



The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies

Opening Remarks by the Director of the Center

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The current bulletin covers the diverse activities of the Center during the last two years. The academic year 2008-9 was the last in which the Center was supported on an annual basis by the University's administration. Currently, the University supports the Center by way of matching external research funds which are won by the Center's fellows, whether as individuals or as teams. The first such team, headed by Prof. Reuven Amitai, was awarded an Israel Science Foundation Center of Excellence grant on the topic "The Formation of Muslim Society in Palestine (ca. 600-1500 CE)". I hope that in the near future we will witness additional submissions by colleagues, which are cru-

cial for the continued operation of the Center.

After three years as the Center's director, I conclude my term and am replaced by Dr. Meir Hatina, starting from 1 October 2010. I am certain that Meir will advance the Center toward new horizons. On this occasion, I wish to thank all my colleagues who supported the Center's activities. Special thanks are due to Prof. Meir Bar-Asher, the chairman of the academic committee since the establishment of the Center, and Profs. Muhammad Haj Yahia, Gideon Libson and David Satran, members of the committee, for their contributions to the Center. All four are now stepping down from the academic committee. Congratulations to the new

chairman of the academic committee, Prof. Rachel Milstein, and the new members, Prof. Amikam Elad, Head of the Institute of Asian and African Studies, Dr. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony of the Dept. of Comparative Religion, and Dr. Nurit Stadler of the Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology.

In conclusion, it gives me great pleasure to be able to thank Ms. Jenia Yudkevich, the operations coordinator of the Center, for her excellent work in the daily running of the Center. I am sure that she will greatly assist the new director.

With best wishes for a fruitful year of academic activity,

Dr. Ron Shaham
Director of the Center

The Levtzion Center's Mission

The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies was established at the Hebrew University (HU) of Jerusalem towards the end of 2004. The Center strives to encourage and initiate research relating to the Islamic religion and civilization, from the advent of Islam in the seventh century C.E. until today, in the Arab world, elsewhere in the Middle East, in Asia and Africa, and also in the West. In order to fulfill this goal, the Center organizes research groups, conferences, seminars, and

lectures, supports individual and group research, distributes scholarships and encourages dialog between scholars of Islamic studies and related fields. Islam is understood not just in the narrow sense as a religion, but also as a culture and civilization, and thus the Center deals with such subjects as religious thought and practice, material and intellectual culture, politics, society and economics.

To this end, the Center supports in-

terdisciplinary research in religious studies, history, the social sciences, law and other fields. Innovative research projects within established disciplines are also encouraged and supported. The Center directs some of its activities towards the general public, in order to bring about greater understanding of Islamic faith and civilization. The publications of the Center seek to reach a wide audience of scholars as well as other interested people.

The Fifth Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lecture

Prof. Haggai Erlich: "Muslims, Christians and Ethiopia: First Meeting, Last Meeting"

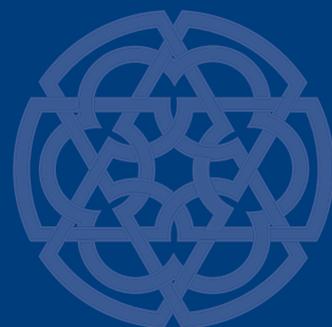
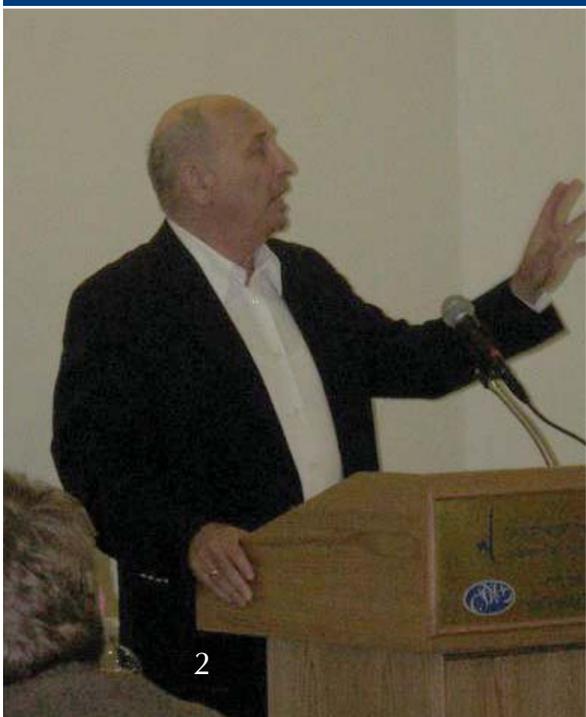
The annual Prof. Nehemia Levtzion lectures bring to the Center established scholars to discuss central themes in the field of Islamic studies. The lectures are conducted in collaboration with leading academic institutions in Israel and subsequently are published by the Center. In the first annual lecture, conducted in 2005 in collaboration with the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Prof. Michael Brett of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London lectured on the Islamization of Egypt and North Africa. In the second annual lecture, conducted in 2006 in collaboration with Tel Aviv University, Prof. André Wink of the University of Wisconsin-Madison discussed perspectives on the Hindu-Islamic world. These two lectures have been published by the Center and may be ordered from the Center's secretariat. The

contents of these lectures are also available on the Center's website. The third annual lecture took place on 19 March 2007 at the Jerusalem Van Leer Institute and with its collaboration; Prof. Baber Johansen of the School of Theology of Harvard University talked about the transfer of Islam from a cosmic order into a legal order. The fourth annual lecture, by Prof. Dale F. Eickelman of Dartmouth College, took place on 17 January 2008 and was co-sponsored with the Ben-Zvi Institute and the Chaim Herzog Center for Middle East Studies and Diplomacy of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Prof. Eickelman's talk focused on a phenomenon he termed "globalization from below," arguing that the current religious discourse has become more inclusive than in the past, due to the expansion of education and the influence of the mass media, thus enabling lay voices to confront official ones.

The fifth annual lecture, by Prof. Haggai Erlich of the Open University and Tel Aviv University, took place on 30 April 2009 and was titled: "Muslims, Christians and Ethiopia: First Meeting, Last Meeting." The lecture was part of an evening in which the Center announced its annual recipients of scholarships and research grants (see below).

Prof. Erlich's lecture focused on the Horn of Africa in the present day. Historically, this region was an area of active contact between Christians and Muslims, often of confrontation and even violence. At the center of the latest chapter in this history lies the war

between Somali Muslim radicals (al-Shabab movement) and the Christian-led Ethiopian army. This conflict was contrasted with the first historical meeting between Christians and Muslims at the time of the First Hijra, when a group of the first Muslims and Companions of the Prophet found refuge at the court of the Christian king of Ethiopia. This formative encounter (beginning in 615 CE) resulted within Islam in a message of charity, gratitude and neighborliness, but also in a (slightly later) claim that the Ethiopian king had himself converted to Islam (*islam al-najashi*) and thus the continued existence of a Christian kingdom was illegitimate. This double message has continued into our own time, legitimizing the claims of Islamic radicals and moderates alike. After giving examples of the connection between this early dual heritage and modern historical events, Prof. Erlich returned to current reality – the internal argument within Somali society between peace-seekers and those eager for jihad. The present day shows a deepening ideological divide, with the radicals turning to ever more extreme traditions negating the Ethiopian Christian "other". Yet, the legendary experience of first meeting continues to inspire and legitimize those hoping for interfaith reconciliation – in the region and worldwide.



Conferences

Islamic Law Faces the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

The three-day international conference which took place at the Jerusalem Van Leer Institute on 19-21 October 2009 was the culmination of a two-year research workshop on the same topic, directed by Prof. Aharon Layish of the HU (Emeritus) and Dr. Ron Shaham, Director of the Nehemia Levtzion Center for the Study of Islam, as a collaboration between the Center and the Jerusalem Van Leer Institute. The workshop was aimed at scholars and advanced students working on various aspects of the changes that have taken place in Islamic law from the late nineteenth century up to the present day. The workshop is an attempt at a comprehensive and integrative analysis of these changes from the combined perspectives of history, law and the social sciences, including comparisons with Jewish law, where possible. Among the topics that were discussed are Islamic law in the late Ottoman period, the codification of Islamic law in the nation-state and its significance, family law reforms, the application of Islamic law in civil courts, the revival of Islamic law in the nation-state, Islamic law in Saudi Arabia, the application of Islamic law in non-Muslim states and radical Islamist legal interpretations.

During the 2007/2008 academic year, the workshop convened for four introductory sessions at the Jerusalem Van Leer Institute (see report in the Center's bulletin no. 4). During the academic year 2008/2009 the workshop convened for six meetings. Each meeting, focusing on a pre-circulated paper

written by one of the participants, included a short introduction by the author, comments by a discussant and an open discussion.

The international conference, following the pattern of the workshop, started with an opening lecture by Prof. Aharon Layish, titled: "Islamic Law in the Modern World: Challenges and Prospects," which set out the general historical and thematic framework for the conference's themes. The seven following sessions were:

- Islamic Law in the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire and in Modern Turkey (Dr. Avi Rubinfeld of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Prof. Haim Gerber of the HU and Dr. Nicholas Foster of the University of London; discussants: Dr. Eyal Ginio of the HU, Dr. Anat Lapidot-Firilla of the HU and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Prof. Haim Gerber of the HU).
- Renewal of legal theory (Prof. Eric Chaumont of the French Research Center in Jerusalem

and CNRS, and Dr. Muhammad al-Atawneh of Ben-Gurion University; discussants: Prof. Robert Gleave of the University of Exeter and Dr. Nimrod Hurvitz of Ben-Gurion University).

- Islamic law, human rights and gender (Prof. Irene Schneider of Gottingen University and Dr. Raquel Ukeles of the HU; discussants: Dr. Noga Efrati and Dr. Liat Kozma of the HU).
- Developments in Shi'i law (Ori Goldberg of Tel Aviv University and Prof. Robert Gleave of the University of Exeter; discussants: Dr. Eldad Pardo of the HU and Prof. Eric Chaumont of the French Research Center in Jerusalem and CNRS).
- Islamic law and medicine (Dr. Ron Shaham of the HU and Prof. Aref Abu Rabia of Ben-Gurion University; discussants: Prof. Vardit Rispler-Chaim of Haifa University and Oren Asman of the HU).
- Islamic law in Europe (Prof. Mathias Rohe of Erlangen University



and Dr. Ian Edge of the University of London; discussants: Prof. Amikam Nachmani of Bar-Ilan University and Prof. Haim Sandberg of the College of Management in Rishon Le-Zion).

- Islamic law in Israel (Dr. Moussa Abou Ramadan of the Carmel Academic Center in Haifa; Prof. Haim Sandberg of the College of Management in Rishon Le-Zion and Dr. Adam Hofri-Winogradow of the HU; discussants: Iyad Zahalka, Director of the Shari`a Courts in Israel and Dr. Nurit Tsafir of Tel Aviv University).

The conference ended with a panel discussion on the status of Islamic

law in a non-Muslim state, chaired by the President of the HU, Prof. Menachem Ben-Sasson, and with the participation of Dr. Nicholas Foster of the University of London, Prof. Mathias Rohe of Erlangen University, Prof. Aharon Layish of the HU and Mr. Iyad Zahalka, Director of the Shari`a Courts in Israel. The discussions on the status of Islamic law in non-Muslim states were of particular interest, because the European cases (e.g., the United Kingdom and Germany, which have considerable Muslim minorities) and the Israeli case (in which Islamic law is the applicable family law for the Muslim minority) beg for comparison. From another perspective, it seems that

the pressing need to find legal solutions for these minorities, who strive to maintain their Islamic identity in an alien environment, draws an impressive measure of creativity from those legal scholars who are developing the novel legal field of "Islamic minorities' jurisprudence" (*fiqh al-aqalliyat al-muslima*).

A collective volume composed of articles based on papers submitted to the conference, as well as on solicited articles, is currently being edited by the directors of the workshop.

The Shi`a: Theology, Law and Culture

During the last decades, scholarship on the Shi`a has been overshadowed by the focus on modern Iran, especially its political system and relationships with its neighbors and with the West, with special emphasis on regional and global security concerns and on the supply of oil. Concurrently, Shi`i communities in the Middle East have undergone important transformations, from political empowerment in Iraq and Lebanon, through vibrant debates on a host of religio-theological issues. The organizers of the conference, Prof. Meir Bar-Asher and Dr. Ron Shaham of the HU and Prof. Meir Litvak of Tel Aviv University felt, therefore, that there was a need to discuss more neglected topics concerning the Shi`a, such as religious theory and practice, Sunni-Shi`i encounters, including ecumenical

enterprises, developments in Shi`i religious and state laws and gender.

The conference, which was held on 2-3 June, 2010, was organized as collaboration between the Levzion Center and the Center for Iranian Studies of Tel Aviv University. The first day took place at the Mt. Scopus campus of the HU and included two sessions:

- Religion and law (Michael Ebsstein and Roy Vilozny of the HU; Prof. Rainer Brunner of CNRS Paris).
- Representation of Shi`i figures in literature and art (Dr. Julia Rubanovitch and Dr. Raya Shani of the HU; Dr. Liora Hendelman-Baavur of Tel Aviv University and Prof. Zeev Maghen of Bar-Ilan University).

The second day took place at Tel Aviv University and included four sessions:

- The Iraqi Shi`a between tradition and change I (Dr. Ronen Zeidel and Prof. Isaac Hasson of the HU and Dr. Elisheva Machlis of Cambridge University).
- The Iraqi Shi`a between tradition and change II (Prof. Amazia Baram and Dr. Liad Porat of Haifa University and Rachel Kantz-Feder of Tel Aviv University)
- Post-revolutionary Iran (Orly Rahimiyan of Ben-Gurion University and Dr. Ori Goldberg of Tel Aviv University).
- Traditional and novel thinking in the Iranian Shi`a (Prof. Meir Litvak of Tel Aviv University, Dr. El-dad Pardo of the HU and Dr. Daniel Tsadik of Yeshiva University).

Leisure Culture in Islamic Societies

The conference, organized by the Levtzion Center, with financial support from the HU's Faculty of Humanities and the Institute for Asian and African Studies, was held on 21-22 January 2009 at the Mt. Scopus campus. It brought together historians, social scientists, a folklorist and an archeologist. The opening lecture by Prof. Uri Kupferschmidt of Haifa University revealed the preliminary stage at which the study of leisure in Islamic societies (especially before the year 1500) currently finds itself, in contrast to the advanced stage of the study of leisure in Western societies. In Europe, the industrial, reading and consumption revolutions altered leisure culture drastically. In Middle Eastern societies, however, in which the intensity of similar processes was much lower, the pace of change and its specific patterns needs to be further investigated. After reviewing Western

leisure studies from methodological perspectives, Kupferschmidt pointed a number of themes that have potential for future scholarship on Islamic leisure culture.

The six sessions of the conference were titled: New leisure spaces – the theatre, restaurant and advertisements; leisure hours – aspects of culture and entertainment; the physical and the spiritual in the bathhouse; healthy spirit in a healthy body-sports and leisure; forbidden and permissible leisure; and the leisure culture of the Mamluk elite.

One of the most fascinating presentations at the conference was given by Dr. Liora Gvion, a sociologist of the Kibbutzim Seminary College, focusing on the role of the restaurant in the leisure culture of Israeli Palestinians. Her main argument was that the restaurant serves as an arena for leisure activity which

preserves social power relations on three levels: on the level of gender, the restaurant duplicates the supremacy of the husband over his wife, while enabling the wife to be released from her daily chores. Palestinian restauranteurs refrain from including homely dishes in the menu, because ordering such dishes would imply that the wife fails to carry out her cooking duties properly, which would insult her as well as her husband. On the cultural level, visiting a restaurant enables the Palestinian family to experience a "modern" practice and to adopt a certain part of the Jewish majority's culture. On the political level, the Palestinian restaurateur is able to control the image of Palestinian food in Israel and the measure of culinary information he shares with his Jewish customers. Through the restaurant the Palestinian entrepreneur becomes an agent of culture preservation.



The Middle East on the Web: Virtual Communities and Social Networks on the Internet

On March 18, 2009, the Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies and the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies held a one day conference entitled "The Middle East on the Web: Virtual Communities and Social Networks on the Internet". The conference was coordinated by Dr. Liora Hendelman-Baavur of the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace of the HU, and examined the boundaries of the current internet revolution in our region. The discussions elaborated on the internet's role as a central medium for the understanding of political, social and cultural dynamics in the Middle East and the Muslim World.

As of 2009 over twenty percent of the population in the Middle East is connected to the World Wide Web. However, is the internet a path to freedom or a propaganda

tool of the government, e.g., in the Islamic Republic of Iran? How can weblogs promote human rights in Arab countries? And can online computer games bridge the gap between young Jews and Arabs in Israel? These and other questions were debated by young researchers from the HU and from other Israeli academic institutions.

The conference hosted four sessions:

- The boundaries of the virtual world in the Middle East – the speakers were Tali Messika of Tel Aviv University; Dr. Liora Hendelman-Baavur of the HU and the Center for Iranian Studies at Tel Aviv University, and cyber-law attorney and blogger Jonathan Klinger of the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya.
- New Faces of the Media – the second session hosted Zvi Yehezkeili, Arab affairs correspondent and head of desk at Israel News 10; Ksenia Svetlov, Arab affairs reporter of Channel 9, Israel TV, and Yossi Neshet, Middle East Chief Editor at Kol Israel (Israel Radio) in Arabic.
- The Virtual Front in the Arab World – Dr. Bosmat Yefet-Avshalom of the HU, who opened the third session, was followed by Dr. Tal Pavel, an independent researcher of the internet in the Middle Eastern and Arab World, Idan Brir of the Dayan Center at Tel Aviv University and Shay Zohar of the HU.
- Case Study-The Palestinian Web – the fourth session included Anat Ben-David of Bar-Ilan University; Ido Zerkovitz of Haifa University; Dr. Ronit Kampf of Tel Aviv University, and Dr. Michael Dahan of Sapir College.

Teaching Islam to Jews and Judaism to Muslims in Israel

The Jewish and Muslim communities in the state of Israel live side by side, but not enough is done to bring them closer to each other and to reduce the reciprocal ignorance, stereotypes and hostility. Both religions have a dominant role in constructing the identities of their adherents and, regrettably, in deepening the alienation between them. To rectify this sad reality, Dr. Ahmad Ghabin of al-Qasimi College for Education in Baqa al-Gharbiyya, Dr. Ron Shaham and Prof. Reuven Amitai of the Levtzion Center and Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish of the Interreligious

Coordinating Council In Israel, in collaboration with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Israel, initiated this project, whose aim is to deepen the knowledge of each community as to the religion and culture of the other.

The afternoon meeting, which took place at Mishkenot Shaananim on 24 November 2008, was attended by a large and attentive audience and the discussions were lively. The first session dealt with the current situation in various Arab and Jewish educational environments. Dr. Hani

Musa, the Ministry of Education's inspector for Hebrew studies in the Arab sector and Dr. Shlomo Alon, the Ministry of Education's inspector for Arabic studies in the Jewish sector, each spoke about the curricula of formal education. Dr. Alon expressed his frustration, emanating from the failure to require each Jewish high-school student to study a minimum level of Arabic. Abd al-Salam Najjar of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam and Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish discussed informal projects of education toward co-existence. Rabbi Kronish reported that in co-exis-

tence groups the participants are reluctant to discuss religious issues on the grounds that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is national rather than religious. He argued that religious literature includes shared values which may be a basis for a dialogue, that religious leaders are influential in their communities and that ignorance as to the other's religion intensifies mutual fear and hatred.

The second session focused on universities, colleges and religious leaders. Prof. Meir Bar-Asher of the Dept. of Arabic Language and Literature of the HU and Dr. Ahmad Ghabin of al-Qasimi College represented the academic sector. Prof. Bar-Asher shared with the audience his long experience of teaching the Islamic religion to a mixed group of students. To avoid hurting the religious feelings of his Muslim students, Bar-Asher took care to refrain from discussing polemical chapters of the Quran and the idolatrous remnants in Islam and to present the orthodox Islamic and the Western scholarly interpretations of Is-

lamic themes at the same time. The Jerusalem Shari'a court qadi Muhammad Zibdeh and Rabbi Benny Lehman of Har Etzion Yeshiva spoke about their experience as participants in the innovative project of Kedem, a group of Jewish, Christian and Muslim clergy who met to discuss religious topics of mutual interest.

The evening ended with a symposium, with the participation of MP Prof. Menachem Ben-Sasson, chairman of the legal committee of the Knesset, Prof. Khalil Athamina of al-Qasimi College, Dr. Mahmud Yazbak of Haifa University and Prof. Sara Sviri of the HU. Prof. Ben-Sasson emphasized that thinking about the present in terms of religious certainty by both Muslims and Jews is dangerous, because it negates the legitimacy of the other side. Teaching the other's culture will not necessarily result in greater mutual tolerance, but this is a step in the right direction. Prof. Athamina emphasized that in the early Islamic period there was mutual influence

between all religions and condemned the current use of religion for political aims by both Muslims and Jews. Finally, Prof. Sviri claimed that to make the experience of learning about the other's religion and culture meaningful, this learning should be conducted in mixed groups. Thus, for example, Jewish students are encouraged to study Islam as it is taught by Muslims and vice versa.

The second event of the project, a panel discussion, took place on 21 June 2009 at al-Qasimi College for Education in Baqa al-Gharbiyya. The topic was the role of teaching Judaism and Islam in promoting coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Israel. The moderators were Rabbi Dr. Ron Kronish and Dr. Ahmad Ghabin and the participants were Dr. Khalid Mahmud of al-Qasimi College, Sheikh Samir `Asi, the imam of al-Jazzar Mosque in Acre, Prof. Gabi Solomon of Haifa University, Dr. Ben Molov of Bar-Ilan University and Dr. Muhammad Marzuq of Shatil Organization in Baqa al-Gharbiyya.



Sponsorship of Academic Activities

A one-day conference in Remembrance of Prof. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (d. 1998) – in collaboration with The Chaim Herzog Center for the Study of the Middle East and Diplomacy. The conference, which took place on 20 November 2008 at the Mt. Scopus campus of the HU, included sessions on Islamic culture, the relationship between Judaism and Islam and Islamic mysticism. The speakers were colleagues and former students of late Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh.



Iran the Pink: Islamic Democracy – the Lost Dream – The discussion was dedicated to the book of the Italian journalist Vanna Vannuccini,

which appeared in Hebrew translation. The evening, moderated by Nimrod Goren, the director of the Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation and a Ph.D. student at the Dept. of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the HU, included a lecture by the author and a commentary by Dr. Eldad Pardo of the HU.

The Annual Meeting of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Association of Israel (MEISAI) – The meeting was hosted by the HU on 20 May 2009. The Levtzion Center organized a panel on conversion to Islam.

Nationalism in the Middle East – The conference, organized by the Dept. of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies of the HU, and co-sponsored by the Institute of Asian and African Studies and the Levtzion Center, took place on 3 June 2009 at the Mt. Scopus campus.

Material Evidence and Narrative Sources: Interdisciplinary Studies of the History of Islamic Societies – the 14th Annual Workshop of the Department of Middle East Studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (30 June – 3 July 2009). The workshop, which was coordinated by Dr. Daniella Talmon-Heller of Ben-Gurion University and Dr. Katia Cytryn-Silverman of the HU, brought together scholars

whose primary fields of interest are archaeology, numismatics, art history, geography, social and cultural history, political history and economics, to share ideas, discuss methodologies, and enjoy the opportunity to investigate a variety of case studies and approaches.

Sources and Methodologies for the Study of Charity in Monotheistic Religions

This conference, conducted on 1-3 September 2009, was a reunion of the "Charity and Piety" research group which worked at the Institute for Advanced Study of the HU during the previous year. The organizers were Prof. Yaacov Lev of Bar-Ilan University and Dr. Miriam Frenkel of the Ben Zvi Institute and the HU. The conference included an opening lecture by Prof. Amy Singer of Tel Aviv University, titled "Factoring Charity into History," as well as a keynote address by the President of the Hebrew University, Prof. Menachem Ben-Sasson, titled

"The Study of Charity: From Minutiae to Constructed Systems."

Religious Knowledge, Authority and Charisma in Islam – This international workshop, convened on 15-17 December, 2009, was organized by Dr. Meir Hatina (the Hebrew University) and Prof. Daphna Ephrat (the Open University). The workshop aimed to explore the dynamic affinity between the acquisition and transmission of religious knowledge and the construction and diffusion of charismatic authority in pre-modern and modern Islamic societies. A comparative perspective from Judaism, was also provided and enriched the discussions. The workshop concluded two years of deliberations on this theme by a study group hosted jointly by the Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center in Jewish Studies, and the Department of History, Philosophy and Judaic Studies of the Open University of Israel.

Reforming the Family Law of Muslims in Israel

The evening panel, a collaboration between the Levtzion Center and the Harry S. Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, was organized by Dr. Liat Kozma from the Dept. of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies of the HU and took place on 7 May 2009. The convening of this meeting was prompted by the rapid changes that the Israeli Palestinian community is going through, with the strengthening of Islamist political movements on the one hand, and the empowerment of liberal trends and feminist movements, on the other. In the field of family law, in which Islamic patriarchal law is still dominant, the shari`a courts enjoy exclusive jurisdiction. In the year 2001, however, a Muslim-Jewish lobby succeeded in pushing through Knesset legislation which opened the civil family courts (est. 1995) to Muslim-Israeli citizens. This reform divided the Muslim community between supporters (liberals, feminists) and opponents (members of the Islamist movements and shari`a court personnel). The purpose of the panel, bringing together academic scholars, activists and legal officials, was to derive lessons from the experience of other Islamic countries which went through similar processes and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between opposing camps within the Israeli Palestinian community.

The first part of the evening included three brief background presentations: Dr. Iris Agmon of Ben-Gurion University discussed the traditional extended-patrilineal pattern of the Arab family, as well as the reforms in family law adjudication in Palestine during the late Ottoman period. Dr. Liat Kozma spoke about

the historical development of the Moroccan feminist movement, focusing inter alia on Fatima Mernissi, the famous Moroccan feminist who used anti-Islamic rhetoric at the beginning of her career, but later changed her claims, arguing instead that the Prophet was a "feminist" reformist and that the blame for the inferior status of women in Islamic societies should not be put on Quranic and prophetic values but rather on male patriarchal establishments, which through history corrupted the original message of Islam. Such rhetoric, which directs women to develop their own interpretations of Islamic sacred texts, has proved to be more effective for feminist activists, because it prevents their patriarchal opponents from labeling them as secularists. The activities of the Moroccan feminist movement are responsible for the promulgation of a liberal family law by King Muhammad VI in 2000. Dr. Ron Shaham of the Dept. of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the HU, reviewed Egyptian family law reforms from the early twentieth century up to today. He emphasized that family law reform is unable to change the actual status of women if not accompanied by parallel social processes, such as empowering women by promoting their education and integrating them in the skilled working force. The Egyptian experience has proved that where the reforms were too remote from social practices and customs, the litigants found channels for "bending" the laws to their needs or for circumventing the law. The same is true for the qadis, who expressed their opposition to certain reforms by narrowly interpreting the letter of

the law, thereby frustrating the intentions of the legislators. Dr. Layla Abd Rabho of the Dept. of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the HU, who conducted field study in the Israeli shari`a courts, involving interviews with dozens of women who came to the courts, as well as with qadis, lawyers and shari`a litigators, shared with the audience her perspectives on the social inhibitions which prevent women from realizing their legal rights.

The second part of the evening focused on the Israeli case. Prof. Haim Sandberg of the College of Management in Rishon Le-Zion and Dr. Adam Hofri-Winogradov of the HU presented their study in which they ask whether women's renunciation of their legal inheritance rights is voluntary or enforced. Saida Muhsin-Bayadsi, the former director of "Women and Horizons" (*Nisa' wa-Afaq*), a feminist organization which follows the above-mentioned Islamic rhetoric of Fatima Mernissi, spoke about the campaign led by the organization, encouraging Muslim women to realize their shari`a-based inheritance rights. The movement's current project is to promote the replacement of the almost century old Ottoman Family Rights law, which is still the applicable code in Israeli shari`a courts, by a code which is more egalitarian to women. Taghrid Jahshan, a lawyer and social activist, who was deeply involved in promoting the 2001 family courts reform (see above), presented an alternative approach to the Islamist rhetoric of "Women and Horizons." She considers civil legislation and cooperation with Jewish feminist organizations as the most effective channel to pres-

sure the shari`a courts to alter their traditional policies. For example, the competition between the family courts and the shari`a courts, created by the 2001 amendment, has forced the shari`a courts to increase the sums of maintenance (*nafaqa*) which they allocate to women and their children.

However, there are still many obstacles that discourage Muslim women from approaching the civil family courts, such as the language barrier and the absence of Muslim

judges in these courts. Iyad Za-halka, the director of the shari`a courts in Israel, opposed the opinion of the previous speaker on the grounds that adjudication at the civil courts does not necessarily improve the status of women. For example, a testamentary disposition by which a father bequeaths all his property to his sons, thereby disinheriting his daughters, is acceptable according to Israeli law while it is rejected by Islamic law. He argued that even after the 2001 reform most women prefer the

shari`a courts to the civil ones and that the shari`a courts are capable of integrating liberal policies towards women and children which are prevalent in Israeli law, but at the same time rejecting other aspects of Israeli law which are contradictory to social practices and customs of the Palestinian society.

A booklet based on the presentations of this meeting is currently under preparation by Liat Kozma.

Guest Lecture

On 22 June 2009, **Prof. David Powers** of Cornell University lectured on "Quran Manuscript 328B and the Mystery of *Kalala*."

Book Evening

The Levtzion Center dedicated an evening to discussing the new book by Moshe Maoz (ed.), ***The Meeting of Civilizations, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish*** (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009). The book is a product of an international conference which took place in October 2007 at Harvard University and brought together Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars and theologians from the United States, Canada,

Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

The book seeks to challenge the "clash of civilizations" theory which has instilled an atmosphere of self-defense and hostility towards the West, especially the United States and Israel, among Muslims. It aspires to demonstrate that in the past inter-religious relationships were complicated and nuanced and included positive aspects of mutual influence and cooperation. The book argues that Jews and Christians who currently feel an Islamic threat toward Judeo-Christian culture tend to ignore the fact that the majority of Muslim believers are moderate and strive for peace. Many Jews and Christians are unaware of

Islam's major contributions to world civilization, of the values common to all monotheistic religions and to the relative tolerance of pre-modern Islamic states towards their non-Muslim subjects. Finally, the book calls upon intellectual and religious leaders to work towards greater knowledge and mutual and understanding. Political leaders are called upon to solve the remaining political disputes in the region, especially the Israeli-Palestinian and the Iraqi.

The evening was moderated by Dr. Ron Shaham, Director of the Levtzion Center, and the panel members were Prof. Yoram Erder of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Meir Zamir of Ben-Gurion University and Prof. Haim Gerber of the HU.

Sponsorship of Publications

Uri M. Kupferschmidt and Meir Hatina (eds.), **The Muslim Brothers in the Middle East: Religious Vision in a Changing Reality**, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, forthcoming. [In Hebrew]

Yael Ben-Tzvi, **Patricide and Other Family Relationships in Palestinian Cinema**, Tel-Aviv: Resling, forthcoming. [In Hebrew]

Research Grants for Post-doctoral Scholars in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

The Levtzion Center encourages research on Islamic religion and culture in the Middle East and other areas, from the beginning of Islam in the seventh century C.E. to the present. The Center supports interdisciplinary studies as well as innovative studies within existing disciplines. In 2009 the Center awarded three research grants to post-doctoral scholars:

Dr. Katia Cytryn-Silverman, Dept. of Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies

and the Institute of Archaeology: "Road Inns of the Golan in the Medieval Period – a Historical-Architectural Study."

Dr. Kobi Peled, Amirim Interdisciplinary Program for Outstanding Students: "Rehabilitation of Muslim Holy Places and the Construction of Islamic Identities: Architectural Work and Religious Revival at Sidna Ali."

Dr. Arin Salama-Qudsi, Dept. of Arabic Language and Literature, Haifa University: "Annihilation in the Sufi Master: The Concept of *Mashyakha* in 12th century Sufism."

Scholarships for Graduate Students in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Every year the Center grants awards of excellence to MA and PhD students. The following students won the scholarships for the year 2009:

Mr. Nimrod Goren, PhD student, Dept. of Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies: "The Impact of External Incentives on Positions and Policy Relating to Un-controlled Conflicts in Turkey and Israel."

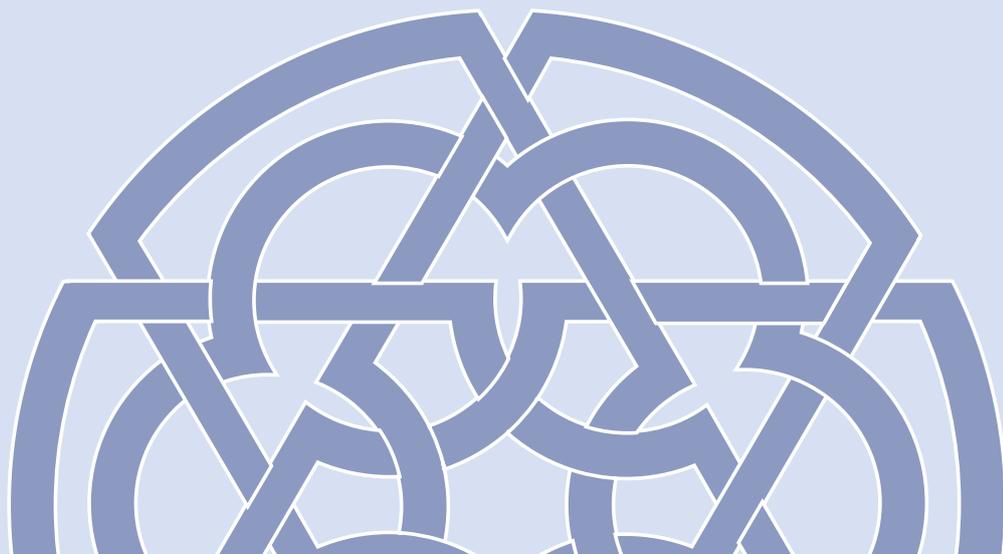
Ms. Na'ama Arnon, PhD student, Dept. of Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies: "A Bridge to the East – Mongol Foreign Relations in the Middle East".

Mr. Daniel Lev, MA student, Dept. of Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies: "The Revival of Anti-Murji'a Polemics among Jihadi Thinkers."

Mr. Avraham Almakias, MA student, Dept. of Islamic & Middle Eastern Studies: "Edition, Analysis and Translation of a Druze Treatise."

Ms. Salwa `Alinat, MA student, Contemporary Middle East Studies Program: "The Representation of Conflicts in Palestinian Literature for Youth, 1987-2000."

Ms. Maryam Tahir `Abd al-Da'im, MA student, School of Education: "Popular Models of Martyrdom among Students of Bir Zeit University."



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