disciples. “A woman” — the noun is often used in the singular as if the entire gender can be labeled with one broad stroke — “is lightheaded and untrustworthy.” What is more, “she will distract a man’s mind from the essential.”

In the Talmud, most often, women appear in cameo roles. The scholar and writer Rachel Adler compares them to “shadowy utilities like the black-garbed stagehands of the Japanese Noh.” They are sometimes moved around more like useful props than actual people. One striking example occurs in the tale

of the dashing bandit Reish Lakish coming upon Rav Yochanan, a man of famed beauty, bathing in the waters of the Jordan. Lakish jumps right in with Yochanan and the two are overwhelmed by mutual attraction. Yochanan arranges for his new friend to marry his sister. There is no mention of anyone asking the sister whether she agrees to the match.

Indeed, most of the women who haunt the Talmud are nameless. They are identified as wife of this esteemed rabbi, mother, daughter, sister, maid or consort of that revered sage. Women’s words and initiatives appear in these stories as heard, seen or recalled by an androcentric male chronicler.

The wonder is that in spite of their subordination, these talmudic women illuminate the pages from behind, changing the perspective, upsetting the equilibrium, raising unasked questions, shifting the energy. The sur-

prise is that once unwrapped and unmuted, these characters shine through.

And as we will see from the stories we're about to discover, while never approaching equal status, the women do make a differ-

ence. It is the women, both young and old, from both the elite and the popular classes, who question the status quo, set the action in motion and provoke change. Sometimes they are angrily rebuffed and summarily excluded. Never do they achieve true parity and often there are consequences for their unwanted provocation. Other times, it is clear they have moved the needle of men's sensibilities, even taking on the role of ad hoc, if not officially sanctioned, spiritual teachers.

A great rabbi agonizes in the throes of death. His disciples gather to pray for his life, for it is known that as long as they recite certain words, the rabbi's soul will not escape his wracked body. His lifelong maid has a deeper understanding of the great man's needs. She throws a clay vessel off the roof and its sudden clatter causes the men to pause in their prayers long enough for the death agony to end. The maid is guaranteed a place in the world to come.

Women, however disparaged, are often praised for some inherent virtue or insight the men cannot attain. In another story, the community is threatened by drought. The rabbi and his disciples declare a fast and desperately offer unanswered prayers up on the roof. Meanwhile, the rabbi's nameless wife offers her own prayers in another rooftop corner. It is there that the withholding heavens open and rain finally falls. We understand that her untutored piety exceeds that of the learned scholars.

Virtue is a prized and praised quality. She of superior virtue can bring about significant change. Where there was drought, now the rain falls. But the notion that women possess some kind of innate virtue has also been used in arguments against their access to fur-

*It is the women, both young and old, from
both the elite and the popular classes,
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in motion and provoke change.*

ther education. Why bother with more schooling, the argument goes, when women are naturally so knowing and evolved. Here, as elsewhere, we detect a desire for maintaining the unequal balance of power between the two genders.

In the aggada, it is noteworthy, though not altogether rare, for a man to learn something from a mere woman. Rabbi Joshua tells a story of "having been bested by a woman." He relates an incident that occurred when he was the guest of a female innkeeper. For two nights in a row, she looked on as he neglected the important social custom of leaving something on the dinner plate for the less fortunate workers. On the third night, the rabbi finds his food so over-salted that he can't eat it. He pretends not to be hungry, but the innkeeper asks him why, in that case, he is filling up on bread. She then inquires if he is not eating his food to make up for the other nights when he neglected to leave anything for others. The rabbi admits to having learned an important lesson from a lowly female innkeeper who, in this case, is clever, virtuous and a good teacher.

While the sages are collectively a sexist fraternity, a closer look reveals that there is no monolithic attitude toward all women at all times. In one story, a woman who has been studying Torah with Rabbi Meier comes home late, after the home fires have burned out. Her controlling husband turns her out of the house until such time as she spits in her teacher's eye. Hearing about her plight, Rabbi Meier lets it be known that he has an eye ailment that must be cured. He encourages her to spit in his eye — not once, but seven times, using the pretext of curing his disease. She can

return home and we assume she can also resume her studies. But in another story, another rabbinical giant, Rabbi Eleazar, explodes in anger at a woman who wishes to learn, throwing her out of the study hall, infamously de-

claring that he "prefers to see the Torah burned rather than handed over to women."

Feminist scholar, Rabbi Judith Hauptman expresses her frustration. "Some of the aggadic statements praise women and others exhibit deep misogyny...almost any aggadic statement can be offset by another that says the opposite. ... I am interested in the development of the law — not attitudes over time."

Finding a binding justification for women's equal participation within a mainstream Orthodox community requires the kind of halachic or legal analysis in which Hauptman excels. But the contradictory nature of aggada reminds us that much that arises around gender inequality is really a reflection of human preferences and prejudices, these generating social customs of varying rigidity. Understanding the fine line between custom and law is essential for navigating these tensions. It is precisely in these contradictory aggadic attitudes that women can decode the roots, layers and psychological nuances of male resistance and, if they wish, strategically confront them.

Aggadic legends reveal that men feel threatened by women's power, which is largely contained in their sexual allure. Rabbi Abin is disturbed when someone makes a hole in his fence to catch a glimpse of the beautiful daughter he keeps inside. The father says to his own child, "Girl, return to dust, your beauty is a disturbance to mankind."

In the Talmud, there is an exceptional, scholarly woman named Bruriah who is credited with being as smart as the sages and, in some instances, even smarter. There are times when legal debates are settled in her favor rather than following the opinion of certain

rabbis. In a shocking tale, this atypically learned woman is set up to commit a sexual transgression in order to taint her overall merit.

When Bruriah refuses to save her husband's pride by publicly agreeing to the misogynist rabbinic dictum that women are untrustworthy, legend has it she meets a bad end. Her husband, the much esteemed Rabbi Meier, is the very same man who has allowed another woman to spit in his eye seven times. But he goes to such lengths to uphold the "women are untrustworthy" maxim that when Bruriah denies it, he obliges one of his young students to seduce his wife. When, after much refusal, she finally succumbs to the young student's charms,

the ruse is exposed, thus confirming that she is sexually transgressive. In the wake of her husband's scheming, Bruriah, we are told, commits suicide and the devastated Meier goes into exile.

Aggada presents a picture of men concerned with the perpetuation of a power base they perceive to be insecure. We understand women as threats to male hegemony in ways that still echo within certain communities today. Sexuality is a destabilizing factor and even when it is not a woman's primary mode of engagement, it is often a convenient pretext to keep women away from positions of true authority.

In aggadic stories, prestigious rabbis now and again rely on their wives to make important decisions. There are, for better and for worse, many such examples of women directing from behind.

The Talmud tell us that at his wife's insistence, Rabbi Eleazar ben Arak lived up in Emmaus where the missus



found the air clean and the waters refreshing. The rabbi considers traveling back to centers of study such as Yavneh or Jerusalem to be closer to his followers. But he remains isolated, unable to contradict his wife's not altogether flattering analogy: "Should the vessel with food come to the mice or should the mice come to the vessel?" However, as a consequence of giving in to her, the great man loses all his learning.

Spousal influence morphs into the many instances where women are called in to mediate, most often where tensions between men have reached a dangerous breaking point. Let's return to the famous story of Rabbi Yochanan giving his nameless sister for a wife to the dashing bandit-turned-scholar Reish Lakish. It is clear that the most intense passions are those that bind the two men. One day their highly charged connection flares into a violent dispute in the study house where the two exchange devastating insults. The wife of Reish Lakish now becomes proactive.

She begs her brother to forgive her husband's harsh words before they both suffer terrible consequences, but he refuses. And just as she helplessly foresees, both men die of their limitless grief over losing one another.

In an analogous tale, a woman named Ima Shalom or Mother of Peace plays a bit part within a saga of larger forces at work. Ima Shalom is the wife of Rabbi Eleazar and the sister of Rabbi Gamliel. (This is the same Eleazar who railed against letting women study Torah; he has paradoxically married the learned and refined Ima Shalom.) Husband Eleazar and brother Gamliel face off in a heated dispute around the laws of purity. This results in her

brother excommunicating her husband and even burning all the objects that Rabbi Eleazar has declared pure. She knows that her husband Eleazar has enough spiritual clout to persuade God to kill her brother, Rabbi Gamliel, to avenge his humiliation. There is particular danger if Rabbi Eleazar says the tachanun prayer while prostrate. (This prayer is said to have the power to avenge those who have been shamed.) For this reason, Ima Shalom takes up an around-the-clock vigil to stop him. But one night, she runs out to bless the new moon, leaving her husband unattended long enough for him to lie down and offer up his catalytic prayer. And in that moment, just as she feared, cries go up that her brother has died.

There is a vignette along similar lines involving a mother and son. The great Rabbi Sheshet refuses to forgive a colleague who offended him, causing the other man to fall ill. (Alert: Male ego, umbrage and obstinacy run danger-

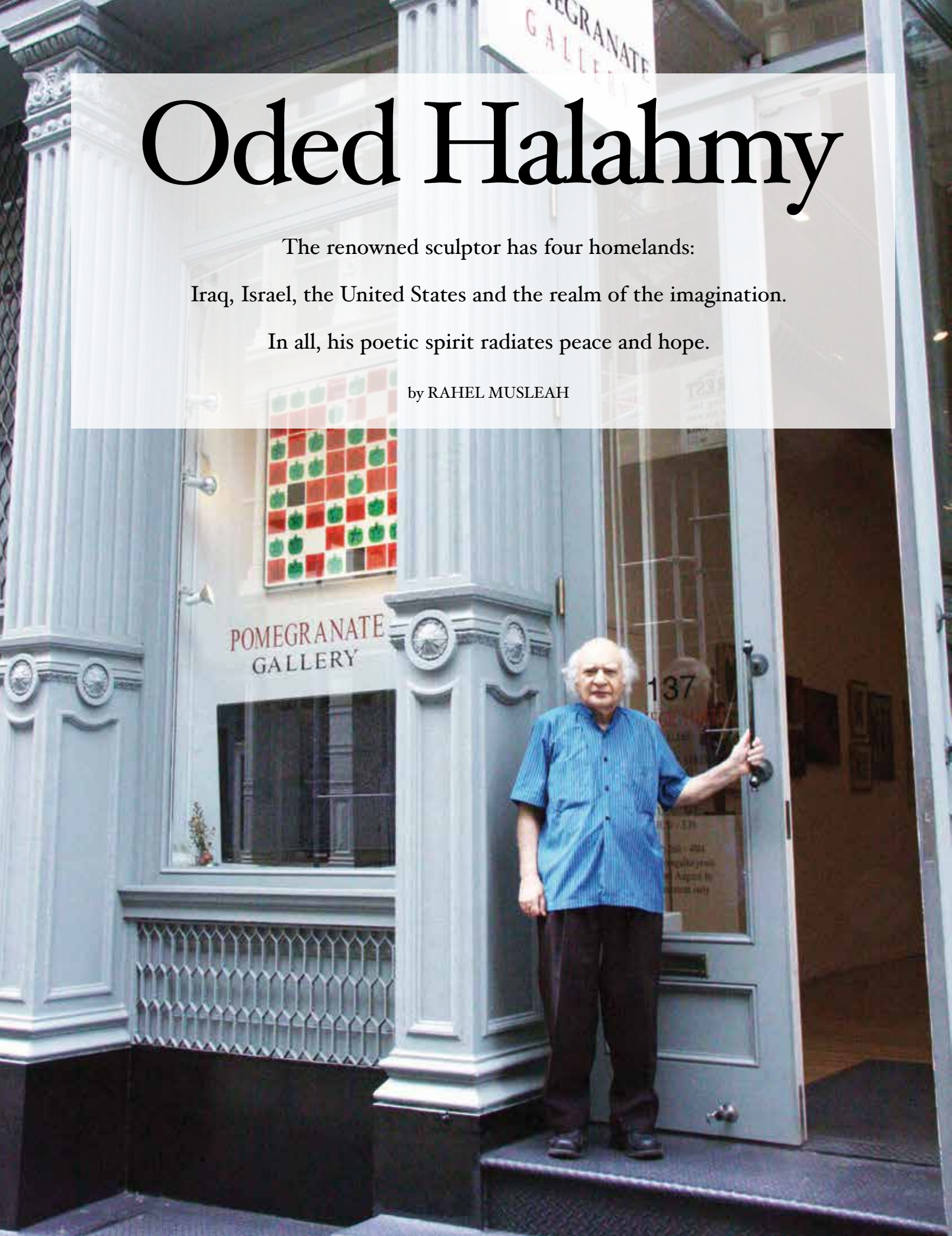
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Oded Halahmy

The renowned sculptor has four homelands:
Iraq, Israel, the United States and the realm of the imagination.

In all, his poetic spirit radiates peace and hope.

by RAHEL MUSLEAH



At Oded Halahmy's Pomegranate Gallery in New York's SoHo, even the doorknobs and table casters are shaped into pomegranates. The sensuous fruit, cast in bronze and other metals, crowns hanukkiot (Hanukkah menorahs) and whimsical sculptures, often fanned by the elegant, spiky branches of a palm tree.

For the Baghdad-born sculptor, evoking his beloved homeland through the classic Middle Eastern symbols of love, fertility, prosperity and righteousness is a natural homage. Despite the fact that he fled with his family in the wake of virulent anti-Zionism in 1951, despite its ravaged landscape today, Halahmy's Iraq will always be "the land of milk and honey," "a Garden of Eden," "the most beautiful place on earth." "The Iraq of today is different from what it was when I lived there but the love remains unchanged," says Halahmy.

Everything Halahmy does is in the service of that love, overlaid with a broader, overarching goal: global harmony. His galleries — the second is in Old Jaffa, Israel, where he lives part of the year — showcase his own work as well as that of other Iraqi artists of all backgrounds. His foundation, the Oded Halahmy Foundation for the Arts, funds original artistic expressions that promote a greater cultural understanding and peace in the Middle East. It has already brought the translated works of Iraqi writers and poets to American audiences.

As president of the Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center in Israel, he supports the mission of preserving Iraqi culture and has dedicated its music hall to the memory of his parents Saleh and Salimah Chebbazah. He has

compiled images of his art and his poems in Arabic, English and Hebrew (they function as captions of sorts) in three books (*Homelands: Baghdad. Jerusalem, New York; My Life and Work: Chanukah Lamps; Art Home Lands*). He has made two trips to Iraq in the past decade. During his travels in 2008, he documented and photographed its sacred Jewish sites — all that remains of the Jewish community that numbered 150,000 in the mid-20th century.

"The culture continues to live with me," says Halahmy, 77. Pinned against the black vest he wears over a short-sleeved rust-colored shirt is a traditional Iraqi talisman against the evil eye, a gold and turquoise sheva einayim (seven eyes) with three hamsas (amulets protecting against the evil eye), part of his jewelry collection. "I make them. I wear them. They protect me."

A short, trim man with an impish grin and a fringe of gray hair, Halahmy's delight at sharing all things Iraqi is contagious. He reminisces about chickpeas covered with sugar (humus el k'd), a treat for children; he recalls the weddings in the large courtyard of his

parents' home that overflowed with musicians, entertainers, food and araq; and he describes the special Iraqi cherries he still buys in New York to bring to friends in Israel.

The sights and sounds of Iraq surround him like a 360-degree theater. Walking from the gallery to his workshop, the walls are lined with some of the hundreds of paintings by other Iraqi artists that he has acquired.

What's Cooking?, 2005. Bronze cast (24 x 17¼ inches).



Photos courtesy of Oded Halahmy/Pomegranate Gallery

Opposite page: Oded Halahmy stands in front of Pomegranate Gallery in SoHo. Above: Halahmy's Pomegranate Gallery in Old Jaffa.

His own work is a study in roots — literal and figurative — that merge his heritage with the forms of nature and myth: moon-shaped curves, linear trunks, arched gates, flag-like rectangles. In "Proud Babylonian Lady," a jug rises like a torso, arms curving upward to clasp a branch flowering with pomegranates. "Pomegranates are perfect — they offer spiritual and physical well-being," he states. "Imagining Peace" is a riff on the same theme, this time suggesting the Statue of Liberty: the head a bowing pomegranate, the torch a proud palm tree. A Hanukkah lamp says, "Babylon is Love." Each sculpture exists in harmony within itself, reflecting Halahmy's larger wish that all people coexist in harmony — especially the children of Abraham.

Halahmy's art has captured the attention of collectors and museums worldwide, including the Guggenheim Museum in New York; the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.; and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. His "dynamic, engaging sculptures...exist between abstraction and representation, evoking figures, landscapes, and



even at times, still life, without ever slipping out of the ideal world of symbol and sign,” writes Eleanor Heartney, who curated an exhibit of the artist’s works at the Yeshiva University Museum in New York five years ago. “They are beautiful in a way that blends formal ideas about balance, gravity and proportion with references to ancient traditions that made the whole world a place of praise.”

Large outdoor sculptures adorn private grounds and public spaces. “Blue Party,” a geometric collage painted a royal blue “to remind sky/how much/I love it,” is at the William Benton Museum of Art at the University of Connecticut. “Or Miyehudah,” a bronze sculpture of a hanukiah, stands outside the Babylonian Heritage Center. Each of its three main branches is shaped like the Hebrew letter “shin,” the first letter of shalom (peace), topped with pomegranates for lights. “Embrace,” a semicircular construction of diagonally inter-



Fata Morgana, 1980-87. Nickel and bronze cast (101 x 39 x 25 inches).

— including the base of the palm frond — that he buys, cuts into endless forms and shapes, pencils with drawings, and textures with a mixture of glue and sawdust. Quickly, he draws a face with a pomegranate eye on a wooden square to illustrate the process. Real dried pomegranates hang on a branch nearby. A small room houses circle and band saws, a sanding machine and other power tools. “This is my handwriting. I cut it all by hand,” he says. “I work on 50 different pieces at the same time.”

After he creates the structure of the sculpture, Halahmy sometimes models it with plaster, then lives with it for a while before casting it in bronze at a foundry in Brooklyn. “When I am making a new sculpture, I feel connected to a higher power. I have nothing on my mind. From nothing I make one form, connect it to another and another.” He declines to be photographed with one of the many unfinished pieces in the vast space. “I’m in the middle of cooking,” he explains by way of analogy. “It still needs salt and spices.”

Music often accompanies him, especially biblical Oriental music and liturgical Iraqi-Jewish songs. The music, Halahmy says, “is not only for me but also for the sculpture — music of praise and celebration for the universe, for mankind.” He doesn’t limit his handiwork to his art. He makes his own drawers, tables, utensils and dishes and designs his own clothing (he chooses the fabric and has it sewn at an Indian tailor shop in Jackson Heights, Queens). An avid photographer, he has also made dozens of videos about Jewish life in Iraq, including one that demonstrates how to eat the heart of a palm. Is there anything he doesn’t create himself? “The chair you are sitting on I bought,” he answers promptly.

Halahmy inherited his love of metalwork from his father, a successful goldsmith in Iraq. The young Oved (he changed his name in Israel) experimented with crafts, calligraphy, kite making and painting. He began sculpting in Israel, using clay and

secting lines and curves made of welded aluminum and painted sun orange, beautifies the lawn of a private home.

Many of the current pieces in his Manhattan gallery play with the first six letters of an alphabetical Judeo-Arabic children’s song. Because Arabic does not have a “v” sound, the letter “vav” is pronounced as “wow,” preceded by the letter “hey.” Halahmy titles the sculptures “Hey Wow!” or “Sing Hey Wow” or other variations. “I’m sculpting my Iraqi childhood here in New York City,” he explains. He has also extended his gaze beyond Iraq: pomegranate-studded, painted wood sculptures in the colors of the Iraqi, Israeli and American flags are odes to his native and adopted homelands. “I always live in a place I love. I love three countries and take the most beautiful from each and put it in my art.”

His workshop holds thousands of wood pieces



Light for Morocco, 2011. Aluminum and bronze cast (22½ x 17 x 5½ inches).



Above: Mirage, 1976.
Welded Cor-Ten steel.
Below: Artist with his sculpture Sing Hey Wow!, 2015.



The Iraq of today is different from what it was when I lived there but the love remains unchanged. I'm sculpting my childhood here in New York City.

wood, but soon discovered that working with bronze — a material both ancient and contemporary — excited and challenged him. Figurative art gave way to lyrical abstraction, its openness of line and space infused with a mystical sensibility. A trip to Egypt in 1978 compelled him to explore the landscapes of East and West. A decade later his art shifted homeward even more.

Halahmy studied at St. Martin's School of Art in London with Anthony Caro and Phillip King, both important advocates of modern sculpture. In 1968, he moved to Canada to teach at the Ontario College of Art in Toronto, moving again in 1971 — this time to New York. The art scene there, he recalls, was both "charged and electrifying," an amalgam of abstract expressionism (Pollack and Rothko), pop art (Warhol and Stella), photorealism, and experimentation in video, music and dance and perfor-

mance art. "There was a spirit of playfulness, but it was serious, too. All these artists were inspired by America and its culture. It was their art that inspired me to sculpt the landscape of my homelands."

Halahmy bought a factory in SoHo with a 16-foot ceiling along with a 4,000-square-foot loft for

his home and began making large-scale sculptures. One Sukkot, he built a sukkah sculpture for a party, decorated it with branches and pomegranates and had 4 o'clock tea in it. "This was my first environmental sculpture and it was as big as a room. I looked at one of the pomegranates and it talked back to me. I put it in one of my sculptures. All my work was flat but this was round and sensuous. It brought me back to Iraq, when I used to help my dad decorate the sukkah with pomegranates and lights and palm branches, and sometimes painted them with gold paint. Then I connected the pomegranate with customs for other holidays." Now, he says, he feels he is like a pomegranate himself. "It's a complicated fruit. It's love."

His love affair with hanukkiot also originates with his father, who had a collection that included original designs. When the family left for Israel when Halahmy was 13, they packed some of the lamps in their suitcases. Since they were allowed only one trunk each, "we wore our most beautiful suits and dresses and jewelry and left our home with deep sadness," he writes in *Homelands*. Like other immigrants from Arab countries,





Above: Homeland, 1982. Bronze cast (94 x 101 x 19 inches).
Right: Forthright Love, 2015. Mixed media (17 x 17 x 6 inches).

the family was settled in a transit camp with horrendous conditions. His father became a road laborer. “We sold some of the lamps and jewelry to get out of the tent camp and buy a home in Jaffa,” Halahmy recalls. Several of his books feature a family photograph taken in 1953 on the roof of that Jaffa home.

Halahmy made his first hanukiah in 1973, inspired by a simple sculpture of his own, “Altar of Balance.” Since then he has crafted a new design every year, using his favorite symbols: pomegranates, palm fronds, hamsas, lions, crowns and horseshoes. In 2003, a friend who was working in Iraq asked him to donate a Hanukkah lamp so American troops stationed there could light it at the Royal Palace. The piece, which he now calls “Royal Palace,” resembles a standing figure holding the lights aloft, like the Iraqi women he remembers carrying trays on their heads.

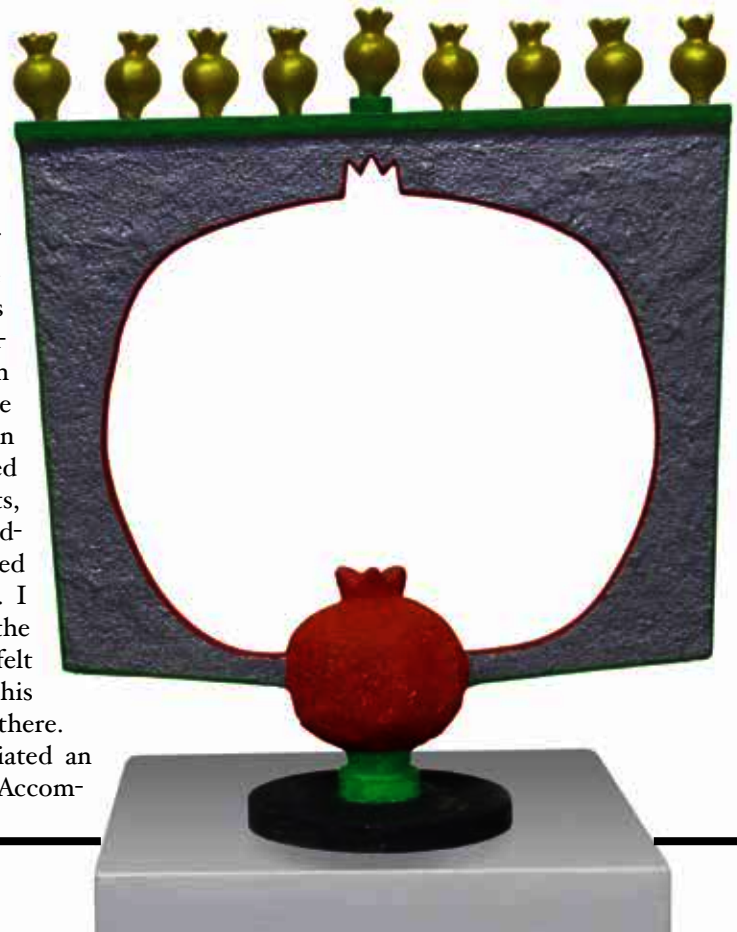
A year later, when he returned to Iraq after 53 years — at the invitation of an Iraqi government official in charge of religious places — he was greeted by his very own Hanukkah lamp (it’s now in the collection of the American Embassy in Baghdad). He walked to museums, markets, coffeehouses and goldsmith shops he used to know. “I felt safe. I felt at home.” Even the ground he walked on felt holy to him, since his grandfather is buried there.

In 2008, he initiated an Iraq trip himself. Accom-

Pomegranates are perfect — they offer spiritual and physical well being.

panied by a photojournalist, he went north to document the Jewish holy sites. Halahmy shrugs off the danger it presented. “There are risks all artists take,” he observes. “It’s a risk to say they want to make a living making art. It was a risk to come to America with only one sleeping bag. It was a risk going into the Israeli army. Going to Iraq — I didn’t look at that as a risk. I looked at it as if I were going to visit the Garden of Eden. People come and go but the land is still there. I’m interested in its spirit.”

That is the same spirit he hopes to preserve in the series of three cookbooks he is finalizing: one about pomegranates, one about dates and one about Iraqi cooking. Each is filled with hundreds of traditional recipes spiced with his own twists, illustrated with his photographs and interwoven with poetry





When I am making a new sculpture I feel connected to a higher power. I have nothing on my mind.

and recollections. There are recipes for pomegranate molasses, breads, Shabbat eggs and even tea crackers shaped like pomegranates as well as poems about knife sharpeners, chopping boards, pots that stored and chilled water and more.

Cooking is second nature to Halahmy, who grew up watching his grandmother and mother shop and cook three meals a day for the 15 members of his extended family who all lived together. He honed his cooking skills in Israel and England. During his 2008 trip to Iraq he cooked for three weeks with an Iraqi chef, focusing on learning how to prepare mazgouf, an Iraqi fish specialty. The book receptions and holiday parties he hosts at his loft are famous for their lavish spreads of home-cooked Judeo-Arabic foods and music.

"Arab musicians won't play in Israel but they will play here," he says proudly. In a video clip from one Hanukkah party he wears a traditional Iraqi fez, singing and reading his poetry backed by Iraqi musicians. He founded the Pomegranate Gallery as a catalyst for international artistic dialogue, hoping it will serve as a "cultural ambassador to awaken American consciousness of Middle Eastern art. Although we are all from different ethnic groups, our objective is to encourage all forms of art as

an effective long-term means of fostering the peace dialogue." The fact that Baghdadi artists continued to create at the height of the insurgency is "nothing short of astounding," he says.

Halahmy "reminds us that there is a place where serenity is still possible," writes Heartney. "This is the realm of imagination, which is Halahmy's fourth and most persuasive homeland."

"This is my synagogue. I pray every day," Halahmy says, humming the words of an Iraqi-Jewish High Holiday

song. "Adonai melech, Adonai malach, Adonai yimloch le'olam va'ed." God is king, God was king, God will be king forever. "Here in New York City I'm singing songs I grew up singing. This is Baghdad. The artwork is my home."

Award-winning journalist and author, Rabel Musleah is of Baghdadi origin and leads trips to Jewish India, where she was born. Her website is www.rabelsjewishindia.com.

Right: Desert Bloom, 1982. Bronze cast (93 x 42 x 27 inches). Left: Pomegranate Is Love, Israel is Love, 2015. Mixed media on wood (12 x 12 inches).



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Hotel photos courtesy JW Marriott

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Courtesy Las Vegas News Bureau



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Courtesy Cirque du Soleil



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Building a Future for Teens Who Have Lost Hope

Miracles Happen at the Eleanor and Edward Epstein NA'AMAT Technological High School in Holon

by JUDY TELMAN

Even though I've been a member of NA'AMAT for several decades and have continually visited our facilities since moving to Israel in 1983, I don't think I'm biased or brainwashed when saying I'm always impressed. In just one or two visits to a NA'AMAT installation, I see how tirelessly and compassionately NA'AMAT works to achieve our many goals.

I recently visited the Eleanor and Edward Epstein NA'AMAT Technological High School in the center of Holon. Just south of Tel Aviv, with a population of 200,000, Holon has in recent years emerged as a national culture and design center.

Although the school's entrance gate is locked and guarded, as are all schools in Israel (especially today), once inside, the reception is warm and welcoming. A plaque honors the generosity and passionate Zionism of the Epstein family of New Jersey, who have funded the high school for many years.

I was met by Leora Dekel, who has

worked here for 36 years — 14 as principal. Now retired from this role, she continues to serve as educational supervisor and feels very much at home when visiting. Students greeted her with hugs and kisses. That says a lot.

Leora pointed out that the Holon school, founded in 1973, is one of 18 technological high schools and two residential high schools in the NA'AMAT educational network. These schools are a haven for teenagers who were frustrated and unable to cope in the regular school system. Many come from disadvantaged and difficult backgrounds and suffer from learning disorders, high-risk behaviors and other problems.

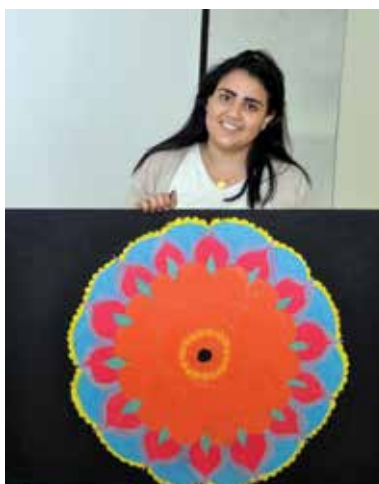
Some 200 students are enrolled in the school, which has a staff of 35 teachers plus a social worker and a psychologist. Most of the students come from Holon, with others from nearby Bat Yam and Azor. The majority of the students are Mizrahim (those of Middle East ancestry), with a minority of Ashkenazim (those of Central and Eastern European

ancestry) and new immigrants, primarily from the former Soviet Union. The school day lasts from 8:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., with some students staying until 3:00 for tutoring, counseling and extra-curricular activities.

Along with Hebrew, English, math, science, history, geography, civics and other core subjects, students can choose from four "technological" tracks: computers, management, photography and hairdressing. This ability to choose is one of the major factors leading to success, with students pursuing their stronger interests and developing self-confidence.

After completing the four-year program, graduates receive their diplomas and take exams to qualify for professional and/or matriculation certificates. Eighty-five percent of students receive professional certification and 20 percent receive a matriculation certificate (a prerequisite for higher education). Considering that when the students first enter the school their academic

Photos by Rivka Finder





**Avi's popular
hairdressing class.**

skills are pretty much non-existent and they've had zero technological training, this is quite an accomplishment.

Outstanding students can continue their studies for another two years at the junior college recently opened by NA'AMAT in Rishon LeZion. Run in conjunction with Cisco and Microsoft, the curriculum is designed to improve their communication and computer skills. Graduates are qualified to work

as computer programmers in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The program is supported by the Ministry of Education's Department of Science and Technology and the IDF.

Dudu Itach is the school's new principal. He's only a few months into the job but brings many years of experience. He headed a school in Tel Aviv for 24 years and for five years was the principal of a high school for students

who had failed in all other academic institutions.

Dudu firmly believes that it is important for students to advance not only in their studies, but also in their community and in society — and to learn that they can succeed. Class size plays an important role in enabling students and the teachers to interact with each other. Instead of the usual class size of 40 to 48, the Holon school limits the number to 20, allowing a close rapport to develop between students and teachers. All the students I spoke with mentioned they feel their teachers know and care about them. When necessary, small groups of five students sit together with their teacher for extra help if they need it. When students are absent, the school phones to make sure they are all right.

An innovative addition to the academic and technological programs benefiting both the students and community is an extensive volunteer program. "If you give, you are enriched" is their motto. At first, the idea of



**Students
proudly display
their art
projects.**

Part of my job is to help them gain confidence,
to show them that they can learn and achieve. I start from the beginning
and guide them through until they, too, realize that they can.

volunteering — working with the elderly, handicapped children or troubled youth — met with resistance from the students. But they soon realized they had something valuable to offer.

Those studying hairdressing volunteer at senior citizens residences to shampoo, cut and style hair and do manicures. Once a week, people from the community come to the school to have their hair done, paying a token fee, which covers the cost of supplies. Most important, the experience gives the students the opportunity to use their new skills and develop a positive self-image.

Those in the computers track work with seniors, teaching them how to use a computer, link to social networks like Facebook and use email and other programs. Some students volunteer at a residential facility housing troubled youngsters. They play with residents, sing to them and involve them in games and other activities — and come away feeling terrific about themselves. Students studying photography volunteered at a school for children with special needs, took photos and made a “big

happening there,” they told me.

A nearby day care center also benefits from the students’ involvement. They participated in a program of Save a Child’s Heart, an Israeli organization providing pediatric heart surgery and follow-up care for needy children from developing countries. Students met with the mother of an infant a month after his first surgery, learning that he would have to undergo additional surgery.

This inspired them to return to the center, bringing crayons, paints and paper. They encouraged other children to draw pictures of the infant as if the second surgery had already taken place, celebrating his recovery. “That was a great experience,” one teenager told me. “We really enjoyed it and felt that we made a difference.” Like other students who resisted initially, they now can’t wait for their turn to do more volunteering.

Dudu is keen on expanding and strengthening the curriculum by introducing an industrial track, making use of Holon’s attractive new industries. He would also like to introduce a music course in which students can learn

to play instruments and develop their talents. Of course these innovations require funding, and Dudu hopes to find an angel or two to help him realize his dream.

An extracurricular music program already exists. Once a week, an IDF volunteer works with about a dozen students. They learn to play instruments and have formed a choir. The next step is expansion into the academic program.

Perhaps it is best to hear from the teachers and the students themselves to understand and appreciate what NA’AMAT is accomplishing here.

Irene has been teaching English at the Holon school for 13 years. Her theory, like that of the entire staff, is that everyone can succeed. “When students first come to the school in 9th grade,” she said, “it’s almost as if they had never been to school at all. They can barely read or write — they don’t know the alphabet. Even though they had been enrolled in a school, they often just didn’t show up. It was too difficult for them to always feel as if they were failing. Part of



Left: Students get lots of individual attention. Above: The school’s new principal Dudu Itach.

my job is to help them gain confidence, to show them that they can learn and achieve. I start from the beginning and guide them through until they, too, realize that they can.”

Irene introduced me to Denis, one of her students on track to graduate at the end of the school year. He spoke to me in English — obviously not his native tongue but certainly indicative of what he has accomplished.

Denis has chosen the computer course. When asked what brought him here, he recalled: “In the school I attended, I didn’t have a choice. They expected me to learn everything and I couldn’t handle it. Here, I’m studying computers, which I like, and I’m also learning as a result of being able to access information on the computer.” I asked him what courses he was enrolled in. “English, of course. Math, yes, and everything else. Trying to do the best I can. The teachers always help. I feel I have a chance because of my teacher

Above: Plaque acknowledges the generosity of the Epstein family. Below: Students volunteer in the community.



— something I didn’t have at the other school.”

Asked about his plans after graduation, Denis said: “Maybe go into management, computer programming, something like that. I’m planning to go into the army, possibly the regular army, extending my service. I have great hopes for the future and I am grateful to the teachers who have helped me to feel good about myself.” Denis lives in Holon and has two younger brothers, both in kindergarten, which he laughingly says is not school.

Avi, who teaches hairdressing, has been working at the school for 24 years. I immediately felt that his students were thoroughly enjoying the

course. One teenager was cutting and styling another student’s hair. Others were giving shampoos and working on mannequins — combing, brushing and shaping various lengths and textures of hair. As Avi walked around supervising, admiring, assisting and complimenting, he asked if anyone would like to speak with me. Several volunteered, but Bobo quickly came forward.

A 12th grader set to graduate at the end of this school year, he lives in the small town of Azor. Explaining why he came to the school, Bobo said: “I always wanted to learn all about hairdressing. There was no possibility for me to study this profession in any other school, where the demands, class size and lack of personal attention turned me off. Here I have the opportunity to do something I love. I can study the required subjects more comfortably in a small classroom guided by teachers who know me and care about me.

“I study hairdressing on the computer as well — logging onto YouTube and seeing programs from around the world. I’m able to follow and learn new

continued on page 32



I'm BRCA Negative. Now What?

by MICHELE CHABIN

Last spring I drove to Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, where I live, and met with a genetic counselor to calculate my lifetime risk of developing breast cancer. After checking whether anyone in my family has had any type of cancer and the age I gave birth, the counselor determined that my risk could be fairly significant.

My maternal grandmother died of breast cancer at 80. My mother's breast cancer was caught extremely early when she discovered a lump at age 64. She had a lumpectomy followed by radiation,

That my mother, now 80, tested negative for the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene mutations was good news for me, but there was a risk that my father, also an Ashkenazi Jew whose family had never been tested, could have passed on one of the mutations to me. Women who have a BRCA1 gene mutation have a 55-to 65-percent chance of developing breast cancer by age 70. BRCA2 carriers have about a 45-percent chance. These numbers represent average risk.

My father's mother and her sister lived long lives, but their mother and the rest of their family were killed during the Holocaust, making it impossible to map his maternal family's cancer history. My father, whose parents divorced when he was young, knows virtually nothing about his father's side of the family.

Another potential strike against me is that I had my first (and only) pregnancy at the "advanced" age of 43, which according to the formula used by most genetic counselors, raises a woman's risk of breast cancer. While my genetic counselor expressed the opinion that the formula assigns too much risk to advanced maternal age, she agreed that having children later in life, coupled with my family history, gave her some cause for concern.

About 5 to 10 percent of breast cancers are thought to be hereditary, caused by abnormal genes passed from parent to child. Together, BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations account for about 20 to 25 percent of hereditary breast cancers and about 5 to 10 percent of all breast cancers. (They also account for around 15 percent of ovarian cancers overall.) Among Ashkenazi Jewish women and men, about one in 40 have a BRCA1/2 mutation — compared with roughly one in 345 in the general population.

According to the National Institutes of Health of the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the proteins produced from the BRCA1/2 genes are involved in repairing damaged DNA, helping to maintain the stability of a cell's genetic information. They are called tumor suppressors because they help keep cells from growing and dividing too fast or in an uncontrolled way. Mutations in these genes impair DNA repair, allowing potentially damaging mutations to persist in DNA. As these defects accumulate, they can trigger cells to grow and divide without control or order, forming a tumor.

Those who know they carry one of the BRCA mutations typically opt for frequent breast exams that combine a physical examination by a specialist as well as a mammography and/or ultrasound, and often an MRI. Some decide to undergo a bilateral prophylactic mastectomy — surgery to remove both breasts to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer as well as an oophorectomy — the surgical removal of the ovaries.

When I asked the genetic counselor when I could get tested for BRCA1/2, she said, "Right now if you're ready." I headed to the lab and got a simple blood test.

About two months later, the genetic counselor told me I'd tested negative for BRCA 1/2 mutations. My reaction to this good news was, "Fantastic. Now what?"

For me and many others considered to have a higher than normal risk of developing breast cancer, testing negative for BRCA1/2 is only a starting point. While I was relieved that I don't have to worry about those two mutations, the question of whether my mother may have passed down another mutation that predisposed her to breast cancer continued to worry me.

Determined to educate myself about the latest developments in the field of breast cancer screening, I contacted a trio of experts on inherited breast cancer among Jewish women: Dr. Tamar Yablonski-Peretz, director of Hadasah Hospital's Sharett Institute of Oncology in Jerusalem; Dr. Ephrat Levy-Lahad, director of the Medical Genetics Institute at Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem; and Dr. Deborah M. Axelrod, medical director of the Clinical Breast Services unit of New York University and co-author of *Bosom Buddies*, a guide for women with breast cancer.

Before discussing the options for BRCA-negative women

deemed to be at high risk, Yablonski-Peretz sought to put gene mutations in context. “A genetic predisposition is only a predisposition,” she said. “It doesn’t mean the disease will appear. One person can live her life with a genetic predisposition and die healthy at 100 or have no predisposition and die of breast cancer at 30.”

In most cases, she said, mutations aren’t inherited. They develop over a person’s lifetime due to a variety of environmental triggers, including smoking, exposure to radiation and certain hormones. “They appear to increase the predisposition to become sick. But there’s a lot we don’t know,” she said.

All three physicians said many high-risk patients, including those who have tested negative for BRCA1/2, could potentially benefit from a multi-gene panel test. The panel tests for about 20 gene mutations, including BRCA1/2, that may predispose a person to breast and ovarian cancers.

Ideally, the person who should undergo the panel test is the family member already diagnosed with breast or ovarian cancer to see if she has a mutation that could be passed down to her children. Children must be at least 18 years old to be tested. “We always try to test an affected person in the family, the person who has had cancer,” Levy-Lahad explained. “Sometimes they will turn out to have a mutation you might not have tested for otherwise. If their daughter or son subsequently tests negative for that mutation the child’s risk of developing cancer goes way down.” However, she added, the fact that one daughter or son tests negative for that specific

For me and many others
considered to have a
higher than normal risk of
developing breast cancer,
testing negative for BRCA1
and BRCA2 mutations is only
a starting point.

mutation does not mean the other children will. The only way to know if you have the mutation is to test for it.

Axelrod related the story of one of her patients, a Jewish woman in her late 40s whom Axelrod had operated on several times for pre-cancerous lesions. “She’s negative for BRCA1 and BRCA 2. Her mother and sister have had pre-menopausal breast cancer. The woman said, ‘I’m not sure how to be followed.’ I told her, ‘You need another surgical biopsy and it’s time to do some panel testing even though you’re BRCA negative.’”

The panel test discovered the patient had a significant mutation: a variant on the PALB2 gene. “We scheduled her for bilateral mastectomies. She’d had enough health scares. It goes to show you that although she’s not at risk for BRCA1 and BRCA2, she’s at increased risk of developing cancers. I have another patient with an increased risk of stomach cancer, as well as breast cancer, who had a prophylactic gastrectomy. Genetic testing at least gives patients the option if you can identify [the potential risk].”

Levy-Lahad explained that the panel test searches for a variety of mutations, some associated with a much higher than average cancer risk, some with a moderate or low risk and some whose risk is unknown. Genetic experts believe that, in time, other mutations that predispose a person to breast and/or ovarian cancer will be discovered and added to the panel. “Panels sometimes uncover something you didn’t suspect,” she said, “and this can be very



Miriam Libicki

My father's mother and her sister lived long lives,
but their mother and the rest of their family were killed during the Holocaust,
making it impossible to map his maternal family's cancer history.

important, especially if you can identify the riskiest mutations. Sometimes it's less clear what should be done."

Before undergoing the panel test, Levy-Lahad continued, the patient needs to be informed that it might reveal a mutation whose risk has yet to be determined. "Labs are reporting variants of uncertain significance (VUS) and people can receive results where the implications are unclear," she said. "I'm not sure if that's damaging, but there are situations where there's a gap between what we know how to test for and what we understand. Currently in our field we report everything, but both doctors and patients can get stuck with information that, at this point in time, leads to more questions than answers."

Although knowledge of how certain mutations express themselves may not be available today, Axelrod pointed out that genetic research is constantly providing more answers. "This is why we tell people who have been tested to come back every so often to revisit their variants. On top of this, you may have been tested for BRCA, but there are newer tests for BRCA."

If it were up to Yablonski-Peretz, family members who have had breast and/or ovarian cancer would undergo multi-gene panel testing without first testing only for BRCA 1/2 mutations. "Today, I don't see a reason to test in two stages. I suggest starting with the panel, which includes BRCA1/2 testing. We start with testing 22 genes already known to predispose people to breast cancer and/or a variety of syndromes."

While it is tempting to choose the cheapest laboratory, Axelrod advises patients "not to go to a place without a specialized geneticist or health risk specialist. It's very easy to test someone but difficult to interpret the results. There may be variants of uncertain significance that later get classified as benign or malignant when the families with the mutation are followed long enough" and data is tallied.

Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York — where my mother participated in a genetic breast cancer study several years ago (she was treated elsewhere) — updates the study's participants when it has new information and sometimes provides further testing.

Axelrod believes that "if you shake the tree we will find more mutations or associations — or some undiscovered BRCA 3 or BRCA4 mutations or another mutation." The challenge, she said, will be to discover which mutations and gene interactions and the proteins they produce lead to which diseases. While the job will be daunting, "look how

far we've come with BRCA1 and BRCA2."

Armed with information on genetic panel testing, I asked some friends who have had breast cancer whether they are considering taking the test. One friend told me she won't take the test because of the cost "and because scientists aren't even close to sure they know enough yet to make it worthwhile. They may be missing BRCA mutations. And what's the point? My kids are at risk no matter whether a test tells me they are or not. I had it, my mom had it and my sister had it, so there's clearly some family thing going on. Or some environmental thing — but either way my kids and I already know we need careful monitoring."

I read author Elizabeth Wurtzels's piece on her breast cancer in *The New York Times*. She said she "could have avoided eight rounds of the strongest chemotherapy and six weeks of radiation," not to mention other suffering, if she had been tested for BRCA mutations. She could have had a "mastectomy and reconstruction and skipped the part where I got cancer."

As for me, I'm still on the fence about taking the multi-gene panel test. My mother has agreed to take it. I'll have to decide whether I would be comfortable knowing I have a gene mutation — should the test reveal one — especially if it's a mutation with an unknown at the present time. And how comfortable will I feel in the future if I don't have any answers? Will the search for answers give me — a control freak — peace or added anxiety?

What I do know is that my dear mother, who enrolled in a Sloan Kettering study more than a decade ago solely because she wanted to provide me and my brother with as much information about our cancer risk as possible, won't be around forever (may she live to 120!). If I truly want answers, this may be the best time to seek them.

While I have my own personal reasons for wanting to know of any gene mutations, I also hope that any knowledge my family gleans will help our youngest members.

In the meantime, I've scheduled my next breast exam and hope that my health insurer will provide me with an MRI, at the suggestion of my specialist. Wish me luck.

Michele Chabin is a journalist living in Jerusalem. She covers the Middle East for the New York Jewish Week and other publications. She wrote "Israel: (Unofficial) Fertility Capital of the World" in our summer 2015 issue.

ERA: Now is the time...

by MARCIA J. WEISS

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) states simply: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." It was introduced into every Congress between 1923 and 1972, when it was passed and sent to the states for ratification by both houses of their legislatures. The ERA has also been introduced in every Congress since 1982, since the proposed amendment was not approved by the necessary three-fourths (38) of the 50 states to make it part of the Constitution.

In the five years following 1972, 35 states approved the ERA. By the Congressionally imposed deadline of 1982, no additional states had voted yes and the ERA fell three states short of ratification. The states that have not ratified the amendment are: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah and Virginia. Since then, 8 of the 15 unratified states have equal rights bills on the state level, but have not ratified federal legislation. Speculation by legislators on why ratification failed resulted in a determination that national economic injustice exists and that women must continue to fight for their rights.

Many Americans mistakenly believe that the Constitution already includes an equal rights guarantee. It does not. Only the 19th Amendment right to vote specifically affirms equality for men and women. The 14th Amendment equal protection clause has never

been interpreted to protect women against sexual discrimination in the way that the ERA would. We need a constitutional guarantee to protect against threats to the significant advances made in women's rights. In a 2012 poll, 91 percent of Americans believed that men and women should have equal rights affirmed by the Constitution.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (who will receive NA'AMAT USA's 2016 Golda Meir Humanitarian Award this May) stated in 2014: "If I could choose an amendment to add to the Constitution, it would be the Equal Rights Amendment. I think we have achieved that through legislation, but legislation can be repealed, it can be altered. I would like my granddaughters, when they pick up the Constitution, to see that notion — that women and men are persons of equal stature ... is a basic principle of our society." In contrast, the late Justice Antonin Scalia said: "Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't."

What would an Equal Rights Amendment achieve? It would guarantee that the rights affirmed by the Constitution are held equally by all citizens without regard to their sex. It would provide a fundamental legal remedy against sex discrimination for both men and women. The ERA would clarify the legal status of sex discrimination for the courts, where decisions still deal inconsistently with such claims. Legal standards would be changed. For the first time,

sex would be considered a suspect classification, as race currently is. Governmental actions that treat males or females differently as a class would be subject to strict judicial scrutiny and would thus have to meet the highest level of justification — a necessary relation to a compelling state interest — to be upheld as constitutional. Currently, sex discrimination is subject to a lower or intermediate level of scrutiny. The governmental interest is not required to be "compelling" or "necessary" but rather simply "important."

Unless the bias against women has been shown to be intentional, women have no recourse under the 14th Amendment. Even decisions in current cases having a *disparate impact* on women have been upheld as not constituting sex discrimination against women. Examples include exclusion of pregnant women from employer health insurance benefits available to others unable to work temporarily, unequal pay for equal work, discrimination by law enforcement in responding to instances of domestic violence and sex discrimination in the workplace. Legislation currently in effect does not cover everyone equally and can be rolled back by a congressional vote. In many of its decisions, the Supreme Court has focused on equal *treatment* of women under the 14th Amendment rather than actual equality between men and women.

As stated by the National Council of Women's Organizations/ERA Task Force on July 2015: "To actual or potential offenders who would

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Take Action!

Equal Rights Amendment

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section 3. This amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

John Orosz



▲ An enthusiastic crowd attended the luncheon and fashion show presented by the Medina club at Century Village (Pembroke Pines, Florida). Chico's in Pembroke Gardens provided the lovely garments. The funds raised will benefit Israeli preschoolers. The Medina models, from left: Anita Ratzner, Frieda Hanann, Ellie Utel, Sharon Melin, Muriel Levine and Anne Kaufman. Isabel Resnick, far right, was the director.

Hatikvah chapter in ► Scottsdale, Arizona, celebrated Tu B'Shevat with an uplifting seder attended by many members and guests. Food, wine, song and prayer were enjoyed. From left: seder leaders and co-presidents Gail Glazer and Debbie Seplov.



▲ More than 165 members and guests filled the ballroom at the Delray Beach Golf Club (Florida) to celebrate Na'AMAT USA's 90th anniversary. Sponsored by Broward and Palm Beach Councils and the Southeast Area, the memorable event, featuring musical entertainment by Meritt & Moreau, was MC'd by Rhoda Birnbaum, Palm Beach Council president, and Raena Zucker, Southeast Area coordinator.



▲ Connecticut's Israeli club (New Haven) held a festive Paid-Up Membership Luncheon. Doris Katz, Eastern Area coordinator, was guest speaker. From left: Evelyn Travitsky, Ann Tilow, Sylvia Rifkin, Loretta Lipka and Carol Sharf.



◀ Cleveland Council enjoyed a book presentation by Marlene Saul Englander. She and her mother, Hinda Zarkey Saul, published a book comprised of letters from Hinda's friend Nochum Berman who remained in Lithuania when Hinda headed for America. The book is *My Dear Hindalla Remember Me: Letters from a Lost World May 1937-January 1940*. From left: Howard Saul, Hinda Zarkey Saul, Marlene Saul Englander



Or and Mazal chapters hold a Diamond and Emerald Magical Celebration for Na'AMAT USA's 90th anniversary in Aventura, Florida. Some 250 guests heard keynote speaker Masha Lubelsky, executive member of the World Zionist Organization and former president of Na'AMAT Israel. From left: Cammy Leff, Annabel Rub-Peicher, national board member Rebecca Yohai, Raquel Rub, Masha Lubelsky, Sarah Leff, Frieda Guterman, Matilde Behar, Janet Neuschatz and Dr. Benny Rub.



▲ Lisa Steindel, president of Pittsburgh Council, presents plaques to honorees Gail Ryave (mother) and Sharon Ryave Brody (daughter) at the Spiritual Adoption/Scholarship Dinner. The women are staunch supporters of Israel, Na'AMAT and the Pittsburgh Jewish Community.



▲ Na'AMAT USA spreads the word about Na'AMAT's multitude of activities at the Israel Programs Expo in New York City. Sponsored by the World Zionist Organization, the American Zionist Organization and StandWithUs, Expo gave Zionist organizations an opportunity to share their missions with people who teach about Israel in their communities. From left: Eastern Area director Ange Nadel and former Eastern Area coordinator Tal Ourian from Jericho, New York.



▲ New York City members held a reception at artist Linda Stein's Tribeca studio to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Na'AMAT USA. Stein spoke about her sculptures and Holocaust tapestries, and the terrific new video about Na'AMAT USA was shown. Empowered by wearing Stein's body-swapping armor are, from left, Ange Nadel, Eastern Area director; Doris Katz, Eastern Area coordinator; Judith Sokoloff, editor of *Na'amat Woman*; and Linda Stein.



◀ Shirli Shavit, director of the Na'AMAT Israel International Department, center, is welcomed by Na'AMAT USA president Liz Raider and her husband Dave Raider at the national office in Canoga Park, California. She spoke to a packed house at a reception given by San Fernando Valley Council and the Western Area.

And in Israel...

Eighty lucky children get a new day care center in Beersheva. Dedicated to the memory of Alice Howard, past national president of Na'AMAT USA, the center was built with funds donated by Howard's family, friends and members of Na'AMAT USA. At the ribbon cutting: Galia Wolloch, Na'AMAT Israel president (middle) and Hagit Pe'er, chairperson of Na'AMAT in the Negev region. ▼



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ously high throughout the aggada.) Rav Sheshet's mother insists that her son forgive the insult. When he refuses, she famously rips open her blouse, baring her breasts, as if the authority of the mother-body can stun (or stunt) the male ego. Sheshet relents and forgives. (We should never underestimate the subtle twists in Talmudic intention: Consider that in an unrelated aggada featuring the same Rav Sheshet, we learn that he was legally blind from birth.)

Women who are deprived of official agency are nonetheless considered responsible for outcomes. In a tragic scenario, the wife of Rabbi Hanina is put to death along with him when the Romans burn the great sage at the stake for teaching Torah in spite of the prohibition. Our rabbis, looking for cause and effect, ask how the great Hanina could have met such a horrendous fate. They reply that Hanina, while righteous, did transgress by speaking the name of God in the public square. But why was his wife killed as well? They reply that she was punished for having failed in her wifely duty to make him stop his wrongful behavior.

The Talmud lets us know that behind many a great man there is a wife, and unofficially she is frequently consulted before he makes an important move. Women take on roles as intermediaries, advisors and peacemakers. Deprived of authority, a wife is nonetheless considered responsible for her husband's behavior. The Talmud manages to give us the template for the overbearing and frustrated Jewish wife, and depending how we read it, a possible warning against becoming a cultural stereotype.

Stories of the aggada also divulge men's fear, even paranoia, about what they know to be women's cleverness in circumventing patriarchal law. We find a stunning example of this dynamic in a tale of two sisters, one of whom is suspected by her husband of being a sotah or adulteress. The sotah's ordeal, of biblical origin, requires that a woman stand before the elders of Jerusalem and drink a brew made up of dirt

from the priests' floor and dissolved letters spelling the name of God. If she is guilty as accused, her stomach will swell resulting in great harm, but if she is innocent, nothing will happen. In this story, the accused woman runs to find her look-a-like sister and has her undergo the "trial" in her place. The sister-substitute drinks the waters and remains intact, surviving the ordeal. Then she runs back to her home where the other sister awaits. In great relief, the two kiss. In that moment the tiniest drop of bitter waters that remained on one sister's lips passes to the other and the obviously guilty sotah dies.

And then there is the controversy about how much time a man should devote to his studies and how much to his wife.

Rav Rechumi was away studying with Rava in Mechuza. He only came home on Yom Kippur eve. One year he became lost in his studies. His wife was waiting for him: He is coming! He is coming! He didn't come. Her mood darkened. She shed a single tear. He was sitting on a roof. At that moment, the roof collapsed and he died. (Ketubot 62b)

With the greatest economy, the aggada paints a scene of interiors and exteriors, psychological landscapes, even creating a split screen — a woman waits in her foyer, while a man stargazes on a roof. It is a highly charged moment, the eve of Kol Nidre.

This story comes to illustrate a point in a legal debate. The controversy is about scholars and their lust, not for their wives or even for other women, but for "Torah, the love goddess." They debate how long a man can spend away from his wife for the purpose of Torah study. Some sages argue just for a week or two, but others say a husband can do so for as long as he pleases, regardless of his wife's needs. This story is offered as a cautionary tale against that permissive point of view.

We learn much about the fabric of society from this compressed tale. Some men of the elite needed to be instructed to fulfill their conjugal obligations. Apparently, like in the story of Yochanan and Reish Lakish, the real passion lay elsewhere. On the other hand, the rabbis recognized the danger of neglecting family and community life and used this

story to warn of social collapse. It is also an example of a woman living within the values of her social world when she accepts deprivation and emotional distress, silently, sublimating her own needs to a higher cause. But this story makes the point that the rabbis wanted to delimit the amount of suffering a woman was to endure.

The rendering of the woman is sympathetic, though spare and evocative. She puts up with much neglect. She retains her faith. She waits and waits. But suddenly, she has a moment of clarity, symbolized by a single, crystalline teardrop. At that instant, she understands all the parameters of her situation. Could she be emblematic? A kind of Everywoman? The storyteller realizes that a woman's awakening, her aha moment in which her consciousness changes, is so powerful it causes the roof — and with it an abusive system — to come crashing down.

Aggada is both mirror and enigma. This is how we really are — yet these are far from banal morality tales. This is our humanity, and by that very fact, it is anything but simple. The baseline is indisputably, even incorrigibly, sexist. But openness to Talmud implies mistrust of a monolithic reading. There is a patriarchal party line. Yet, a careful reading of this uncensored psychohistory of men reveals their vulnerability, a fault line in the balance of power. Sages push back against vibrant women in an ecosystem that is as fragile as it is self-perpetuating. By exposing the roots, layers and nuances, these stories set the stage for an unflinching discussion of male-female relationships and can help nurture equality in our time.

The dissident daughter of an Orthodox Jewish family, Susan Reimer-Torn spent 22 years raising a family in France and writing for the International Herald Tribune. Since her return to New York City in 2001, she has become a life coach and hypnotherapist specializing in women while writing about Jewish feminist issues for a variety of publications. She is the author of Maybe Not Such a Good Girl: Reflections on Rupture and Return. Reimer-Torn wrote "Jewish Feminists: What Are We Talking About Now" in our fall 2015 issue



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Building a Future

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techniques and styles. I bought equipment for my home and friends and family come to me. I've also worked in a beauty shop, but I have to have knee surgery since I cannot stand too long, so I'm not working there now. I'll go back after the surgery. They like what I do and what I've learned here." Bobo said that after graduation and army service, "I hope to open my own shop and continue to learn and improve my skills in the field that I love."

I moved on to the computer classroom where 15 teenagers were busily surfing the Web. Yechi, the instructor, showed them how to use the links to find what they were looking for. When I mentioned that I could use the course, he graciously invited me to join the class.

Next stop was the art and photography course where I was greeted by Stav, the teacher. The nearby corridors and classroom walls are covered with the students' work: beautiful paintings and photographs of landscapes, people, flowers and animals.

I met Yigal and Aliha, who both said they couldn't be happier with what they are learning and doing. Yigal mentioned that his brother had graduated from here and encouraged him to attend. "I'm planning to take the full matriculation exam," he boasted, "and I plan to pass with flying colors."

Speaking of flying, art student Orelle held up a picture of a flying horse she had drawn. At first she hesitated to be photographed, but when Stav encouraged Orelle and stood with her, the two proudly displayed her creation. "I worked very hard on this," she said, "and Stav guided me throughout so that I am happy with the way it turned out."

Eden and Mendi showed me the portraits they had drawn. When I asked if they were happy with their work, both were quick to reply they were quite pleased. "I never thought I would ever be able to do this," Eden said, and Mendi agreed.

Tsilil, another art student, showed us her work: a stunning colorful graphic design. A large circle surrounding colorful shapes and designs, it certainly in-

volved much time, effort and creativity. "I used something like a magic marker, and it was a challenge trying not to smear or overlap the colors," she said. "I like the way it came out, and I thank Stav for encouraging me."

Stav, beaming, showed me a catalog that was published for an art exhibit held at the Jaffa Port. It featured a photograph taken by Chen, a 12th-grade student. She showed me her work, and, yes, she was proud to have it exhibited.

The students in the photography course learn just about everything there is to know about cameras and shooting photos. Rivka Finder, our *Na'amat Woman* photographer, commented: "I'm jealous. I never learned all those things. If I had, it would really help me today, since there are so many new things to learn on my own. I think I'd like to join this class."

The school is grateful to the Epstein family for continuing to support the school. They made it possible, said Leora, to convert space once used for a day care center into photography and art studios. These programs have opened up new worlds for many students.

Another new world, introduced a couple of years ago, is a visit to the sites of the concentration camps in Poland. Although the students learn about the Holocaust in school, seeing the camps and meeting with survivors create indelible experiences. A group of 11th and 12th graders will be going this year. As the trip is expensive and many can't afford it, only about 15 students will participate. Some receive scholarships, others earn money and *NA'AMAT* contributes.

Students from the last trip returned with a new understanding of the Holocaust and those who survived. They also experienced renewed faith in Israel and appreciation that it exists and serves as a homeland for the Jewish people.

This, along with renewed faith in themselves, makes for a promising future.

Judy Telman, a former vice president of NA'AMAT USA, made aliyah in 1981. She writes, translates and volunteers and is the newsletter editor for the Sophie Udin NA'AMAT club in Jerusalem.

Take Action

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try to write, enforce or adjudicate laws inequitably, the ERA would send a strong preemptive message: the Constitution has zero tolerance for sex discrimination under the law."

New Approaches. In 2013, Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ) introduced the so-called "new" or "start-over" ERA, which adds an opening sentence to the 1972 text: "Women shall have equal rights in the United States and all territories subject to its jurisdiction." The new language affirms equal rights and puts "women" into the Constitution for the first time. It helps to clarify that the purpose of the amendment is to address historical discrimination against women. The new language also says that the states as well as the Congress have the power to enforce the amendment by appropriate legislation. The approach suggested by Maloney and Menendez would require a new resolution and no ratification deadline. The new ERA has bi-partisan support with 176 co-sponsors in 2015.

A "three-state strategy" sponsored by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) would repeal the ratification deadline and make the ERA part of the Constitution when three more states ratify it. Advocates point to the 27th Amendment, which was sent to the states in 1789 and finally ratified by three-fourths of the states in 1992.

Including sexual equality language in the amendment and a new strategy are important and critical first steps in providing momentum for ultimately rectifying a critical omission in our Constitution.

TAKE ACTION! As activity on the above approaches has been growing in the states, a new national ERA coalition has formed to work for Congressional action. Contact your members of Congress, urging them to cosponsor the ERA by signing onto both the three-state resolution and the start-over resolution. Thank them if they have already done this.

Marcia J. Weiss, J.D., is the NA'AMAT USA Vice President/Program and Education. Her last column (fall 2015) addressed gender bias in medical research.

OUR 90TH ANNIVERSARY PROJECT

Help Us Build a Women's Health Center in Sderot— A New Flower in the Blossoming of the Desert



In celebration of NA'AMAT USA's 90th anniversary, we are proud to sponsor a new women's health center in Sderot. The facility, serving the women of the town as well as surrounding kibbutzim, will be the first of its kind in the western Negev.

Sderot, with a population of about 25,000, was established in 1951 as a development town for new immigrants. Less than one mile from the Gaza Strip, Sderot has been the target of Kassam rocket attacks since 2001, with a high percentage of the population suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Despite living with tension and uncertainty, the people of Sderot have shown great courage and strength. There is ongoing rebuilding, construction of new houses, opening of new businesses, improvements in the educational system and transportation, and an increase in cultural activities. What Sderot clearly needs is a women's health center.

Modeled on NA'AMAT's outstanding health center in Karmiel, the Sderot facility will offer many of the same services: educational programs and workshops on health issues and concerns,

counseling and promoting women's empowerment.

The building that is being completely renovated for this purpose was once a NA'AMAT day care center. (NA'AMAT runs two day care centers in Sderot.) In addition to three large activity rooms, the site will include a kitchen, safe room and large outside area.

Sderot ("boulevard" in Hebrew) was given its name to symbolize the biblical prophecy of "making the desert bloom." Our health center will be a new flower in the blossoming of the Negev.

To contribute to this far-reaching project, the cornerstone of our 90th birthday celebration, please contact the national office: NA'AMAT USA, 21515 Vanowen Street, Suite 102, Canoga Park, CA 91303. Phone: 818-431-2200. E-mail: naamat@naamat.org.

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**In celebration of the 90th anniversary of
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To become a Life Member or gift a Life Membership, you can pay online at www.naamat.org or mail check to NA'AMAT USA, 21515 Vanowen St., Suite 102, Canoga Park, CA 91303. Phone: 818-431-2200.

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 Rochelle Berger
Teaneck, NJ
 Cheryl Bleden
Westlake Village, CA
 Miriam Brillman
Rydal, PA
 Marilyn Bulmash
Las Vegas, NV
 Florence Dobrin
Beachwood, OH
 Oscar Epstein
Brookline, MA
 Sharyn Fuchs
Rockville, MD

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Highland Park, IL
 Gloria Elbling Gottlieb
Coconut Creek, FL
 Phyllis Green
Santa Maria, CA
 Barbara Grau
Boynton Beach, FL
 Jan Gurvitch
East Windsor, NJ
 Raquel Hochwert
Highland Park, IL
 Lois Joseph
Las Vegas, NV
 Minda Kataczinsky
Las Vegas, NV
 Debra Kohn
Delray Beach, FL

Dena Mallach
Maplewood, NJ
 Beatrice Misch
Douglaston, NY
 Merle Mitzmacher
Las Vegas, NV
 Marguerite Morris
Beachwood, OH
 Marcia Pevsner
Lincolnshire, IL
 Elizabeth Raider
Woodland Hills, CA
 Carol Rosen
Boca Raton, FL
 Joyce Schildkraut
Boca Raton, FL

Linda Schoenberg in
honor of
 Nancy Oleinick
University Heights, OH
 Sheri Schoenwald
Thousand Oaks, CA
 Rita Shapiro
Clearwater, FL
 Gail Simpson
Agoura Hills, CA
 Lynn Wax
Wheeling, IL
 Hanna Wiener
Pembroke Pines, FL
 Rochelle Wilensky
Chicago, IL
 Raena Zucker
Delray Beach, FL

CIRCLE CAMPAIGNS

NA'AMAT USA greatly appreciates the
generosity of the Circle donors, who are
helping to provide vital services for Israeli
women, teenagers and children.

Circle of Life

Manny and Sheila Adler
Solon, OH
 Jan Gurvitch
East Windsor, NJ
 Debra Kohn
Delray Beach, FL
 Chellie Goldwater
Wilensky
Chicago, IL
 Bernice Zoslaw
Abington, PA

Circle of Love

Patty and Bill Mandell
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Circle of Hope

Niki Schwartz
Porter Ranch, CA

Join Us In Celebration



90th Anniversary of NA'AMAT USA

In honor of 90 years of providing critical social and educational services to women and children in Israel, we are kicking off our **CHAI 5 CAMPAIGN**

Everyone knows that 18 is Chai (Life). But, did you know that 90 (5 x 18) is CHAI 5?

When you make a donation at any Chai level, your name will appear in the next issue of our **NA'AMAT Woman** magazine.

Join us in celebrating 90 years of dedication and support for NA'AMAT Israel!

Chai 5 ☐ \$90

Chai 5 (X2) ☐ \$180

Chai 5 (X3) ☐ \$270

NA'AMAT USA thanks you - To Life! To Life! L'Chaim!

Name _____ ☐ Life Member ☐ Annual Member

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Payment Options

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NA'AMAT USA
21515 Vanowen St. #102
Canoga Park, CA 91303



Phone: (844) 777- 5222
Fax: (818) 431- 2214
Email: admin@naamat.org

Your donation to the Circle of Life helps to support NA'AMAT's invaluable services for women: legal aid bureaus; vocational and professional education; intervention, treatment and prevention of domestic violence; cultural enrichment activities; and advocacy for women's rights.

**Celebrate 90 years
of empowering women by
joining the NA'AMAT USA**

Circle of Life!

When you take part in the Circle of Life, you help create a better life for the women of Israel.

You *educate* women to expand their opportunities and achieve their goals • You *protect* women from domestic violence • You *help* women overcome the obstacles to gender equality • You *encourage* women to participate in political life • You *empower* women to become agents of social change • You *reinforce* women's awareness of their value and rights • You *invest* in the economic growth of women and their families

You can join the Circle of Life by contributing \$1,800. Two people each donating \$900 also count as a circle.

Donors' names will be inscribed on the Circle of Life Wall at the NA'AMAT Women's Center in Jerusalem.

Send your contribution to NA'AMAT USA, 21515 Vanowen St., Suite 102, Canoga Park, CA 91303. Phone: 818-431-2200.