



# NA'AMAT Now!

A publication of NA'AMAT USA

Spring 2021

## Dr. Ruth headlines gala for NA'AMAT USA, Canada

Famed sex therapist and recipient of NA'AMAT USA's Golda Meir Humanitarian Award Dr. Ruth K. Westheimer shared her unique personal story and a large dose of advice for a satisfying sex life during a fundraising gala on Sunday, March 7.



Dr. Ruth Westheimer

Attended by more than 150 people, the gala was a joint effort of NA'AMAT in the U.S. and Canada. It commemorated International Women's Day, March 8, and raised more than \$75,000 for NA'AMAT's scholarship program.

NA'AMAT awards about 200 scholarships and research grants each year at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level. The program is the only one in Israel geared specifically to female scholars, according to Shirli Shavit, director of NA'AMAT Israel's International Department and the scholarship program. Shavit and NA'AMAT Israel President Hagit Pe'er brought greetings from Israel at the event, conducted on Zoom.

A VIP event for 34 major donors, moderated by Sharon Sutker McGowan, kicked off the afternoon. Participants were invited to ask questions directly to Dr. Ruth. Each participant also was sent a signed copy of Dr. Ruth's book, "The Doctor is In."

In response to a question from gala moderator Art Verity about what inspired her to write "Heavenly Sex: Sexuality in the Jewish Tradition," she explained, "The reason I can talk about erection, orgasm and masturbation is that in the Jewish religion sex has never been a taboo – it is something to engage in and be taught." The book was recently selected for the NYU Press Classics collection, which publishes new editions of seminal books. "It will never go out of print," Dr. Ruth said. "Hallelujah!"

The gala included a presentation by NA'AMAT scholarship recipients, moderated by Dr. Ilana Kwartin, regional director for the Western U.S. of the Jewish Agency for Israel, who received a scholarship in 2017. Dr. Maya Weinberg, a veterinarian working toward a Ph.D. in animal science, discussed her research on bats, and Eliana Avitzour talked about her work on gender bias among teachers. All the recipients expressed gratitude for the scholarships, which enabled them to complete their doctoral degrees.

Asked what advice she would give the scholarship recipients, Dr. Ruth said, "Celebrate that you were chosen. Then promise, like me, to help other women. Make the best out of the advantage you got. And say 'thank you' to NA'AMAT."

## NA'AMAT remembers founders during Women's History Month

By Sharon Sutker McGowan

As a member of NA'AMAT, you may have heard the story of our founding almost a century ago. But it bears repeating, to highlight what a few women were able to achieve — just because they were asked to help.

In 1924, Rahel Yanait Ben-Zvi established a tree nursery in Jerusalem to train young women in agricultural work. Because there was not enough water, the young trees were dying; the nursery needed a deep new well.

Ben-Zvi turned to her friends in America for help. Sophie Udin and six other Poale Zion activists (Eva Berg, Leah Brown, Chaya Ehrenreich, Luba Hurwitz, Rahel Siegel and Nina Zuckerman) responded by raising the first \$500. With this, NA'AMAT USA was born. Then called Pioneer Women, it was the sister organization of Moetzet Hapoalot, the women's labor movement in Israel.

As we celebrate Women's History Month in the U.S. let's remember some of the women who were instrumental in launching our own organization.



Rahel Ben-Zvi

**Rahel Yanait Ben-Zvi** (1886-1979) helped establish the state of Israel and found Israel's Labor Party. She was born in Ukraine and educated in Russia and France. Ben-Zvi moved to Jerusalem

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# Get to know the national office staff

## Deanna Migdal, Executive Director

I have been with NA'AMAT for seven years. I was the first employee hired when the office moved from New York to Los Angeles in 2014.



*Deanna Migdal*

I first learned of NA'AMAT from my mom, who is a life member. For years, I attended luncheons and programs with her, which got me interested in the mission of helping women and families in Israel. My love for Israel expanded

once my sister moved there and I visited frequently. I had worked in the entertainment industry for many years but realized that my career needed to fulfill a greater purpose. My position at NA'AMAT USA allows me to manage and oversee the operations, grow the organization, and work with empowered women while finding creative ways to raise funds to help Israelis in need.

Currently, I am working to implement a strategic plan to centralize and strengthen the organization. I strive to make NA'AMAT well known in every community, raise awareness and increase our membership and support.

My husband, Gary, is the president of a post-production facility. We love to travel wherever the cuisine, climate, culture and music take us. Our two sons, Zach and Josh, live in Hollywood and are in the music business. Our daughter, Brooke, is in college. She is my greatest accomplishment and always keeps me sane and grounded. We have a beautiful Akita, Luna, who is everyone's best friend.

### Did You Know?

... The Israeli High Court ruled this month to recognize Reform and Conservative conversions for the purpose of citizenship.

## Cindy Leshtz, Administrative Assistant

I have been with NA'AMAT USA for four months. I enjoy working and being a part of an organization that has such a rich and long history of serving and helping to improve the lives of women and children in Israel.

In the last few months, my focus has been to create, integrate and update area activities into our national website calendar. Additionally, I am focused on making sure that all our donations are acknowledged and assisting with our daily business transactions. I came to NA'AMAT with more than 30 years in Jewish nonprofits and I know that all my past experiences have led me here.

I am so grateful for my adult sons, my two adorable grandchildren, Jude, 2, and Eliana, 5, who have my heartstrings every step of the way. I love going to the beach and a friendly game of tennis. Hikes and Mah Jongg keep me centered. When I can travel again, I hope to visit family and friends in my hometown of Chicago.

## Marcy McKenzie, Finance Manager

I started working for NA'AMAT in 2017 and moved into my current position in August. It has been a pleasure to work with all of our staff, NA'AMAT members and the board of directors.



*Marcy McKenzie*

Prior to coming to NA'AMAT I was interested in working in the area of family services or foster care in the local area.



*Cindy Leshtz*

Working for NA'AMAT partially fulfilled my quest — I just didn't imagine I would be involved in work that benefits women and children halfway around the world. As a result, between reconciling bank statements and paying invoices I am a volunteer with the nonprofit CASA of Los Angeles (Court Appointed Special Advocates). In this role I act as an advocate for a 10-year-old boy who is in foster care.

My husband and I have a son and daughter. Our son is in college at the University of Oregon and our daughter has one foot out the door, ready to start college next fall. We are looking forward to being empty nesters!

## Maya Stark, Membership Manager

It has been a pleasure working for NA'AMAT for the past three years and supporting women and children in Israel. I have a BA in Finance and accounting from the University of New Orleans. After spending 13 years in the southern U.S., it was a real change of pace moving to Los Angeles where I now reside with my two little girls.

I was born and raised in Israel and my whole family is still there. I served in the IDF as an officer social worker and, as part of my job, I traveled throughout the country for house visits and advocated for soldiers' social benefits and rights. Growing up in Israel, NA'AMAT was (and still is) a household name. Everyone knows about the daycares and shelters, and hears on the news when NA'AMAT protests and advocates for women's rights.

When I moved to the U.S., I didn't realize that the fundraising for all the wonderful projects that are taking place in Israel are made possible due to the help and commitments of NA'AMAT members. I am very proud to be part of the NA'AMAT USA family and to help it grow and thrive for many more generations.



*Maya Stark*

# Message from the President



By Jan Gurvitch

This year as we celebrate Women's History Month, we will also celebrate Passover. At our seder table we will read from our Haggadot, once again sharing the story of our freedom and redemption. We will again recount the wisdom of our sages and highlight the four questions. So why will this year be different than all other years?

This year, I hope we will all add to our Passover seder the story of the amazing and strong women who played important roles in our liberation.

Shifra and Puah were Hebrew midwives who were told by Pharaoh to kill all Jewish boys at birth. They directly disobeyed these orders, knowing that the punishment for this could be death. They acted with the intent to save human life and to ensure a future for the Jewish people.

Another Jewish mother, Yocheved, hid her son, Moses, to protect him from Pharaoh's evil edict. However, there came a time when her son could no longer be hidden so Yocheved made the most painful decision a mother can make — to give away her child. She carefully placed her beloved son in a reed basket under the watchful eye of her daughter, Miriam, who put Moses in the River Nile. Thankfully, that day the unnamed daughter of Pharaoh saw the basket floating in the river and saved the baby from certain death. She raised him as her own son, knowing that her father would be furious if he should ever find out.

These women are our heroines because they boldly stood for things they believed in. NA'AMAT women have long followed in the historic footsteps of our "mothers" by being proud partners in the founding of the State of Israel and as advocates for women, children and families. We in NA'AMAT continue to choose the right path that will lead to a more equitable and just society. We have so much to be proud of.

Today rabah to each of you, because every day you make an important difference in the lives of so many. Hag Sameach! L'Shana Haba'ah B'Yerushalayim.

## Shop online? Help NA'AMAT

Are you doing more online shopping these days? Did you know that Amazon will donate .5% of AmazonSmile purchases to NA'AMAT? You get the same products, and your cost is the same. Last year, NA'AMAT raised \$306; help us raise \$1,000 in 2021. If you have an Amazon account but have never used Amazon Smile:

- 1) Log into your Amazon account
- 2) Search for Amazon Smile in the search box
- 3) Click on the link that says "Change your charity"
- 4) Select NA'AMAT USA
- 5) Next time, go directly to Amazon Smile ([smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com))

NA'AMAT USA

FUN

CHALLENGE

April 18-25, 2021

HAVE YOU NOTICED  
OUR NEW LOGO?



We are challenging you  
to take a close-up selfie with  
the new NA'AMAT USA logo.

Here is what we'd like you to do:

- 1 Hold up this newsletter with the logo showing, take a close-up selfie, and you are halfway there!
- 2 Then post your photo on your Facebook page or email it to the National Office.
- 3 Ask your "friends" to **SHARE** your post.
- 4 Ask all your member friends and their friends to do the same fun challenge!
- 5 Include with your post: **#naamatusachallenge**

Our goal is to reach  
thousands of postings of the  
**#naamatusachallenge**

ARE YOU UP TO THE  
CHALLENGE?

Your PR/Publicity Team,  
Susan Isaacs & Esther Friedberg



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NA'AMAT NOW is written and produced by Complete Communications Inc., Skokie IL

## Founders

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in 1908 and soon became a leader of Hashomer, the volunteer Jewish self-defense force. It was in Hashomer that she met her future husband, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, who became Israel's second president.

When she came to Palestine, one of Rahel Ben-Zvi's dreams was to work on the land. She went to France to study agriculture and returned to Israel when World War I began.



*Sophie Udin*

When Yitzhak Ben-Zvi became president of Israel in 1952, Rahel Ben-Zvi assisted him in his official duties and worked to make the president's house a landmark for all Israelis. Following her husband's death in 1963, Rahel Ben-Zvi became an active member of Yad Ben-Zvi, a historical and research institute. She was awarded the Israel Prize in 1978, a year before she died.

**Sophie Udin** (1896 – 1960) was born in Zhinkov, Ukraine, and emigrated as a young girl to Pittsburgh. At 14, she became active in the American branch of the Poale Zion movement, which combined socialism, Zionism and the struggle against assimilation. After high school, she moved to New York and studied library science, one of the few vocational professions open to women.

Taking a leave from her job at the New York Public Library in 1921 and 1925-1927, she went to Palestine where she joined the Jewish National and University Library. While living in Jerusalem, she became a spy for the Hagana.

Before Udin got Rahel Ben-Zvi's request to help build a well, she had previously attempted to raise money from Americans to create agricultural schools in Palestine. The male leaders of Poale Zion argued that there was no need for a separate women's organization, since their organization offered women full equality. The founders of Pioneer Women, however, argued that Poale Zion had only a few female members and was dominated by male leaders.

They believed that a women's Labor Zionist organization would engage immigrant and working women.

Udin made aliyah in 1949 when she was appointed by Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to set up and direct the Israel State Archives. She also helped establish the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel in 1951. She died in Jerusalem on April 24, 1960.

**Beba Idelson** (1885-1975) was born in Ukraine to a traditional Jewish family. As a young woman, she became very involved in Zionist-Socialist affairs. As a result of her work as a dissident, she was sent to a region near the North Pole. In 1926, she was allowed to immigrate to Palestine.



*Beba Idelson*

In 1949 she was elected to the Knesset and held office until 1965. She served twice as the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset. During her terms in office, Idelson became a strong advocate for working women and children. Idelson believed strongly that women should participate in helping the new country to build a democratic society and be involved in its political and economic life. Because of these beliefs, she became involved in Moetzet Hapaolet.

After she left the Knesset, Idelson chaired the World Movement of Pioneer Women from 1968-1975. She helped establish an educational network for high school students unable to succeed in traditional schools. These schools continue today. Idelson also was involved in establishing two agricultural boarding schools in Israel.

In 1975, Idelson wrote a new epilogue for the second edition of "The Plough Woman," about the young women pioneers who came to Palestine in the early 1900s. She wrote, "...we continued to educate women toward equality and independence, toward acquiring a profession and becoming active in public life, and toward the role of equal partners in the structure of the country in general and the labor movement in particular."

Idelson died a short time after she wrote this epilogue, but her words still resonate today.