

# TEENS EXPLORE WOMEN IN ZIONIST LEADERSHIP

One of the key goals of Zionism was to bring about a revolution in Jewish life and identity. As imagined by those who participated in the early waves of aliyah during the first quarter of the 20th century, the ideal "New Jew" was the productive individual rooted in the Land of Israel, working the land and contributing to the country and nation. But did this ideal include both Jewish women and Jewish men or was it limited to male Jews? Or, in other words, was Golda Meir, Israel's first, and only, woman prime minister the exception or the rule? This was the question underlying this year's MERCAZ USA-Canada/Women's League Essay Contest.

The theme of this year's competition, chosen to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the ordination of women as Conservative rabbis, was "Women in Zionism: Past and Present." The topic asked high school students either to take two Jewish women, with at least one living and working in Israel today, to compare and contrast regarding the challenges that they faced in their advancement towards leadership or to analyze the difficulties facing Jewish women in Israel vis-a-vis religious status and leadership.

A record number of entries, nearly 30, were received by the MERCAZ USA and MERCAZ-Canada offices. And after two rounds of judging, five prize winning essays were selected, including four from the United States and one from Canada, to receive scholarships for use on Conservative Movement-affiliated trips to Israel.



**MERCAZ USA President Janet Tobin (right) joins AZM float for annual New York "Celebrate Israel Parade"**

*Jackie Brenner* from Congregation Ohev Shalom in Maitland, FL, and *Jesse Gorman* from Pride of Israel in Toronto, ON, are the fourth prize winners. They are both receiving a \$250 scholarship.

Enjoying a \$400 award of third prize winner is *Aliza Sherman*, from Congregation B'nai Israel in Millburn, NJ, while a \$600 award is going to second prize winner *Maayan Amiran*, of Melville, NY, whose family belongs to the South Huntington Jewish Center.

The top prize of a \$1,000 scholarship is going to *Shari Boiskin*, a ninth grader who goes to Cherry Hill High School East in Cherry Hill, NJ. Shari's family belongs to Temple Beth Shalom, and she is planning to use her award to attend the Tichon Ramah Yerushalayim (TRY) high school semester in Israel.

Shari's essay focused on the lives of two Zionist leaders, Emma Lazarus, the 19th century American Jewish poet, and Michal Modai who, prior to her death in 2012, served for a quarter-century as a leader and president of the Women's International Zionist

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## How MERCAZ Benefits Conservative Judaism

MERCAZ, the Zionist arm of the Conservative Movement, represents Conservative Judaism in the World Zionist Organization (WZO), the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) and the Jewish National Fund-KKL. As the official lobby of Conservative/Masorti Judaism in these world Jewish institutions, MERCAZ brings about benefits in excess of \$2 million annually to Masorti institutions in Israel and around the world.

The strength of the MERCAZ lobby within the "National Institutions" is in direct proportion to the size of the MERCAZ delegation at the Zionist Congress. The next Zionist Congress will take place in October 2015, with elections in the United States to determine the composition of the 145-delegate American contingent scheduled for the first quarter of 2015. Look for print and electronic mailings starting in December with information about voter registration.

## Around the Conservative/Masorti World

*Yeshar Koach to Rabbi Abraham Skorka*, Rector of the Seminario Rabinico Latinoamericano, the Masorti educational center in Buenos Aires, who accompanied Pope Francis I, a fellow Argentine, on the latter's recent visit to Israel. Rabbi Skorka's trip comes at the conclusion of a year of celebration at the Seminario in honor of the 50th anniversary of its founding. For more information, go to [www.seminariorabinico.org.ar](http://www.seminariorabinico.org.ar).

*Mazal tov to Prof. David Golinkin*, President of the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, who was chosen by the Jerusalem Post as one of the world's "50 Most Influential Jews of 2014." Golinkin shares this distinction with such notables as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, President Shimon Peres and former UK Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. Go to [www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/The-50-most-influential-Jews-of-2014-1-10-355218](http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-Features/The-50-most-influential-Jews-of-2014-1-10-355218) to see the entire list.

*Congratulations to NOAM*, the Masorti Movement's youth organization which has been finally recognized as an official "youth movement" by the Israeli Ministry of Education. The official recognition, which had been sought for years, came only after NOAM had reached a minimum of 2,500 "hanichim"/youth members and had proved to the ministry's satisfaction that it was growing in participation, training counselors and developing branches throughout the country. Official recognition now entitles NOAM to receive funding from the Education Ministry alongside veteran youth organizations like HaTzofim/Scouts and Bnei Akiva. The recognition is also important as a first step in the fight for recognition for Masorti congregations, rabbis, marriages and conversions. For more information about how to help support NOAM, go to [www.masorti.org](http://www.masorti.org).

*We pray for Ukraine:* MERCAZ joins with the other arms of the Conservative/Masorti Movement in praising a return to calm for Masorti communities in Kiev and elsewhere in western Ukraine. At the same time, we pray that there is a similar return to normalcy for those communities in the southern and eastern parts of the country where the Ukrainian army has been battling pro-Russian separatists. Masorti programs in Ukraine can be found in both areas, including Congregation "Kehilat Masoret" in Kiev, the Sha'alavim Jewish Day School in Kharkov, Masorti community centers in Chernowitz and Berdichev, a young adult program in Odessa, nine Sunday schools and Camp Ramah-Yachad, a summer camp for teenagers, families, teachers and youth leaders. These programs are supported organizationally and financially by Masorti Olami and the Schechter Institute's Midreshet Yerushalayim. For more information, go to [www.masorteworld.org](http://www.masorteworld.org) or [www.schechter.edu](http://www.schechter.edu).

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Organization (WIZO). As Shari noted, Modai established in 1983 Israel's first shelter for abused women and also worked on building and expanding WIZO's youth villages: "Modai spoke up for those who could not speak up for themselves . . . Her mitzvot continue to inspire others, like me, to take part in social justice actions today."

As MERCAZ President Janet Tobin said, "We are proud to have helped shine a light, through this year's essay contest, on the importance of Jewish women in the Zionist Movement and in the creation and development of the State of Israel. In recognition, the World Zionist Organization, in which Michal Modai served as a leader and role model for many years, has now mandated that one-third of all delegates to the 2015 World Zionist Congress must be women, and we in MERCAZ are confident that we will have no problem fulfilling this commitment."

### VISIT ISRAEL TODAY:

Go to [www.mercazusa.org/trips.html](http://www.mercazusa.org/trips.html) for a current list of Conservative Movement Israel trips that are open to all participants.

## Join MERCAZ Today.

Please complete this form and return to:

MERCAZ USA 136 East 39th Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10016  
or enroll online at [www.mercazusa.org/membership.html](http://www.mercazusa.org/membership.html)



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