



# SCHOLION NEWS

SCHOLION - INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTER IN JEWISH STUDIES

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האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies

Prof. Paula Fredricksen (Boston University) , Prof. Christina Angelidi (University of Athens)



Prof. Hillel Newman (University of Haifa)



## Byzantium Conference



Scholion's second research group concluded its fertile three-year research period by hosting largest conference ever held at the Center to date, with four days of incessant lectures, panels and discussions, a plethora of international guests and a jolly atmosphere of erudition. Upwards of three years ago, the Byzantium group submitted a detailed research proposal to the Scholion Academic Committee in which three essential goals were to be achieved. Three years later, the group members are confident that they got the job done.

The first of the goals was, quite plainly, to restore the forgotten magnificence of Byzantine Jewish culture to its rightful place within the realm of Jewish Studies. The conference demonstrated the richness of the Jewish Byzantine culture. An impressive array of international researchers contributed profusely to the conference proceedings, representing Germany, France, England, USA, Italy, Switzerland, and Greece. The very high profile of the papers was strengthened by a keynote opening lecture by Prof. Evangelos Chrysos, one of the world's foremost experts on Byzantium and a very influential figure in the field. Perhaps most significantly, attendance throughout the four days was consistently high, meaning that word got around. The second purpose was to develop and publish a model for studying the mechanisms of communication and transmission of knowledge between minority and majority

Prof. Steven Kaplan, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities



Mr. Yossef Soffer and Prof. Paolo Eleuteri (University of Venice)

cultures, using the Jews of Byzantium as a benchmark. In this regard, the group, confronted with a mother lode of untapped research potential, chose rather to focus on fleshing out the particular case of Byzantium instead of trying to deduce a generic model from a merely skeletal appreciation of a theme that has hitherto merited undeserved oblivion. Lastly, the Byzantium Research effort sought to generate a momentum of interdisciplinary research and study that would continue even after their three-year term at Scholion, a sort of Byzantine studies legacy. The conference generated positive responses and calls for further research by the invitees. Furthermore, the group stands to publish a book under the auspices of Scholion that summarizes their scholarly toil over the past three years.

Dr. Yuval Rotman, Dr. Rina Talgam, Prof. Vera Von Falkenhausen (University of Rome)



Prof. Robert Bonfil, Prof. Guy Stroumsa, Prof. Evangelos Chrysos (University of Athens)



# Harvard Conference



Prof. Gregory Freeze, Prof. Allan Nadler, Prof. Emanuel Etkes, Mr. Shlomo Tikochinski

## on Religion and Education

The members of the "Religion and Education" research group recently initiated a very important endeavor that yielded an international collaboration with other academic centers for Jewish studies – The Center for Jewish Studies at Harvard University and the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University.

On the backdrop of impressive fall foliage, at Harvard University's Hillel House on October 17-18, the conference brought together scholars from diverse disciplines to explore religious and educational issues in the Jewish world from historical and methodological perspectives. Providing both junior and senior members of the Scholion research group with the opportunity of sharing their research interests, the intimate setting of the conference created a seminar-like atmosphere conducive to debate and active participation by all.

Prof. Sharon Feiman-Nemser opened the conference with a talk on key concepts in the methodology of historical and anthropological studies of pedagogy and religion. The next session was devoted to Christian pedagogy in early modern Europe, with presentations by Prof. Michael Heyd and Mr. Asaph Ben-Tov of the Scholion group. Prof. Heyd focused on

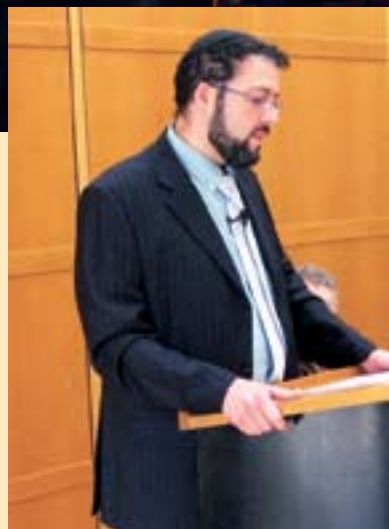
divergent translations of "a young man according to his way" (Proverbs 22:6), discussing the disparate perceptions of the verse in Christian thought. He argued that the different translations reflect revisions in the pedagogical attitudes of Christian educators. Mr. Ben-Tov addressed the question of the authority of pagan texts used in Protestant pedagogy, maintaining that their authority was redefined to facilitate their assimilation into a Lutheran context. He also discussed an educational model he calls "the hermeneutical triangle of authority," consisting of teacher, text and student. Ben-Tov contended that whereas the teacher and the text each had a claim to authority, the student was perceived as being in a subordinate position. The student therefore required careful guidance from the teacher, who strictly regulated the texts read and studied.

The first afternoon session, led by Prof. Septimus, examined how Maimonides adapted the Aristotelian concept of friendship to apply to the relationship between a rabbi and his young pupil.

Although a large part of the program was devoted to the discussion of historical topics,

contemporary issues were not neglected. Two papers, both by members of the Scholion group, investigated contemporary Israeli phenomena. The first was Ms. Michal Kravel-Tovi's anthropological study of Orthodox conversion in Israel. Because she had recently given birth, she was unable to attend and her paper was delivered by her doctoral advisor, Prof. Tamar El-Or, who later continued with her own lecture about the dialectics of autonomy and authority among Orthodox feminists in Israel. Other presentations addressed Jewry outside Israel. Dr. Susan Tanchel outlined dilemmas of Jewish identity in the modern world, specifically examining the situation in Boston and New York. Dr. Susan M. Kardos dealt with educational dilemmas facing Modern Orthodox teachers, with special emphasis on the problems of teaching biblical criticism at Jewish day schools. In an interview with Mr. Asaph Ben-Tov, a doctoral student in the group, he remarked that the discussion of modern day issues in addition to historical ones was a rewarding experience.

On the second day of the conference three talks were given by members of the "Religion and Education"



Mr. Shlomo Tikochinsky



Prof. Tamar El-Or



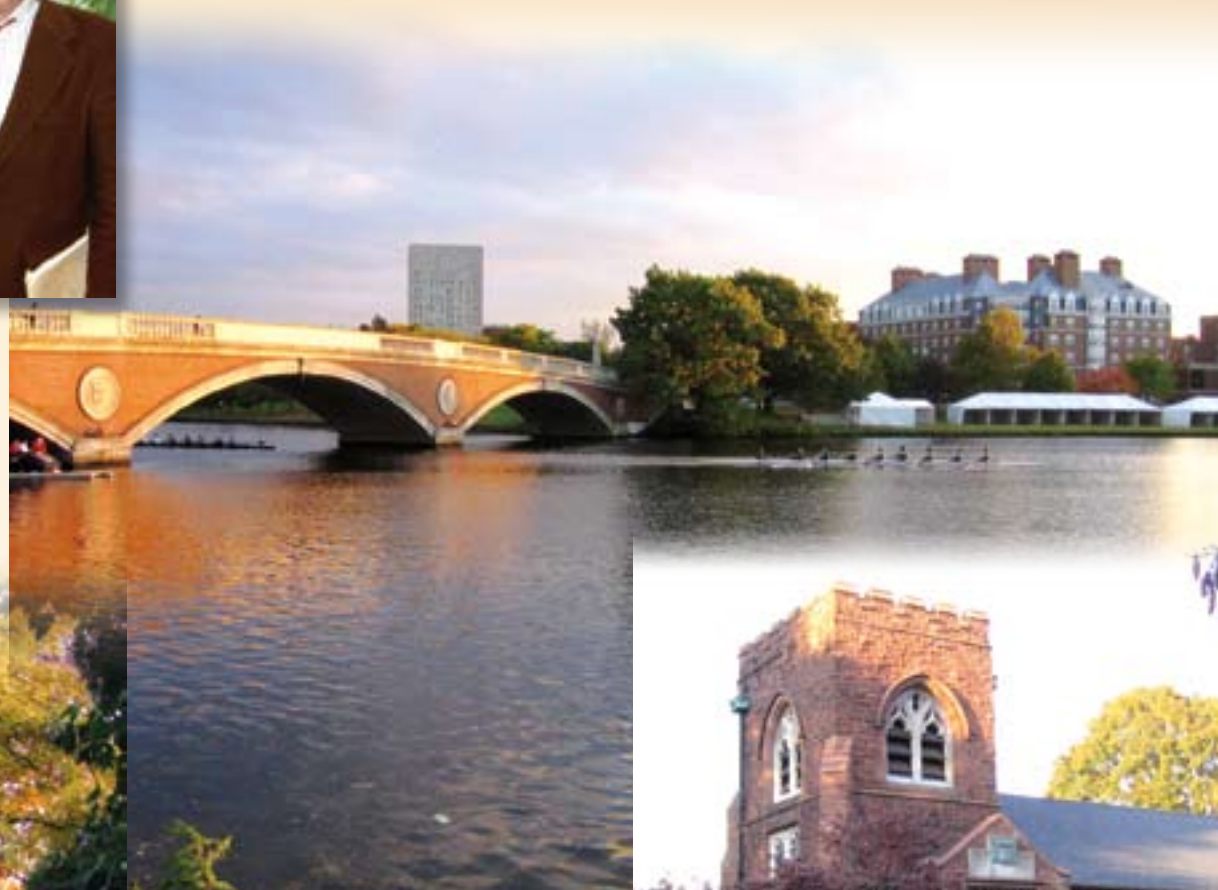
Prof. Baruch Schwartz



Mr. Asaph Ben-Tov



Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold, Prof. Emanuel Etkes, Prof. Jay M. Harris, Prof. Allan Nadler





group. Prof. Immanuel Etkes explored the role of the Hassidic leader as educator, and Prof. Baruch Schwartz, presented a psychological, cognitive analysis of dialectical reasoning in contemporary Yeshivas. Prof. Schwartz's study analyzed the verbal dialectics of students studying Talmud in hevruta today. Mr. Shlomo Tikochinsky's lecture dealt with the migration of two Musar Yeshivos, Slabodka and Novardok to Erez Israel at the beginning of the 20th Century.

Dr. Jon A. Levisohn delivered the concluding remarks which, like the opening session, had a conceptual, methodological focus. He presented a survey of the challenges facing Jewish educational methods in North America and discussed the status of Jewish studies in academic institutions.

The conference, which covered a broad spectrum of subjects, offered a unique comparative and interdisciplinary setting for the discussion of fundamental dilemmas in Jewish religion and education. The members of "Religion and Education" said that their interaction as a group with scholars from leading institutions abroad was invaluable and would certainly promote future academic cooperation.



Singer, Shuli Nathan

## "Ascending and Descending" in the Garden of Eden



Dr. Ariel Hirschfeld

Right after starting their first year in Scholion, the new group titled "Ascending and Descending – Transcending Borders between Heaven and Earth" began its weekly meetings, choosing the topic "the garden of Eden" and discussing it from a variety of perspectives. The members of the group decided to hold a concluding conference open to the public at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, to present a summary of the major issues and themes they had discussed. The two-day conference held on November 5-6 called "גן בעדן מקדם" captures the play on words in the original title; kedem literally refers to the East, though in this catchy heading its deeper meaning connotes a reference to ancient times.

The first day of the conference was devoted to a wide range of subjects, including the biblical traditions of the Garden of Eden, and the Garden of Eden in Jewish prayer and Midrash, as well as social and cultural perspectives of the Garden of Eden. Besides the scholarly exchange of ideas, the convention included a festive session which integrated a reading of Agnon's "ביער ובעיר" by Dr. Ariel Hirschfeld as well as musical accompaniment by Shuli Nathan. The second day of the conference expanded the scope of the discussion to encompass Christian traditions, philosophical and mystical perceptions of an upper and lower Garden of Eden, and a look at the Garden of Eden in modern literature. In an interview with Professor Shinan he affirmed the existence of three distinct Gardens: a historical paradise as experienced by Adam and Eve mentioned in the third chapter of Genesis, a Garden of Eden as it exists in the present, parallel to the world we know and live in today, and lastly, the prospective Garden of Eden as it will transpire in the days to come. Professor Shinan notably mentioned the lectures that explored beyond the texts relevant to the Garden of Eden, and proceeded to examine the unique particulars of the Garden of Eden as a visionary matter.

The large crowds that filled the lecture halls at the Van Leer Institute attest to the success of the conference, and the relaxed atmosphere allowed for a great deal of fruitful, informal discussion before and after each session. The conference also served as a platform for young scholars, providing them with an opportunity to present their research to a wider audience.

The members of the group have decided to publish a collection of articles based on the lectures given at the conference. The projected book will also reflect aspects of the Garden of Eden in art, drawing on cooperative efforts conducted over the past year between the group and the Bezalel School of Art and Design.



Prof. Avigdor Shinan



Prof. Rachel Elior





Prof. Menachem Magidor, President of the Hebrew University, Prof. Haim Rabinowitch, Rector of the Hebrew University, Prof. Sara Stroumsa, Prof. Steven Kaplan

# Lecture Marathon

The famous Scholion Lecture marathon though held this year a little later than usual, more than equaled its past success. As a matter of fact, with over sixty qualified applicants to choose from, twenty percent more than last year, the academic committee found itself unable to winnow the list down to seven and after lengthy debate uniquely conceded a total of eight finalists this year. The second floor of the Rabin Building was transformed into a bustling hub of academic parley for the day of 23 February, as each of the eight presented in turn a 20 minute lecture on his/her area of expertise. Pointed

questions from a receptive audience rounded off each of the lectures within the time allotted, probing their depth of expertise in front of the academic committee, academic staff and lay intellectuals alike. The lectures encompassed several eras of Jewish studies, ranging from archeology of Late Antiquity, through Medieval Hebrew poetics, to numerous concerns of the modern era. Dr. Havi Ben Sasson, Dr. Dimitri Shumsky, and Dr. Reimund Leicht whose lectures were nothing short of exemplary, were eventually selected by the Academic Committee to join Scholion in October 2006.



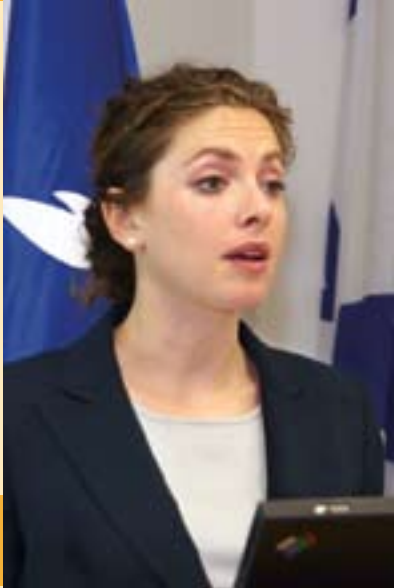
Prof. Israel Yuval, Academic Head of Scholion







Academic Comitee members: Prof. Dalia Ofer, Prof. Moshe Halbertal, Prof. Peter Schaefer and Prof. David Ruderman



Dr. Karen Stern



Dr. Havi Ben-Sasson (left)  
Dr. Revital Amiran-Sapir  
Dr. Daniel Tsadik



Dr. Luisa Levi-D'ancona (left)  
Dr. Dmitry Shumsky  
Dr. Michael Rand  
Dr. Reimund Leicht



Candidates and Academic Committee of Scholion



# The Collaboration with "Alma" College Continues



Prof. Rachel Elijor

Scholion's collaboration with "Alma" College continues as Prof. Yoram Bilu's inaugural lecture in January on the Rise and Fall of the Gate of Heaven was followed on 30 March with great success by Prof. Rachel Elijor.

Continuing the theme of the collaborative lecture series in Tel Aviv entitled "The Garden of Eden in the Religious Imagination," Prof. Elijor, the recent beneficiary of the Gershom Scholem Prize for Kabbalah research, expounded on Garden of Eden traditions manifest in the Judean Desert scrolls from Qumran. With characteristic charm and erudition, Prof. Elijor spoke about the social and spiritual role of holy places. She elaborated on themes and motifs that run common through the various Garden of Eden traditions, while also touching upon other iconic manifestations such as the Cherubim, the mythical Orchard and Hanoch ben Yarad, the seventh generation descendant from Adam and the only human being to have been "taken" to heaven to bear witness on the world of men and angels.

Rachel Elijor was very warmly received by a wall to wall audience, whose active participation in this lecture series has been very heartwarming.



## Multifold Paths to Learning



Prof. Tamar El-Or,

Capping off a prolific year-long study of educational practices both historic and modern, the Education and Religion research group hosted an expert panel of three Talmudic educators from

different walks of the Jewish spectrum. Dr. Rabbi Dalia Marks communicated the reform approach to Talmudic text, while Rabbi Momi Paloch from the "Hesder" Yeshiva in Petah

Tikva illustrated the national religious approach, alongside Rabbi Yitzhak Ya'avetz, who demonstrated the traditional Haredi (Ultra-orthodox) way of learning.

Each of the three gave a half hour lesson in Talmud, expounding a particular issue that showed their methodology in the best light, before an audience that included all the members of the Education and Religion research group, along with some auditors.

After a short break, the Panel reconvened in open debate surrounding the merits and drawbacks of each approach. Though the likely contrast of academic vs. traditional received due attention, an interesting and, perhaps, more subtle juxtaposition emerged involving the two orthodox approaches. The dynamic session resulted in a deeper understanding of the influence of pedagogy on understanding.



Mr. Shlomo Tikochinsky



Rabbi Momi Paloch



Prof. Baruch Schwartz

Rabbi Yitzhak Ya'avetz, Dr. Dalia Marx, Rabbi Momi Paloch



# Elijah's wake

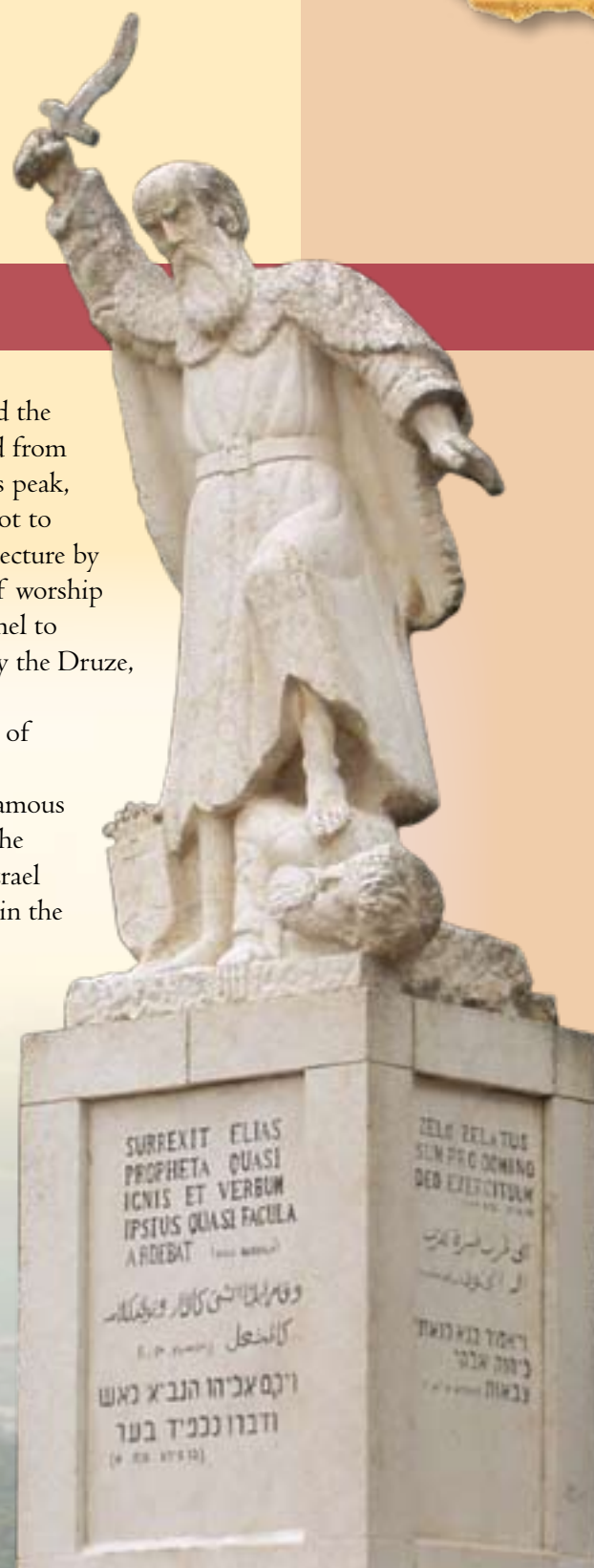
On a dewy morning in April, the Ascending and Descending group seminar along with a few more Scholion members set off in the footsteps of the famous biblical prophet and worker of miracles, Elijah, whose life and work centered around the Carmel region. The group's first visit was to The Stella Maris Carmelite Church, which houses a monastic order whose origins can be traced back to the 12th century Crusader occupation of the region, when groups of religious hermits began to inhabit the caves of the Carmel district in imitation of Elijah the Prophet.

Atop Mt. Carmel, the obliging Friar John elucidated the subtle transition of Elijah's holy place, where he hid from Jezebel, from a cave at the foot of Mt. Carmel to its peak, and so the group trekked down the mountain on foot to view the original. After a charismatic off-the-cuff lecture by Professor Yoram Bilu on the cultish phenomenon of worship at holy sites, the group moved on to Daliat El-Carmel to discover that the Jewish prophet is no less revered by the Druze, known to them as Abu Ibrahim.

The final stop was as aesthetically pleasing as it was of historical interest. Known by its Arabic name Al-Mukhraqah ("the burning") is the site of Elijah's famous challenge against the false prophets of the Baal on the horn of Mt. Carmel, which overlooks the fertile Jezrael Valley to the south-east. With the sun going down in the late afternoon, the day trip was brought to a close.



Prof. Yoram Bilu and Prof. Yair Zakovich







Scholion members and staff deeply regret the sudden death of our dear friend and mentor, Prof. Seymour Fox of the Mandel Foundation, who was a true partner and a great believer in the vision and ideas of Scholion.

Yehi zikhro barukh; may his memory be for a blessing.

# Scholion Celebrates

## a Productive Academic Year

For the second year now, Scholion has been making its mark in Interdisciplinary Jewish Studies research employing its full complement of three research groups and six independent Mandel Scholars. As the notable diversity of individual academic backgrounds synthesize into the genial and industrious air of cooperation that the Center is used to, Scholion finds itself with a great deal of tangible success to celebrate at the year's end. The amicable and effervescent scholar Dr. Manuela Consonni suggested that, seeing that no official cooperative framework exists yet among the independent Mandel Fellows in which they might share their research with each other in the confidence of a closed forum, it would be fitting that two Fellows present their work on this more festive occasion. Dr. Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra and Dr. Ishai Rosen-Zvi were more than willing. Manu, as she is known around the Center, directed the evening from the podium, as her colleagues presented the particulars of their research before a delightful assortment of accomplished academics, inquisitive students and autonomous intellectuals. Dr. Stökl-Ben Ezra presented his thesis that there are in fact two

collections of scrolls at Qumran, in contrast with the current single collection consensus. But this is less important to Daniel than the method he used to arrive at this controversial conclusion. "The real significance of my research, aside from the conclusion per se, lies in demonstrating how statistics can be used to break new ground in historical research." Lamenting what he calls the "demathematized state of the humanities," Daniel explains how he analyzed the average age of scrolls in each cave at Qumran in order to support his two-collection hypothesis. With typical modesty, he explains that his breakthrough would not have been possible were it not for the interdisciplinary atmosphere that he encountered at Scholion, especially in the person of Maya Weissman, a doctoral student in psychology under Prof. Amia Lieblich in Scholion's first Canon and Genizah research group, who introduced him to the statistical methods commonly employed in the social sciences. He then applied those newly acquired methods to his own humanities research. Discussing a close era, but on a completely different topic, Dr. Ishai Rosen-Zvi, spoke about the evil inclination ("yetzer hara") in tannaic sources. He deduced two schools of thought

regarding the nature of man that are prevalent throughout the Mishnah, one identified with Rabbi Ishmael in which the evil inclination is a prominent tool in the rationalization of evil and Jewish edification, the other identified with Rabbi Akiva, in which an inclination is admitted to exist, but is not necessarily evil per se. Despite spending only one year of three at Scholion as a Mandel Fellow, Dr. Rosen-Zvi departs for Tel Aviv University to assume tenure. Scholion wishes him the best of success there in his new position. Veteran Mandel Scholar Sarit Shalev-Eini concluded the conference with her charming mellifluousness about the feeling of family fostered at Scholion, whereupon she wished in the name of the staff, academic and administrative alike, great success in the future.



Dr. Ishai Rosen-Zvi  
Dr. Rina Talgam  
Mr. Micha Perry and Ms. Roni Amir  
Ms. Michal Kravel-Tovi  
Prof. Michael Heyd and Mr. Shlomo Tikochinsky

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