

Status of Women in Israel

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INTRODUCTION

The status of women in Israel is complex, overladen with contradictions which result in considerable ambivalence concerning equality between the sexes. Israeli women are educated in the spirit of modern achievement-oriented values which emphasize the right of the individual to develop his/her unique potential and to select a life course in keeping with his/her unique abilities and preferences. Social norms, furthermore, reward the woman whose social status stems from her own achievements, independent of those of her husband. At the same time, widely held traditional values endorse a patriarchal system of social relations which ascribe roles on the basis of gender and emphasize the centrality of the patriarchal family with its sex division of labor and of social status. The normatively prescribed model for successful family life still requires that the husband be the major breadwinner, namely, the head of the family; that the out-of-home work of the wife — the primary caretaker of home and children — be defined for the family as less important. Israeli society has opened new opportunities for women to participate in the public sphere outside the home, but it has not adapted the family roles nor developed the services necessary to make success of career possible without considerable strain.

The purpose of this article is to outline the status of women in various social institutions — legal, military, political, and economic as well as in the kibbutz. It underlines the tension between the conception of woman as person entitled to equal opportunities and of woman as wife and mother in a patriarchal system of relations and the resulting ambivalence existing in Israeli society concerning equality between the sexes.

THE LEGAL STATUS OF WOMEN

The legal status of women in Israel is determined at the same time by one of the most modern and one of the most ancient legal systems in the world. The former — the secular law — is based on the principle of one law for both the man and the woman, while recognizing that a relevant distinction is not discrimination. The latter — the Hebrew (religious) law — views the man and woman as different and not equal. It imposes a different legal status on each and assigns to each a different set of rights and obligations. The co-existence of these two legal systems creates contradictions and is problematic for achieving equality between the sexes.

The desire of the founders of the State to establish the principle of equality between the sexes is expressed in the Declaration of Independence which states that: "The State of Israel will maintain equal social and political rights for all citizens, irrespective of religion, race and sex." The Supreme Court, however, refused to grant this document the authority of a basic law which overrides other laws in contradiction with it.

Two laws passed shortly after Independence were instrumental in expanding educational opportunities and in freeing women from social oppression: the compulsory education law (1949) made it mandatory for parents to send their daughters (as their sons) to school until the age of 14 (and from 1978 until age 15) and the marital age law prohibited the marriage of girls under age 17.

The Women's Equal Rights Act of 1951 defines the equal status of women with respect "to all legal activity," and it states that "any legal act which discriminates against woman for being a woman should not be acted upon." A number of exceptions, however, limited the potential contribution of this law. Article 5 excludes the sphere of marriage and divorce which is governed by religious law. Moreover, since it is not a basic law, it was overridden by later laws. For example, the Women's Equal Rights Act did not prevent the passing of discriminatory income tax regulations according to which the income of a married woman residing with her husband is perceived for tax purposes as part of her husband's income and is registered in his name and not hers. The

major contribution of the Women's Equal Rights Act is that it established the married woman's status as a person in her own right and eliminated legal restrictions on her by virtue of her marriage in relation to such matters as property rights and guardianship.

Protective Legislation — restriction or privilege? Parallel to an egalitarian orientation which disclaims the relevance of ascribed sexual attributes, there is a trend found in legislation and collective labor agreements that recognizes sex differences as a legitimate basis for differential treatment, on the assumption that women are more vulnerable and require protection. There is general consensus that privileges which relate directly to women's reproduction functions, namely pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding are an important achievement and should be preserved. For example, a pregnant employee is allowed to be absent from work upon her doctor's recommendation, and she is permitted a shorter workday without loss of income. The law grants a woman 12 weeks maternity leave with pay and also guarantees that a woman's job be held for her up to 12 months after childbirth. It is illegal to dismiss a pregnant woman on account of her pregnancy or a woman on maternity leave.

There is growing disagreement in recent years, however, concerning the long-term advantages of protective measures which are based on the assumption of women's different social roles. For example a mother may extend her maternity leave without pay to up to one year. The Employment Severance Compensation Law assures a woman pay if she resigns from her job within nine months of giving birth or of adopting a child who is not yet nine months of age, if her resignation is to care for her child. Certain collective agreements permit mothers of young children to work fewer hours. These privileges are not granted to fathers. They consequently reinforce the stereotypical view that the care of the young is the mother's responsibility. Those who wish to encourage greater parental sharing propose that maternal rights be changed to parental rights leaving the decision as to which parent to the couple. A move in that direction is a change in the sick leave clause of certain collective agreements which now permits both parents to utilize their sick leave for the care of other family members.

While public opinion is more conservative in relation to women's roles in the family, there is considerable agreement concerning the restrictive nature of the law prohibiting night work (except in specified cases) or the collective agreement requiring differential retirement age: 60 for women and 65 for men. In 1987, the Knesset passed legislation equalizing the age of the retirement age at 65, with women retaining the right to retire earlier. The prohibition on night work was rescinded in 1986 but retained a woman's right of refusal. Collective agreements in government service, the Histadrut, and among university teachers specify equal retirement age for men and women, and it is likely that in time a policy of flexible retirement age for both sexes will become the norm.

The Enforcement of Sex Equality Legislation. Despite the existence of a body of anti-discrimination legislation the judicial system has not proven to be an effective vehicle for reducing sex inequality. The law enforcement system has two major shortcomings: the law enforcement agencies, such as the supervisors of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare in relation to the Equal Opportunity in Employment Law, do not adequately utilize the potential clout available to them to enforce the law, and women for their part are not accustomed to bringing discrimination complaints to court. Since the establishment of the State there have been only a handful of sex discrimination cases. From the point of view of the plaintiff, the procedure is cumbersome, expensive, and time consuming, often entailing harassment from the employer and even from the workers' committee. The sanctions defined in the law are such that they do not provide an incentive for a woman to file a claim. For example, the Equal Opportunity in Employment Act (1981), which covers discrimination in hiring (but not in promotion), does not require the employer to hire the plaintiff even if found guilty of refusing to hire her on the basis of sex. In two of the three discrimination cases decided by the courts to date — an airline-hostess against El Al airlines (1973) for denying her promotion to the position of purser on the basis of sex and a factory worker against the Elite Chocolate Factory (1978) for paying her a lower wage than paid to the man whom she replaced while the latter was on army reserve duty — the Labor court judged in favor of the plaintiff. In the third — an anthropologist, Dr. Naomi Navo, against the Jewish Agency for forcing her to retire at 60 — the District Labor court judged this not to be a case of discrimination (1986) and the decision was appealed (still pending).

Status of Women in Matrimonial law. Matters related to marriage and divorce and personal status are within the sole jurisdiction of the religious courts. There are fourteen recognized denominations in Israel, each with its own legal system, courts, procedures, and legal experts. The Jewish courts are governed by Orthodox rabbis only.

Under Jewish religious law the woman is subordinate to her husband but enjoys his economic protection. He is obligated to support her as long as she fulfills her obligations as a wife. He also carries the major responsibility for the support of the children.

The woman's subordination to her husband is reflected foremost in laws related to divorce.

Divorce is possible only upon his consent. While a woman must also give her consent, her refusal may nevertheless be circumvented and the husband permitted to marry another woman, his children with the second wife not being considered bastards. This is not the case for women.

The restrictions that religious law place on a married woman have created severe problems and often prolonged suffering for women whose husbands refuse to grant them a divorce, for those whose husbands have deserted them, or who have disappeared without granting a divorce; and for childless widows whose liberation requires that their late husband's brother release them in order to remarry and are thus legally suspended, their future hanging on the good will of their in-laws.

In the last few years there has been a growing organized pressure on the rabbinate from a number of women's organizations — the Israel Women's Network, Naamat, Emunah, Mitzva, and Prisoners of the Rabbinical Court — to find acceptable solutions within the framework of religious law.

WOMEN IN THE DEFENSE FORCES

Israel was the first and is still one of the few states which has compulsory military training for both men and women. The significance of women's participation as well as the ambivalence felt towards women's position in the army were expressed by Ben-Gurion to the Second Knesset (1951):

When one discusses the position of women, two factors must be taken into consideration. First, women have a special mission as mothers . . . However, . . . the woman is not only a woman, but a personality in her own right in the same way as a man. As such she should enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as the man. . . . We have no intention of putting women into combat although no one can be sure that, should we be attacked and have to fight for our lives we should not call on the service of every man and woman. But the law in question deals with a peacetime situation and we want to give women only the most basic military training.

It was an issue of contention after Independence whether women's participation in the Israel Defense Forces would be modeled after the Palmah where women were relatively integrated into the various units, or after the A.T.S. of the British army where the women were segregated in specialized units. Organizationally, these two plans were merged during the first two years, making the Women's Corps (*Hen*) the responsible authority for training and judicial matters, while all work assignments became general army manpower decisions. Until 1970, however, the commander of *Hen* was always a former A.T.S. officer and the A.T.S. esprit and concept of women's role as primarily auxiliary to men became the dominant one.

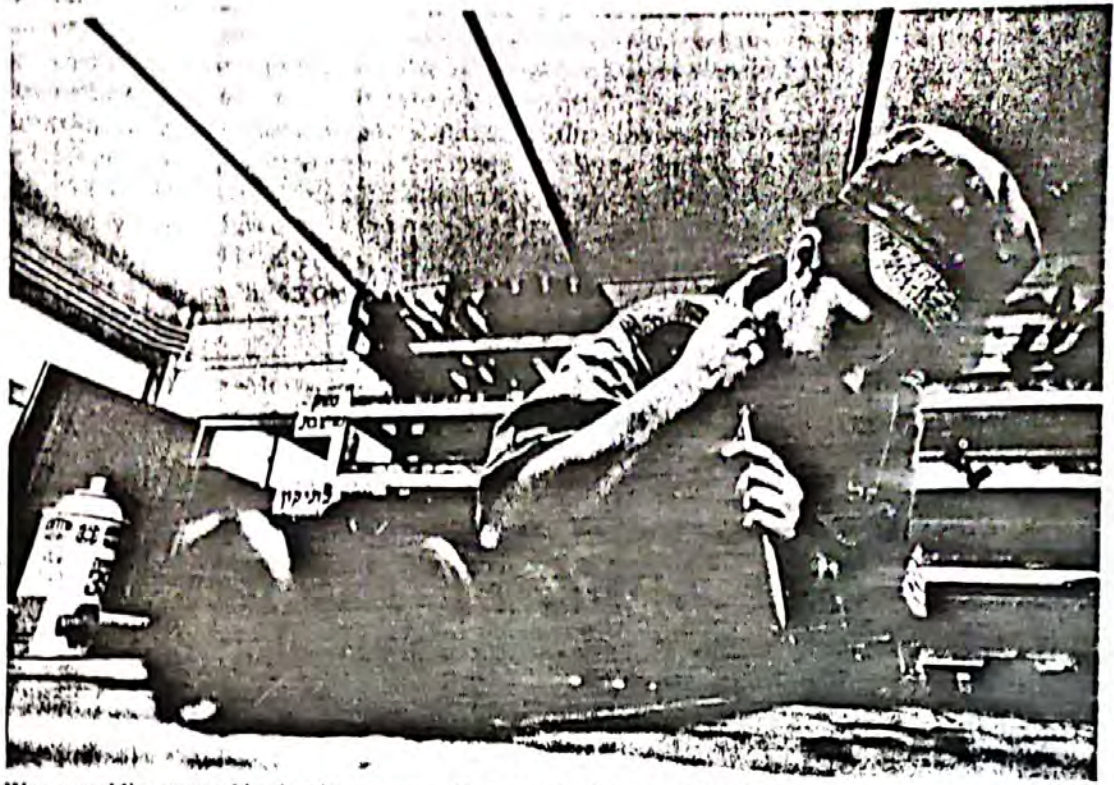
A second issue of contention related to the universality of conscription. Marriage, pregnancy, motherhood, and religious conviction were defined as grounds for non-conscription. In 1953 the Knesset passed the National Service law which made two-year national service compulsory for those released on religious grounds. The law, however, was never implemented. In 1980 the demand for immediate implementation of the law was raised once more but the Knesset ruled its postponement until the government decided otherwise. In 1970 national religious groups established the Agudah le-Hitnadvut Be'am (Organization for Volunteering) which provides an alternative voluntary framework for national service.

In 1978, in accordance with the coalition agreement, the Knesset amended the military service law to facilitate release on the basis of religious conviction. The proportion of women released on the basis of a personal declaration of religious conscientious objection, consequently increased from 18.5% to 25%, where it has remained since 1983 (see Table 1).

Table 1. Recruitment of Women into the IDF (%)

	1976/77	1986
Recruited	51.5	65.0
Not recruited:	48.5	35.0
religious conviction	18.5	25.0
below qualification	19.0	2.0
marriage	8.0	5.0
health	2.0	1.0
other	1.0	2.0

Table 1 also reveals an impressive drop in the proportion of women who lack the minimum qualifications required for recruitment. This change is of special social significance for ethnic mobility since, according to the Commission on the Status of Women Report (1978), 80 percent of this category in 1976 were of Middle Eastern and North African origin. Research shows that army service has a significant positive impact on women's self-esteem and occupational aspirations.



Woman soldier engaged in cleaning weapons. (Courtesy Ba-Mahane, Tel Aviv)

The Military Roles of Women in the IDF. The two decades following independence, when fighting units were consolidated but not greatly expanded, brought about a continuous restriction of women to the more traditionally female jobs and an increase in the sex segregation of occupations. The shortage in human (male) resources following the Six-Day War (1967) precipitated a more extensive use of women in non-traditionally female jobs to free men for combat units. The critical self-examination in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War and the intensification in the use of sophisticated technologies led the army to reevaluate its policies regarding the most efficient use of women.

In 1976, of 709 jobs 210 (29.6%) were open to women, the majority of them clerical jobs. In 1978 the Commission on the Status of Women recommended that the number and type of jobs available to women be increased. At the end of 1980, there were 296 out of 775 jobs open to women (38.2%). In mid-1981 the army chief of personnel with the encouragement of the then chief of staff ordered that all jobs be open to women except for direct combat jobs. Since 1984 the range of jobs filled by women has expanded greatly and there has been continued experimentation to break down the barriers to women's maximum integration. In September 1986, the C.O. of the Women's Corps was promoted to the rank of brigadier general, making her rank equivalent to that of heads of the other major military branches of the IDF.

New technologies create new occupations for which the more educated women soldiers are well suited. However, women's shorter period of service (two years compared to three for men), their disinclination to sign up for an additional period of service, their release upon marriage, and their negligible availability for reserve duty, were and remain major disincentives to intensifying the investments in women's training and to expanding the number of jobs available to them.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

Although Israel is one of the few countries of the world in which a woman has served as Head of State, few women hold positions of authority or participate in the policy making forums of public life. Since 1948, only four women have served as government ministers (Golda Meir held several portfolios and Shoshana Arbeli-Almoslino as minister of health), two of them (Shulamit Aloni and Sara Doron) without portfolio and both for less than one term. There have been three deputy ministers. The government formed in 1984 by Shimon Peres, the largest ever, had 25 ministers and not one woman. At the local level there have been only four women heads of a municipal or local council, two of whom served for less than one term. In the Trade Union Sector of the Histadrut, women are highly under-represented on all the elected bodies, although since the mid-1970s, there has been a significant increase in women's participation especially at the grass roots level of



Golda Meir, 1973. (GPO, Jer.)

the workers' committees. There is also a recent upward trend in women's election to elected municipal and local councils (see Table 2). The policy making bodies of the political domain in Israel, as elsewhere, are dominated by men.

Table 2. Elected representatives on Jewish municipal and local councils by sex (1950-1983)

Election year	Total no. elected	No. of women	Percent women
1950	684	28	4.0
1955	826	33	4.0
1959	1008	32	3.2
1965	1050	33	3.1
1969	1070	39	3.6
1973	1118	47	4.2
1978	1178	66	5.6
1983	1231	93	7.5

Source: For 1950-73, from Zvi Rosen, "Six Election Campaigns"; for 1978 and 1983 from the Ministry of Interior. Data on women from Hanna Herzog.

The number of women in any Knesset term has varied from 8 to 11 members. From the First to the Eleventh Knesset there have been 40 different women members who served an average of 3 terms each. The distribution of the 40 Knesset women among party blocs is as follows: Labor 28; Center 6; Religious 2; small parties 4 (Citizens' Rights 2; Communists 1; Tehiyah 1). The great majority of women Knesset members have been members of socialist parties; 40% of them were sent by the kibbutzim. To date the Center and Religious blocs have given women only token representation if at all. Separate women's lists have not had much success. In 1949, WIZO won a disappointing one seat and did not submit a list to the Second Knesset. In the same year the women of the National Religious Party ran on a list separate from the men in protest at their non-representation on the party list but failed to win a seat. A similar fate befell a feminist party list in 1977 which received only 5,000 votes but had a powerful consciousness raising impact on public opinion through its exposure on the mass media.

Women on Knesset Committees. Women's representation on Knesset committees is unevenly distributed. They are over-represented, relative to their numbers in the Knesset, on the Education and Culture and Public Services committees as well as on the Parliamentary Committee. They are under-represented on the most powerful and prestigious committees — Finance, Foreign Affairs, and Security. An analysis of the 1,129 Private Members' Bills introduced between 1949 and 1981 (960 initiated by men, 113 by women, and 56 jointly) reveals that on the average, women have introduced more bills annually than men: .53 bills per female member compared to .29 bills per male member. The period 1974-81 was one of a particularly high rate of parliamentary activity for women (1.58 bills per female member compared to .47 per male member).

One of the arguments for increased representation of women in political forums is the need for a lobby able and willing to advance the particular interests of women as women. Most of the bills which have over the years brought incremental improvements in women's status were introduced by women members (alone or jointly with men) particularly of the left of center parties. The potential effectiveness of women in the Knesset as a lobby on behalf of women, however, has been hampered by their unwillingness, at least until very recently, to act jointly as a women's lobby. Some have no particular interest in women's issues. The liberals and the conservatives on

Table 3. Knesset membership of Women by Party Bloc, 1949-1985 (absolute numbers)

Party Bloc	Knesset										
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
Labor*	8	6	8	7	6	6	6	5	4	5	5
Right-Center**	2	4	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	3
Communist	—	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Religious	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
Others***	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	1	1
Total	11	11	11	9	10	9	8	8	8	9	9
Percent	9.2	9.2	9.2	7.5	8.3	7.5	6.7	6.7	6.7	7.5	7.5

* Mapai, Ahdut ha-Avodah, Mapam, Alignment

** Herut, General Zionists, Progressives, Liberals, Rafi, Democratic Movement for Change, Free Center, Likud, Telem, Ha-Tehiyah, Shinui

*** First Knesset: WIZO; 8th through 11th Knesset: Citizens' Rights Movement

Source: Government of Israel Yearbook 1949-1985.



Knesset members congratulating newly sworn-in minister of health, Shoshana Arbelli-Almozlino, Jerusalem, Oct. 20, 1986. (Government Press Office, Jerusalem)

women's issues disagree about the desirability of protective and other legislation. All female Knesset members are under pressure to put party interests above women's interest. For example, in 1978 the Knesset amended the abortion law making abortion more inaccessible. Geula Cohen (Tehiyah) supported the amendment on national demographic grounds while Sara Katan Stern (Religious) supported it on religious grounds and Sara Doron (Liberals) bowed to party pressure and supported it. In addition, the organized opposition of the religious bloc to sexual equality has proven more powerful than the disunited efforts of the women members. At what may prove to be a historic meeting, sponsored by the Israel Women's Network in 1985, the women members of the Knesset, generally in opposition over other political issues, affirmed their support for efforts to enhance the status of women.

Sex Differences in Political Participation. Researchers have found a number of systematic sex differences in patterns of political participation. First, more women than men vote for the political bloc to the left of center while more men than women vote for the political bloc to the right of center. This difference is consistent for all elections since the First Knesset. Second, women tend more than men to vote for the large center parties while more men vote for the extreme parties of the right and of the left, with the exception of the Citizens' Rights Party (small left of center civil rights party) which receives a disproportionate number of female votes. Third, women partake to the same extent as men in mobilized forms of political behavior such as signing petitions and participating in demonstrations, but participate significantly less in institutional forms of political behavior such as political parties and political campaigns. Research shows that women are more skeptical about their chances of gaining access to institutional channels.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY

Labor Force Participation. Between 1955 and 1985 the proportion of women in the civilian labor force grew from 26.5% to 37.6%. Among Jewish women the figure reached 42% but among non-Jewish women it was approximately 15% (up from 7.2% in 1970). In 1985 there were 558,800 women employed or actively looking for work. They constituted 38.1% of the total civilian labor force in Israel. The growth in female participation came at a time of declining participation rates for males, so that during the 1970s, women contributed more than 55% to the net increase in the labor force.

Women joined the labor force in response to the demand created for educated workers by the growth in public, community, financial, and business services following the Six-Day War. At the same time growing military and defense-related needs absorbed men from the civilian sector, shrinking the pool of those available for the civilian economy, a trend intensified by the growth in the number of students in the universities.

In most cases the demand for labor came from occupations such as teaching, social work, and clerical work where women already had a foothold. In others it came from occupations previously closed to women, such as bank tellers, where, unable to attract men in sufficient numbers, employers were compelled to hire women. In addition new occupations which initially had no clear sex label such as in the fields of computers and human resource management, were receptive to women. The demand for labor during the 1970s opened opportunities also to older women who had previously encountered difficulty competing for jobs.

Table 4. Percentage of Women in Civilian Labor Force by Age (1970-1985)

Age group	1970	1975	1985
Total	29.3	31.6	37.5
14-17	18.1	11.3	8.3
18-24	44.9	40.4	39.4
25-34	32.6	44.2	55.6
35-44	31.9	40.6	57.4
45-54	33.9	36.8	46.4
55-64	22.1	22.4	24.9
64+	5.0	5.0	5.5

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1975, 295; 1986, 289

A comparison of the age distribution of women's labor force participation between 1970 and 1985 reveals the following major developments: A drop in participation rates among younger women aged 24 and under, due largely to the prolongation of school education and partly to the increase in military recruitment. Peak participation by age in 1970 was 18-24, in 1975, 25-34 and in 1985, 35-44. This upward drift reflects the increase in the proportion of older women with higher education as well as the proportion of married women in the labor force. The proportion of married women going to work grew from 25.7% in 1968 to 43.1% in 1985. The shift also reveals a much more gradual decline in participation with age reflecting an increase in women's commitment to the labor force and the fact that the presence of small children has become less of a deterrent to women's employment in recent years. In 1985, 57.8% of all non-single Jewish women with youngest child aged 2-4 were in the labor force and among women with 13 and more years of schooling the figure was more than 77.3%.

Table 5. Jewish Women in the Labor Force, by Continent of Birth, 1970, 1979, and 1984

Continent of Birth	Labor Force Participation Rate		
	1970	1979	1984
Born in Israel	36.8	45.2	47.7
Father born in Israel	35.0	39.8	41.8
Father born in Asia-Africa	35.5	37.9	43.4
Father born in Europe-America	38.4	54.4	59.1
Born in Asia-Africa	25.6	31.0	34.8
Born in Europe-America	34.1	36.6	37.8

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Surveys 1970, 1979, 1984.

The Effects of Ethnicity and Education. The data in Table 5 reveal ethnic differences in participation rates. The highest are among Israelis born of fathers from Europe-America, and the lowest among women born in Asia-Africa. These ethnic differences in participation rates, especially among younger cohorts, may be attributed primarily to ethnic differences in educational attainment: women from Europe-America are on average more educated.

Table 6. Civilian Labor Force by Continent of Birth, Sex and Years of Schooling (1984)

Years of schooling	Jewish Women			Non-Jewish Women	Jewish Men
	Continent of Birth				
	Israel-born	Asia-Afr.	Eur.-Am.		
Total	48.9	34.8	37.8	9.3	62.7
0-4	(13.1)	15.2	8.4	7.0	41.8
5-8	30.0	29.1	19.5	7.0	63.9
9-12	42.3	49.6	38.8	15.7	60.2
13-15	66.1	66.4	58.7	(46.6)	70.1
16+	82.7	82.3	73.4		77.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Surveys 1984, Special Series no. 780, pages 95 and 231.

THE JEWISH WOMAN

The impact of education on labor force participation is shown in Table 6 which reveals the following: The more educated a woman is, the more likely she is to be in the labor force. This applies to Arab women as well, although the effect of education is not as powerful as it is for Jewish women. The lower participation rates found for first and second generation women from Asia-African countries become negligible when we compare women with the same levels of education. Furthermore among those with 16+ years of education, participation rates for women are the same as for men. The female labor force is on the average more educated than the male labor force. The median years of schooling in 1984 was 12.3 years for women and 11.4 years for men.

Table 7. Women recipients of University Degrees (% and absolute numbers)

	1969/70	1974/75	1979/80	1983/84
First Degree	39.7% (1613)	42.5% (2823)	45.0% (3035)	49.7% (3849)
Second Degree	24.8% (200)	33.5% (413)	37.8% (625)	38.6% (759)
Third Degree	15.5% (37)	17.2% (47)	27.2% (103)	28.0% (85)
Diploma	58.9% (269)	75.9% (497)	84.2% (506)	82.1% (523)
Total (1964/5=29.4)	38.1% (2119)	43.0% (3780)	45.1% (4223)	49.0% (5216)

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Recipients of University Degrees 1983/84; Supplement, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, Vol. 36, no. 7 (April 1985); Tables 1 and 2.

The availability of ever-increasing numbers of women with university education, a trend observable from the data in Table 7, makes it likely that the upward drift in female labor force activity will continue provided employment opportunities remain available. Such opportunities became more sparse toward the end of the 1970s. Between 1979 and 1982 the rate of employment growth declined from 5% per annum during the 1970s to 2.5%, and the rate of unemployment in the economy grew from 3.8% to 6.4%.

Table 8. Students in the Universities by Sex and Specialization (1974/5, 1981/2)

Specialization	1974/75		1984/85	
	women (%)	total	women (%)	total
Total	44.3	59,929	47.9	
General humanities	57.7	6,733	56.7	
Languages, literature & regional studies	79.8	4,635	80.0	
Education & teacher training	74.4	3,889	79.4	
Art, crafts & applied art	75.0	1,838	79.4	
Librarianship	—	173	82.1	
Social sciences	47.6	12,620	50.9	
Business & administration	12.4	3,621	24.4	
Law	31.8	2,560	39.6	
Medicine	20.3	2,599	33.4	
Para-medical studies	77.8	1,289	81.2	
Mathematics, statistics & computer sciences	38.0	4,416	32.5	
Physical sciences	31.1	2,036	33.0	
Biological sciences	59.2	3,005	63.5	
Agriculture	16.8	1,157	35.3	
Engineering & architecture	8.0	8,439	13.3	
Other & not known		579		

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Students in Academic Institutions (1971/72), 50-51; Students in Universities 1984/85; Supplement, *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics*, vol. 37, no. 4 (April 1986) Table 8.

Education also influences where women work. There is understandably a relationship between the distribution of women among fields of study and their distribution among occupations. From Table 8 we observe that women students are highly concentrated in certain fields. Between 1974 and 1981 there was an increase in the proportion of women in most specializations but a decrease in mathematics, statistics, and computer sciences, subjects which are important if women are to take advantage of the opportunities in high technology occupations.

Sex Segregation of Occupations. The occupational distribution of women in Israel, as elsewhere, is very different from that of men (Table 9). In 1983, 73.3% of the women were concentrated in three of the nine aggregated occupational categories — professional and technical workers, clerical, and service workers, and every second woman was employed in one of the following

Table 9. Employed Persons by Occupation and Sex: 1972 and 1983

Occupation	Women in the occupation (%)		% Distribution Jews			
	1972	1984	Men		Women	
			1972	1985	1972	1985
Total			100%	100%	100%	100%
Scientific & Academic Workers	33.5	39.8	5.5	8.5	5.9	8.6
Other Professional, Technical and related workers	54.6	60.0				
Administrators & Managers	7.4	11.7	7.1	10.1	19.3	23.7
Clerical & Related Workers	52.0	61.8	4.2	7.6	(.7)	1.8
Sales Workers	26.0	30.2	11.3	10.7	24.1	29.6
Service Workers	54.0	58.8	8.3	8.7	8.2	5.9
Agricultural Workers	17.0	17.0	8.6	8.5	21.5	18.9
Skilled Workers in Industry Building, Transport & others	11.2	10.5	8.5	7.0	6.1	2.3
Unskilled workers	15.7	16.4	38.2	34.2	11.2	7.6
			8.1	4.7	3.0	1.5

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics. Labor Force Survey, 1972, 1984; Statistical Abstract of Israel 1986, 306-7

eight occupations (out of a list of 90): teachers and principals; social workers and probation officers; nurses and paramedical workers; bookkeepers; secretaries; typists and keypunch operators; general office workers; sales workers.

Comparing the distribution among occupations between 1972 and 1984 we observe that for both sexes there occurred an upward drift from the lower-status manual to the higher-status white-collar and semi-professional occupations. This development reflects the increased educational level of the population, the rationalization of industry and agriculture, and the growth in the demand for educated workers. The upward drift, however, was stronger for women than for men. During the last decade the level of segregation in most occupations increased: the female occupations attracted an even greater proportion of women, and the male occupations, particularly the manual occupations, became more intensely populated by men. The few traditionally male occupations in which there was a significant increase in the proportion of women during the last decade include: pharmacists and veterinarians, managers and administrators in government and municipal services, primary and intermediate school principals, and lawyers.

One of the characteristic features of occupational and organizational hierarchies is that the higher the position the smaller the proportion of women. This is true in each of the institutional spheres we have discussed — political, military, economic, educational as well as those not discussed here such as the religious and cultural institutions. For example in the universities women constitute 41.5% of the instructors, 30.5% of the lecturers, 17.1% of the senior lecturers, 8.2% of the associate professors, and only 4.3% of the full professors. In the government service they constitute 51% of those employed but only approximately 11% of those in the top five ranks of the administrative hierarchy and 20% of those in the top of the professional hierarchy. As a rule, women have moved into middle and higher level positions where the competition with men became less intense. This has occurred either where men have left the occupation such as in educa-



Photo of Peter Publishing House 1976

tion which opened opportunities for women to become school principals, or where there was a rapid expansion of the occupation as occurred in such managerial staff positions as personnel management and training and public relations for which women were considered suitable. Both conditions were evident in the State Attorney's Office. In recent decades men have left for more lucrative private legal practices and there was a growth in the number of positions for attorneys in the Office. In 1984 women constituted approximately 41% of the lawyers in Israel and 61% (123 of 203) of those in the State Attorney's Office. They also constituted 20% (64 of 321) of the judges compared to 8% in 1976. Two of the 12 judges of the Supreme Court are women.

The Earnings Gap. The law requiring equal pay for equal work for men and women was introduced in 1965 and amended in 1973 to include work that is essentially equal. Although on average, working women are more educated and hold more prestigious occupations than men, between 1970 and 1983 their hourly earnings were between 75% and 80% that of men. The differences in hourly income between the sexes is greatest among industrial workers.

The sex difference in earnings has been explained primarily by the lower rates of returns that women receive compared to men for their human capital resources. In a study of sex differences in earnings of civil servants, Efroni found that women earned 78% of what men with similar characteristics earned and that, furthermore, were women compensated for their education, training, and experience at the same rate as are men, their income would in fact be 2% greater than those of men.

One of the important mechanisms through which employers can and do discriminate between men and women in essentially similar jobs is in the differential allocation of fringe benefits such as overtime payments, telephone and car allowances, and in the assignment of different job titles for what is essentially the same work.

Another source of sex difference in earnings is the sex segregation of occupations. The majority of men and women do not work in the same jobs and the jobs filled by women pay less than those filled by men with similar levels of education.

Social norms regarding women's responsibilities for care of the home and children, as well as for many of the tasks which link the family to services in the wider society are a major source of pressure on women to forgo potentially higher income jobs for those with shorter and more convenient working hours and those located close to home. With the increase of married women in the labor market the percent of women working part time has increased. In 1985, 40.8% of the women (and 9.6% of the men) worked generally part-time (less than 35 hours a week including preparation work) and among scientific academic and other professional workers, the figure is greater than 50%. Although part-time work permits married women to meet the expectations of their work and family roles, it is also a reason why women are more apt to find themselves in jobs in which opportunities for promotion and/or power and authority are limited.

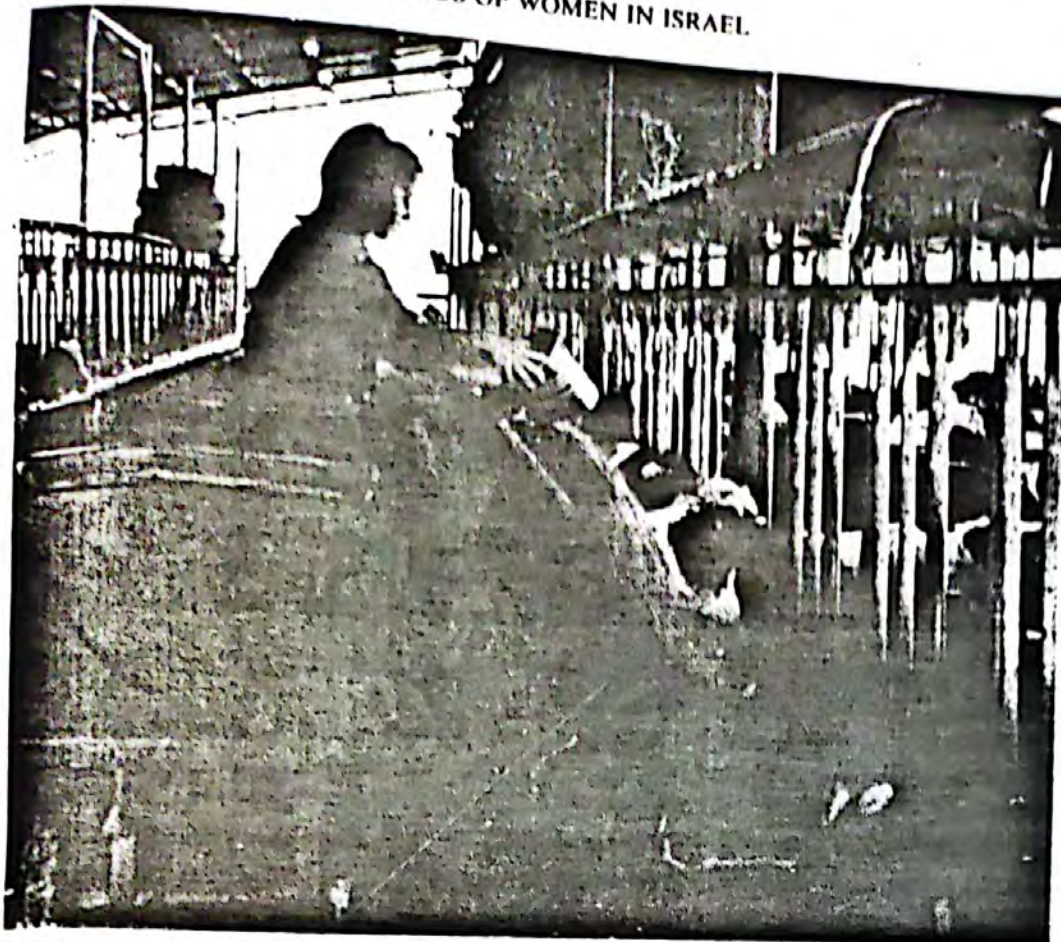
Over 90 percent of the families in which the woman is employed, depend on her income to maintain their standard of living. However, neither the division of labor within the family nor the social institutions which service the family are well adapted to the needs of a dual income family with children. Consequently, women who select high commitment careers frequently pay the price of feeling guilty and under stress.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE KIBBUTZ

The kibbutz has been defined as an experiment in social equality, and has attracted considerable attention as a locale for the study of the relationship of gender to the social division of labor and prestige. In the mid-1950s, the late Yonina Talmon Garber of the Hebrew University began serious research into the sex role problem of the kibbutz. Her definition of the problem as "the emergence of sex-role differentiation in a society based on a denial of sex differences," has since been the major research issue concerning women in the kibbutz.

During the early years the kibbutz created cultural and structural conditions which were particularly well suited for the emergence of sexual equality. These include a strong ideological commitment to social equality; women's economic independence of their husbands; the communalization of domestic and child care services as well as a collective orientation which de-emphasized family life. More than half the women worked for a considerable time in production jobs together with men and the sex division of labor was seriously undermined. The image of the pioneer (*halutz*), however, idealized stereotypically masculine attributes and equality was perceived primarily in masculine terms. While women entered traditionally male occupations, men did not take on the traditionally female jobs. During the first decades of the kibbutz movement, women's right to participate in the highly valued income producing activities was a subject of continuous debate. Vegetable gardening and poultry became the main agricultural activities of women.

Over the decades, the ideology of sex equality changed. If during the first period the ideology



Feeding livestock at kibbutz Palmahim, 1967. (GPO, Jerusalem)

denied significant sex differences and women were encouraged to adopt masculine style behavior, from the 1950s men and women are perceived as different but equal: women and men have different needs and play different roles in the kibbutz but their work is of equal value. Work in the kibbutz has become increasingly segregated along sex lines. Women virtually moved out of the agricultural branches: 75% work in services and education, 65% of the men work in production jobs. In a society that values productive work, the service work that most women do is generally considered less prestigious than the work done by most men. In the public sphere women are less active in the general assembly than men, and while women are highly overrepresented on committees dealing with educational, social, and cultural problems, they are highly underrepresented on committees dealing with economy, work, general policy making, and security. The higher the authority of the office or committee the lower the percentage of women on it.

Table 10. Women Holding Public Office in the Kibbutzim of the United Kibbutz Federation (Takam) 1976-1984.

Position	Percent women
Heads of education committee	75
Secretariat	20
Head of work committee	23
Treasurer	7
Head of administration	5
Head of factory	0

Source: Takam — Information Dept.

In the course of time the kibbutz developed a strong familistic orientation. In the late 1960s the Ihd Federation of kibbutzim officially sanctioned a new arrangement whereby children sleep with their parents rather than collectively in children's homes. The Takam Federation approved of the new system known as "family sleeping" in the mid-1970s. The Kibbutz ha-Artzi federation, which was most adamantly opposed to such a breach of collective life, recently decided to allow it in exceptional cases. The shift from collective to family sleeping was brought about by the persistent and militant campaign led by the women members, frequently in opposition to the preference

of the men. Research indicates that women take on more of the additional tasks and responsibilities resulting from a family sleeping arrangement than men.

While researchers generally agree on most of the "facts," the interpretation of these developments and the conclusions arrived at generate considerable controversy. One explanation, known as the sociobiological argument, is that we are confronted here with a classic case of Mother Nature reasserting herself in the face of well-meaning but naive, misguided humans trying to replace time-tested biological solutions by ersatz sociological solutions. According to the sociobiological perspective, equality as perceived by the pioneers, is not desired by women, desirable for society, or possible in the long run.

The environmental impact explanation argues that the increased sexual differentiation and the expansion of the family in the kibbutz is part of a much broader range of social structural and cultural adjustments which the kibbutz has made to the larger society which surrounds it and with which it is in constant contact and interaction. Talmon Garber suggests an incomplete socialization and structural functionalist argument. She views sex differentiation as an outcome of internal pressures both within the family and within the economy of the kibbutz. With the advent of children, the effects of former socialization which had not been eliminated re-emerged while with the advent of modernization the priority granted to considerations of rationalization and efficiency in the productive sphere worked against the blurring of sex differences. It was more rational to assign women to the care of children and to tasks performed near the home. The restriction of child care and educational services to female labor and labor intensity of these branches meant that there were not many women available for other jobs.

The discrepancy between the proclaimed egalitarian ideology and the growing differentiation between the sexes is a source of structural strain. Two theories explain women's interest in reconstituting the family as a response to the decline in their social status relative to men in other spheres of kibbutz life. While one perspective emphasizes the retreatist nature of this development, the other argues that bolstering the family is a strategy women used to develop a base of power for themselves and to achieve some parity with the men in the struggle for individual power and recognition — in a word, for status — in the kibbutz community. In the early 1980s the strain resulting from the discrepancy between ideology and reality took a new form of expression. Women's inequality was raised as a public issue. In 1982, at the initiative of the women members' committee (*va'adat ha-haverot*) of the United Kibbutz Movement (Takam), the Inter-Kibbutz Department for the Advancement of Sex Equality (*Ha-Mador ha-beinkibbutzi le-kiddum Shivyon ha-Minim*) was established. That same year the Kibbutz Artzi Federation renewed the activities of its *Haverah* Department now called the Department for the Advancement of Sex Equality. In addition, at least lip service is being paid to moving men teachers into early childhood education.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN AS AN ISSUE ON THE PUBLIC AGENDA

In this final section, we trace the vicissitudes of women's status as a social issue in Israel. We identify four overlapping historical periods. In summary, from the time of Independence until the Six-Day War (1948–1967) the status of women was, for the most part, a non-issue. The issue reap-



Cleaning the dining hall windows at kibbutz Massada, 1968. (GPO, Jerusalem)



Assembly section of Tadiran semiconductor plant. (Courtesy Tadiran, Tel Aviv)

pears between two wars — 1968 and 1973 — when an anticipated labor shortage and the emergence of the feminist movement stimulated public interest and debate. The issue moved to center stage in the years following the Yom Kippur War (1973–80) during which period economic developments and the activities in connection with the UN Decade on Women served as major catalytic forces for change. From the early 1980s, the economic recession, the Lebanese War and the re-election of the right wing coalition government with its Orthodox partners, push the issue to the sidelines. At the same time, however, the momentum of the processes of social change begun in earlier periods, continued to have an impact on women, especially at the grass roots level and public debate over the hard core issue of women and institutionalized religion, re-emerged with greater intensity.

Four Historical Periods. FIRST PERIOD (1948–1967). Following the War of Independence (1948–9) in which many women played an active military role, the issue of the status of women went into hibernation. After almost a decade of fighting, women re-entered the home to raise a family. In this formative stage of Israel's Statehood, a number of important laws were passed to correct some of the inequalities between the sexes in rabbinic law as well as leftovers of the earlier Turkish and English legal traditions. During the 1950s and early 1960s, however, national energies were consumed by the overwhelming tasks associated with the absorption of hundreds of thousands of immigrants. Those originating from Moslem countries imported a distinctly patriarchal life style in which women were subservient and the majority of them illiterate. In addition to supplying housing and creating a sexually integrated public educational system, public policy was directed toward creating job opportunities and occupational training intended almost exclusively for men who were considered to be the primary breadwinner.

SECOND PERIOD (1968–1973). In 1968 the Economic Planning Authority predicted a shortage of labor for the 1970s, especially in industry and agriculture. For the first time women's labor force participation was defined as a national economic interest, and women were encouraged to enter the labor force, especially the low paying food and textile industries, as well as the new electronics industries. As an incentive, and in lieu of granting tax concessions which would benefit primarily professional women, public funds were used to build kindergartens and day care centers. The Women's Bureau of the Ministry of Labor established in 1971 was the major vehicle for the implementation of government policy. In 1971 there were 10,000 places for children under 5 in day care centers: 6,500 were reserved for children of welfare recipients, 3,500 for the "private market." In 1984 there were 46,000 places — 12,000 reserved for welfare cases, 34,000 for working mothers, with first preference given to industrial and agricultural workers. These centers are subsidized by

the government and operated by the major women's organizations, specifically Naamat, WIZO, and Emunah in descending order of size. In addition there developed a network of private nurseries. Together, these services were instrumental in enabling mothers of young children to enter the labor force.

During this period women, working within a variety of organizational frameworks, began new initiatives which were later instrumental in galvanizing the forces of change. In 1969, the Mo'ezet ha-Po'alot (Council of Women Workers; later called Naamat) opened a department for legislation and social security. In 1974 it established a special department to deal with the status of women. WIZO continued to operate its family and legal aid services. The women's department within the trade union section of the Histadrut, inaugurated in the mid 1960s, was, by 1973, at the forefront of the first and only public struggle for equal promotion opportunities for women. The fledgling feminist movement that appeared on the scene in the early 1970s began to challenge existing myths about sex equality. At the same time, a few academic women within the universities taught their first Women's Studies courses and conducted the first research studies in this area.

THIRD PERIOD (1974-1979). The status of women became a major issue on the public agenda in the period following the Yom Kippur War. The surprise attack by the Arab armies ushered in a period of self-criticism and demythologization which provided fertile ground for the seeding of feminist ideas. This was in contrast to the social climate following the brilliant victory of the Six-Day War, which had intensified the macho elements of the culture. By 1973 the public was more prepared for criticism on the issue of women's status, especially in view of the deep frustration women experienced at having been denied a significant role during the war, either on the battlefield or on the homefront. It may be suggested, furthermore, that the period of relative economic, social, and military stability that followed the war created the "surplus energy" which permitted the women's issue to rise to greater priority on the national agenda.

The Eighth Knesset (1973-1977) in which Shulamit Aloni and Marcia Friedman, one of the founders of the feminist movement in Israel, added a militant flavor, brought public attention to the problems of wife beating and rape and to the need to liberalize the abortion law. The abortion law was amended and liberalized in 1976, when the religious parties were not party to the coalition government; the most progressive clauses were later reversed in keeping with the coalition agreement of 1977 between the Likkud and Agudat Israel parties. The Ninth Knesset (1977-81) introduced important changes in the laws regarding rape. The feminist movement opened shelters for battered women and rape crisis centers, services which several years later were also provided by the mainstream women's organizations Naamat and WIZO.

A major contribution to raising public consciousness was made by the Prime Minister's Commission on the Status of Women established in keeping with the UN Declaration of 1975-1985 as the Decade of Women. The mandate of the Commission, chaired by Knesset member Ora Namir, was to study the issues and make recommendations "for advancing equality and partnership between men and women in all aspects of life."

After two years of deliberations, the commission submitted its report in February 1978. It con-



Feminist demonstration in Haifa, 1982. (GPO, Jerusalem)

tained 241 policy recommendations. Only the task force on women and family (religious) law failed to submit recommendations because "differences of opinion could not be bridged." No less important than its recommendations was the impact that the experience of working on the commission had on its participants. It brought together for the first time members of Knesset, heads of the women's organizations, academics, high ranking civil servants, and other public figures, men and women from different political parties and ideological orientations. For many it was a powerful consciousness-raising experience which had a ripple effect on the organizations from which they came.

The information, systematically gathered about women in all aspects of life, showed up the long standing myth of sex equality in Israeli society. It stimulated research on women and contributed to attaining high visibility for the subject in the public media. In addition, the disseminated information, by raising public consciousness, legitimized the issue as a social problem.

FOURTH PERIOD (1980-1986). During the first half of the 1980s women's status as a social issue was moved to the sidelines by tensions between Eastern and Western Jews, secular and religious, hawks and doves as well as economic and military problems which reached crisis proportions. Plans for extending the school day and expanding child care services, so vital for women's progress in the labor market, have been shelved, and in many cases the school day shortened as a result of budget cuts.

Toward mid-decade the problem of women's position in the rabbinical courts and their lack of representation on such agencies as the local religious councils and municipal bodies which elect the chief rabbis surfaced as a number of existing and new organizations mobilized around these issues. There were also a number of new legislative initiatives in the direction of creating greater equality of opportunity the outcome of which is at this time unclear.

Today, almost a decade after the Commission on the Status of Women submitted its report to the prime minister, the majority of recommendations which require government action, remain unimplemented. Notable exceptions are the government decision — initiated by the advisor to the prime minister on the status of women — to implement a form of affirmative action in government service and the army's efforts to expand the range of jobs open to women. Instead of "a government agency to deal with all matters concerning the status of women," the position of advisor to the prime minister on the status of women was created but maintained on a shoestring budget. The Equal Opportunity in Advertising and Hiring Law (1981), has proved ineffective. The National Council on the Status of Women, established in 1984, has to date been virtually inactive, in large measure for lack of direction as well as a working budget. The same is true for most of the women's advisory councils affiliated to the municipal councils which were established in a number of cities as well as for the tripartite committee (government, trade-union, and employers) established to monitor the implementation of Equal Opportunity Law, where the inability to bridge internal differences between the parties has been an additional impediment. The level of activity and public visibility achieved during the 1970s by the Women's Bureau in the Ministry of Labor and Welfare and the Women's Department in Trade Union Division of the Histadrut were diminished in the first half of the 1980s. Despite the meager gains in the area of public policy in recent years, the very proliferation of organizational frameworks committed to improving the status of women is significant. These frameworks provide new arenas in which women can gain political acumen, new outlets for leadership, and a "co-optable social network" for change.

The 1980s have seen important developments outside of the government sphere. The Hebrew University (Jerusalem) and Haifa University opened women's studies programs and courses related to gender differences are offered in all universities. The School of Education at Oranim developed an equity education curriculum guide for teachers and students. New organizations, with essentially feminist agendas emerged, such as "Mitzva" — the association for women's rights in the rabbinical courts; the Israel Women's Network which operates as a political lobby on a range of issues; and, in the health field, Shilo — pregnancy advisory service and the Israel Child-birth Education Trust. Existing women's organizations and particularly Naamat have adopted a more militant and vocal stand in relation to women's issues, a change reflected in the liberal feminist ideology of the Naamat monthly magazine. *Noga*, a more radical feminist magazine, began publication, and feminist ideas today receive more favorable press coverage than a decade ago.

At the grass roots level, the proportion of women receiving higher education and entering the labor force continues to grow as more women move into middle, and even senior, level positions in the economy. Such developments enhance women's self-image and raise their expectations for more egalitarian relationships with men as well as for greater recognition of their capacities and contributions.



Prof. Galia Golan, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, active worker for women's rights. (Photo Debbi Cooper, Jerusalem)

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