

**Eishet Chayil
Israeli women of Valor**

Goals

- For participants to learn about the contribution of women to recent Israeli history

Timing: 90 minutes

Equipment: Biographies

Program Outline

- 5 min Trigger
Ask participants to name any important Israeli women that they can think of. You will probably get Golda Meir, Tzippi Livni, and perhaps Naomi Shemer and Henrietta Szold.
- 10 min Open a brief discussion about whether Israel is advanced or backwards when it comes to women's rights and equality

Main points should be

Advanced	Backwards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men and women are equal under the law in Israel. The equal pay law legislates against wage discrimination • Israel is the only country in the world to have military conscription for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although women serve in the army they have traditionally held mostly service roles and even though this is changing sexual harassment and discrimination continues to be widespread • Israeli Women are subject to Rabbinical law in many areas including those related to their personal status. For example women can not received a divorce without their husbands consent. Rabbinic courts often discriminate against women • There is severe • Women comprise only 27 out of 120 members of the Knesset

Summary – despite many people's assumption (based on women in the army and Golda Meir) that Israel is very advanced in the arena of women's rights, in reality the country has a long way to go. However many women have achieved prominence in many, and varied areas of public life. We are going to learn about these women and their achievements.

(15 min)

- 20 min Present the following scenario to the group: As Israel approaches its 70th birthday the Government has decided to award a Eshet



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Chayil trophy to the Israeli woman who has made the most important contribution to the State of Israel. (The award can be given posthumously)

The group will be divided into several small teams in order to learn about and campaign for a particular woman. In each case the group should

- a) Read the materials about the woman they are presenting
- b) Consider the discussion questions raised about her contribution
- c) Appoint one representative to speak for your woman
- d) Prepare main arguments in favour of your candidate
- e) Prepare arguments against other candidates

Note to facilitator: Some of the more well known women such as Golda Meir and Tzippi Livni were deliberately not included here as a) participants are already likely to know of their contributions b) we would like to increase the consideration of other, less well known women.

We have included eight women here, but we suggest you select just five, depending on the numbers of participants.

Each woman represents a different area of public life. The woman under consideration are

- Politics: MK Aliza Lavi
- Military: Alice Miller
- Arts: Naomi Shemer
- Judiciary: Esther Hayut
- Healthcare: Henrietta Szold
- Religion and women rights: Batya Kahana Dror
- Education: Alice Shalvi
- Science: Ada Yonat

(35 min)

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| 15 min | Bring the groups together
Each group representatives should speak for two minutes on why their character is most deserving of this honor. |
| 15 min | Open up to questions from the floor. Groups may challenge other characters on their claim. |
| 5 min | Ask the group if there are any other Israeli women they would like to nominate for this contest. |
| 5 min | Out of character ask the participants should vote on which woman they would like to win the Eishet Chayil trophy. |



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(1 hour 15 min)





Politics: Aliza Lavie

MK Dr. Aliza Lavie serves as a Member of Knesset for the Yesh Atid party in the 20th Knesset and previously served in the 19th Knesset. She is currently the Chairwoman of the Sub-Committee on Trafficking and Prostitution and a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, the Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality (of which she used to be the Chairwoman), the Ethics Committee, and the Special Committee for Public Petitions. Aside from serving in the Knesset, MK Lavie is a researcher, lecturer, and author.

MK Aliza Lavie was born in Kfar Saba in \September 1964. She attended the religious high school Bar-Ilan in Netanya and was active in the Bnei Akiva youth movement. After graduating high school, she served in the IDF as a geography guide and later as an officer in army training. After finishing service, she continued her commitment to nature protection. Lavie is married to attorney Zuriel Lavie and they live together in Netanya. They are parents to four children and two grandchildren. After their marriage, the couple served as emissaries for Bnei Akiva in Durban, South Africa.

Aliza Lavie is a senior lecturer of communications and the School of Communication at Bar-Ilan University, and a leading author, publicist, and social activist. Her areas of research include the media, multiculturalism, and the role of women in Judaism and in the public sphere. She works primarily in the fields of gender equality, religion and state, communications, Jewish identity and culture, and civil-military relations, and in strengthening Israel's relationship with Diaspora Jewry and its commitment to being a Jewish and democratic state. MK Lavie is a prominent figure in the public conversation on Jewish culture in Israel, where her research and writing seeks to extract lessons from history and apply them to the public and political spheres today.

MK Lavie studied at Bar-Ilan University where she received her BA, MA, and PhD. She wrote her doctoral dissertation on "Israeli Radio and Gender", which focused on the issue of gender newsreels and current affairs programs on public radio. Her study was the first attempt of its kind to address the issue of how the media shaped the role of women in Israeli society and explore the intersection of communications and gender. Lavie also spent a year as a research fellow at Brandeis University working on similar issues.

Aliza Lavie is a popular lecturer in Israel and around the world on various issues, including women in the Jewish world, Jewish culture and identity, politics and society, Diaspora affair, and the promotion of women's status and gender communication.



Military: Alice Miller

In 1994 Alice Miller, a young immigrant from South Africa, took the Israeli Defense Forces to court for the right to be admitted to the Air Force Pilots Course. At this time women were not permitted to



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serve in combat units in the IDF including the prestigious pilots program. In a revolutionary decision, the Court ruled that the Israel Air Force must allow Alice Miller to take the qualifying tests for pilot training and, if found eligible, to participate in the pilot training program. The court also ordered the Air Force to initiate an experimental program to facilitate integration of women into pilot training courses.

In 2001, Lt. Roni Zuckerman became the first woman become a fighter pilot in the Israeli air force and in the 2006 War against the Hezbollah women served in combat for the first time since the War of Independence.

Today 88 percent of all military positions are available to women. One example of this integration is the Karakal infantry battalion in which both men and women go through a trying basic training period of four months where they go through an arduous physical training regimen, with everything else that can be expected from a military course such as this. In operations just like in basic and advanced training, and in routine guard duty, both the males and the females shared the work equally. Operations test the basic principles of the battalion; combat camaraderie between the genders. Part of the conditions of equality is the fact that all of the combat soldiers of the battalion serve for three years in the military, even though women are usually only legally required to serve for 21 months.

Although Alice Miller herself did not become a fighter pilot she has no regrets. "It was for the best," she explained ten years later. "I was exhausted by the whole ordeal, the public exposure that I had at the time. Dealing with that was far from easy. For two years I held onto the flag, I was forced to defend the honor of women whenever I walked in the street. The military's approach towards women is changing for the better," she added, "and the more they become part of specializations that are not conventional, their position in the IDF will become stronger."

Due to the status of the army in Israeli life, women's equality in the military is an important step towards women's equality in wider life.



Arts: Naomi Shemer

Known as the "First Lady of Israeli Song," Naomi Shemer was a prolific song writer and composer. She was born in 1931 and died in 2004. In her lifetime she wrote numerous songs, many of which have become anthems of their times, summing up the mood in Israel at a particular moment. She has also set poems to music, including works by Rahel and Natan Alterman.

Naomi Shemer was born on Kvuzat Kinneret. Many of her songs recreate the landscape that was such a part of her youth and reflect her love of the topography and scenery of Eretz Yisrael.



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In 1963, she wrote the popular Hurshat Haecalyptus (The Eucalyptus Grove) describing the landscape where she grew up. Her music linked her own biography to the history of Israel between war and peace. At her best she was able to write songs that sketched the tension between past and present. In 1967, Shemer was asked to compose a song for the Israel Song Festival. The three stanzas of “Yerushalayim shel Zahav” (“Jerusalem of Gold”) became instantly popular. The song acquired a national significance after the six-day war and even functioned as a second national anthem. Following the war, Shemer composed a fourth stanza to the song, celebrating the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem. “Yerushalayim shel Zahav” was translated into many languages and became an international statement on the reunification of Jerusalem. After the Yom Kippur War, Shemer wrote “Lu Yehi” (“Let it Be”) which began as a translation of the Beatles’ song and evolved into an independent hit. The song was one of the most popular songs of the war and once again summed up the mood of the country after the devastating events. Her song ‘Al Kol Eilah’ with its lines ‘Do not uproot that which is planted. Do not forget the hope. Bring me back and I will return to the good land. God, protect this house, this garden, this wall, from sorrow, from unexpected fear and from war.’, became the anthem of the residents of Sinai, when the Sinai was evacuated and returned to Egypt in 1982.

Songs such as these have made Shemer’s songs arguably the most-sung in the 1960’s to the 1980’s. For her immense contribution to Israeli music, Shemer was awarded the Israel prize in 1983.



Judiciary: Esther Hayut

Is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Israel. She was sworn in on October 26, 2017, and is expected to serve as Chief Justice until October 2023. She was born in Israel in 1953. After graduating school in 1971, she enlisted in the IDF, where she served in the military music band of Central Command. After her discharge from the army, Hayut attended law school at Tel Aviv University, graduating in 1977. Hayut interned at the law firm of Haim Yosef Zadok, a former Israeli Minister of Justice, where she stayed on to work as an associate lawyer between 1977 and 1985.



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After leaving the firm, Hayut opened an independent office together with her spouse, specializing in commercial and tort law. In March 1990 Hayut was appointed as a judge in the Tel Aviv Magistrate Court, and in 1996 was appointed to the Tel Aviv District Court where she gained tenure in 1997. In March 2003 Hayut was appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of Israel, where she gained tenure in March 2004.

In May 2015 Hayut was appointed Chairperson of the Central Election Committee for the 21st Knesset.



Healthcare: Henrietta Szold

Henrietta Szold is most renowned for creating the largest Jewish organization in American history, Hadassah Women. One of eight daughters of a Baltimore rabbi, Szold was a passionate and accomplished student of Judaism. She even won permission to study Jewish texts at the then male-only Jewish Theological Seminary, on condition that she never agitate to be granted rabbinic ordination. Later, she translated Heinrich Graetz's monumental *History of the Jews* from German into English.

Her deepest passion, however, was Zionism. In 1898, the Federation of American Zionists elected Szold as its only female member of its executive committee. During World War I, she served as the only woman on the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, which helped hold together Zionists living in nations at war with each other.

In 1909, at age 49, Szold traveled to Palestine for the first time and, as historian Michael Brown observes, "found her life's vocation: the health, education and welfare of the Yishuv [the pre-state Jews of Palestine]." She joined with six other women to found Hadassah, which recruited American Jewish women to implement and support medical improvements throughout the Holy Land. Contributions from Hadassah funded hospitals, a medical school, dental facilities, x-ray clinics, infant welfare stations, soup kitchens and other services for Palestine's Jewish and Arab inhabitants. Szold insisted that the most up-to-date medical treatment be extended to the Arabs of Palestine as well as to the Jews, and Hadassah played a major role in lowering Arab infant mortality. Szold persuaded her colleagues that practical programs open to all were critical to Jewish survival in the Holy Land.



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In 1918 Szold moved to Palestine to become the director of the American Zionist Medical Unit. In 1926, She became honorary president of Hadassah. A year later she was elected a member of the three-man executive of the World Zionist Organization, with the portfolio for health and education. In 1939, she was offered a seat on the Va'ad Le'umi (National Council) of Palestine.

During the 1930s, Szold involved Hadassah in a program to rescue Jewish youth from Germany, and later from all of Europe. It is estimated that the program she created, "Youth Aliyah," saved some 22,000 Jewish children from Hitler's concentration camps.



Religion and Women rights :Batya Kahana Dror

Batya is the CEO of the "Mavoi Satum" Organization. The Organization provides legal advice and support to women whose husbands refuse to grant them a religious divorce. It also protects the status of the women in the divorce process. She is an active member of the "Yahad Council" which encourages connections between religious, non-religious and ultra-orthodox Jews. She was chosen one of the most influential women by the Makor Rishon and Maariv News Papers. Together with her organization she had a very important role in the revolutionary decision to introduce a women Deputy Director in the Rabbinical Courts.





Education: Alice Shalvi

In 2007 Alice Shalvi was awarded the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement and Special Contribution to Society and the State of Israel. The prize-committee judges called her "revolutionary and courageously trailblazing, with intellectual integrity and long-term vision."

Shalvi is an internationally known scholar and women's rights advocate who has spent her life promoting Jewish education and creating a more just society in Israel

Alice Shalvi was born in Germany in 1930, educated in England and immigrated to Israel 1949. She received a doctorate in English literature from Hebrew University in Jerusalem where she taught from 1950 to 1990; founded the English Department at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 1969; and served as head of the Institute of Languages and Literature at Hebrew University from 1973-1976.

Following this Shalvi served as the principle of the Pelech School for Girls in Jerusalem, turning it into one of the first religious experimental schools and a model for other experimental and democratic schools throughout the country. Under her influence Pelech dedicated itself to ensuring equal opportunities for women in Torah study and in every aspect of civil society.

She began her feminist activity in the 1970s, battling for the rights of women whose husbands refused to grant them a divorce. In 1984 she became the founding Chair of the Israel Women's Network, the country's major advocacy organization for women's rights.

In 1996, Alice Shalvi was appointed rector of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem where she later served as President and as Chair of the Executive Committee.



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Science: Ada Yonath

Ada Yonath was born in Jerusalem, Israel in 1939. Her parents had emigrated from Poland. Although her father was a rabbi, her family tried to make a living by running a grocery store. After her father's death, Ada Yonath's family moved to Tel Aviv. After studying chemistry at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, she earned her PhD from the Weizmann Institute of Science, to which she has maintained her ties as a researcher. Alongside her work there, Ada Yonath has also worked for several European and US universities.

In 2009, she received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry along with Venkatraman Ramakrishnan and Thomas A. Steitz for her studies on the structure and function of the ribosome, becoming the first Israeli woman to win the Nobel Prize the first woman from the Middle East to win a Nobel prize in the sciences, and the first woman in 45 years to win the Nobel Prize for Chemistry. However, she said herself that there was nothing special about a woman winning the Prize.

