

## **Dr. Aliza Lavie**

Dr. Lavie lectures in Israel and overseas on diverse topics including women's prayer, Jewish culture and identity, Israeli society and Israeli-Diaspora relations. Her fields of research include gender, public communications, and the world of feminine Jewish wisdom and knowledge. She is also a presenter and editor of Israeli television programs on Jewish culture, and is active in a number of social initiatives promoting tolerance, equality, and empowerment. Dr. Lavie is the chairperson of the Matan Women's Beit Midrash (Religious Study Center) in Netanya and she is also chairperson of the steering committee of the "Tzavta" forum for Jewish-Israeli discourse in Tel Aviv. Dr. Lavie will chair the Center for Communications, Judaism, and Religions which is currently being established at Bar-Ilan University.

### **A List of Lecture Topics and Titles\***

- **Jewish Women's Prayers Are Coming Home!**

A Jewish Woman's Prayer Book is a one-of-a-kind collection that draws from a variety of Jewish traditions through the ages to commemorate every occasion and every passage in the cycle of life, from the mundane to the extraordinary. The work includes special prayers for the Sabbath and holidays and important dates of the Jewish year; prayers to mark celebratory milestones such as bat mitzvah, marriage, pregnancy, and childbirth; and prayers for comfort and understanding in times of tragedy and loss. Each prayer, culled from a wide range of sources both geographically and historically, is presented in Hebrew with an English translation along with fascinating commentary on its origins and allusions.

**Read more:** <http://www.alizalavie.com/english/jwprev.pdf>

#### **Fanny Neuda: A Pioneer of Women's Prayer.**

a. An introduction to the woman and her mission. Fanny Neuda's ground-breaking book of prayers for women and girls (Prague, 1855) was hugely popular in Europe and the US, yet her name was omitted from Jewish history books and her prayers long lost and forgotten. Recent translations have inspired prayer composition workshops and her prayers have been incorporated into private and communal ceremonies. Come meet the spirit of this amazing woman and her heartfelt communication with God.

b. Fanny Neuda as an educational personality in her time. She worked quietly within her community offering progressive

suggestions about how women should be educated and the importance of their development as Jewish individuals. Fanny taught how and why women should be educated even though there was no formal learning for them.

c. An in depth look at pieces written specifically for the High Holy Days. A workshop for intensive/advanced learning.

- **Women's Rituals and Customs. A Journey through the Generations and the Diaspora.**

This lecture talks about Aliza's new book *Women's Customs* which represents a mission to salvage knowledge that is quietly disappearing. It is an attempt to locate and engage elderly women of sound mind and accurate memory who are reservoirs of knowledge and wisdom. It encompasses a review of texts produced throughout the generations, as well as conversations with women "conveyors" of traditions and prayers. This lecture will talk about their life stories, the process of their training and the manner in which they were introduced into the realm of Jewish womanhood which sheds fascinating light on the world of halakhic knowledge and wisdom.

- **Women's Prayers for Shabbat Candle-Lighting**

The *Kabbalat Shabbat* (Welcoming the Shabbat) ceremony in the synagogue is the way in which men welcome Shabbat, within the formal prayer quorum. A woman welcomes Shabbat into the private domain - her home - by lighting candles. Thus, while men must leave home to usher in this day of holiness, Shabbat enters women's homes of its own will...

- **Jewish Women's Prayers: Rediscovering a Secret Code.**

Exploration of long-forgotten treasures of Jewish tradition, which reveal themselves as profoundly relevant to modern existential questioning. Jewish women's prayers, long relegated to the sidelines of history and heritage, are being restored to their proper place and becoming accessible; inspiring religious connection, communication and creativity.

**Read more:** <http://www.alizalavie.com/hebrew/barbaratrainin.pdf>

- **Women's Prayers - A Mirror Image of Judaism.**

The fact that A Jewish Women's Prayer Book has received such wide acclaim in so many varied communities throughout Israel and the world says a lot about our current reality. This lecture discusses why all the movements within Judaism are picking up this collection of prayers. What's in it for them?

**Read More:** <http://www.alizalavie.com/english/TuretskyWaxman-Sliding%20to%20the%20Left.pdf>

- **Women's Prayers - The Power of Marginality and the Universal Feminine Jewish Code.**

In this lecture we will look at the reasons that led women and men to compose prayers, and to create special formulas, for women. We shall consider the question of why women needed their own, separate prayers. Was the primary reason their difficulty with the Hebrew language, or was it perhaps the lack of prayers that offered any response to women's needs and experiences? Perhaps it was the distancing of women from the public arena, the canonical literature and the formal prayer service that served as fertile soil for the special women's customs and ceremonies that gave rise to prayers that were likewise suited to women.

- **Women's Prayers - A Workshop.**

Each prayer is a personal, moving appeal to the Creator at key moments in a woman's life. The reader will encounter prayers composed for a girl reaching the age of *bat-mitzva*, a prayer for a mother whose daughter has her first period, prayers to find a spouse, prayers for a bride on her wedding day, supplications for fertility, prayers for reciting throughout a pregnancy, during childbirth, following childbirth, and when naming a daughter. There are also prayers for times of crisis: for the recovery of a child who is ill, for *agunot* - "chained women" who are unable to obtain a divorce, and a special prayer for Jewish women who have been murdered by their husbands.

**Read more:** <http://www.alizalavie.com/english/thetoraofourmothers.pdf>

- **Miriam the Prophet: The Sister, the Leader, and Her Well.**

Revealing the Woman Behind the Scenes. Miriam the prophetess is widely perceived as a central feminine leadership figure despite the sparseness of Biblical text about her. According to the Midrash,

generations of Jewish women have invoked the miraculous waters of the well which accompanied the Children of Israel in the wilderness through her merit. We'll explore what the Torah hides, what the Midrash reveals, and why Jewish women have traditionally celebrated Miriam and her waters.

- **Esther the Queen: From Beauty to Leadership.**

The text tells us in chapter 9, verse 29 that the scroll was actually written by Esther herself: "And Queen Esther, daughter of Avihayil, and Mordechai the Jew, wrote down all the acts of power...". The Talmud adds that Esther asked the Sages of that generation to establish Purim as a festival for all future generations, and continued to insist over their objections until they agreed. This, then, is a fascinating example of the main character of a biblical story who also, according to our tradition, took the trouble to ensure that it was written down so that its memory would be preserved for the Jewish people for posterity.

- **Forgotten Women in Jewish History.**

While the prayers, supplications, liturgical poems and psalms collected in *Tefilat Nashim* differ from one another, they share a common core, representing a dialogue with the Creator, hope for a better future, and concern for the welfare of the Jewish nation. These texts have given rise to further research in the fields of Judaism and gender, with the hope of discovering more forgotten texts and exploring the lives of the women behind them. The women who wrote these prayers in the past; who were they and are there still those we don't know about? Why? What were their lives and communities like? This discussion will deal with personalities from Dr. Lavie's latest research into Women's Rituals and Customs.

- **Conversion and Assimilation in Israeli society.**

Israeli society has changed greatly in the past few decades with the immigration of huge numbers. While these newcomers have acclimated and become "Israeli" there is still a question as to their Judaism. Their daily life is among us; as our neighbors, at school, in the youth movements, in the army, at university, and in the workforce. Many of those that convert do so simply to become full members of Israeli society and its soul. They learn about Judaism and Jewish practices but not necessarily to keep the mitzvot.

Is Jewish law Law still relevant or should these social converts be fully accepted at face value?

- **Mixed Marriages are Not a Religious Matter, But a National One.**

As the world looked on, Chelsea Clinton's intermarriage to a Jew brought the topic of mixed marriages to a head. The number of mixed marriages in the Diaspora has increased by 200% in the past 50 years. About 55% of all Jews' marriages are mixed ones. In one-quarter of families, the children of the next generation will no longer be Jewish, and at best will have a loose connection to their Jewish roots. A look at the future shows that within a number of generations, American Jewry will nearly disappear, excluding its religious and haredi part. This issue is not just in the Diaspora but is becoming more and more common in Israel where mixed marriages are not a religious matter, but a national one. It's not only the interest of religious people. It is the interest of Jewish Israelis, who may lose their children in favor of other religions, other people and other nations. It is for us to maintain our continuity and survival throughout the generations by permitting marriage within, and only within.

**Read more:** <http://www.ynet.co.il/english/articles/0,7340,L-3826381,00.html>

- **Why is a Bar/Bat-Mitzva Such a Big Deal?**

What is a bar/bat-mitzva? Why was there opposition to these ceremonies for girls? Why are bar/bat-mitzvas so popular today among secular Israeli Jews? We'll look at this new/old ceremony and texts that have accompanied it over the generations.

\*More academic lecture topics in Communications, Gender, and Today's Israeli Society are available upon request.