



האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

The Nehemia Levtzion Center
for Islamic Studies



Opening Remarks by the Director of the Center

This bulletin summarizes Prof. Rachel Milstein's semester-long term as the head of the Center, and my first year at the Center. This period was filled with a wide range of activity, in continuation of the policy of my predecessors, Professors Reuven Amitai, Ron Shaham and Meir Hatina, in defining the Center as a focus of research activity on a variety of topics relating to Islamic studies and the Middle East from the Middle Ages to the present. This thrust was reflected by the annual lecture series featuring leading scholars from Israel and abroad, as well as in collaborations with other academic bodies in the Hebrew University and elsewhere. Additionally, the Center's pedagogic role and its link with the community was manifested in joint initiatives with the Ministry of Education and Reches Educational Projects Ltd., including the writing of an updated volume devoted to Islamic and Middle East history for high school students, as well as an outreach program in the form of public lectures in collaboration with the L.A. Mayer museum of Islamic Art.

Since Autumn 2014, the Levtzion Center has concentrated on two main themes: the history of Arab-Jewish interactions in the Middle East; and the status of women in Islam, around which several activities have focused. In addition, we continued to hold book events, academic workshops and conferences. Significantly, we have expanded our activities to include events in

Arabic, a goal we plan to pursue in the future as well. It is our belief that the Center is ideally situated to nurture interdisciplinary dialogue. It is also our belief that it is our obligation to mediate academic knowledge about Islam to the Israeli public, especially from our location in this torn city.

The Center has close ties with colleagues in the Faculty of Humanities – especially with the Institute of Asian and African Studies and with the Dean of the Faculty – and also receives support from the Office of the President. I thank the Center's academic committee, Prof. Elie Podeh, Prof. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Prof. Rachel Milstein and Dr. Miriam Goldstein, for their support and assistance; also the chair of the Department of Islamic and Middle East Studies, Prof. Ron Shaham, and the chair of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Prof. Meir Bar-Asher, for continual support and advice. Moreover, the performance of the administrative and logistic office was highly effective under Mr. Sasha Schneidmann. I thank one and all. Last but not least, I thank the Levtzion family for providing advice and encouragement.

With best wishes,

Dr. Liat Kozma

Director of the Center

The Center's Mission

The Nehemia Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies was established at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2004. It aims to encourage and initiate research relating to Islam as a religion and civilization, from its advent in the 7th century C.E. until today, in the Arab world, elsewhere in the Middle East, in Asia and Africa, and in the West. To fulfill this goal, the Center organizes research groups, conferences, seminars, and lectures; supports individual and collaborative research; grants scholarships; and encourages dialogue between scholars of Islamic studies and related fields. Islam is approached not only as a religion, but, more broadly, as a culture and a civilization. As such, the Center deals with subjects

that include religious thought and practice, material and intellectual culture, politics, society, economics and interfaith relations.

To this end, the Center supports interdisciplinary research in religious studies, history, the social sciences, law and other fields. Innovative research projects within specific disciplines are also encouraged and supported. The Center directs some of its activities to the general public with the aim to bring about greater understanding of the Islamic faith and civilization. The Center's publications seek to reach a wide audience of scholars as well as the public at large.

The Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lectures

The Nehemia Levtzion Lectures bring noted scholars to the Center to discuss major themes in the field of Islamic studies. The lectures are held in collaboration with leading academic institutions in Israel and are later published by the Levtzion Center. The lectures are the main part of an annual event that includes the announcement of the Center's scholarship recipients. The first annual lecture took place in 2005, shortly after the Center's establishment.

The Ninth Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lecture

March 23, 2014, the Hebrew University

The ninth annual lecture, delivered by Prof. Franklin Lewis of the University of Chicago, took place on March 23, 2014, and was titled: *"Crossing Communal and Sacred Boundaries: The Poetics of Conversion in Classical Persian and Arabic"*.

The annual event opened with greetings from Prof. Reuven Amitai, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, followed by the scholarship award ceremony. Dr. Osnat Levtzion-Korach presented the Levtzion award of excellence for the year 2013/14 to Ms. Yaara Perlman and Mr. Yoge Elbaz. The event was moderated by Prof. Rachel Milstein, Director of the Levtzion Center.

Prof. Lewis' lecture dealt with the literary analysis of conversion stories, based on Persian and Arabic sources ranging from the 10th to the 15th century. These stories include full conversions from one religion into another, changing doctrinal affiliations within a religion, and stories of repentance. The lecture presented a taxonomy or typology of conversion narratives and examined the tropes, topoi, or motifs they

employ, as representations of identity, and how they were gendered, or inflected with ethnic, regional, linguistic, class, communal, creedal, and ritual concerns.

The Tenth Annual Nehemia Levtzion Lecture

June 23, 2015, the Hebrew University

The tenth annual lecture, delivered by Prof. Edhem Eldem of Boğaziçi University, took place on June 23, 2015, and was titled: *"Osman Hamdi Bey and Islam: Art, Science, Orientalism and Blasphemy"*. The lecture was co-sponsored by the Forum for Turkish Studies.



Osman Hamdi Bey, The Tortoise Trainer

The annual event opened with greetings from Prof. Gideon Shelach, Head of the Institute of Asian and African Studies, and Prof. Amnon Cohen, Professor Emeritus at the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, who framed the tenth annual lecture with an introduction to the life and work

of the late Prof. Levtzion. The opening remarks were followed by the scholarship award ceremony. Dr. Osnat Levtzion-Korach presented the Levtzion award of excellence for the year 2014/15 to Mr. Gilad Shor-Kehat. The event was moderated by Prof. Elie Podeh, Chair of the Levtzion Center's Academic Committee.

Prof. Eldem's lecture dealt with the complex



character of the polymath Ottoman intellectual, administrator, archeologist, and painter Osman Hamdi Bey (1842-1910). Osman Hamdi's art, Eldem argued, represented his ambiguous relationship to Islam and "westernization" processes, as well as the ways in which his work and legacy were affected by Western and Orientalist understandings of the Ottoman Empire and the "East" more generally. His art was dotted with timeless and space-less Orientalist objects, which were marketed in European galleries as authentic, but had little to do with the realities of Ottoman practices. Reading his work as sets of artistic borrowings does much more justice to his art than looking for symbols of stagnation and modernity, as his work is often read.

The Annual Hava Lazarus-Yafeh Lectures

Prof. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh (1930-1998) was Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, and a prominent scholar of the intertwined worlds of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A generous donation made by Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh's family has enabled the Levtzion Center to establish a new lectures series in her memory. This memorial lecture series continues the memorial event held in 2013/14, marking fifteen years since Prof. Lazarus-Yafeh's passing (see Bulletin No. 9, pp. 2-4).

The project's steering committee includes Dr. Daniella Talmon-Heller of Ben-Gurion University, Prof. Avner Giladi of Haifa University, and Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher of the Hebrew University. The first lecture and seminars were co-sponsored by the Center for the Study of Christianity, with the support of its Director, Prof. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, and Dr. David Satran of the Department of Comparative Religion.

The First Annual Hava Lazarus-Yafeh Lecture

March 8, 2015, the Hebrew University

The first annual lecture, delivered by Prof. Sidney H. Griffith of the Catholic University of America, took place on March 8, 2015, and was titled: *"Reading and Reporting the Fractious History of Abraham's Extended Family of Monotheists: The Role of Interreligious Polemics"*. The lecturer was introduced by Dr. Jon Whitman of the Hebrew University.

Prof. Griffith's lecture dealt with the polemics between Muslim and Eastern Christian scholars between the 8th and the 15th century. He focused on early Muslim-Christian polemics about Christology, namely the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Reading Christian texts composed in Arabic within the world of Islam, he shows how early Christians integrated the Qur'an (or rather, select passages of the Qur'an) into intra-Christian polemics, and responded to the challenges posed to their belief by the new religion. They adopted not only Arabic as language of debate, but also Islam's framing of the questions to be addressed. Muslim writers, for their part, mentioned Christian writers in their own works merely in passing, with few notable exceptions. At least until the thirteenth century, Christian, Muslim and Jewish intellectuals, he argued, were in active interaction with each other's works.

Following the memorial lecture, Prof. Griffith gave two seminars: the first, *"It only seemed so to them': Docetism and a Contextual Reading of Qur'an 4:157"*, took place on March 10, and the second, *"The Sunna of Our Messengers': Exploring the Qur'an's Revisionist Prophetology"*, took place on March 11.



Workshops and Conferences

Two research workshops co-sponsored by the Levtzion Center over the past two years reached fruition in 2014/15. Furthermore, the Levtzion Center held several large-scale events and activities during Spring 2013/14 and 2014/15, listed here in chronological order. There are strong thematic links with smaller scale events, especially during 2014/15 (for example: the use of Arabic in the academic sphere).

1. Wills in the Ottoman and Mediterranean Regions

This workshop is sponsored by the Levtzion Center and Misgav Yerushalayim - The Center for Research and Study of Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage and is coordinated by Prof. Meir Hatina and Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh. The workshop studies Jewish and Muslim wills in the Ottoman realm and its periphery from the early 17th century until the mid-19th century. The workshop was launched with a one-day conference on March 12, 2012 (see Bulletin No. 7, p. 4), followed by four encounters during 2012/13 (see Bulletin No. 8, p. 4) and Fall 2013/14 (see Bulletin No. 9, p. 2).

During Spring 2013/14 and 2014/15 five additional encounters were held:

The encounter on March 3, 2014, led by Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh, was titled: "*Inventories of Objects found in Jewish houses in Jerusalem, according to the Sijjil*". Documents of the Shari'a Court of Jerusalem, published by Amnon Cohen and his colleagues, contain a plethora of information on the history of the Jewish community, its economic activity, its relations with the authorities, and more. So far, these sources have not been used to examine

material culture. There are two types of Shari'a and Jewish court documents relevant to this subject: deeds of inheritance and appeals. Both contain lists of items found in the house of the deceased, along with comments on their status (new, old, worn out, broken, etc.). They also contain lists of everyday items or real estate. Lacking archaeological findings, these court documents from the 16th century onward are a major source for the study of material culture. They can show what a provincial city house looked like or shed light on social class gaps.

The encounter on March 31, 2014, led by Dr. Michal Held of the Hebrew University, was titled: "*The Female Voice in Jewish Wills from the Ottoman Empire*". Dr. Held's lecture dealt with the same corpus of Ottoman documents studied by Prof. Ben-Naeh, and like Dr. Frenkel (see Bulletin No. 9, p. 2), she focused on women's wills. There were clear gender distinctions in patterns of property ownership and the manner in which it was bequeathed. The voices of women, often using direct speech, and the vernacular Ladino language are also rare and revealing features of these documents. The mentions of charity, *waqf* foundations or synagogues offer a glimpse of women's culture and beliefs.

The encounter on May 19, 2014, led by Dr. Avriel Bar-Levav of the Open University and the Ben-Zvi Institute, was titled: "*Wills and Death: Instructions for Dying Rituals*". Dr. Bar-Levav focused on the moral and ritual aspects of death and dying. The dying men (this applies almost exclusively to *talmidei hakhamim*) sought to shape the event of their death and burial through specific instructions. Interest in the proper manner of dying was connected with the spread of Kabbalah in the Jewish world. These practices were common in Italy and spread to the Ottoman Empire (and, on a smaller scale, to Eastern Europe) from the mid-18th century. The instructions relate to the people who should stand vigil; the texts which should be read at each stage: the moment of death, burial, and the mourning periods (*shiv'a*,



yahrzeit); the body's purification and dressing rituals; rituals of contrition and atonement (symbolic *arba mitot beit-din*); and dealings with demons, or *maziqim*. Additional insights into the deceased's beliefs about this world and the next come from moral acts (such as charity), which are meant to influence the destiny of their soul.

Note: the Levtzion Center held in the past a conference related to these matters, under the title: "*The Attitude to The Deceased and to Cemeteries in Judaism and Islam*" (see Bulletin No. 6, p. 4).

The encounter on June 6, 2014, led by Prof. Bat-Zion Eraqi Klorman of the Open University, was titled: "*Jewish Wills in 19th-Century Yemen: Inheritance, Family and Gender*". Prof. Eraqi Klorman's lecture explored the social and cultural ethos that governed Yemeni society in the 19th century as reflected in testaments, pointing out generational changes, shifts in power relations, and the transfer of wealth. Concepts of the Yemeni Jewish family were based on traditional tenets that were in congruence with Muslim society, and according to which most women did not inherit. The analysis shows that 19th-century political and social changes affected the practical position of women, as many entered the labor force. It suggests that the dissonance between the formal status of women and their actual power lasted as long as Jews lived in Yemen.

The encounter on May 4, 2015, led by Dr. Yuval Haruvi of Tel-Aviv University, was titled: "*The Story of Caïd Nessim Samama's Will: From Tunis to Jerusalem*". Samama (d. 1873) was the leader of the Jewish community and a powerful government official in Tunisia, positions that allowed him to acquire significant wealth. His will was complex and deviated from ordinary *halakhic* practice. In addition to his default heirs there were many charitable causes and other beneficiaries (such as servants etc.), and therefore, the default allocation of wealth

between his heirs was modified. There were additional interested parties, such as the Tunisian government. The will ignited an elaborate web of legal and religious disputes, which divided the Jewish communities of the Mediterranean for many years. These disputes offer unique insights into the social and intellectual world of these communities.

2. Sufism in Modern Times: Islamic Universalism vis-a-vis Islamic Radicalism

This workshop was co-sponsored by the Levtzion Center and the Alliance Center for Iranian Studies at Tel-Aviv University and was coordinated by Dr. Elisheva Machlis, an affiliated scholar at the Levtzion Center. The workshop studied the contemporary revival of mysticism in the Muslim world among both Sunnis and Shi'ites, in the shadow of religious radicalism. It seeks to evaluate to what extent the historical tolerance and cross-sectarian elements of Sufism continue to play a part in the contemporary era. The workshop was launched with an opening event on January 6, 2014 (see Bulletin No. 9, pp. 5-6). Viewing Sufism as a bridging agent, the workshop began with evaluating the interplay between Sunni and Shi'i mysticism. From this initial rationale the workshop has evolved into a broader study on how modern Sufism emerged as a crossroad between conflicting trends including ethnic, tribal and cultural divides, sectarianism, Islam versus the West as well as mysticism and orthodoxy. The workshop is now coming to its closure with a planned international conference that will provide the basis for a future publication.

During Spring 2013/14 and 2014/15 nine encounters were held:

The encounter on February 18, 2014 was led

by Prof. Giuseppe Cecere of the University of Bologna, a Visiting Fellow at the Hebrew University at the time. Prof. Cecere's lecture was titled: "*The Tariqa 'Azamiyya and al-Islam Watan: An Egyptian Sufi Perspective on Sunni-Shi'a Relationships*". In his lecture, Prof. Cecere focused on the thought of Shaykh 'Ala al-Din Abu'l Aza'im, the head of this Tariqa, and his pan-Islamic vision, in which the Islamic Republic of Iran was given a key part in promoting a united Muslim front. Shaykh Abu'l Aza'im justified his pro-Iranian stance as stemming from the common Zionist enemy of all Muslims, while calling for the bridging of religious divides between Sunnis and Shi'is. The significance of his thought as delineated by Prof. Cecere is in its expression against the backdrop of widespread anti-Shi'i sentiments in Egypt. Furthermore, Shaykh Abu'l Aza'im, who was the first Sufi leader to establish a political party, presented himself as an adversary of both the Mubarak regime and of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafi trends.

The encounter on March 3, 2014, led by Prof. Sarah Sviri of the Hebrew University, was titled: "*The Greater and Lesser Jihad: Between Internal Reflection and Activism in the Ancient Sufi Traditions and in the Contemporary Era*". Prof. Sviri spoke about *jihad al-nafs*, the struggle against one's soul, known as the Greater Jihad. She delineated the evolution of this notion beginning with ancient Sufi traditions in the thought of the 9th-century al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi and reaching its height in the 12th century with Ibn al-'Arabi. This inner struggle against one's negative instincts was portrayed as a difficult yet necessary endeavor in order to reach God. Prof. Sviri demonstrated that modern Sufi scholars continued to portray spiritual jihad as the more significant aspect of jihad. Concurrently, the modern era also saw the emergence of Sufi jihadists who emphasized the significance of war against foreign invaders.

The encounter on May 13, 2014, led by Dr. Moshe Terdman of Haifa University, was titled: "*Shi'ism*

and Sufism in East Africa: The Khoja between the Isma'ilis and the Sufis". Dr. Terdman described the development of the Khoja Isma'ili community as it incorporated mystical elements within its principles of belief. He emphasized the flexible elements of the Isma'ili sect, which enabled its survival over the centuries in different areas and diverse cultures of the Muslim world. Dr. Terdman delineated the development of the Khoja community in India, which began as a Hindu caste that incorporated Shi'i motifs. A more clear-cut Shi'i-Isma'ili orientation began emerging among the Khojas from the mid-19th century as a result of internal changes and the arrival of the British. Dr. Terdman emphasized the role of the Aga Khan and his reforms in strengthening the community's Isma'ili identity. Describing the immigration of the Khojas to East Africa and later on to the West, the lecture ended with a discussion of the social, political and economic contexts of these newly-established communities.

The encounter on June 9, 2014, led by Prof. Yitzhak Weismann of Haifa University, was titled: "*Post-Sufi Organizations*". Prof. Weismann spoke about modern challenges to Sufi existence, with the emergence of the nation-state and its threat to Sufi freedom, and modern rationalism and materialism, which questioned Sufi mysticism. The emergence of the state system of education undermined the position of the shaykh and the development of the media threatened the secretive character of Sufism. As a result, Sufism vanished in some places in the Muslim world but also found ways of re-inventing itself. Moreover, Muslim modernists themselves actually adopted Sufi elements. The result, according to Prof. Weisman, was the emergence of post-Sufi organizations. In this category Prof. Weismann included movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Jama'at al-Tabligh, the Gülen movement and the Sufi orders in the West. These organizations were highly critical of Sufism but were also influenced by it. The result



was a dialectic encounter between Muslim modernists and Sufism within these post-Sufi organizations.

The encounter on November 3, 2014, led by Prof. Daphna Ephrat of the Open University, was titled: *“The Sheikh and Sacred Topography in Medieval Syria”*. In her lecture, Prof. Ephrat explored the role of religious spaces in Sufism as a meeting place between Sunnis and Shi’ites. Looking into the role of Sufi lodges or places of retreat known as *zawiya*, *khankah* or *ribat* and identifying their locations, Prof. Ephrat demonstrated how these sacred places succeeded in blurring sectarian distinctions. The *zawiyas* were established in the compound of the Shaykh, thus confirming the centrality of his charismatic leadership and serving as a focal point for spreading his message. However, according to Prof. Ephrat, burial places of Sufi saints became sacred sites that served as magnets for other holy figures. These sites were no longer exclusively associated with a particular figure, as the search for the sacred provided space for both Sunnis and Shi’is.

The encounter on December 1, 2014, led by Dr. Chen Bram of the Truman Institute, was titled: *“Sufism, New Age and Circassian-Abkhazian Trans-Nationalism”*. Dr. Bram spoke about the unique cultural and ethnic encounter between Sufism and the West through the teaching of Murat Yagan, following his move to Canada. In his lecture, Dr. Bram demonstrated how Murat Yagan created a unique merger between Sufism and the New Age, traditional ethnic values and a cosmopolitan outlook, as well as individualism and collectivism, from of Abkhaz-Circassian origins. Murat Yagan transformed his Caucasian heritage into a more universal vision. Another guest speaker at this meeting was Ya’qub ibn Yusuf from the Tariqa Ibrahimiyya, a Sufi order in Israel. Ibn Yusuf elaborated on Murat Yagan’s thought and his mystical reading of God. According to Yagan’s understanding, God is the essence that exists within man. Therefore, man should strive towards perfection and awareness

by awakening the spiritual drive from within.

The encounter on April 13, 2015, led by Dr. Dina Lisnyansky of Bar-Ilan University, was titled: *“Sufis in Central Asia: A Journey from the Caucasus to Cyprus and back to Bashkortostan”*. In her lecture, Dr. Lisnyansky followed the trail of the Naqshbandiyya order in the Ural Mountains from the late 19th century until today. Exploring the movement and the re-settlement of its leadership, Dr. Lisnyansky showed that this wing of the Naqshbandi order branched out to Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Cyprus, even reaching the US. The order achieved a full circle as it re-emerged in Bashkortostan in the late 20th century. Shaykh Hisham Kabbani, who was born in Beirut, immigrated in 1991 to the US, where he established the Naqshbandiyya-Nazimiyya order of America. Shaykh Kabbani is considered among the most influential Muslims in the world. This journey, which began in the late 19th century, contributed to the global reach of the Naqshbandi order and its pluralistic message.



Dr. Avishai Ben Dror on Ethiopian Sufism

The encounter on May 11, 2015, led by Dr. Avishai Ben-Dror of the Open University and the Truman Institute, was titled: *“Ethiopian Sufis’ Localization Processes”*. In his lecture, Dr. Ben-Dror spoke about the significance of Harar in Ethiopia as a cross-religious juncture due to the city’s saintly heritage. Harar with its numerous shrines is considered the most important center of Islam in the Horn of Africa and is also known as the city of saints, *Madinat al-’Awliya’*.

Dr. Ben-Dror elaborated on the particular context of this holy city, which blurred the lines between local African beliefs and monotheistic religions, between Christians and Muslims, and between Muslim orthodoxy and Sufism. As a result, mosques served as Christian social meeting places, while local African saints were embraced by Sufis.

The encounter on June 9, 2015, led by Dr. Michael Barak of the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya and Tel-Aviv University, was titled: “*Sheikh Habib ‘Ali al-Jifri: A Global Sufi Sheikh*”. Dr. Barak elaborated on al-Jifri’s broad network and his conciliatory message. In his lecture, Dr. Barak argued that al-Jifri, who is of Yemeni origins and is still based in Yemen, is a global Sufi Shaykh. Al-Jifri belongs to the Ba-‘Alawiyya order which originated in Yemen and was influenced by the Shadhiliyya and Qadiriyya orders. This is a Sunni order that includes Shi’i-oriented elements such as the visitation of holy tombs (*ziyara*). As Dr. Barak explained, al-Jifri further developed this broad Islamic basis, reaching out to diverse audiences across the Muslim world, including youth, women, political leaders, Islamic movements and scholars. Dr. Barak presented several examples of al-Jifri’s efforts to promote both inter-Muslim and interfaith tolerance through conferences, joint statements, meetings and social media. Seeking to combat the growing radicalism in the region, al-Jifri wishes to strengthen the emotional side of Islam. The believer should reconnect with his heart and suppress his ego, al-Jifri argues, as he expresses a Sufi outlook while presenting himself as a global Muslim leader.

3. A Big Story on a Small Scale: Stamps in the Arab States

On March 12, 2014, the Faculty of Humanities, the Levtzion Center, and the Bloomfield Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences at Mount Scopus held a one-day conference centered on

Arab stamps. The conference was conceived and organized by Ms. Irina Bochevar-Tzigelman, the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies’ Administrator and an avid stamp collector. The event was co-sponsored by the Israel Philatelic Federation and included an exhibition of Arab stamps both from the Federation’s and Ms. Bochevar-Tzigelman’s collections, displayed at the entrance hall to the Mt. Scopus Library.

The first session was opened by the moderator, Prof. Meir Hatina, and was followed by a lecture by Prof. Ami Ayalon from Tel-Aviv University on “*Stamps and History in the Middle East*”. Prof. Hatina remarked that stamps are an important means for understanding the development of state institutions and the formation of state ideologies. Prof. Ayalon’s lecture surveyed the history of stamp use in the Arab world since the late Ottoman period. At first, stamps were regarded simply as receipts for various payments, but gradually, they have become a means of expression for the new, independent states. As a socializing agent, similar to coins, banknotes, and monuments, stamps reflect the national ethos and the state agenda.



A Big Story in Small Scale

The second session was moderated by Prof. Eyal Ginio of the Hebrew University and dealt with regional case studies: Mr. Eyal David of the Hebrew University lectured on “*Libya between King Idris and Qadhafi: Between a Pro-Western and a Pan-Arab Orientation*”; Dr. Omri Nir of the Hebrew University lectured on “*The Lebanese Case: Stamps as an Agent of Unity in a Divided State*”; Dr. Noga Efrati of the Hebrew



University and the Truman Institute lectured on “*National and Ethno-Sectorial Symbols in Post-Saddam Iraqi Stamps*”; and Dr. Mira Tzoreff of Tel-Aviv University lectured on “*Stamps and Graffiti as Memorial Sites: The Struggle for Shaping Revolutionary Memory in Egypt*”.

Note: a second conference, similar in setting, was held by the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies and the Mt. Scopus Library on March 9, 2015 (without the participation of the Center) under the title: “*A Big Story on a Small Scale: Palestinian History Seen Through Stamps*”. That conference was organized by Prof. Meir Hatina and Prof. Hillel Cohen.

4. Jews and Arabs in the Middle East: Social and Cultural History

For many years, the history of Jews in Arab lands has been studied mainly in Jewish Studies Departments, with little dialogue or collaboration with Middle Eastern Studies Departments. Such departmental boundaries are beginning to dissolve in recent years, and a conference held on November 20, 2014, organized by the Levtzion Center in collaboration with the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East and the Bernard Cherrick Center for the Study of Zionism, the Yishuv and the State of Israel, was part of this growing interest, as it brought together scholars of Middle Eastern Studies and scholars of Jewish history, from four Israeli universities.

The conference opened with greetings from Prof. Ron Shaham, Chair of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher, Director of the Ben-Zvi Institute, and Dr. Liat Kozma, Director of the Levtzion Center. The speakers addressed the importance of the conference and deplored the absence of Arab participants, despite the organizers’ best efforts to enlist them.

The first session, “*A Common Local Space*”, was moderated by Dr. Dimitry Shumsky, Director of the Cherrick Center. Dr. Tami Razi of Sapir College lectured on “*The Duality Thesis and the Mixed City: Border Neighborhoods and Jewish-Arab Space in Mandatory Palestine*”; Mr. Dotan Halevy of Tel-Aviv University lectured on “*Relations between Jews and Arabs in Eretz-Israel/Palestine in the Shadow of the First World War*”; and Dr. Orna Cohen of the Truman Institute lectured on “*Zionist Parties and Arab Citizens in Israel: Between Exclusion and Inclusion*”.

The second session, “*Crossing Borders*”, was moderated by Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher. Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh lectured on “*The Change of Garments in Baghdad: Clothing as a Mark of Identity and Attitude toward Modernity*”; Dr. Geula Elimelekh of Bar-Ilan University lectured on “*Exile in the Works of a Muslim Writer and a Jewish Writer: ‘Abd al-Rahman Munif and Samir Naqqash*”; and Prof. Shmuel Moreh of the Hebrew University lectured on “*Conversion to Islam among Jews in Iraq*”.

The third session, “*Intersecting Glances*”, was moderated by Dr. Miriam Goldstein of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature. Dr. Ariel Sheerit of the Open University and Ben-Gurion University lectured on “*The Other in the Eyes of Others: Characters of Israeli Jews in Contemporary Palestinian Literature*”; Mr. Eli Osheroff of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies lectured on “*Our Father Abraham, Sayyiduna al-Khalil: The Character of Abraham in Early Palestinian Historiography*”; Mr. Ido Harari of Ben-Gurion University lectured on “*Ashkenazi Arabs: Muhammad Asad, Jacob Israëli de Haan, and the Old Yishuv in Jerusalem*”; and Prof. Kimmy Caplan of Bar-Ilan University lectured on “*Why did I go beyond the Jordan? - Fanatic Haredim and Arabs: Reality and its Images*”.

The fourth session, “*Jewish Participation in the Nahda*”, was moderated by Dr. Liat Kozma. All three speakers were from Bar-Ilan University: Prof. Yaron Harel lectured on “*The Identity Circle of*

Syrian Jewry Between Ottomanism and the French Mandate"; Mr. Yaron Ran lectured on *"Eliyahu Sasson: A Jewish Syrian Zionist Intellectual"*; and Dr. Guy Bracha lectured on *"Al- Ālam al- ʿ Isrāʿīlī: The Newspaper Born Within the Nahda"*.

The conference concluded with a screening of director Ibtisam Mara'ana-Menuhin's film, *"Write down, I am an Arab"*, followed by a discussion between the director and the audience, moderated by Dr. Ariel Sheetrit. The film tells the turbulent life story of the Palestinian national poet, Mahmud Darwish, who was also an Israeli citizen.

Articles stemming from this conference will be submitted, as a special issue, to *Zmanim*, a history journal (in Hebrew).

5. Palestinian Women and Personal Status in Israel: A Twenty Year Struggle

On March 9, 2015, a one-day conference co-organized by the Levtzion Center and the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status (a Nazareth-based feminist coalition of NGOs) took place in the Hebrew University's Senate Hall. This conference embodied collaboration and dialogue between academia and the field, and was conducted mostly in Arabic with simultaneous translation to Hebrew and English - the first conference of its kind in the Hebrew University's history. It was attended by more than a hundred university students and members of Palestinian-Israeli NGOs, and was covered by the Hebrew and Arabic language press.

The conference was part of a wider project run by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Dirasat: the Arab Center for Law and Policy, and Sikkuy: The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality, and supported by the EU as part of the Partnership for Peace Program: *"Arabic in the Israeli Academic Sphere"*. This conference used the Levtzion Center's thematic focus on Islam – history, society and culture – to create an Arabic-language academic environment at the Hebrew University. Its success convinced us that Arabic can be promoted as an academic language at the Hebrew University, and that such a project is both possible and important.

The conference opened with greetings from one of the project's coordinators, Ms. Maisalon Dallashi of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and Tel-Aviv University; Dr. Liat Kozma, Director of the Levtzion Center; Ms. Heba Yazbak of the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status; Prof. Ron Shaham, Chair of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies; and Mr. Jabir 'Asaqla, Co-Executive Director of the Sikkuy Association.

The first session, *"Personal Status and Women's Rights: Law, Gender, and Post-Colonial Thought"*, was moderated by Dr. Roy Vilozny of the Van Leer Institute. Dr. Ido Shahar of Haifa University lectured on *"Muslim Law as Native Law: The Shari'a Courts in Israel from a Post-Colonial Perspective"*; Mr. Omer Aloni of Tel-Aviv University lectured on *"Reading Sa'id in the Realm of Law: Bigamy and Violations of Marriage Age in Oriental Societies, as seen by Israeli Law in the 1950s"*; Attorney Rawia Abu Rabi'a of the Hebrew University and the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status



Attorney Nareen Alimi-Kabha speaking at the second panel



lectured on *“Legally Excluded: Bigamy and Arab Bedouin Women in Israel”*; and Ms. Reham Abu al-Asal, a feminist scholar and social worker, lectured on *“Polygamy in Israeli Arab Society: Between Discourse and Practice”* (see this session’s Q&A).

The second session, *“A Religious Court, a Civil Court: Where are Women’s Rights?”*, was moderated by Ms. Rawia Loucia of Tufula Center and the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status. Prof. Haim Sandberg of the College of Management Academic Studies and Dr. Haya Sandberg of the Hebrew University lectured on *“The Civil Courts’ attitude toward the Shari’a Courts’ approach to women’s guardianship over their children”*, Attorney Nasreen A’limi-Kabha of Tel-Aviv University and the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status lectured on *“Women’s waiving of their inheritance rights”*; Attorney Rawan Agbaria of Kayan – Feminist Organization lectured on *“Women’s Status in Church Courts”*; and Attorney Shirin Batshon, a family lawyer and feminist activist, lectured on *“Violations of Palestinian Women’s Rights in Religious Courts: Is Civil Marriage the Answer?”* (see this session’s Q&A).

The third session, *“A Religious Court, a Civil Court: Between Female Representation and Egalitarian Practice”*, was moderated by Ms. Rafa ‘Anabtawi of the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status and Director of Kayan – Feminist Organization. Justice Jamela Jabareen-Khalifa of the Nazareth Magistrate’s Court lectured on *“Personal Status issues at the Family Court”*; Attorney Bana Shugari of the Hebrew University and the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status lectured on *“Women Qadis in Shari’a Courts from the Perspective of Islamic Shari’a, Israeli Law, and International Law”*; and Dr. Laila Abed Rabho of the Truman Institute lectured on *“The Historic Appointment of Women Qadis to West Bank Shari’a Courts: Public Discourse and Personal Experience”* (see this session’s Q&A).

The fourth session, *“The Palestinian Feminist Discourse in Israel: The Chronicle of a Struggle”*, was moderated by Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher of the Hebrew University. Dr. Liat Kozma, Director of the Levtzion Center, lectured on *“Struggles to Change the Status of Women in the Middle East: The Case of Morocco”*; Ms. Aida Touma-Suleiman of the Working Group on Equality in Personal Status and founding Director of the Women Against Violence NGO, lectured on *“Amending the Law at the Family Court: A Feminist Struggle for a New Reality”*; and Dr. Rula Hardal of the Leibniz Universität Hannover lectured on *“The Issues of Personal Status in Palestinian Feminist Work: Discourse, Challenges, and Achievements”* (see this session’s Q&A).



Shada Diab's artwork

The conference concluded with remarks by Dr. Liat Kozma and Ms. Heba Yazbak. The conference was accompanied by an exhibition of two young Israeli-Palestinian photographers, Ms. Shada Diab and Ms. Habka Ali Basmat, held at the entrance hall to the Mt. Scopus Library. On March 11, 2015, Dr. Liat Kozma hosted a gallery talk with the two artists.

6. History through Literary Eyes

On May 3, 2015, the Hebrew University (represented by the Levtzion Center and the Departments of Arabic Language and Literature and Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies), together with Beit Berl Academic College (represented by the Arab Academic Institute of Education and the Center for the Study of Language, Society and Arabic Culture), held a one-day bilingual Arabic-Hebrew conference (simultaneous translation was offered) at Beit Berl under the title: “*History through Literary Eyes*”. This conference continues the cooperation between the two institutions, which began the previous year (see Bulletin No. 9, p. 6). We plan to continue and expand this joint venture next year, with another conference to be held at the Hebrew University.

The conference opened with greetings from Prof. Tamar Ariav, President of Beit Berl College, and an introductory lecture by Dr. ‘Ali Watad, Head of the Arab Academic Institute, on “*The Mutual Influences between Two Semitic Languages: Arabic and Hebrew*”.

The first session, “*The Historical Aspects of Biographies*”, was moderated by Dr. Ghalaeb ‘Anabseh of Beit Berl College. Dr. Samir Hajj of Beit Berl College lectured on “*The Presence of Jerusalem in Palestinian Autobiographical Literature*”; Dr. Ariel Sheetrit of the Open University and Ben-Gurion University lectured on “*Reviving Childhood Landscapes in Arab Autobiographies*”.

The second session, “*Literature and War*”, was moderated by Prof. Elie Podeh of the Hebrew University. Dr. Eman Younis of Beit Berl College lectured on “*Sights of the Arab Spring in Modern Arab Literature*”; Mr. Salman Natour, a writer and a journalist, lectured on “*What Should We Write about Wars: The Memory of Death and the Memory of Life*”; and Dr. Tamar Hess of the Hebrew University lectured on “*On Responsibility and Combat Stress: Retrospective Descriptions of Killing Civilians in Hebrew Writing about 1948*”.

The third session, “*Literature and Identity*”, was moderated by Dr. Johnny Mansour of Beit Berl College. Dr. Mustafa Badran of Beit Berl College lectured on “*National Identity in Palestinian Historiography*”; Dr. Batya Shimoni of Ben-Gurion University lectured on “*Ana Min al-Yahud’: The Return to Arab Identity in the Work of New Generation Mizrahi Authors*”; and Prof. Eyal Ginio of the Hebrew University lectured on “*Defeat in the Balkan Wars and Promoting the National Discourse in the Ottoman State*”. The conference concluded with remarks by Dr. Liat Kozma.

The contributions will constitute the basis for a bilingual edited volume, to be published by Beit Berl College.



Left to right: Author Salman Natour, Dr. Tamar Hess, Dr. Eman Younis and Prof. Elie Podeh

7. From the Ottoman Empire to Nation States: Cultural, Political and Social Transformations

On June 9, 2015, the Levtzion Center, together with the Forum for Turkish Studies, held a one-day workshop under the title: “*From the Ottoman Empire to Nation States: Cultural, Political and Social Transformations*”. The purpose of this workshop was to bring together several young scholars of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, and to explore different aspects of



the shift from the Ottoman Empire to the new nation states created after its breakup. The workshop opened with introductory remarks by Prof. Amnon Cohen of the Hebrew University and comprised two sessions.

The first session, “*Cultural and Political Transformations*”, was moderated by Prof. Moshe Sluhovsky, Chair of the School of History. Dr. Avner Wishnitzer of Tel-Aviv University lectured on “*Out of the Limelight: Nightlife away from the Illuminated Boulevards of Late Ottoman Istanbul*”; Mr. Guy Rak of the Scholion Center lectured on “*Architecture between Empire and Republic*”; Dr. Erdal Kaynar of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute lectured on “*Constitutionalism and the Ideal of Popular Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire*”.

The second session, “*War, Change and Memory*”, was moderated by Prof. Ron Shaham, Chair of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Dr. Stefan Ihrig of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute lectured on “*German Jihadi Dreams: Islam and the Ottoman Empire in German Wartime Propaganda*”; Dr. Ellinor Morack of the Martin Buber Society of Fellows lectured on “*Fear and Loathing in Gavur Izmir: Early Republican memories of the Greek occupation*”; and Prof. Eyal Ginio of the Hebrew University and Head of the Forum for Turkish Studies lectured on “*Witnessing the Shift from Empire to Nation State: The Memoirs of Yitzhak Florentin on Kavala during the Balkan Wars*”.

Book Events

The Levtzion Center held eight book events during Spring 2013/14 and the 2014/15 academic year, listed here in chronological order. Most of these events were held in collaboration with the Mt. Scopus Library, and special thanks are due to Ms. Osnat Levy, Director of Readers' Services, and Ms. Ala Kulik, Director of the Media Department, for all their support and assistance.

1. In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands

On April 2, 2014, the Hebrew University, Misgav Yerushalayim, the Levtzion Center, and the Mt. Scopus Library held a discussion panel on Martin Gilbert's book, “*In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands*”. The event was attended by Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson, President of the Hebrew University, and included a panel moderated by Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher. Dr. Oded Zinger of Princeton University lectured on “*Life in the Shadow of the Crescent*”; Prof. Yaron Ben-Naeh lectured on “*The Ottoman World as a Case Study*”; Dr. Haim Saadon of the Open University and Ben-Zvi Institute lectured on “*Representations of the Modern Era in Ishmael's House*”; and Ms. Levana Zamir, President of the International Association of Jews from Egypt and the book's translator, talked about “*Why I became attached to the book*”.

2. Qisas al-Anbiya by Muhammad b. 'Abdillah al-Kisa'i: a Hebrew translation

On May 14, 2014, the Hebrew University, the Faculty of Humanities, the Levtzion Center, and the Mt. Scopus Library held an event launching the Hebrew translation of Muhammad b. 'Abdallah al-Kisa'i's “*Qisas al-Anbiya*” (“*Stories of the Prophets*”, 11th century) by Dr. Aviva Schussman of the Hebrew University. The event was attended by Prof. Reuven Amitai, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and included a discussion panel moderated by Prof. Rachel Milstein, Director of the Levtzion Center. The panel's participants were Dr. Yair Schiffman of the School of Education and Dr. Joseph Witztum of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature. The panel concluded with a response from Dr. Aviva Schussman.

Qisas al-Anbiya was a genre in its own right. It comprised Islamized versions of stories about pre-Islamic - mainly Jewish and Christian - prophets and religious figures. The chief purpose of the stories was for the early prophets to validate Muhammad's prophetic mission, as the continuation and final version of their own ones. The panelists examined the genre from several perspectives: the historical and philological transformations of stories between religious traditions; the ways pre-Islamic prophets were portrayed in Islamic art; and finally, the dilemmas that arise in translating these stories into Hebrew.

Note: the Levtzion Center attributes great importance to the subject of translation in general and translation from Arabic into Hebrew in particular (see Bulletin No. 8, pp. 4-5 for the one-day conference *New Insights into Translation: Mediterranean Texts in Hebrew*, held in 2012; also, see this Bulletin's *Guest Lectures and Special Events*, for the event in honor of translator Emmanuel Koplewitz).

3. TARPAT/1929: Year Zero of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

On November 18, 2014, the Cherrick Center and the Levtzion Center held a discussion on Prof. Hillel Cohen's book "*TARPAT/1929: Year Zero of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*". The discussion panel was moderated by Dr. Dimitry Shumsky, Director of the Cherrick Center, and its participants were Prof. Israel Bartal of the Hebrew University, Prof. Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and Dr. Raif Zreik of the Carmel Academic Center and Tel-Aviv University. The panel concluded with a response from Prof. Cohen. Hillel Cohen's book is a courageous attempt to understand the Jewish-Arab conflict from various perspectives – sometimes competing, something complementary, sometimes

contradictory. The talks and discussions that followed reflected the complexity of historical memory and historical truth and the fluidity of identity in Mandatory Palestine, as well as present-day conflict.

4. A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880-1940



Prof. Ronit Ricci

On December 8, 2014, the Hebrew University, the Faculty of Humanities, the Levtzion Center, and the Mt. Scopus Library held an event launching the book "*A Global Middle East: Mobility, Materiality and Culture in the Modern Age, 1880-1940*", edited by Cyrus Schayegh, Avner Wishnitzer and Liat Kozma. The discussion panel was moderated by Prof. Michal Biran of the Institute of Asian and African Studies, and its participants were Dr. On Barak of Tel-Aviv University, Prof. Ronit Ricci of the Hebrew University, and Dr. Relli Shechter of Ben-Gurion University. The panel concluded with a response from Dr. Avner Wishnitzer of Tel-Aviv University. The different talks examined the utility of globalization as a conceptual tool for understanding the mobility of people, objects and ideas in the modern Islamic world.

5. Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Piety, Power, and Politics

On December 15, 2014, the Hebrew University, the Faculty of Humanities, the Levtzion Center, and the Mt. Scopus Library held an discussion on Prof. Meir Hatina's book "*Martyrdom in Modern Islam: Piety, Power, and Politics*". The discussion



panel was moderated by Prof. Etan Kohlberg of the Hebrew University. Prof. Emmanuel Sivan of the Hebrew University talked about the internal Islamic debate and discourse concerning the legitimacy of martyrdom; Dr. Eli Alshech of the Hebrew University and an affiliated scholar at the Levtzion Center talked about the different manifestation of the doctrine of *al-wala' wa-'l-bara'* ("loyalty and disavowal") among Salafi movements; Prof. Yitzhak Weismann of Haifa University talked about the book's strengths and the main insights he drew from it. The panel concluded with a response from Prof. Hatina.

6. Religious Knowledge, Authority, and Charisma: Islamic and Jewish Perspectives

On January 5, 2015, the Levtzion Center and the Department of History, Philosophy, and Jewish Studies at the Open University held a discussion on Prof. Meir Hatina and Prof. Daphna Ephrat's edited volume, *"Religious Knowledge, Authority, and Charisma Islamic and Jewish Perspectives"*. This volume is the result of an international workshop titled "Religious Knowledge, Authority, and Charisma in Islam", convened on 15-17 December 2009, and organized by Meir Hatina (The Hebrew University) and Daphna Ephrat (The Open University) (see Bulletin No. 5, p. 8). The event opened with remarks from Prof. Ora Limor of the Open University and included a discussion panel moderated by Prof. Ron Shaham of the Hebrew University. Prof. Avriel Bar-Levav of the Open University lectured on *"Text, Book, and Charisma"*; Dr. Gadi Sagiv of the Open University lectured on *"The Charisma of Hassidic Tzadiqim"*; and Prof. Meir Hatina lectured on *"The Modern Manifestations of Charisma in Islam"*. The panel concluded with a response from Prof. Ephrat.

The importance of this volume lies in breaking

down several disciplinary and institutional barriers: first, the barrier between scholars of Islam and Judaism; second, the barrier between scholars in different disciplines in the humanities and social sciences; third, the barrier between scholars of different periods and geographical areas; and fourth, the barrier between scholars coming from different academic institutions.

7. The Journey to the Arab Spring: The Ideological Roots of the Middle East Upheaval in Arab Liberal Thought



Prof. Meir Hatina

On May 14, 2014, the Hebrew University, the Faculty of Humanities, the Levtzion Center, and the Mt. Scopus Library held a discussion of Dr. David Govrin's book, *"The Journey to the Arab Spring: The Ideological Roots of the Middle East Upheaval in Arab Liberal Thought"*. The book demonstrated how liberal intellectuals served as a catalyst for the Arab spring, gradually changing the political discourse. Several of them even took an active part in shaping recent events in the Arab states.

The discussion panel was moderated by Prof. Elie Podeh of the Hebrew University. Prof. Meir Hatina lectured on *"Approaches in studying Arab Liberalism"*; Dr. Sharon Maftsir of Ben-Gurion University and the Truman Institute lectured on *"Women in the Public Sphere: Gender Discourse in the Post-Colonial Egyptian Press"*; and Dr. Noga Efrati of the Open University and the Truman Institute lectured on *"Democracy in Iraq under the American Occupation, 2003-2011"*. The panel concluded with a response from Dr. David Govrin.

Note: the Levtzion Center has addressed the Arab Liberal discourse in the past and views it as an important component of contemporary Arab and Muslim thought (see Bulletin 8, p. 7; Bulletin 6, p. 8; Bulletin 4, p. 9; Bulletin 3, p. 3).

8. Two: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Hebrew and Arabic Works

On April 14, 2015, the Levtzion Center, together with the Departments of Hebrew Literature and Arabic Language and Literature, held a discussion on the book *“Two: A Bilingual Anthology of Contemporary Hebrew and Arabic Works”*. The book is a bilingual Arabic-Hebrew anthology, and it owes its publication to [a project](#) whose purpose is to connect Hebrew and Arabic literary work. The event attracted a wide audience and was conducted in both languages. Although the discussion was more literary than academic, an introductory lecture by Dr. Ariel Sheetrit of Ben-Gurion University



Left to right: Sheika Hlewa, Enak Mawasee, Prof. Galit Hazan-Rokem, Rajaa Natour and Almog Behar.

and the Open University served to ground the participants in current research on links between Arabic and Hebrew literature.

The discussion panel was moderated by Prof. Galit Hasan-Rokem of the Department of Hebrew Literature, and its members were

Almog Behar, Sheikh Hlewa, Enak Mawasee, Guy Ron-Gilboa, and Rajaa Natour. Each read a poem or a short story in both languages and shared with the audience her or his thoughts about it, or his or her experiences during the anthology’s production. The general discussion was lively, open, and even humorous. We hope that the use of both languages made both Arab and Jewish participants feel more at home, and that the interdisciplinary nature of the discussion brought new insights.

Guest Lectures and Special Events

The Levtzion Center hosted and co-sponsored several special activities and guest lectures by visiting scholars:

1. Special meetings with student delegations from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

The Levtzion Center has hosted student delegations from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for the past three years, with the support of the Institute of Asian and African Studies and the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. The Dutch students come to gain first-hand knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and visit academic institutions in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The Levtzion Center at the Hebrew University served as the Israeli tier: it provided an academic program, along with a tour of Mt. Scopus and informal meetings with Israeli students.

Following the successful first meeting on March 3, 2013 (see Bulletin No. 8, p. 7), two additional meetings were held:



The second meeting took place on March 3, 2014. The academic program was titled: *“Students, Identity, and Politics in the Middle East”*. The delegation was greeted by Prof. Reuven Amitai, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, and Prof. Yuri Pines, Head of the Institute of Asian and African Studies and a former student activist himself. Prof. Haggai Erlich of Tel-Aviv University lectured on *“Youth and Higher Education in the Middle East: Between Despair and Hope”*, and Dr. Ido Zerkovitz of Haifa University lectured on *“Revolutionary Education: the Palestinian Universities’ Role in Building National Identity”*. The session was moderated by Prof. Meir Hatina.

The third meeting took place on March 12, 2015. The academic program was titled: *“Victims of History: Does Meeting the Suffering of the Other Influence Reconciliation?”*. Dr. Samir Ben-Layashi of the European Research Council (ERC) Project *Judging Histories: Experience, Judgement, and Representation of World War II in an Age of Globalization* lectured on *“The Social Response of Jews and Muslims to Vichy and Nazi Occupation in North Africa during WWII”*; Prof. Hillel Cohen of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies lectured on *“Zionist and Palestinian narratives of the conflict: can they meet?”*; and Dr. Tamar Hess of the Department of Hebrew Literature delivered a lecture titled: *“They will say we brought the Nakba: Agency and Responsibility in Israeli literature about 1948”*. The session was moderated by Dr. Liat Kozma.

2. Turkey’s Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-Israel Relations

On May 14, 2014, the Levtzion Center, together with Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies, the European Forum at the Hebrew University, and the Forum for Turkish Studies at the Institute of Asian and African Studies, hosted a public lecture by His

Excellency Yaşar Yakış, former Foreign Minister of Turkey and President of STRATIM - The Center for Strategic Communication, on the subject of *“Turkey’s Foreign Policy and the Future of Turkey-Israel Relations”*.

Former minister Yakış visited Israel on 20-21 May 2014, at the invitation of Mitvim - The Israeli Institute for Regional Foreign Policies. The visit was carried out in light of progress made towards Israel-Turkey reconciliation. It was aimed at preparing for the day after an agreement is signed between the two countries. The visit included a series of events and meetings with prominent politicians and diplomats, that focused on bi-lateral issues, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and regional affairs.

3. Natural Disasters and Religious Identity in the 17th- and 18th-century Ottoman Empire

On June 2, 2014, the Levtzion Center and the Forum for Turkish Studies hosted a guest lecture by Dr. Yaron Ayalon of Ball State University, titled: *“Natural Disasters and Religious Identity in the 17th- and 18th-century Ottoman Empire”*. The lecture was based on Dr. Ayalon’s new book, *Natural Disasters in the Ottoman Empire: Plague, Famine, and Other Misfortunes*, published in November 2014 by Cambridge University Press. The book explores the history of natural disasters in the Ottoman Empire and the responses to them on the state, communal, and individual levels. It sheds new light on flight and behavioral patterns in response to impending disasters by combining historical evidence with studies in social psychology and sociology. Employing an approach that mixes environmental and social history with the psychology of disasters, it asserts that the handling of such disasters was crucial to both the rise and the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

The lecture was followed by a response from Prof. Eyal Ginio, moderated by Prof. Meir Hatina. The discussion offered new points of view and issues, which could be addressed in future publications.

4. Emmanuel Koplewitz: Seventy Years of Translation and Service



Emmanuel Koplewitz

On May 13, 2015, the Levtzion Center, together with the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, held a special public event celebrating the seventy-year long career of translator and civil servant Mr. Emmanuel Koplewitz. The event was conceived by Mr. Koplewitz's family – his children Benjamin Koplewitz, Irit Yanir and Noga Koplewitz – and Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher, Emmanuel Koplewitz's friend and colleague.

The list of works translated by Koplewitz into Hebrew includes original texts, such as Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*, as well as a variety of academic publications, such as Hugh N. Kennedy's *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates, 600–1050*. Koplewitz's wide field of interests includes the classical period of Islam as well as the contemporary period. For example, he has compiled, translated and edited a selection of papers by Egyptian intellectual Taha Hussein (1889-1973). His latest translation is Rudi Paret's *Mohammed und der Koran*, published this year by Carmel Publishing House.

The event opened by Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher and Dr. Benjamin Koplewitz, who shared with the audience the course of Emmanuel Koplewitz's life and career, and reflected on their special relationships with him. The academic program

included a lecture by Dr. Nurit Tsafrir of Tel-Aviv University on the subject of "*The Persian Muslims' Contribution to the Shari'a*", which was inspired by a chapter from Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*. Following the lecture, Mr. Koplewitz himself talked about his translation career, discussing professional challenges and dilemmas, as well as his deep motivations for acquainting Israeli readers with Arab and Islamic culture. The event was accompanied by musical pieces played by the Kfar Saba Brass Orchestra and concluded with remarks by Dr. Benjamin Koplewitz.

Outreach

As a public institution, the Hebrew University has the responsibility to share and disseminate knowledge beyond its own campus. The Levtzion Center for Islamic Studies has a particular duty in this regard, given the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian struggle and the conflict between Israel and most of its neighbors, and given the virtual ignorance of most of the Israeli public about Arab and Islamic societies, history and culture. The purpose of the outreach program, initiated during the academic year 2014/15, is to popularize academic knowledge on Arabic and Islam using venues already available to the public.

1. Middle Eastern Cinema

Following the encounter with director Ibtisam Mara'ana-Menuhin and the screening of her film, "*Write down, I am an Arab*", in Fall 2014/15, the Levtzion Center,



Dr. Samir Ben Layashi

together with Dr. Sharon Maftsir of Ben-Gurion University and the Truman Institute, planned a series of similar events, seeking to involve

larger audiences, and to expose them to recent cultural productions in neighboring countries. A similar series held in 2008 (see Bulletin No. 4, p. 7) served as additional inspiration. Five films were screened, accompanied by guest lectures, which provided the historical and cultural background.

On March 2, 2015, the Levtzion Center hosted a screening of Rachid Bouchareb's film, *Hors-la-loi / Outside the Law* (France, Algeria, Tunisia, Belgium, 2010), a drama centering on the Algerian War of Independence. The event opened with a lecture by Dr. Samir Ben-Layashi of the European Research Council (ERC) Project *JudgingHistories*.

On April 13, 2015, the Levtzion Center hosted a screening of Nuri Bilge Ceylan's film, *Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da / Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2011), a drama revolving around a group of men setting out in search of a dead body in the Anatolian steppes. The event opened with a lecture by Dr. Omri Paz of Haifa University.

On April 27, 2015, the Levtzion Center hosted a screening of Eitan Wetzler's film, *Winding Roads / בדרכים עקלקלות* (Israel, 2008), a documentary covering a year in the life of an 18-year-old Bedouin girl, Huda Abu Ubayd, and her struggle for rights as a Muslim Israeli woman. The event opened with a lecture by Dr. Sarab Abu-Rabia-Queder of Ben-Gurion University, titled: "*The Challenges of Higher Education in Arab Society in the Negev: Gender, Identity, and Social Change*". The discussion involved the audience in the current challenges and struggles of the Israeli Bedouin community in the Negev.

On April 29, 2015, the Levtzion Center, together with the Ben-Zvi Institute, hosted a screening of Kamal Hachkar's film, *Tinghir-Jérusalem: les échos du Mellah* (France, Morocco, 2013), which documents the director's search for the vanished community of Moroccan Jews and deals with Moroccan Jews' and Moroccan Muslims' memories of living together and sharing a

common identity. The screening was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Prof. Meir M. Bar-Asher, titled: "*Moroccan Identities*". Dr. Aviad Moreno of Tel-Aviv University and Ben-Gurion University lectured on "*Shifting Collective Memory: From Jewish Ethnicity in Morocco to Moroccan Ethnicity in Israel*". Mr. David Guedj of Tel-Aviv University lectured on "*Forging an Identity before Immigrating to Israel: The Arab History of Morocco's Jews*".

On June 2, 2015, the Levtzion Center, together with the Department of Arabic Language and



Eyal Sagi Bizawe and Sara Tsifroni at their film screening

Literature and the Cherrick Center, hosted a screening of Sarah Zifroni's and Eyal Sagi Bizawi's film, *Arab Movie / סרט ערבית / فيلم عربي* (Israel, 2015), which was followed by a discussion of the directors with the audience. The film documents the directors' research into a unique and often paradoxical phenomenon. Many Israelis fondly remember the days when the television had just one channel and broadcasted an Arab movie every Friday. They never asked themselves how these films reached the official channel while the borders were closed, and why "enemy" films were even broadcasted at all. The Arab movie was the campfire of Israeli society. Everyone watched them, but not everyone watched them in the same way. Some did not watch them at all. They watched, but they did not necessarily see the stars, music, twisted plotlines and the short moment when Israelis shared the same cultural

protagonists as the other nations of the Middle East. When the wealth and power of Egyptian cinema is revealed, disturbing questions are raised.

2. Gallery Talks at the L. A. Mayer Institute for Islamic Art

The Islamic Art Museum, in the heart of Jerusalem, has an impressive collection of Islamic artistic, cultural and archeological



Left to Right: Mr. Tom Fogel, Dr. Vered Madar and Mr. Avishai Yarkoni of the L.A. Mayer Museum for Islamic Art

artifacts and the Hebrew University's Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies faculty specializes in the disciplines and periods the Museum offers, but so far, collaboration between the institutions has been sporadic. During May and June 2015 the Levtzion Center and the Islamic Art Museum ran a pilot series of three thematic gallery talks, co-organized academically with Dr. Tawfiq Da'adle of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, and organizationally with Mr. Avishai Yarkoni, the museum's marketing director. The talks were held on Friday mornings, in one of the

museum's galleries, with two scholars working on similar themes, but coming from different disciplines.

The first talk, "*Women and Jewelry from Yemen: Representation and Exhibition*", was led by two folklore scholars, Dr. Vered Madar and Mr. Tom Fogel. Mr. Fogel discussed Yemeni Jewish silversmiths and their craftsmanship, and the changes that both experienced and underwent as the Jewish community left Yemen and joined the Yishuv and Israeli society. Dr. Madar examined Yemenite Jewish songs as a means for women to express their anxieties and pain.

The second talk, "*By the Sword: Weapons and Combat Spaces in the Islamic World*", was led by two experts on medieval military history, archaeologist Dr. Rafael Lewis and graduate student Mr. Nissim Sofer. Dr. Lewis presented the interdisciplinary methods he employs in investigating historic battlefields, which allow him to gain unique insights on the battles fought there. Mr. Sofer lectured on the military training, tactics and weapons used by the Mamluk army and their representation in artwork and literature.

The third talk, "*Horses, Stars, and Travelers in the Medieval Islamic World*", was led by two experts on medieval Islamic science, Dr. Keren Abbou Hershkovits and Dr. Housni Alkhateeb Shehada. Dr. Hershkovitz reviewed the many branches of Islamic medieval science, which preserved and greatly developed the knowledge of the Greco-Roman world. Dr. Shehada focused on medieval Islamic attitudes toward animals, their portrayal in art, and Islamic veterinary medicine.

This collaboration will resume in the 2015/16 academic year.



Co-sponsored Events

The Levtzion Center has co-sponsored and supported several additional activities:

1. North Africa and its Jewish Communities: a symposium in memory of Prof. Pessah Shinar (1914-2013)

On March 18, 2014, the Hebrew University and the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East held an event in memory of Prof. Pessah Shinar, who passed away about a year earlier. The event included three panel discussions: *“Islam in North Africa”*, *“Between Jews and Muslims in North Africa”*, and *“Pessah Shinar’s Contribution to the Study of North Africa and its Jews”*. Shinar (1914-2013) was Professor Emeritus of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at the Hebrew University. For more than forty years, he studied Islam in the Maghrib, or North Africa. He also served at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is known for compiling the popular Ayalon-Shinar *Arabic-Hebrew Dictionary of Modern Arabic*, together with his friend and colleague, the late Prof. David Ayalon. Prof. Pessah Shinar was also one of Prof. Nehemia Levtzion’s teachers and greatly influenced his work.

2. From the Middle East to Central Asia and Back: a symposium in memory of Prof. Moshe Gammer (1950-2013)

On May 1, 2014, the Department of Middle Eastern and African History and the Cummings Center for Russian and East European Studies at Tel-Aviv University, as well as the Department of History, Philosophy, and Jewish Studies at The Open University, held an event in memory

of Prof. Moshe Gammer, who passed away a year before. The event included two panel discussions: *“Central Asia: Representations, Ideologies, and Practices”*, and *“The Sufi Brotherhood: Networks, Spaces, and Passages”*. Gammer (1950-2013) was a Professor at the Department of Middle Eastern and African History at Tel-Aviv University. His publications addressed numerous thematic issues from a comparative perspective, including ethno-nationalism, communal identity, Sufism, colonialism, and written and oral cultures. His research interests were very broad, including the history of the Caucasus, Central Asia, the modern Middle East, the Islamic world in general, historiography, and the relation between history and politics. Speakers included Dr. Batir Xasanov, Mr. Roi Bar Sade and Dr. Irit Back of Tel Aviv University; Mr. Yochai Primak of the Ben-Zvi Institute; Prof. Daphna Efrat of the Open University; and Dr. Itzchak Weismann of Haifa University.

3. Democracy, Religion and the Status of Women

On April 30 and May 1, 2014, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University and the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Israel held a two-day international conference under the title: *“Democracy, Religion and the Status of Women”*. Its coordinator was Prof. Tamar El Or of the Hebrew University. The conference opened with a public event at the Tel Aviv-Yaffo Academic College, a discussion focused on *“Women and Leadership in Different Religious Contexts”*. The following day, a workshop was held at the Hebrew University, which included four panel discussions: *“Secularization and religion in a democratic context”*; *“Looking for justice: between religious law and secularism”*; *“Current spirituality: between religion and secularism”*; and *“Islamic feminism in the Arab states and in Europe”*. The participants came from different academic fields in the humanities and

social sciences, and from different academic institutions in Israel, Germany, and Switzerland. The conference was also attended by many members of Israeli NGOs. Lectures on Islam, sponsored by the Levtzion Center, included the following: Prof. Ruth Roded from the Hebrew University spoke on “Muslim and Jewish Women between Feminism and Religion”; Dr. Naifeh Sarisi of *Nisa wa-Afaq* spoke on “Feminist Readings and Understandings of Muslim Texts”; Bettina Dennerlein of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, lectured on “Islamic feminism and its critics in the Arab world. Examples from Egypt and Morocco”; and Susanne Schröter of Johann W.- Goethe-University, Frankfurt a. M., Germany, lectured on “Between traditionalism, salafism and liberalism: Muslim women in Germany”.

4. The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History

On 11-16 June, 2014, a German-Israel Minerva-Gentner Symposium under the title: “The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History: Economic, Social and Cultural Development in an Era of Increasing Interaction and Competition” took place at the Hebrew University. Its organizers were Prof. Stephan Conermann of the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, and Prof. Reuven Amitai of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and it was held under the auspices of the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg (“History and Society during the Mamluk Era [1250-1517]”). The purpose of the symposium was to put the Mamluk state and the society over which it ruled into a larger historical, cultural, economic and political context and to examine certain processes over a *longue durée*. Six scholars from Germany and seven from Israel spoke at the symposium, in five discussion panels: “Open and Closed Borders”, “Landscapes”, “Economics

and Infrastructure”, “Geographical Perspectives”, and “Military and Civilian Elites”.

The symposium concluded with a special evening session held at the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities dedicated to the centennial of Prof. David Ayalon’s birth. This session was held in cooperation with the Academy and the Institute of Asian and African Studies at the Hebrew University. The participants and their guests also took part in three excursions: “Mamluk Jerusalem”; “Mamluk sights west of Jerusalem, from Ramleh-Lod to Yavneh”; and “Mamluk archeology in Jordan”. The symposium will hopefully be the basis for further German-Israeli cooperation in the realm of Islamic studies in general, and Mamluk history in particular.

5. New Perspectives on the First World War

On 10-11 November, 2014, the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations at the Hebrew University held an international conference titled: “Multidisciplinary Conference: New Perspectives on the First World War”. The Levtzion Center sponsored Panel No. 7: “Ottoman Societies and WWI: Social, Cultural and Military Aspects”, and the Center’s Director, Dr. Liat Kozma, was the panel’s chair. Dr. Ozan Arslan of the Izmir University of Economics lectured on “An Imperial Sideshow, the Caucasian Front and the Ottoman-Romanov Clash in the Near East, 1914-1917”; Prof. Eyal Ginio of the Hebrew University lectured on “Landscapes of Modernity and Order: War and Propaganda in Ottoman Writing during World War I”; Prof. Ayhan Aktar of Bilgi University lectured on “A Propaganda Tour Organized by Djemal Pasha: Arab Literati’s Visit to the Gallipoli Front, 18-23 October 1915”; and Prof. Martin Strohmeier of the University of Cyprus lectured on “Siege and Surrender, Desertions and Diseases: Medina in World War I”.



Other Activities

Two additional projects were promoted by the Levtzion Center during Spring 2013/14 and 2014/15:

1. A new high-school textbook in Middle Eastern Studies

Middle Eastern Studies is offered as a subject in 40 Israeli high schools. During the 2014/15 academic year, the Levtzion Center sponsored the writing and editing of the first textbook to be used in such classrooms. The texts authored will be used in selected classrooms during the 2015/16 academic year, and the book is scheduled to be integrated in high school instruction the following year. This collaboration can be strengthened and expanded to include one-day conferences for teachers that would enable them to enrich and update their knowledge of the region's history.

2. Closing down the Levtzion Center's Archives

In the early years of the Center's activity, two personal archives were deposited at the Levtzion Center, of Prof. Nehemia Levtzion and Prof. Yaakov Meron (see Bulletin No. 4, p. 12). Due to the Center's limited resources, little has been done to process this material and to make it available for researchers. Therefore, we have decided to close down the Center's archives and to move the material to other places: Prof. Meron's papers were transferred to the Israel State Archives and the Menachem Begin Heritage Center's Archives. The latter currently holds the papers relevant to Meron's staff work during the First Lebanon War, such as drafts of the failed Israel-Lebanon peace treaty. This material may eventually be moved to the State Archives as well. Prof. Levtzion's papers are in the process of being moved to the National Library of Israel.

New from the Center's Bookshelf

David Cook, *The Mahdi's Arrival and the Messianic Future State According to Sunni and Shi'ite Apocalyptic Scenarios* (The Seventh Levtzion Lecture, 2012).

Israel Gershoni, *Devil and Infidel: Representations of Adolf Hitler in the Egyptian Public Sphere, 1938-1945* (The Eighth Levtzion Lecture, 2013).

Shmuel Moreh, Ghaleb 'Anabseh, and Eman Younis (eds.), *Palestinian Literature in Israel and the Issue of Modernism: Research and Studies* (proceedings of the first conference with Beit Berl College, 2014).

Forthcoming:

Franklin Lewis, *Crossing Communal and Sacred Boundaries: The Poetics of Conversion in Classical Persian and Arabic* (The Ninth Levtzion Lecture, 2014).

Sidney H. Griffith, *Reading and Reporting the Fractious History of Abraham's Extended Family of Monotheists: The Role of Interreligious Polemics* (The First Lazarus-Yafeh Lecture, 2015).

* Early in the 2014/15 academic year, the Levtzion Center launched a **Facebook page** (<https://www.facebook.com/NehemiaLevtzionCenter>) and a **YouTube channel** (<https://www.youtube.com/user/LevtzionCenter>). These new media complement the Center's website and contain audio and video recordings of most of the Center's activities for this year.



Scholarships for Advanced Students

Each year the Center grants awards for excellence to M.A. students in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies.

The following students won scholarships for the year 2013/14, based on their theses:

Ms. Yaara Perlman, Department of Arabic Language and Literature. Ms. Perlman's thesis is entitled "The Banu Aws Arab tribe".

Mr. Yogev Elbaz, Program for Israel Studies. Mr. Elbaz's thesis is entitled "Israel's involvement in Middle East conflicts, 1948-1975".

In 2014/15, the scholarship recipient was **Mr. Gilad Shor-Kehat**, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. His thesis centers on the Shadhiliyya-Yashrutiyya Sufi brotherhood.

Affiliated Scholars

Eli Alschech (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2004), visiting scholar at the Hebrew University since 2011. Research interests: Islamic law, Islamic religious scholarship, early Islamic history, Islamic criminal law, Islam and human rights, Islam and the state; interdisciplinary theories of privacy. Co-author (with Nimrod Hurvitz), *The Clash within Islam: Making Sense of Muslim Fundamentalism* (under review).

Elisheva Machlis (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, 2010), research fellow at Tel Aviv University's Center for Iranian Studies. Research interests: Modern Iraq, contemporary Islam, Shi'i thought and politics. Her latest book is *Shi'i Sectarianism in the Middle East: Modernization and the Quest for Islamic Universalism* (London: I.B. Tauris).

Aaron Rock-Singer (Ph.D. candidate in Near East Studies, Princeton University). His research project is titled: *Between Text and Contestation: Islamic Magazines and Religious Revival in Egypt, 1976-1981* (supervisor: Prof. Muhammad Qasim Zaman, Princeton University) – 2013/14.

Roy Vilozny (Ph.D., Hebrew University, 2012), lecturer at the Hebrew University Department of Arabic Language and Literature, Polonsky Postdoctoral Fellow at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and fellow at the *Biblia Arabica* joint project of the Free University of Berlin and Tel Aviv University. Research interests: Shi'i literature, religious thought and theology in the 9th-11th centuries, religious minorities, and depictions of the Arab-European encounter in Arabic fiction.



The Center's Staff

Academic Committee:

Prof. Elie Podeh, Chair, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Prof. Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Director, Center for the Study of Christianity

Prof. Rachel Milstein, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies

Dr. Miriam Goldstein, Department of Arabic Language and Literature

Dr. Liat Kozma, Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies (2013/14)

Dr. Nurit Stadler, Department of Sociology and Anthropology (2013/14)

Director of the Center:

Prof. Rachel Milstein (Spring 2013/14)

Dr. Liat Kozma (incumbent)

Coordinator: Mr. Sasha Schneidmann (outgoing)

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