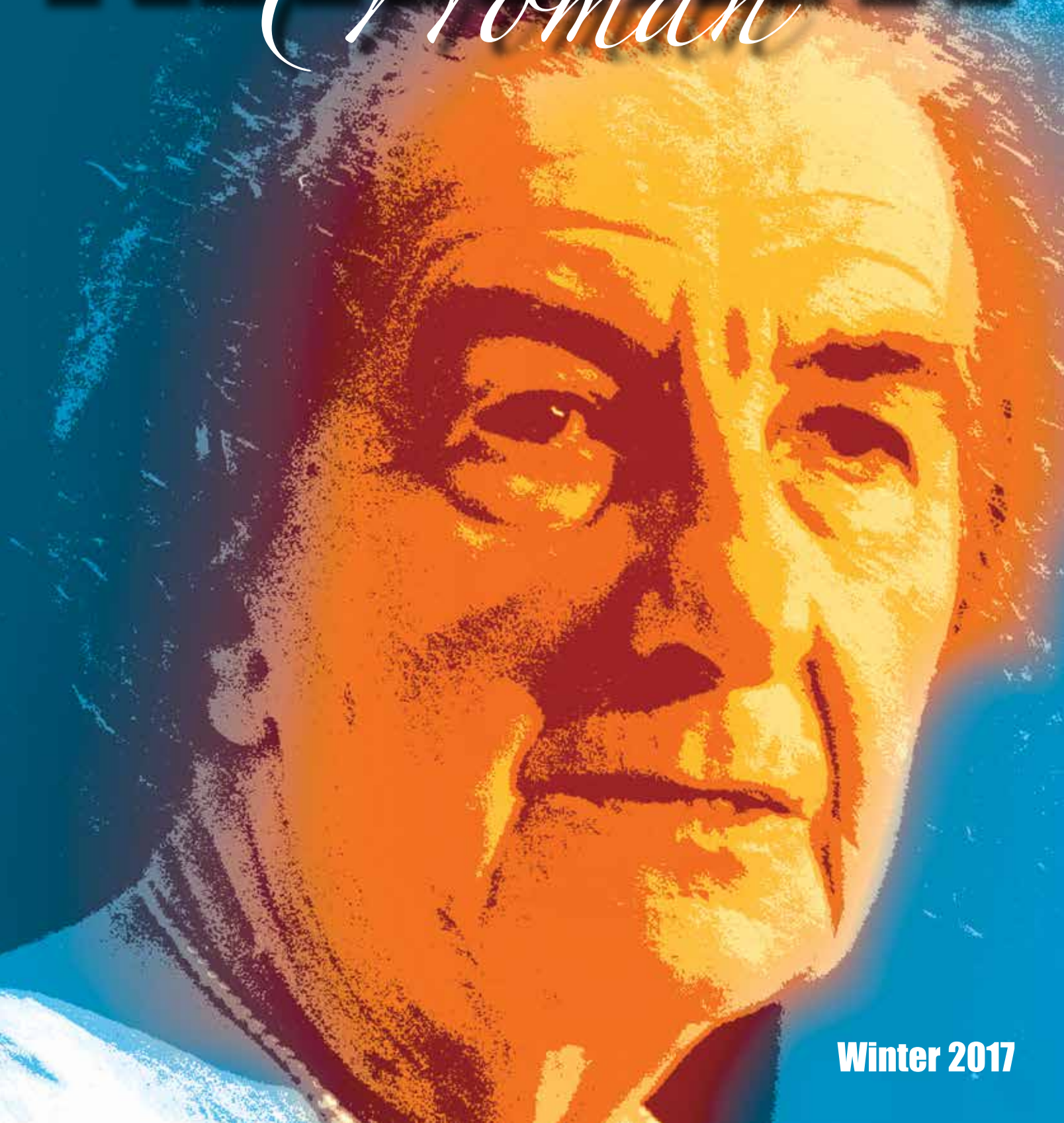


NAJAMMAT

Woman



Winter 2017

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Ellen Cassedy

**MAGAZINE OF
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WINTER 2017**

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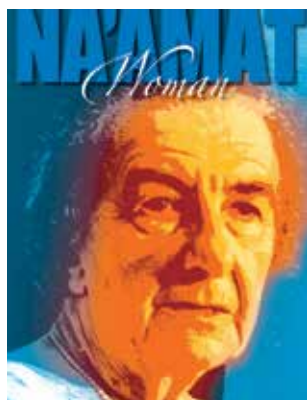
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Illustration by Marilyn Rose

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,

This past November, Americans elected a new president in what was one of the most contentious elections the United States has ever had. Many have strong negative feelings about what happened but they must accept the results. Donald Trump is President of the United States and as such he is our leader. We can support his policies or disagree with them and protest them as is our right, but we must do so with respect. NA'AMAT USA hopes he will keep his pledge to be a president for all Americans and urges our elected officials from both major parties to create a bipartisan path to solving the country's crucial problems.

NA'AMAT USA will continue to work for women's rights both here and in Israel. We will continue to support Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to control what happens to her body. We will continue to work for equal pay for equal work, women's health equity and for the right of women to live free from abuse. We will oppose sexual harassment wherever it occurs and support programs for victims of sexual assault. NA'AMAT USA will continue to work to improve the lives of children and families.

And, of course, we will always be dedicated to our main mission: supporting our beloved State of Israel. The pie chart on this page illustrates how your contributions are distributed in Israel.

Let's look at some recent examples of our financial support. The Women's Health Center in Sderot — NA'AMAT USA's 90th Anniversary Project — is in the process of being built and is scheduled to open in June 2017. The first of its kind in the western Negev, the facility is expected to serve 500 women. It will also provide special projects for children, especially during tense security times. The center will be

a great asset to Sderot, which has been the target of thousands of rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza since 2001.

As many of you know, there were severe wildfires in Israel at the end of last year. Six of our day care centers in Haifa needed to be evacuated, and one was so severely damaged it couldn't be used for more than a month. The playground took even longer to be repaired. The other five centers needed extensive clean up to remove all the soot, ash and smoke contamination. The physical damage was repaired as quickly as possible — it is the emotional trauma that will take longer. A few of the day care center directors and workers are still quite traumatized by what happened because of the deep responsibility they feel for the safety and well being of their children. NA'AMAT is providing psychological counseling as well as running workshops to help them deal with these problems. We are grateful to all of you who participated in our NA'AMAT Israel Emergency Fire Appeal. We have sent \$25,000 to Israel to help with the renovations and cleaning, and the funds still coming in will also be sent to these centers.

NA'AMAT continues to fulfill the great need for day care throughout Israel. It recently opened a day care

center for 80 Arab children in Jaffa. Many of the families are poor, but all have working parents. The center is well equipped and a dedicated staff is providing expert care. The families are all very appreciative of NA'AMAT.

We're happy to witness the results of our ongoing efforts to help Israeli women pursue their higher education. The NA'AMAT USA scholarship fund is providing stipends to more than 200 students for this educational year. These university women are extremely thankful to us. As Tami, a third-year software engineering student, remarked: "I am the daughter of a drug addict and my family is of very low socio-economic status. Several years ago I went through a very unpleasant divorce. I enrolled in studies knowing that this step is unlikely to be a simple one, but I did it with total faith. Thank you so much for your contribution...it will assist me greatly."

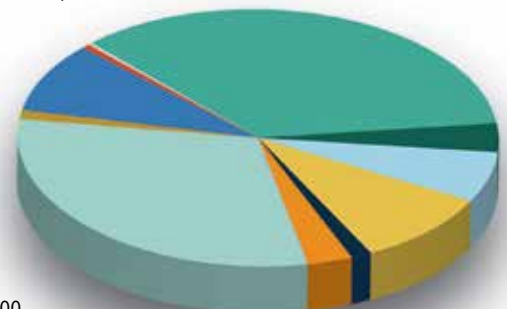
I wish you and your families a happy, healthy and prosperous 2017. I pray it will be a peaceful one for Israel and a successful one for NA'AMAT USA.

Chellie
Chellie Goldwater Wilensky



Allocation of funds sent by NA'AMAT USA through grants to NA'AMAT Israel, July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016. Total: \$849,000.

- Youth Villages-Ayanot/Kanot, \$72,500
- Women's Legal Services, \$10,000
- Women's Health Center-Sderot, \$250,000
- Women's Health Center-Karmiel, \$25,000
- Technological High Schools, \$12,500
- Professional Scholarships, \$79,000
- Golda Meir Child Development Fund, \$52,000
- Emergency Fund, \$30,000
- Day Care Center, \$310,000
- Circle of Love, \$2,000
- Beersheva Community Center Renovation, \$6,000



My Yiddish Month

Why are we
learning
Yiddish
in Vilnius?

To touch the lives of our
ancestors. To honor the lives
of the ordinary people who
spoke it. To learn the
language of passionate debates
and fiery speeches in the struggle
for a better world.

by ELLEN CASSEDY

Photos courtesy of Ellen Cassedy



Author Ellen Cassedy (center) and Fania Brantsovsky (wearing hat) visit the Rudniku forest where Fania fought with the partisans. On page 2: Vilna's statue of Tsemah Szabad (1864-1935), a physician and prominent public figure in Vilna.

Sunday, July 17

Our month of Yiddish study has begun! My friend Jessica and I have arrived in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, and settled into our apartment. Our front windows face a busy street full of rattling trolleys. In back, our courtyard lies within the former Vilna ghetto, where Jews were confined during the Nazi era.

It's my fourth summer at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute, Jessica's first. On our way to the opening reception, we took our time, savoring the light of the Baltic sky, the elegant pastel facades, the walls rich with history. Once, on these cobblestoned streets, Jews, Poles, Lithuanians, and Russians rubbed elbows. Today, the city once known as "the Jerusalem of the North" is home to only 2,000 Jews. The place where the Great Synagogue stood is an empty lot.

Down University Street we went, then through the iron gates of Vilnius University, one of the oldest in Europe. The 50 summer students come from the United States, Lithuania, Russia, Germany, Austria, England, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Israel. The youngest, from Warsaw, studies Yiddish at her public high school. There's a healthy contingent of senior citizens. The institute director, Sarunas Liekis, a Lithuanian historian, welcomed us, as did our teachers, who hail from Argentina, Estonia, Israel and the United States.

Monday, July 18

We've been sorted out into four levels. All classes, from beginning to advanced, will take place almost entirely in Yiddish. In my class, we received a thick volume, a sampling from the past 150 years of modern Yiddish literature.



Lauren, a graduate student from Los Angeles, was drawn to the connection between left-wing politics and the "language of the people."

Jessica loved her first day. "Maybe the most fun I've had *ever*," she said. Her class began with the basics: *Sholem Aleichem!* (Hello!) *A gut morgn!* (Good morning!) *Mayn nomen iz...* (My name is...) *Ikb bin fun...* (I'm from...)

Yiddish is a Germanic tongue written in Hebrew characters. The next step for her class is mastering the alphabet.

In the old days, Jewish boys would begin their studies at the age of three. On the first day, their primers were sprinkled with sugar to show that learning is sweet.

Tuesday, July 19

We walked across town for our weekly music workshop in the Jewish community building. The grand edifice is the site of a wide variety of activities for all ages. Under the direction of the chairwoman, Fania Kukliansky, the community strives to attract Jews and non-Jews alike to learn about Jewish culture.

Our workshop leader strapped on his accordion and guided us through a poignant song from the ghetto: "Vilna, our home! Vilna streets, Vilna rivers, Vilna forests, mountains and valleys." Then we belted out a rousing song of protest: "Why must we pay rent when the stove is broken?"

Wednesday, July 20

Why are we here? Each of us has an answer.

Over the centuries, Yiddish served as a portable homeland that Jews carried with them. Now it's become my home within Jewish culture.

I study Yiddish as a memorial to my mother and to honor the lives of ordinary people who spoke the language, including my own Lithuanian Jewish forebears on my mother's side (my father isn't Jewish). Over the centuries, Yiddish served as a portable homeland that Jews carried with them. Now it's become my home within Jewish culture. And, after repeated visits to Vilnius, I've come to care deeply about this place — its past, present and future.

Jessica, a composer, is writing a piece about how young Lithuanians are encountering the history of the Holocaust. She wants to immerse herself in the sights and sounds of the city, to touch the lives of her ancestors, to taste the language spoken by her grandfather and those who came before.

Avigayl, a senior at a university in Connecticut, grew up hearing about Vilnius from her mother, who was born here. "My mom remembered her address and what her stoop looked like," she said. "I found the stoop, sat down and called her in Chicago. We both cried."

For Avigayl, walking through the former ghetto is a powerful experience. "This is a very heavy city," she observed. "All these people who were my blood walked on these streets, fell in love here, died here, were murdered here." In this place of origins, she can feel herself changing. "Remembering is deeply tied into the way you live your life," she said. "As you learn about the history of oppression, how can you not do everything you can to make things better?"

Lauren, a graduate student from Los Angeles, also traces her roots to this city. What drew her here, she said, is "the connection between left-wing politics and the language of the people." Yiddish was the language of the lanes and kitchens of the Old World and the immigrant neighborhoods of the New, the language of passionate debates and fiery speeches in the struggle for a better world on both sides of the Atlantic.

Friday, July 22

After this first week, Jessica tells me she's starting to be able to read. As for me, my brain is filling up with Yiddish words and phrases, and already the lines of text look less forbidding than they did a few days ago.

In the evening, under the white sky, we walked to the Jewish community building for the *shabes tish*, the Friday night Sabbath gathering. We took our seats beside members of the local community at a long table laden with challah, candles, tasty traditional dishes and plenty of vodka.

The official rabbi of Vilnius lives in our building. When the sun went down at the end of the Sabbath — not till 11 p.m. — we crossed the hall to ask if he'd let us use his WiFi password. Cheerful



The class made recipes using the *Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook* and described in Yiddish what they had prepared.



Strolling through the former Vilna ghetto is a powerful experience for Avigayl, whose ancestors walked these streets.

Marija, a Berlin graduate student in Jewish history, is a non-Jewish Lithuanian studying Yiddish.



and friendly, he invited us in to see his collection of rabbinical seals engraved with signs of the zodiac, some of them hundreds of years old.

Sunday, July 24

Today was an all-day excursion with Fania Brantsovsky, 93, a former resident of the Vilna ghetto who works as the librarian at the Yiddish Institute. She

took us first to the Jewish cemetery, where she showed us a memorial to teachers — *her* teachers — who perished during the ghetto years.

Outside of town, we paid our respects to the site in the forest of Ponar where thousands of Jews were shot and buried in giant pits.

continued on page 26

Jessica is studying at the Vilnius Yiddish Institute for the first time.



Wise Aging:

Learning to accept your life as it is, discovering how to make the best choices and becoming more resilient in difficult times.

by RAHEL MUSLEAH

When Margaret Shapiro stopped coloring her hair at age 70 and reduced her work hours to one day a week, she suddenly realized that she no longer looked so young — nor was she. “With less of a future ahead of me I found myself reflecting on my priorities,” says Shapiro, a psychotherapist in Philadelphia. Raising her children and achieving her own career goals were behind her, and though her life was a lot more relaxing, she faced the question, “What will I do now?”

To guide her in accepting her new stage in life, Shapiro, now 74, joined a “wisdom circle” that drew a dozen women from five area synagogues. It is run by Dayle Friedman, a rabbi who has devoted her career to the spirituality of aging. Friedman calls her practice “growing older,” offering learning opportunities, spiritual care and spiritual guidance to foster meaning and wholeness (growingolder.net). “It helped me to home in on my own wisdom,” says Shapiro, quantifying part of that wisdom as being “more accepting and positive with myself and my

relationships. Wisdom is very different from being smart.”

Like Shapiro, Rabbi Rachel Cowan didn’t spend much time thinking about getting older. At 69, she was still working as executive director of the In-

thing you don’t want to do,” she says. “There’s no word with dignity.”

Cowan partnered with Linda Thal, founding co-director of the Yedidya Center for Jewish Spiritual Direction, which trains rabbis, cantors, therapists and others to provide spiritual guidance. After researching the subject comprehensively, the two focused on the phrase “wise aging”: learning to accept your life as it is, discovering how to make the best choices and becoming more resilient in difficult times. Unwise aging, says Cowan, “would be pretending you are not getting older, not living as fully as you could and not making any preparations for illness or death.”

Their book, *Wise Aging: Living with Joy, Resilience and Spirit*, published in 2015 by Behrman House, has spawned peer groups all over the country interested in facing the next phase of their lives with self-awareness, equanimity and intentionality. Some groups are limited to a few weeks; some extend to months and even years. With funding from a variety of grants, IJS has now developed a group curriculum and has trained 250 facilitators to guide participants in text study, active listening, body awareness



stitute for Jewish Spirituality (IJS) in Manhattan (www.jewishspirituality.org). “I thought maybe it would be good for me to do something different — until I realized I didn’t know what you’re supposed to do when you’re this age.” All the words that labeled the stage of life she was entering had negative connotations. “Getting old is depicted as some-

Elderhood is a time
of life completion.
It's like a picture
you've been
working on for
a long time:
Where does it
need more color?
Where does it need
to be left alone?



exercises, reflection, guided meditation and journaling. Topics range from body image and practicing forgiveness to living with loss and leaving a legacy.

The wise aging curriculum Cowan and Thal have constructed, based on Harvard psychiatrist George Vaillant's research on "successful aging," focuses on developing a spiritual reserve that boosts a feeling of connectedness to self, others and God. "Joy doesn't mean bubbly and happy but a stance that can hold sadness and still allow you to see goodness in life," says Cowan, now 75. "Resilience guides you through difficult times and unwanted transitions so you don't sink into self-pity, and spirit is a deep understanding that you are not alone in this world, that God cares for you and that you are part of something much bigger. I see it as an electric current that lifts up what is ordinary."

Friedman, whose book, *Jewish Wisdom for Growing Older*, newly published by Turner Publishing, has chosen to emphasize "grit and grace," the elements of resilience that include acceptance and gratitude without being "polyannish." "I'm interested in trying to tell the truth about growing older. There are many incredible opportunities, but if you live long enough you will not escape sorrow,

limitations and frailty," says Friedman, 60. "The great idolatry of aging is the belief that things should just stay the same. We need a new spiritual plasticity that allows a person to say, 'It's time for me to retire,' or 'Now I have a walker. That doesn't mean I'm not me.'"

"This is a conversation that needs to be had by people who didn't know they needed it," says Cowan. "The groups are not about people trying to fix each other but about sharing stories and listening. It's a relief to articulate questions about things you think about, like forgetting words or names, as well as the ultimate questions: What is the meaning of my life? What should I do with the years I have left?"

Rabbi Richard Address points out that both American society and the Jewish community are starting to wake up to the fact that we have a huge bubble of baby boomers comprising 76 million people. Address, 71, is the founder and director of Jewish Sacred Aging (jewishsacredaging.com), a forum for the Jewish community to discuss the implications of longevity for the aging baby boomer generation. Reports from the Social Security Administration and the Pew Research Center estimate that 10,000 people a day turn 65. According

to Pew, most of the Jewish community is over 50. Because this generation is living longer in better health, the opportunities and challenges are new.

Economic fears are driving the issue in the general community: There's not enough Social Security to go around. Medical costs can cause financial crises. Spiritual concerns are essential, say the handful of leaders in the Jewish community who are addressing the topic — one they want to frame in the positive light of growth. "The third age, or elderhood, is a time of life completion," says Lynne Iser, founder of Elder-Activists.org, whose mission is to provide education, support and inspira-

tion to bring about a just society and sustainable world. "It's such an opportunity to be able to look at our lives and where we need to be. It's like a picture you've been working on for a long time: Where does it need more color? Where does it need to be left alone? It's a time to review your life, to notice what you've done well and what needs to be resolved."

Iser was one of the first in the Jewish community to focus on issues of aging. A quarter-century ago she and Jewish Renewal founder Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi created the Spiritual Eldering Institute. They used a "psycho-spiritual paradigm" to help practitioners and facilitators look at who they are, how they relate to people and how to face their own mortality. (Reb Zalman, who died in 2014, wrote *From Age-ing to Sage-ing* with Ronald Miller in 1995.) Iser notes that at the time, the only word for an older person was "senior," and many birthday cards joked — and still joke — "You're over the hill" or "Don't worry, you're still 39." Reb Zalman's perspective was that anyone can grow old — but that it takes work to become an elder, a process using life experience. "We've learned that it's good for people to prepare and

complete their lives, to do their philosophical homework, to pass on bits of knowledge and wisdom,” says Iser. “The process of eldering is bigger than we are — it’s spiritual because it’s beyond what we can touch and feel in our lives.”

Iser was 40 when she began working with Reb Zalman, so the subject was not personally relevant to her. Still, she found herself “in awe” of people in their late 60s who were excited about growing older. Now, at 66, she understands. The Spiritual Eldering Institute, which did not have a Jewish orientation, has evolved into Sage-ing International (www.sage-ing.org), and the ALEPH Sage-ing Program (www.aleph.org), cosponsored by Ruach Ha’aretz, carries on the work with a Jewish outlook anchored in prayer, liturgy, songs and teachings.

Perspectives on aging also include humor. “Growing older was something that happened to my grandparents,” writes William Novak in the introduction to his new book, *Die Laughing: Killer Jokes for Newly Old Folks* (Touchstone). “Like so many of my fellow baby boomers I thought our generation would remain forever young. Apparently we were misinformed.” For Novak, 68, who has co-written or ghostwritten numerous celebrity memoirs, jokes about memory loss and body changes don’t tell the whole reality of getting older, but they do provide a lighthearted and cathartic outlet. One example: “A man walks into a pharmacy. ‘I’m looking for some acetylsalicylic acid,’ he tells the druggist. ‘You mean aspirin?’ the druggist asks. ‘Thank you!’ the man replies. ‘I can never remember that word.’”

Despite the comic infusion, the stigma around growing older remains undeniable. Even finding a descriptive term that people embrace is difficult. “It’s such a large swath of life,” says Friedman. “People ask, ‘How can I at 60 be at the same stage as someone at 90?’” She, herself, doesn’t mind the term “aging.” “We are all aging from birth. It’s a process that connotes ‘becoming,’ whereas ‘old’ sounds like a permanent static thing.” She also likes “elder,” because of its sense of relationship to others. In Jewish tradition, it is used as an honorific for those connected with role, responsibility and wisdom.

But, she notes, many people are uncomfortable saying they, themselves, are old and wise, so Friedman often settles on the phrase “beyond midlife.”

Jewish texts and blessings can comfort people by connecting personal issues with the wisdom inherent in the tradition, says Cowan. “The groups offer space to think and spaciousness to listen,” she explains. “It’s an important skill for aging to learn how to accept rather than fight or deny where you are,” says Cowan, who herself dealt with loss at a relatively young age: When she was 47, her husband, Paul Cowan, was diagnosed with leukemia, dying at 48. “We learned to say, ‘We have this day.’ You can have great pain and loss in life and still be happy.”

Much of the wise aging perspective could be called wise living — but that would defeat its purpose, says Cowan. “Aging is a stage of life that exists in a continuum. When you’re younger, job and family occupy you. As you get older, the questions become much more urgent.”

Ten years ago, Cowan initiated her first spirituality group, *Vetaher Libenu* (Purify our Hearts), which still meets monthly in her home. As the participants grew older they began focusing on the connection between spirituality and aging. Wise aging groups began at Manhattan’s Central Synagogue five years ago and are now spreading beyond the synagogue and JCC world to libraries and other institutions.

Elaine Cohen, 69, a retired educator, and Rochel David, 67, a retired psychologist and yoga instructor, facilitate three groups in Teaneck, New Jersey. One is a merger of two groups that have been meeting for almost two years at Conservative synagogue Beth Shalom, and two are new six-week sessions at the Jewish Family Service of Bergen and North Hudson. The meetings include mindfulness meditation, discussion of a Jewish text on a particular theme, and conversations that encourage reflection and contemplative listening. “We look for texts that reach an emotion or have insight,” David says.

The two group leaders emphasize that there is no pat formula or prescriptive wisdom, but having an accepting supportive group can open people’s eyes, develop trusting relationships

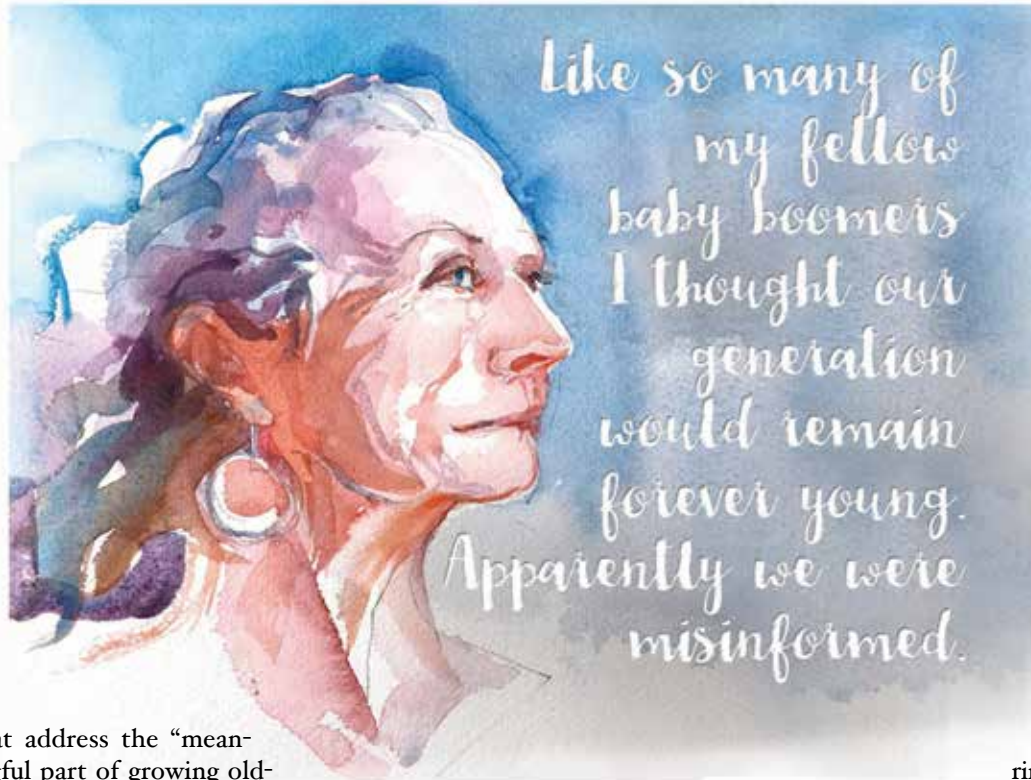
and lead to moving and transformative experiences. For instance, after an exploration of forgiveness and self-forgiveness, one participant left feeling unsettled and later reached out to a friend with whom she had unfinished business. “No one told her to do that, but because of the discussion she was able to,” Cohen recalls.

“It’s our age cohort so the issues resonate with us as well,” Cohen adds. Conscious dying, one of the issues addressed at an IJS retreat for facilitators this past summer, was particularly challenging, she says. “It’s being intentional about the legacy we want to leave, being explicit about your values with your children, grandchildren and friends — and trying to look at the long-term issues that extend beyond our own lives.”

Friedman, who has run monthly wisdom circles in individual homes for the past five years, finds the experiences to be “intimate and deep.” Modeled on the women’s *rosh hodesh* (new moon) group she co-founded 17 years ago, the groups provide what she calls “provisions for the journey.” They are currently women-only gatherings, though that was not her intention. “Women are more immediately drawn to intimacy, sharing and reflection,” she posits, adding that men also want to make sense of their experience and that she hopes to create mixed-gender groups focused on study. Themes have included embracing interdependence, medical treatment at the end of life, what to do with “stuff” and time, prayer and God.

Of the biblical characters she explores in her book as paradigms, she admires Naomi most. Naomi starts at rock bottom — she has lost her husband and sons — but by the end of the story “somehow she’s dangling or nursing a grandchild and her daughter-in-law Ruth is creating the line of King David,” says Friedman. “Naomi is a character who embodies loss in later life but who begins again and is resilient. What helps her to do that is being in a relationship with Ruth and having someone to be responsible for.”

The synagogue, Jewish aging activists agree, can become a central force in changing attitudes toward growing older. Currently, the Jewish community has few formal programming resources



that address the “meaningful part of growing older,” says Friedman. Jewish life, learning and spirituality programming are largely focused on younger families, with identity-building targeting children and teens. Those who do care about the older population fund concrete needs like housing, health care and social services.

“Synagogues are inherently multi-generational,” Friedman says. “We need to create modalities to interact with and hear the wisdom of elders. When you know someone 85-plus who works at a homeless shelter and you’re 35, your view of aging changes.” She recalls that when she was a chaplain at the Philadelphia Geriatric Center, she developed many programs with synagogues, youth groups and Hillels. For instance, the youth group of Congregation Beth Sholom in suburban Elkins Park came to the nursing home once a month for Shabbat dinner and services. Each student was paired with an elder and was trained before and debriefed after each session. “My vision and agenda was to empower the young people to make contributions and the older people to share their wisdom. Each person has a soul and a story even if they look physically frail. When those kids are older they will be less afraid. They will never look at elders as just ‘the other.’”

Address of Jewish Sacred Aging

works with synagogues to reestablish their connections to older members, many of whom leave, he says, because they don’t find much programming of interest to them. His programs examine issues of caregiving, wellness and mental health; consider the economics of aging and explore new rituals. When Address directed the Department of Jewish Family Concerns for the Union of Reform Judaism, he developed a project on sacred aging that has created awareness and resources for congregations. When URJ closed its program departments, he made the project his own. He highlights the need for it by pointing out that the Jewish Sacred Aging Facebook page has more than 24,000 followers.

His approach is grounded in six major Torah texts that he views as a guide to healthy aging. “It’s not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2) stresses the need for relationships. God’s command to Abraham to “Go forth” (Lech Lecha, Genesis 12) empowers us to constantly evolve, change and take risks. Jacob’s struggle with the angel (Genesis 32) and the changing of his name to Israel mirrors the possibility of recreating our identities. The Burning Bush (Exodus 3) reflects the opportunity to reinterpret and create a relationship with God. The

Holiness Code (Leviticus 19) emphasizes an integrated, holistic and sacred lifestyle. And Deuteronomy’s exhortation to “choose life” emphasizes the outlook of positive aging.

As an outgrowth of Address’ work, congregations have begun instituting “legacy programs” where people build their spiritual autobiographies and write ethical wills that set down what they want to leave behind in terms of moral, spiritual and ethical values. The sacred aging website also features an explosion of new rituals that tackle radically private issues: the removal of a wedding

ring after a year of mourning, solemnizing adult cohabitation, leaving a family home, being welcomed into a nursing home or signing an advanced directive or living will. “These are sheheyanu (a blessing that gives thanks to God for enabling us to experience a special occasion) moments, that you are able to make these choices,” says Address. The most controversial, he says, is giving permission for a non-marital relationship to take place when a spouse has Alzheimers’ or dementia. “People are living these situations and want to know what their tradition says about it,” he adds.

Even for elder activists like Iser, delineating personal wisdom can be daunting. “I’ve been thinking about this a lot,” she says. “Am I a wise person? And if I don’t think so, how can I talk about it?” She says she has learned to try to live a life in balance, nurturing the intensity and strength of the unique spark that ignites her passion, joining it with the spark in others. “I’m still not a complete picture at all,” she observes. “I hope that when I die, I will be.”

Award-winning journalist and author Rabel Musleah leads tours of Jewish India and speaks about its communities. Her website is www.explorejewishindia.com. She wrote about the artist Lynne Avadenka in our fall 2016 issue.

Escaping the Nightmare of Domestic Violence

NA'AMAT's Glickman Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence helps to save and rebuild lives.

by JUDY TELMAN

The nine women living at NA'AMAT's Glickman Center during my visit were escaping homes where threats and violence were the norm. A young Ethiopian woman arrived with her baby, seeking to break free from her husband's violent attacks. Another battered woman came with only one of her six children, the others remaining with her husband. All the women found a safe haven at the center, surrounded by skilled and caring people.

My visit to the Glickman Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence in Tel Aviv gave me a complete picture of this remarkable facility, founded by NA'AMAT in 1993. Major support has come from NA'AMAT Canada, which funded the original building and an addition. Meet-

ing the staff and touring the attractive, comfortable facility, I learned about its comprehensive program to help victims deal with the trauma they had suffered.

Although there were 9 women and 13 children in the shelter when I visited last November, the center can house up to 12 women and their children. Generally, the women remain in the shelter for 6 months but may stay up to a year. A woman may decide to leave earlier, even return to her abusive spouse. By law, the staff cannot intervene. Only the woman, herself, or a community social worker acting on her behalf can file a complaint with the police or ask for a restraining order.

When a woman is referred to the shelter by a community social worker, she may arrive at the center following

her own appeal for help, a neighbor's report of domestic violence, a hospital visit or a complaint to the police.

Social worker Yael Levin, the director of the Glickman shelter, explained that it is not easy for the woman to decide to come to the shelter. She has to leave her home, her surroundings and sometimes her children. She may bring sons up to age 11. There is no age limit for girls, but it is felt that boys over the age of 11 would be put in an uncomfortable position, rooming with their mothers and perhaps another mother and her family.

The cultural mosaic of the nine women included five women from Ethiopia, one from South America, one from Russia and two native Israelis — one Jewish, one Muslim. They all spoke Hebrew except for one of the Ethiopians.

A volunteer comes once a week to teach her Hebrew and the other Ethiopians who speak Amharic help.

One of the Ethiopian women is 22 years old with a 1-year-old daughter. She came to Israel as a young child, living in a home where domestic violence was the norm. Her mother was abused and it is believed the girl, herself, was sexually molested. She ran away from home, got involved with drugs and alcohol and never completed high school. When she married, she found herself in the same situation she had run from. After a particularly vicious attack by her husband, she was referred to the shelter. During the few months that

Photos by Rivka FINDER





All shelter residents are expected to prepare some meals and help keep the premises clean.

she has been here, Yael said, there has been a remarkable change in her personality, behavior, relationship with her daughter and her willingness to accept responsibility and participate in daily activities.

Yael has served as director for only a year, but for many years she worked

in a domestic violence treatment center for men in Holon. She said that the young Ethiopian woman was very angry when she came to the shelter. She yelled at her child, didn't show her any affection and wanted nothing to do with the required routine. All residents are expected not only to clean their

own rooms, but also to help keep the center clean, cook meals and adhere to the shelter schedule.

Residents are expected to prepare breakfast for their families. Lunch for the women and children is served in the dining room. This includes kids up to age 5 who attend the on-premises day care cen-

Raising Public Awareness

During the week I visited the center, people around the world were marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25). NA'AMAT was involved in programs to raise public awareness and call for solutions.

Glickman Center staff visited work places around the country educating men and women about domestic violence. NA'AMAT's regional offices throughout Israel also held special events in work places.

In a factory in Nahariya, Orit Eron, director of the

Glickman open section, talked to 150 men about harassment, sexual abuse and domestic violence. The men claimed this was the first time they learned about the problem and the extent of its seriousness. As a result, arrangements were made to visit 18 other work places to alert employees about how to recognize signs of abuse and what to do about it.

Meetings were held at Ichilov Hospital with doctors, nurses and social workers on training emergency room staff to assist victims and refer them to the Glickman Center or other facilities for battered women. In



NA'AMAT advertisements on buses target violence among young couples.

meetings at the Maccabi Health Fund, professors, physical therapists and social workers

were briefed on where to seek help and how to refer patients to a shelter.

ter as well as older children who are mainstreamed into local schools. Everyone is expected to eat dinner together at 6.

The routine was difficult for the young Ethiopian mother, but intensive individual counseling and group therapy brought about a dramatic change. She now is able to relate to her child, to hug her and speak lovingly to her. She has a job cleaning houses, earning money for the first time. There is also the hope that she'll go back to school and complete her education.

Yael told me the story of the South American woman, 38, who arrived with her two children, 4 and 6. In South America, she had been introduced to her husband by her sister who now lives in Israel. They married and came to Israel 8 years ago. She has permanent resident's status and speaks Hebrew fluently. Throughout her married life she was subjected to emotional violence. Her husband, who comes from a wealthy family, totally rejected her because she came from a poor, uneducated family. She had no access to money of her own. Even when she worked, her spouse took all her earnings. A good and loving mother, here at the center she is in psychotherapy for the first time.

The Russian woman has one child and is pregnant. She came to Israel as a teenager, marrying an Israeli when she was quite young. Her husband treated her "like property, with a lack of respect and concern," said Yael. A victim of verbal and physical abuse, what is generally

known as "intimate violence," she was referred to the shelter by a community social worker.

Intimate violence includes physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse, child abuse and stalking. It is estimated that about 200,000 women in Israel suffer from intimate violence. In 2016, 16 women were killed by their spouses or other family members. Some 600,000 children have witnessed domestic violence.

Interviewed in a recent *Jerusalem Post* article, Prof. Einat Peled of Tel Aviv University's School of Social Work said statistics show that children exposed to violence in the home are more likely to lack stability and to experience emotional difficulties than other children. "We know that in the worst cases, the child lives in an environment of terror, fear and lack of confidence," she said. "There could also be developmental issues stemming from the child's exposure to problematic models for interpersonal communication and problem-solving.

"Witnessing abuse can affect the relationship between the child and his or her parents," Peled added. "The relationship with an abusive father is problematic because of the violence, and the relationship with a mother who isn't able to defend herself is also a problem because the child may see her as weak."

Yael told me that the Israeli Arab woman divorced her husband and was then abused by her brother, who threatened her physically and emotionally. Di-

vorice is not accepted graciously by those who follow Islam — and she feared for her life. She was referred to the shelter by a community social worker.

One of the Ethiopians, married to a Bedouin, brought her 4-year-old with her. Her 6 other children remained with the husband who apparently is not abusive to them. Sometimes, as in this case, the father is very dominant. As a result the children turn their backs on the mother, making her life even more difficult.

Often, older children — and sometimes younger ones — who do not come to the shelter with their mothers are placed in a residential boarding school to remove them from a dangerous environment.

The women who come to the Glickman shelter are in dire need of support, counseling and direction. Just the beginning steps of the long process are emotionally arduous: reporting to the police, meeting a social worker, asking for a restraining order. And taking any of these steps often creates additional problems and backlash for the woman. Many go back to their spouses, and then the local social worker is notified. Those who have the desire and ability to become independent have options, such as going to a halfway house.

There are only 14 shelters for battered women in Israel — all of them run by non-profit women's organizations like NA'AMAT under the auspices of the Ministry of Welfare. These include two for haredi (ultra-Orthodox) women and



Yael Levin, director of the shelter at the Glickman Center.



Kindergarten teacher Ronit Isaac holds one of the babies.



Orit Earon, long-time director of the open section of the center.



Social worker Adva Tuval counsels a client.

two in Arab communities. Sixty percent of the funding comes from the ministry. NA'AMAT covers 40 percent of the budget for the Glickman Center. A WIZO study documented that in the past year, 7,335 women, 1,021 children and 2,860 men went to 89 centers throughout the country for the treatment and prevention of domestic violence.

The Glickman Center deals with domestic violence 24/7. In the shelter, two social workers run the required

group therapy sessions and another conducts individual psychotherapy and also works with the children. Group therapy includes the general psychotherapy group, a group dealing specifically with motherhood and a psychodrama therapy group. The goal is to empower the women, give them self-confidence and prepare them for an independent life.

Legal procedures are a key part of the treatment process. Two lawyers provide information on issues such

as temporary child custody, women's rights during divorce proceedings, social security and public housing.

A housemother guides the women in their daily activities along with a staff member who works with volunteers who come in the afternoons, evenings and nights. Night managers work evenings and weekend shifts, dealing with emergency referrals. The kindergarten teacher, Ronit Isaac, oversees three vol-

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NA'AMAT attorney Efrat Nimerode provides a wide array of legal advice.



Social workers Sara Alush, left, and Dafna Rubin, right, talk to one of the residents about her child.

GOLDA

Through the Gender Lens

Based on material from her forthcoming book, a scholar looks at some of the influences in Golda's life during her rise to power, focusing on her relationship to Pioneer Women (now NA'AMAT USA), on the growth of the organization in its early years and the forces of feminism.

by PNINA LAHAV

The Jewish tradition assigns great meaning to the connection between women and wells of water. Miriam the prophetess was the first to be associated with wells. The book of Exodus tells us that Miriam was Moses' sister, who saved him from certain death at the hands of the Egyptians and shared leadership with him as the Israelites were crossing the desert on their way from Egypt to Israel. Water, the quintessential source of life, was hard to get and a well signified life. Jewish tradition tells us that wherever Miriam went, she was followed by a well of water.

The story of Pioneer Women also begins with a woman and a well. In Je-

rusalem, Rachel Yanait Ben-Zvi, one of the founding mothers of socialist Zionism, established an agricultural training farm for girls, which also functioned as a tree nursery. The girls and their teachers were enthusiastic, particularly about the project of afforestation of the land, but without water the seedlings could not grow. They needed a well to provide water and were thirsty for funding. In desperation Rachel wrote to her friend, a fellow socialist Zionist and member of Poalei Zion in New York. Would she help raise the money?

Sophie Udin, a founding mother of Pioneer Women, along with six other remarkable women activists (first

national secretary Nina Zuckerman, Leah Brown, Rachel Sigel, Chaya Ehrenreich, Luba Hurwitz and Eva Berg) raised the \$500 dollars, \$6,836 in today's terms.

This was the beginning of Pioneer Women. The original seven women were thrilled by their accomplishment. There and then they decided to form an organization dedicated to raising funds for Labor Zionist women in Palestine. They called their organization Pioneer Women. "Pioneer" — to designate affinity with the Zionist ideal of pioneering — blazing the trail (*haluziyut*) and by example showing the right path to others who would follow in the fulfillment of the grand project of reclaiming

NA'AMAT USA Sponsors Presentation of Groundbreaking Paper on Golda Meir

Distinguished legal scholar Pnina Lahav (right), recipient of a NA'AMAT USA Fellowship Grant for 2015-2016, previewed her new biography *Golda Meir: Through the Gender Lens* at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati on November 1, 2016. She presented her paper "The Political Leadership of Golda Meir: Pioneer Women

and the Campaign for Jewish Statehood" to a gathering of scholars, students and the NA'AMAT USA national board.

NA'AMAT USA joined the AJA and the University of Cincinnati Department of History as a co-sponsor of the special presentation and reception, the culmination of NA'AMAT's year-long 90th anniversary celebration.

A chapter in Dr. Lahav's

book addresses the role that Golda played in the growth of Pioneer Women, especially during her tenure as national secretary in the early 1930s. Dr. Lahav breaks significant new ground in our understanding of the feminist underpinnings of Pioneer Women (now NA'AMAT USA) and the influence Golda wielded in diminishing the organization's pursuit of women's equality.



Janine Spang Photography



The Women Workers' Council (now NA'AMAT Israel) ran agricultural training farms for girls starting in the early 1920s. Right: This illustration was used on the cover of the earliest editions of *The Pioneer Women*, commonly called "the journal." The magazine, now *Na'amat Woman*, has been in existence since 1926. Golda was the editor in the early 1930s.

and rebuilding the ancient homeland of the Jewish people. "Women pioneers" (halutzot) because they were conscious of the need of a particular organization that would be strictly gender-based and serve the particular needs of women partaking in the great Zionist project.

Their affiliation with the Jewish-American socialist party Poalei Zion was satisfying but also frustrating. They identified with the ideology of Poalei Zion with its belief in socialism, pride in Jewish culture and history, Zionism, the emphasis on Yiddish as the language of the Jewish masses — but they were disappointed in Poalei Zion's patriarchal practices. The men of Poalei Zion simply could not view women as their equals and did not envision the upcoming revolution as requiring reform of the traditional division of labor — men making policy in the public sphere and women performing the traditional roles of mothers, homemakers and facilita-

tors of social functions.

The story is told that in 1919, when the 21-year-old Golda arrived at the office of Poalei Zion in New York City, eager to volunteer, the man at the desk pointed to the broom standing at the corner, indicating she could begin by sweeping the floors. She did.

Pioneer Women was a big leap forward toward women's empowerment and women's assertion of their own self-worth. Just as the men referred to each other as haverim (comrades), a linguistic turn designating the abolition of class distinctions, so the women referred to themselves as haverot (female comrades) or havera in the singular. The ordinary member in Pittsburgh as well as the general secretary in New York or Los Angeles were both addressed as havera. There was no status difference between the two. They were all friends, comrades.

The year was 1924, four years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amend-

ment gave American women the right to vote, opening a well of expectations. American women, Jewish women included, felt they wanted to be more than mothers and homemakers. They wanted to be full citizens, participating in and influencing public policy. Organizing as Pioneer Women felt like an appropriate outlet.

Pioneer Women, or as they originally called themselves in Yiddish Pioneeran Freue Organizaia, proved to be energetic and skilled. With the money they collected they bought 12 acres of land in Jerusalem to establish a permanent women workers' farm. They made substantial contributions toward the establishment of several such farms across the land. They also bought sophisticated equipment, such as advanced incubators for the farms' chicken coops, and sent them to Palestine.

In the United States they established their own national magazine,

The male Histadrut leadership wanted to tame the women who insisted on having women's rights, equal pay and attention to the needs of working mothers because this could derail the project of nation building.



Ministers David Remez and Golda Meir attend the first Knesset session in Jerusalem, 1949.

which appeared monthly with its own editor-in-chief and reporters. The magazine was published first mostly in Yiddish and eventually entirely in English. It contained information about their Palestinian endeavors but also high quality analysis of current events and consciousness-raising articles about women and their special needs as they balanced the public and private spheres.

Pioneer Women imposed annual dues (in the beginning two dollars per woman) and fundraising goals that they called a "quota." They organized into "clubs," similar to the auxiliary "ladies clubs" elsewhere in American society, with the difference that they were dedicated to political and social reform. Coming from a Russian revolutionary background and devoid of disposable income, they considered themselves downtown people as distinguished from the uptown middle-class Jews.

They worked tirelessly to expand their reach and established clubs all over the United States and Canada. The money they collected attracted the attention of the leadership of the Zionist Labor Party in Palestine — always eager for revenue — as a potential source of funding for projects outside that original commitment to advance the status of women.

They were also sophisticated and aesthetically conscious in the strategies developed for spreading their message. From the beginning, their publication appeared with a logo, an emblem, cleverly designed to tell their story, put the woman in the forefront of public activity and communicate their commitment to Labor Zionism.

What does the logo tell us? In the forefront we see an elegant woman farmer. She's wearing a lovely dress, a lovely hat (very fashionable in America of the 1920s), even elegant shoes with a low heel rather than heavy boots for working in the fields. Our pioneer exudes femininity and yet she is walking on the edge, as if she were leading the way, as the halutza was expected to do, calling the masses to follow her. Her face looks upward, bathed in the rays of the rising sun, emblem of the rejuvenation of the Jewish people through Zionism. Behind her we see a field of wheat and in the distance a kibbutz or kvutza (farm collective) in its first stages: a long low building, maybe a barn or a communal dining room and a tent, conveying the message that permanent dwellings were not yet constructed. Behind the

tent we see two cypress trees — alluding to the agricultural project of tree nurseries for which Rachel Yanait initially needed a well. On the left we see a weed, maybe a thorn, a reminder that the land is yet uncultivated and that a lot of work needs to be done. Our pioneer woman is holding a hoe — symbol of her commitment to agriculture and a basket, perhaps signifying fundraising.

The logo is neither in Hebrew, the revived ancient language of the Jews, nor English, the language of America. Rather, the name of the organization appears in Yiddish.

This fact is also revealing. The founders of Pioneer Women, all Americans, were Yiddish-speaking immigrants. They cherished the Yiddish language as *the* authentic and true Jewish language, the language of the masses, and were committed to preserving it.

The question of language was crucial in the development of Pioneer Women. The founders wanted Yiddish to prevail. And there are stories about efforts by speakers to address an audience in English, with calls from the audience, "Yiddish, Yiddish!" However, the great intensity of the American pressure cooker did affect an intergenerational change. The daughters, either born or raised in America, felt differently. They were equally committed to the cause of women's equality as well as to Zionism, but felt more comfortable speaking English. The intergenerational struggle, for a while, threatened the well-being of the organization. In the late 1920s, it became evident that Pioneer Women could not retain its vitality if it insisted on the monopoly of Yiddish at a time when the number of Yiddish speakers was dwindling.

Golda best expressed herself in Yiddish, her mother's tongue, but she grew up mastering English. She encouraged the shift into English, welcoming

Golda was very fond of Pioneer Women and remained close to the organization until the end of her life. The haverot benefited from her leadership, and she knew she could rely on their unconditional support and extraordinary skills.

new English-speaking members into the organization.

One more central characteristic of Pioneer Women was their devotion to the idea of unionized labor. At the bottom of their logo you see the famous “union bug.” Our lady pioneer is walking hand-in-hand with the union and its ideology of organized labor and the

aspiration to provide healthy living conditions for the working class.

But let us now shift our gaze to the Zionist scene in Palestine.

The year the idea of Pioneer Women was born, 1924, came not only four years after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, but was also seven years after the Balfour Declaration. In

that first international moment in Zionist history, the British Empire, on the verge of taking control of Palestine at the end of World War I, declared that it would “view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.”

It was a great boost to Labor Zionism, then in its embryonic stage. The



NA'AMAT USA archives

Golda speaks at Pioneer Women's 11th convention in 1949. She was then Israel's minister of labor.



Golda (back row, second from left) with early Pioneer Women leaders in New York.

doors of Palestine were opened to Jews and immigration (known in Zionist ideology as *aliyah*), particularly from Eastern Europe, began. Many who arrived were revolutionary socialists. In Palestine, they were hoping to build a Jewish state that would function as a haven for Jews, and, *just as important*, would help build a Jewish socialist utopia, in the words of one true believer “the likes of which the world has never seen.”

Utopia required that Jews transform themselves. An ideology was developed based on reconstructing the Jew as a “new Jew” — tall, strong, able to defend him/herself, committed to the community and devoted to social justice. An important ingredient of this utopian vision centered on economics. Not only did its believers preach frugality and self-sacrifice, they also insisted on self-sufficiency. The new Jews should return to their land and bond with the land, making a living primarily as farmers. Agriculture, growing your own food, became a pillar of this ideology.

This is the context and background of the agricultural farm in Jerusalem and of Rachel Yanait’s desire to build a well and afforest the land.

In 1932, Pioneer Women helped finance a volume of essays from women workers in Palestine. Titled *The Plough Woman*, it was published in Yiddish, Hebrew and English. And 70 years later, a

critical edition of *The Plough Woman* was published, edited by Mark and Miriam Raider, with the editors’ essays highlighting the historical and psychological significance of the collection. Rachel Yanait described her projects empowering women workers, saying “however strong our desire to broaden the basis of women’s life in village and town, so as to make it all-inclusive, *the directive principle is and must remain, for the entire women workers’ movement, agricultural.*”

This principle is important to remember as our story unfolds, as it would grow into a major point of contention between Pioneer Women and the Federation of Labor (Histadrut) in Palestine, and also a source of tension within the Pioneer Women themselves. As we shall see, Golda was not so keen on promoting Yanait’s single focus on agriculture.

But let’s focus on Rachel Yanait for a moment, not only because of her significance in the history of both Pioneer Women and Israeli nation building, but also as a way to compare her with Golda as a way to better understand the future prime minister. Yanait herself epitomized the Labor Zionist woman in the early decades of the 20th century.

Like Golda, Yanait was born in Ukraine, then part of Russia, at the end of the 19th century. She identified with the revolutionary ideology of the age,

believed in the necessity of overthrowing the czar’s government — to be replaced by representatives of the proletariat. She was one of the founders of Poalei Zion in Russia and is known for supporting the slogan “liberation of the Jewish people will either come through the Jewish workers movement or will fail to come.”

Golda was too young to participate in the revolutionary fervor in czarist Russia. She only watched her older sister become an activist and their mother’s helpless frustrated anger at what she considered her daughter’s reckless behavior. While Golda was influenced by her sister’s socialism, she never became an active revolutionary. She arrived in the United States at the age of seven and was shaped by American progressivism rather than by the revolutionary passion of the older immigrants. In other words, her emphasis was on reform rather than revolution.

The name Rachel Yanait also reflects the Zionist revolutionary agenda. She was born Golda Lishansky. Golda was a common enough name. But in the spirit of transforming the Jewish people into “new Hebrew persons,” she changed her name. She became Rachel and chose the surname Yanait to affiliate herself with the ancient, royal Yanaitic Hasmonaic dynasty of the late period of the Second Temple.

We thus have two Goldas. One, Rachel Yanait, who dropped her original name as incompatible with her aspirations — and another, Golda Mabovitz, who remained Golda, stubbornly rejecting any suggestion that she Hebraize Golda into Zehava or change it in any other way. The most she accepted was to be called Goldie, mainly by Americans. Her memoranda and letters, even as prime minister of Israel, always bore the single signature — Golda. Today, it is safe to say that the name Golda is iconic, immediately bringing to mind our Golda.

It should be added here that it was not Golda who chose the name Meir. When Golda married Morris Myerson at the age of 18, she took his name and dropped her maiden name. She was quite traditional and did not seek to become a new person. When Israel achieved statehood, its Ministry of For-

Pioneer Women was a big leap forward toward women's empowerment and women's assertion of their own self-worth.

Foreign Affairs required all officials to Hebraize their names. In 1956, when Golda was appointed minister of foreign affairs, she still resisted the pressure.



Rachel Katznelson-Shazar was a leader of the Women Workers' Council, an editor and the wife of Zalman Shazar, the third president of Israel.

But Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion (himself, decades earlier, Hebraizing his name from David Green) literally ordered her to change her name and suggested the name Meir.

I wonder how Golda would feel had she known that she is increasingly referred to as Meir (a male name and one she had no family or emotional connection to) rather than Golda or Myerson.

In any event, most people did not know that Yanait was also a Golda. Unlike our Golda, Yanait was a highly educated woman. On arriving in Palestine, she plunged into public activity, laying the foundations for widespread agri-

cultural training of Jewish immigrants, particularly of young women. Typical of her generation of halutzim, passionate nation builders, she enrolled in a French university to acquire a degree in agricultural engineering, better to promote the cause of introducing modern agricultural methods to the land.

Golda, by comparison, completed only high school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and immediately engaged in politics. Her first speeches in Palestine were delivered in Yiddish. Somehow she failed to realize that the Zionist leadership had decided that Hebrew, not Yiddish, would be the official language of the land. She did learn Hebrew but was always more articulate in Yiddish and English.

Yanait also had a partner whom she later married, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi. Ben-Zvi later served as the second president of Israel, making Rachel Yanait Israel's first lady. By all accounts, they had a solid marriage that lasted until the end of their lives.

Rachel Yanait teaches agricultural skills to girls in the new State of Israel. A founder of Israel's Labor Movement, she was married to the second president of Israel, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi.



Sophie Udin was one of the seven founders of Pioneer Women. A letter to her from Rachel Yanait in Palestine was the catalyst for the birth of the organization.

Golda married Morris Myerson, a Yiddish-speaking self-educated gentle young immigrant, who was interested in music and the arts, not politics. He was also a reluctant Zionist and only came to Palestine because Golda gave

Phyllis Sutker Papers Enhance American Jewish Archives

The personal papers and memorabilia of the late Phyllis R. Sutker (1923-2006), former national president of NA'AMAT USA and longtime Zionist activist from Chicago, have been added to the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. Donated by Phyllis Sutker's family, they document more than 50 years of her work for NA'AMAT USA and other organizations committed to the State of Israel and to Labor Zionism.

Sutker was president of the organization from 1981 to 1985, during which time she strengthened

NA'AMAT USA's presence in the larger Jewish world and the American scene, emphasized strategic planning for the future and strongly urged the change of name to NA'AMAT USA from Pioneer Women/NA'AMAT USA.

NA'AMAT USA national board members and guests had a

chance to view some of the Sutker papers at the archives this past November when the collection was unveiled.

"My mother was attracted to the organization because it combined her interests in Zionism, Israel and labor," said Sharon Sutker McGowan, one of Sutker's four children. Quoting from an interview her mother once gave a reporter: "Pioneer Women is the practical expression of building the programs and institutions that will help make Israel the kind of equal and just society we want it to be, and to give women the opportunity to be significantly contributing members of this society. ... You can't be equal unless you have opportunities." Sutker worked her entire adult life to help achieve these goals.

The event coincided with the presentation of a paper on Golda Meir and Pioneer Women by Prof. Pnina Lahav, recipient of a NA'AMAT USA Fellowship Grant for researching her new biography of Golda (see page 16). A dual reception was the culminating event of the 90th anniversary of NA'AMAT USA. The event was co-sponsored by the American Jewish Archives, NA'AMAT USA, the University of Cincinnati Department of History and the Center for Studies in Jewish Education and Culture at the University of Cincinnati.

Mark Raider, an American historian and professor of modern Jewish history at the University of Cincinnati, was instrumental in both the awarding of fellowship and the acquisition of the Sutker papers. He spoke about the importance of the



Viewing the Phyllis Sutker papers and memorabilia on exhibit at the American Jewish Archives.

Photos by Janine Spang Photography



National board members gather with Professor Pnina Lahav (in red) at the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives.



Shelley Sutker-Dermer, Sharon Sutker McGowan and Edie Sue Sutker (left to right) at the unveiling of their mother's papers at the American Jewish Archives.

collection, as did Gary Zola, executive director of the American Jewish Archives, and Christopher Phillips, head of the Department of History at the University of Cincinnati McMicken College of Arts and Sciences.

NA'AMAT USA national board members toured the American Jewish Archives, located on the campus

of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion. The tour revealed just a fraction of the largest collection of documents relating to the American Jewish experience: 12,000 linear feet of archives, manuscripts, near-print materials, photographs, audio and video tapes, CDs, microfilm and genealogical materials.

Among the compelling handwritten letters read aloud by tour guide Dana Herman, managing editor and academic associate of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center, was an 1883 letter from Emma Lazarus to the editor of *The American Hebrew*. She was alerting the paper to the destitute Jewish families in Jerusalem and Haifa who were being cared for by the Christian Missionary Society “in the hope of making converts of them.”

A highpoint at the end of a celebratory year, this memorable day also ushered in the next phase of NA'AMAT USA as it continues to expand services for women and children in Israel and increase public awareness in the United States about its vital work.

— Judith A. Sokoloff



From the archives: Phyllis Sutker, third from right, is shown at a meeting with women's rights activist Bella Abzug (wearing a hat). On Sutker's right is Miriam Sherman, former national board member now living in Florida.

him an ultimatum: Palestine or we separate. They had two children but within a decade she left him. As we shall see, Golda had her share of lovers, at least two of them very prominent in Labor Zionist circles and one, Zalman Shazar, followed Ben-Zvi to the presidency as the third president of Israel.

There was one more attribute of Yanait that would explain her affinity with Pioneer Women and distinguish her from Golda: feminism. Yanait believed that one of the urgent goals of Zionism was to liberate the Jewish woman and vest her with equality. Hence, the agricultural farm that needed a well. She was dedicated to the idea that women should acquire useful skills and be able to function as independent persons. In her article in *The Plough Woman*, she discussed the urgent need to resolve the tension created as a result of the working mother's need to balance work and family. She also complained about unequal pay for equal work: “However difficult it is for men to find jobs, insecure as these jobs are — yet they have made a place for themselves in every branch of agriculture, in the plantations and fields. But the woman still has to fight out her problem of the right to work in the colony, in the orchard and vineyard; and not merely at the picking of oranges. And how few women get a man's pay for doing a man's work!”

Because of her success with financing the well, her good contacts with the founders of Pioneer Women and her leadership position in the Women's Workers' Council in Palestine, Yanait was sent to the United States to raise more funds and energize the membership of Pioneer Women. The year was 1927.

She crisscrossed the United States, traveled by train and bus from one spot to another, gave speeches, attended bake sales and used clothing sales and endless receptions, concerts and parties. In Yanait's letters to her husband she complained, as Golda would complain later, that these events continued until dawn, invariably ending with those in attendance dancing the hora, a rather tiring if endearing practice. She also used her trip to visit the University of California at Berkeley to consult on her forestry and other agricultural projects. She raised good money but

also felt exhausted. The organizers at Pioneer Women took their mission seriously and squeezed every drop of her energy. She also missed her two sons and complained bitterly to her husband for failing to write, for giving her scant information about the children and not spending enough time with them.

Yanait also got into fights with other emissaries from the Labor Movement then visiting from Palestine and with one of the central leaders of Pioneer Women, Leah Biskin.

What were these fights about?

The Women Workers' Council in Palestine was committed to the advancement of working women. They wanted all the funds raised by Pioneer Women in America to go to the council treasury to be spent on women.

In contrast, the Histadrut wanted some of the money funneled to the general treasury and to promote general projects including those mostly helping male workers.

Biskin, an activist in Pioneer Women, was cooperating with these emissaries and the Histadrut. She thus alienated Yanait, and the leadership of the Women Workers' Council in Palestine, who protested this policy.

It is at this moment that Golda Myerson entered the picture. In 1928, Golda replaced Yanait as the new emissary (shlichah) to Pioneer Women. She stayed for eight months and did very well in fundraising and in expanding the membership base.

Her children, then four and three, were left in Tel Aviv. She returned to Palestine, but then in 1931 accepted the position of national secretary of Pioneer Women and spent three years in the United States as head of the organization and for a short time the editor-in-chief of its magazine. Not surprising she had a very good relationship with Biskin and even brought her children to a Passover seder at Biskin's parents home in Detroit. She also helped propel Biskin to the position of editor-in-chief of *The Pioneer Women* magazine. When Golda returned to Palestine, Biskin made aliyah and for the next 20 years rented a room in Golda's apartment, serving as a housekeeper and nanny to Golda's children, as Golda was a very busy politician.

It is now time to review Golda's

history in Palestine until 1931, as that history sheds light on her actions as national secretary of Pioneer Women. Golda and Morris joined Kibbutz Merhavaya in the Galilee shortly after they arrived in Palestine in 1921. Golda immediately distinguished herself not only as an articulate speaker and political activist, but also as a young woman skeptical of the feminist ideology of other kibbutz women (for example, she welcomed kitchen work). Soon it became clear that Golda had a unique advantage. Not only was she articulate, highly intelligent, passionate about Zionism and not a self-identified feminist — attributes that endeared her to the guys — but she also had perfect command of the English language. Most members of the Labor Zionist Movement at the time were not fluent in English or had thick Slavic accents, a drawback when they interacted with English speakers. Golda had no such problems.

But then came a low point in Golda's life. Her husband, Morris, hated kibbutz life. They moved to Jerusalem, had two children and lived in abject poverty as their marriage was disintegrating.

In Jerusalem, Golda attracted the attention of one of Labor's most prominent leaders, David Remez. He offered her a job in Tel Aviv — secretary of the Women's Workers Council. Most scholars agree that that was a very clever move on the part of Remez.

The Women Workers' Council — a sister of Pioneer Women — was a thorn in the side of the Histadrut. The council leaders agitated tirelessly for gender equality. The male leadership wanted to tame these women. They felt that the insistence on women's rights, equal pay and attention to the needs of working mothers could derail the project of nation building. They believed that to keep their eyes on the prize — a Jewish state based on socialism — they had to put women's issues on the back burner. Gender equality would come — they assured the women comrades — when socialism was fulfilled. The women, in short, had to wait and trust the men's good intentions. Golda agreed.

The Women Workers' Council in Palestine was not too happy with Golda, and the tension between her

and many of the leaders, such as Ada Fishman Maimon, Rachel Katznelson-Shazar (Rubashov), Beba Idelson and Rachel Yanait, is well documented. But their opposition was unsuccessful. Golda remained in the council, simultaneously climbing up the ladder of the Histadrut leadership. Under her direction, more funds went from Pioneer Women to Histadrut projects and the Histadrut became a household name in Pioneer Women literature.

Like most of the world, the Histadrut was male dominated and its culture patriarchal, but the men made room for Golda. She was young, pretty, smart, energetic, efficient and committed to the cause. It probably did not hurt that she and Remez were now lovers. Remez, one of the powerful men in the party at the time, was an impressive figure — a highly educated intellectual, founder of the party, respected everywhere. Golda adored him and he mentored her as she moved up the party ladder. From him she learned about policy planning, about the need to take into account the concerns of the private market, about the inner structures of power, what pitfalls to avoid, where to take advantage of the situation.

Golda moved to Tel Aviv and immersed herself in party politics. The children, most of the time, were left to the care of family members, to "borrowed mothers" (nannies and babysitters) as she succinctly wrote in her short essay in *The Plough Woman*.

Why then did she return to the United States in 1931? There were two personal reasons and one political.

One personal reason was her daughter. Sarale suffered from a kidney disease so severe many thought she was dying. From Tel Aviv Morris cabled his estranged wife "Sarele Desperately Ill. Come Home At Once." Golda took a boat (planes were very rare), arrived in Tel Aviv, arranged an appointment for herself as national secretary of Pioneer Women and took the two children back to New York. The doctors in Tel Aviv advised against the trip, but it stands to reason that Golda had made inquiries in the United States and learned that Sarale might have been misdiagnosed. And so it was. Golda arrived in New York, Sarale was hospitalized, received the

correct treatment and soon was feeling better. Again leaving the children with friends, Golda continued with her grueling schedule, working for Pioneer Women as well as for the Histadrut and the Labor Movement.

There was another personal, more exciting reason to come to America. Another lover. Golda and Zalman Shazar (then Zalman Rubashov) were conducting a stormy love affair. So stormy that Remez was extremely hurt, even though he continued his close ties with Golda. Rubashov, it turned out, had just entered a Ph.D. program at Columbia University and, naturally, Golda wanted to spend time with him. In America, Rubashov made appearances before Pioneer Women as well and saw a great deal of Golda. He was a very charming man, a man of letters and an intellectual, Remez's best friend and a ladies' man. In Israeli history, his affair with the poetess Rachel Bluwstein (who was featured in *The Pioneer Women* magazine) and her desperate obsession with him is well known — even by school children.

You should also know that when Golda secured the position of emissary to the United States on behalf of Pioneer Women, she was not alone. This time the council decided to send two haverot — adding no other than Rachel Katznelson-Shazar, an intellectual in her own right and one of the early feminist leaders in Palestine. She was the editor of the original volume of *The Plough Woman* and had her own ties with the membership. Also, she was Zalman Rubashov's wife and the mother of his daughter.

Golda opposed Rachel's arrival vehemently, to no avail. Which shows you that Golda did not always get what she wanted.

If I were a novelist, I would try to write a story about this triangle plus the two rejected men waiting in the background — Remez and Golda's husband. By the time Rubashov, who eventually Hebraized his name to Shazar, became the third president of Israel, Golda was Israel's fourth prime minister.

Sarale's health and Golda's love for Rubashov were the two personal reasons to spend time in the United States. The third reason was political. First, to reign in Pioneer Women to drop

its opposition to channeling funds to general Histadrut and labor projects in addition to those dedicated to women workers; second, to strengthen labor ties with Jewish and non-Jewish elements of American public opinion. Not all American Jews supported Labor Zionism. The right-wing revisionist camp led by Vladimir Zeev Jabotinsky was strongly anti-union, violently disparaging labor policies in Palestine and elsewhere. Golda's appearances in the U.S. were often obstructed by right-wing Jewish demonstrators.

In addition, mainstream American Jews, benefiting from America's free market economy, were critical of Golda's socialist orientation. To build the nation on Labor Zionist principles, Golda and her friends needed not only money, but also political backing from the unions, from the Democratic Party, from prominent shapers of public opinion. Golda, with her fluent English, charm and political savvy, was an indispensable engine in this context. Indeed, within a decade, as the struggle to get the United States to recognize the State of Israel intensified, Golda's ploughing of the political field was paying high dividends.

Golda also benefited from the sophisticated techniques of public relations employed by Pioneer Women. On return to Tel Aviv, she passed a resolution in the Histadrut Executive Committee to open a touring and sightseeing bureau to welcome visitors from abroad, then established the bureau.

In 1934, Golda probably felt she had reaped all the benefits she could from Pioneer Women. She now had bigger fish to fry: expanding the industrial infrastructure of the state in the making. Remez came up with the idea of finding private investors to develop a shipping company to be called Nachshon. She found the idea thrilling: ships flying a Jewish flag operated by Jewish sailors — what could be better than that?

As her friend and biographer Marie Syrkin observed: Golda preferred to work with men and thus, from the early emphasis on agriculture, wells, tree nurseries and ploughshares operated by and for women, Golda moved to shipping and sailing the oceans, a field dominated by men and associated with masculinity.

Golda was very fond of Pioneer Women and remained close to the organization until the end of her life in 1978. The haverot benefited from her leadership, and she knew she could rely on their unconditional support, extraordinary skills, open hands and open hearts. She did manage to turn Pioneer Women from a unique organization dedicated to gender equality into one of many Jewish organizations supportive of Israel politically and financially. The goal of gender equality never went away, but it became one of many. Deference to the Zionist leadership was accepted as the norm.

Whether, as Golda would argue, there was no choice, the imperative of begetting a Jewish state trumped the noble goal of gender equality or whether if Pioneer Women had retained its revolutionary zeal things would be better for women is a grand question, waiting for serious consideration.

Golda, too, had a well, but she resembled the biblical Rachel rather than Miriam. The Book of Genesis tells us that Rachel waited for Jacob to remove the heavy stone closing the well she customarily used and later urged him: "Give me sons" (not daughters). She knew where power resided and tried to make the best of it.

No one can deny Golda's central role in building Israel. From developing the Histadrut, to settlement of the massive influx of Jewish immigrants in the early 1950s, to labor codification to the Social Security Act, to the growth of the Israeli military-industrial complex in the early 1970s, Golda's contribution is outstanding.

One can only imagine what would have happened if Golda had used her extraordinary talents through the years, especially as prime minister, to address the status of women as an essential component of nation building.

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Then we traveled through the lush Lithuanian countryside — down a straight road lined with pines, spruces, poplars and birches — to a bunker deep in the Rudninku forest, where Fania fought with the partisan forces against the Nazis. We drew near, then nearer, clustering around Fania as she told of the privations and exploits of that time.

On the bus, we sang “*Zog nit keyn-mol*,” the Partisan Hymn. “Never say that you are walking your last road. Our steps sound out a drumbeat: We are here!”

Monday, July 25

We’re reading stories by Sholem Aleichem, the towering Yiddish writer whose work inspired “Fiddler on the Roof.” Our assignment was to write an essay (in Yiddish, of course) about why reading Sholem Aleichem is worthwhile. I wrote: “We come to know a vanished Jewish world — its customs and beliefs, rural and urban, rich and poor. We see how Jews and non-Jews interacted. As with all great writers, we learn about life in general. The sheer pleasure! We laugh, we cry. We learn idioms, improve our vocabulary. In joining with others to read this work, we continue the golden chain that is Yiddish literature.”

In addition to being a student, I’m also a lecturer in the program. My talk today — in English — was called “Contested Memories: Lithuania Looks at the Holocaust.”

I told about how I came here in search of my own Jewish family roots, then began to explore how Lithuania as a country is grappling with its Jewish heritage — *its* Jewish family roots, if you will. How does a country deal with a history of genocide? How does a land divided by competing narratives about the past begin to move toward a more tolerant future? Can we honor our diverse heritages without perpetuating the fears and hatreds of the past?

For centuries in Lithuania, Jews and non-Jews lived side by side mostly in peace. Yet beginning in 1941, the Holocaust in Lithuania was among the swiftest and most thorough anywhere in Europe. During the nearly 50 years

of postwar Soviet rule that followed, Lithuania’s Jewish heritage was further erased. Since independence in 1991, that heritage is coming out of the shadows.

Plaques and other markers of Jewish history are plentiful in Vilnius’s Old Town. On the street where Jessica and I live, the walls of the old ghetto library are covered with heartbreaking family photos recovered from the ruins. The Vilna Gaon museum tells of centuries of Jewish history in Lithuania, along with the story of the destruction. Educational curricula and rituals of remembrance are proliferating, giving Lithuanians throughout the country an opportunity to face their history.

This evening, Jessica and I had dinner with Lara Lempert, leader of an effort to conserve and digitize Yiddish and Hebrew documents housed at Lithuania’s national library. In a joint effort, archivists in New York are digitizing holdings that were rescued and moved to New York under the auspices of YIVO, the Jewish cultural research institute. In all, a million pages will be made available to scholars and members of the public.

Tuesday, July 26

In class each day, one of us gives a five-minute talk in Yiddish, without notes. Mine today was on a Yiddish children’s poem about a *sove*. What is a *sove*? A bird with big, round eyes that flies at night and hunts for mice. “The less she spoke, the more she heard. What can we learn from that wise bird?”

Our teacher played recordings of great Yiddish poets reading their works. The juicy vowels and musical inflection of Rokhl Korn and Kadya Molodowsky rolled out into the classroom. Bliss!

I got together with a young man I met here two years ago. Laura’s family rescued Jews during the war. He undertook to get in touch with those Jews and their descendants all over world. The research changed his life. He now works as a project manager for the Jewish community.

“Jews are my fellow countrymen,” he said. “I need to do all I can for the Jewish community.”

Wednesday, July 27

“Ten years ago,” recalled Marty, a student in my class, “I was diagnosed with throat cancer. I’ve never been so scared in my life. One night, my grandfather came to me in a dream, reached down into my throat and grabbed. I vowed that if I survived, I’d study Yiddish.”

Marty was true to his word. A computer expert, he engineered an array of online Yiddish classes for the Workmen’s Circle, a long-established Jewish cultural organization based in New York. Students and teachers alike log on from all over the world. “It doesn’t matter where you are,” Marty said. “*Mit yidish iz faran nit keyn ‘dort’*” (with Yiddish, there is no ‘there’).

This is the future, Marty tells us. Yet here we are, on site in the former Jerusalem of the North. I wouldn’t want it otherwise. Being here, walking these streets, looking up into this sky feels vitally important.

It was a gorgeous day, with a gentle breeze. Under an awning in St. John Square, I listened to a guitarist singing Bob Dylan as I read my homework assignment, a story about a hungry, homeless soldier in 1920’s Poland.

The afternoon lecture compared Sholem Aleichem with another famed Yiddish writer, I.L. Peretz. The two didn’t get along. Peretz hated humor, and Sholem Aleichem couldn’t understand why.

“If you can’t understand what I’m saying,” the instructor said, “don’t worry. Just sit back and enjoy the sound of the words.”

Should I follow his advice, let go and allow the language to wash over me? Or should I behave as usual, leaning forward on the edge of my seat and struggling desperately to catch every word?

Friday, July 29

“We learned about past tense,” Jessica told me excitedly. “I got it!” *Er falt*. He falls. *Er iz gefaltn*. He fell. *Er falt arop*. He falls down. *Er iz aropgefaltn*. He fell down.

The energetic Fania Brantsovsky led a walk through the streets of the former Jewish quarter, beginning with the street still called Jewish Street — *Zydu gatve* in Lithuanian, *Yidishe gas* in

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Stand Up to Hate Crimes

by MARCIA J. WEISS

“We must be vigilant about hate crimes,” said then U.S. Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch at an interfaith event in December 2016. “This work is never finished.” Lynch contended that Americans must work hard and continuously to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

“Hate crimes demand a priority response,” affirms the Anti-Defamation League, “because of their special emotional and psychological impact on the victim and the victim’s community.”

Unfortunately, the majority of hate crimes go unreported and, even when reported, many go unpunished.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors the activities of domestic hate groups and offers the Teaching Tolerance program, counted 867 cases of hateful harassment or intimidation in the 10 days following the November presidential election. About 12 percent of the total were anti-Semitic incidents. The numbers have declined somewhat since then, but hate crimes abound in schools, the workplace, places of worship and on the street. In 2015, there was a 67-percent increase in hate crimes committed against Muslim Americans, as well as increased hate crimes against Jews, African Americans and LGBT individuals.

The most recent data from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Statistics show that U.S. residents experience about 260,000 hate crime victimizations annually. Yet the FBI reports 5,850 criminal incidents and 6,885 related offenses in 2015. Clearly there needs to be better tracking and reporting of hate crimes to understand what’s happening in our communities, to evaluate the effectiveness of the hate crime laws and to obtain the necessary resources to combat these crimes.

The FBI defines hate crimes as “a criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or part by an offender’s bias against race [the most common], religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender or gender identity.” A U.S. Department of Justice study classifies hate crime

offenders into four categories according to psychological and situational motivations: thrill-seeking (motivated by the desire for excitement), defensive (protecting neighborhood from perceived outsiders), retaliatory (acting in response to a hate crime, either real or perceived) and mission (so strongly committed to bigotry that the offender makes hate a career).

State legislatures passed hate crime statutes in the late 1980s and early 1990s in response to an increase in crime motivated by prejudice. Most states, as well as the federal government, have hate crime statutes but the definition of a hate crime varies from state to state. Some smaller jurisdictions and police departments have their own form of hate crime ordinances. Certain states, such as Wisconsin, have “penalty-enhancing” statutes. That is, when a victim is chosen intentionally and solely based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or national origin, the defendant receives a more severe punishment than in the absence of these criteria. Ohio offenders who choose victims entirely on the basis of the above criteria are charged with “ethnic intimidation,” the gravity and punishment of which are higher than the base offense.

The question arises about whether hate crimes fall under First Amendment protection as freedom of speech. The Supreme Court has ruled that First Amendment rights can yield to the public good in certain instances and that the right to freedom of speech or freedom of expression is not absolute. Hate crime legislation, drafted properly, does not violate the First Amendment. Hate crime laws punish acts, not beliefs, thoughts or protected speech.

Hate crimes rank highest in the FBI’s civil rights program not only because of their devastating impact on families and communities, but also because groups preaching hatred and intolerance can also nurture terrorism. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 expanded the role of the FBI in investigating hate crimes. This landmark legislation also provides

funding and technical assistance to state, local and tribal jurisdictions to investigate and prosecute hate crimes.

We must also be vigilant about hate crimes on college campuses.

“In recent weeks, students have reported a rise in hate speech and bigotry on campus,” said Eric Fingerhut, president and CEO of Hillel, in a December 27 article in *The Jewish Week*. “While Jews are not the only group that has been targeted, many of these incidents have in fact been directed at Jewish students.” There are the “increasingly violent and abusive tactics of the anti-Israel movement. ... We’ve been aggressively calling attention to a new form of bigotry where some in the anti-Israel movement want to bar Jewish students from social justice coalitions unless they condemn the Jewish state’s mere existence. Another is the presence of white nationalists disseminating racist and bigoted rhetoric on college campuses.”

A 2016 study conducted by the AMCHA Initiative, an organization that seeks to combat anti-Semitism on college campuses, found the number of incidents involving “the suppression of Jewish students’ freedom of speech and assembly” doubled from last year. Hillel and AMCHA (Hebrew for “your people”) educate Jewish students on ways to engage in meaningful dialogue with those of diverse backgrounds, and they encourage college administrators to respond quickly and strongly to hate crimes.

Loretta Lynch warned that hate crime incidents “should be of the deepest concern to every American because hate crimes don’t just target individuals. They tear at the fabric of our communities, and they also stain our dearest ideals and our nation’s very soul.”

TAKE ACTION! Watch for incidents of hate crime where you live, work or worship. Don’t be a bystander. Report hate crime to the authorities. Support efforts to prevent and prosecute these crimes.

Marcia J. Weiss, JD, is NA’AMAT USA national vice president of advocacy and education.

TAKE ACTION!

Yiddish

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Yiddish. She pointed out the sites of the former Yiddish theater, the Yiddish newspaper office, schools, libraries and publishing houses. Here was the butchers' street, there the beggars' street, here the street where the tough guys of the Jewish underworld plied their trade.

At lunch with a Lithuanian psychologist I know and her friend, a Russian psychologist, we talked about what people gain from researching their family roots.

"You become rich with these people," I said. "They become yours."

"Exploring your ancestry makes you immortal," they said. "You have your place. You become a link in a chain."

That's how studying Yiddish makes me feel.

Saturday, July 30

Jessica went to services at the Chor Shul, the only synagogue now functioning in Vilnius out of a hundred before the war. Up in the balcony in the women's section, she discovered a display of photos of empty wooden synagogues from towns across Lithuania. She burst into tears. Images of the abandoned houses of worship kept returning to her mind during the lively lunch that followed — a meal with cholent (the traditional Sabbath stew), vodka and loud Yiddish singing.

Monday, August 1

Marija is one of several non-Jewish Lithuanians taking the course. Growing up in the Lithuanian city of Kaunas (Kovno in Yiddish), she said, "I noticed we learned very little Jewish history. I went looking for books in the library." Bit by bit, her interest grew. Now she's a graduate student in Jewish history in Berlin. "I see myself as a mediator between cultures," she said.

Jessica came home from a day trip to Butrimonys, her ancestral town. With the help of a guide, she was able to speak with townspeople. "Our grandparents probably knew each other," one woman said as she welcomed her across the threshold into her home. During the war, she said, her family had hidden three Jewish boys.

Jessica and her guide gathered apples by the side of the road — a much-loved kind that fall from the trees when they ripen in late summer.

The fruit was sweet. "It's amazing to be sitting here eating apples from Butrimonys," Jessica said. "It's a mythical place — and then it's real."

Wednesday, August 3

Jessica has reached a peak of frustration. "I *hate* language immersion," she fumed.

I sympathize! Class was hard for me, too, today. Despite everything I've learned over the years, it's clear I've only scratched the surface — which makes me feel I need to come back next year.

"I'm glad to be here," one of my fellow students said after struggling through a difficult passage. "I'm *glad* to be in over my head."

Me, too. Today I couldn't stop reading the Soviet-era story we'd been assigned. Dense as it was, I couldn't wait to find out what happened. Would the doctor cure the blind man or wouldn't he?

Monday, August 8

One of our teachers can speak Yiddish in rhymes, effortlessly, like a rap artist. He assigned us to turn in our own verses, then delighted us by expertly rewriting our clumsy efforts. He shared some recordings from AHEYM, Indiana University's Archives of Historical and Ethnographic Yiddish Memories. The interviews with people who grew up speaking Yiddish in Eastern Europe capture their vocabulary, pronunciation, memories, songs.

Wednesday, August 10

Jessica's class often begins with singing. Students join in as they enter. The sweet sounds waft through the classroom. "*Tum bala, tum bala, tum balalaika...*"

Her teacher speaks fast, but he repeats a lot. This week's story was called "Seven + Seven = Eleven." A woman from Chelm — Yiddish literature's town of fools — goes to the store for herring and a loaf of bread and gives the proprietor a hard time when he asks her to pay.

Students read the sentences aloud and the teacher peppered them with questions: What did she buy? Do you like herring? Where does she live? "*Gut!*

Vayter! (Good! Go on!)

My final lecture — this time in Yiddish — was about the *Vilna Vegetarian Cookbook*, published in 1938 and recently translated into English. I asked 10 students to choose recipes from the book, bring the food to share and describe in Yiddish what they'd prepared. Charles brought sliced cucumbers; Sofija, spinach dumplings; Jack, a tomato frittata; Barbara, stuffed eggs; Jill, a beet salad.

Fania laughed as she pulled out of her memory the Yiddish words for cauliflower, cranberry and coriander. And Jessica proudly got up to tell about her fruit salad: "I went to the market. I washed the grapes. I cut up the pears and plums."

The food was *geshmak* (delicious).

Thursday, Aug 11

Our Yiddish month is coming to an end. Tonight we'll sing the songs we learned in our music workshop at a concert at the Jewish community building. Tomorrow we'll receive our certificates and say *zayt gezunt* (goodbye) at the closing ceremony.

This morning a folksinger from Israel came to class bearing a poem she'd put to music. Abraham Sutzkever (1913-2010) survived the Vilna ghetto and became the greatest postwar Yiddish poet. His poem "*Yidishe gas*" (Jewish Street) refers not only to the actual street here in Vilnius but to the Jewish community as a whole.

As she sang the haunting tune, Polina's eyes filled with tears.

"*Yidishe gas, yidishe gas*" — "Jewish Street, you have not vanished. Jewish Street, let us bind ourselves to you. Let me hear your sounds forever."

NOTE: The summer program of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute is accepting applications at <http://judaicvilnius.com>.

Ellen Cashedy is the author of We Are Here: Memories of the Lithuanian Holocaust and co-translator, with Yermiyahu Abron Taub, of Oedipus in Brooklyn and Other Stories by Blume Lempel (Mandel Vilar Press/Dryad Press). She lives in Washington, DC. Visit her website: www.ellencashedy.com.



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MONUMENTS BY GUTTERMAN'S

AROUND THE COUNTRY



▲ Philadelphia's new Rimonim club hosted a book discussion on Naomi Ragen's latest novel *A Devil in Jerusalem*. Started just this summer, the club now has 28 members and is going strong.



▲ Cleveland Council held a flamenco guitar concert featuring Stuart Vokes at the elegant Judy Eigenfeld/Rick Maron Glass Box, high atop Euclid Avenue overlooking downtown Cleveland. Proceeds go to Na'AMAT day care centers. From left: Ellen Saltz, chair of hostess community, and Hannah Szabo, vice president of cultural affairs.



▲ Or chapter celebrated the birthday of member Rebeca Kravec (shown with cake) at the Miami home of Raquel Rub (standing), South Florida Council president.



▲ San Fernando Valley Council honored two outstanding Jewish community leaders at its Distinguished Community Leader Award Luncheon. Zita Gluskin, a lifelong Zionist, has held many leadership roles in Na'AMAT USA. She is most proud of the many programs she has implemented as Natanya chapter's program chair for 10 years. Rabbi Nina Feinstein has worked for many years to elevate the status of women in the Jewish community. From left: Zita Gluskin; Scott Abrams, District Director for Hon. Brad Sherman, U.S. House of Representatives; and Rabbi Feinstein.



◀ Masada/Natanya chapter (Broward Council, Florida) enjoyed a book event featuring Ellen Brazer, author of *The Wandering Jew: My Journey Into Judaism*. From left: Ellen Brazer, Terri Andretta, treasurer; and Phyllis Field-Elias, fundraising chair.



▲ Shalom club (Long Island/Queens Council) enjoyed abundant desserts and good company at its Sukkot party. From left, first row: Maddy Berson, Eleanor Blackman, Diane Hershkowitz and Marsha Jaffee; back: Irene Alterman, Florence Lefkowitz and Toby Amisthal.



◀ ▲ At its Membership Brunch, Long Island Council (New York) honored South Shore chapter members Betty Becker and Harriet Forman for their many years of service and dedication to NA'AMAT USA. From left: Tal Ourian, Betty Becker, Doris Shinnars, Paul and Harriet Forman.



◀ Pittsburgh Council honored Debby Firestone for her longtime commitment to NA'AMAT at its gala Spiritual Adoption/Scholarship Fundraising Dinner. Her many leadership roles have included Pittsburgh Council president and national recording secretary. Event co-chairs were Gloria Elbling Gottlieb and Carole Wolsh.



◀ Members of the Cherry Hill club (New Jersey) and the new Rimonim club (Philadelphia) had a fabulous time visiting the Grounds for Sculpture in New Jersey and getting to know each other. Israeli artist Boaz Vaadia was the featured artist. Among the participants: Fran Chvala, second from right, president of Cherry Hill club.



▲ A hearty welcome to the new Oriah Teen chapter of NA'AMAT USA! The high school students are enthusiastic supporters of NA'AMAT and plan to include our organization in their community service projects. Sarita Rosenthal (second from left) was inspired by her grandmother, Rosita Rosenthal, a dedicated member of Or chapter. The teenager is spearheading the group, which meets in Sunny Isles Beach, Florida.



◀ Staten Island's Orach club toured the Sequine Mansion followed by a luncheon meeting. The exquisite Greek Revival structure was built in 1840 near the southern shore of Staten Island, New York.

Keep up-to-date with NA'AMAT USA and NA'AMAT Israel activities, events and news on Facebook.

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Domestic Violence

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unteers doing national service. Other volunteers come in after school to work with the children attending local public schools.

Fathers and children are encouraged to visit — but not at the shelter. Usually they meet at a community center in Tel Aviv.

The shelter is only part of the Glickman Center's mission. The "open section," under the longtime direction of Orit Earon, offers rehabilitation for battering men and counseling and support groups for victims of family violence — women, men and children. The center does not treat men whose families live at the shelter. It provides counseling, mediation and legal help for couples. No wonder NA'AMAT is well known for helping to rebuild families in crisis.

The open section also holds lectures and seminars for social workers, police officers, army personnel, lawyers, judges and medical workers.

Providing a sense of interconnectedness, a beautiful open area with benches and tables — a place just to sit and relax — links the shelter, day care facility and the open section. A volunteer shows mothers and children how to play volleyball on a small court.

NA'AMAT first called attention to the problem of domestic violence in the 1980s when it was only spoken about in whispers. Over the years, it has worked to protect battered women and help them take control of their lives. NA'AMAT has strengthened advocacy for victims of domestic violence and helped change how Israeli society responds to domestic violence. There's still a long way to go — and the Glickman Center will continue to provide both a safe haven for women and leadership in combating a problem that is not going away.

Longtime NA'AMAT activist Judy Telman has lived in Israel for 31 years. Before she made aliya, she was a national vice president of NA'AMAT USA living in Chicago. She wrote about the Eleanor and Edward Epstein NA'AMAT Technological High School in our spring 2016 issue.

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NA'AMAT USA's new WIN membership campaign will kick off later this winter.

Check your email, our website and Facebook for updates.

WELCOME TO THE NEW LIFE MEMBERS OF NA'AMAT USA!

The following have joined our NA'AMAT family for life and will never have to pay dues again.

Members Who Became Life Members

Estela Berry
Surfside, FL
Marlene Feldman
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Caryn Gussin
Agoura Hills, CA
Freida Karp
Pembroke Pines, FL
Janice Kanovsky
Woodland Hills, CA
Rachel Lapidot
Aventura, FL

Nomi Luthra
Freehold, NJ
Susan Michlin
Seal Beach, CA
Sandy Mittleman
Tarzana, CA
Linda Rosner
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Suzanne Singerman
Solon, OH
Sheila Steinberg
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Eva Wellisch
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New Life Members

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Shira Deitsch
Sherman Oaks, CA
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Harriette Donenfeld
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Miriam Ellenberg
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Jori Margolis
Chicago, IL
Selma Roffman
Elkins Park, PA
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Sonia Schwarz
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Shirley Weiner
Elkins Park, PA

Affiliate Life Members (up to age 17)

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Arielle Dror
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Nathan Dror
Stanford, CA
Eli Gabbay
Beverly Hills, CA
Dylan Gurvitch
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Kayla Isaacs
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Jesse Katz
Las Vegas, NV
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LIFE MEMBERSHIP: Only \$250

Na'amat USA is building a Women's Health Center in Sderot – the first of its kind in the western Negev – and you can help.



“The building of our women’s health center in Sderot has begun!” says Shirli Shavit, director of the NA’AMAT Israel International Department. “We’re on our way to constructing three large activity rooms, a kitchen, safe room and an extensive outside area. The hope is to have a festive opening next spring during the annual meeting of NA’AMAT International.”

NA’AMAT USA is not only funding the construction of the center, but also its staffing and maintenance for the next five years.

Less than a mile from Gaza, Sderot is known as the bomb shelter capital of the world with its history of Qassam rockets raining down from across the border. A large percentage of Sderot’s children suffer from post-traumatic stress.

Modeled after a NA’AMAT facility in Karmiel,

the new center will provide services for as many as 500 women, including health care screenings, legal assistance, psychological counseling, exercise classes, recreational activities and other services currently lacking in the community.

The women in Sderot are so preoccupied with the health and welfare of their families that many do not have the time to travel out of their area to seek preventative health care for themselves. The new NA’AMAT Women’s Health Center will fill a critical void in the community’s network of social services.

To contribute to this landmark project, please contact the national office:
NA’AMAT USA, 21515 Vanowen St., Suite 102,
Canoga Park, CA 91303. Phone: 818-431-2200.
Email: naamat@naamat.org.

NA’AMAT USA Thanks These Generous Donors for Enhancing the Lives of Israeli Women and Youth

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The following have donated generously to keep Na'amat Woman going strong. We thank you wholeheartedly!

Betty Groden
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Sharon Sutker McGowan
Ange Nadel

The Milton and Mildred Rosen Foundation
Rita Sherman
Gerd Stern
Chellie Goldwater Wilensky

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.



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

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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.