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The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities

The Shalom Rosenfeld Institute for Research of Jewish Media and Communication

The Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies

The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities

Tel Aviv University, P.O.B. 39040 Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv 6139001, Israel

Tel. 972-3-6405144

Email: [presstau@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:presstau@tauex.tau.ac.il)

<https://dacenter.tau.ac.il/shalom-rosenfeld>

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Founder of the Institute: **Shalom Rosenfeld**

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[presstau@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:presstau@tauex.tau.ac.il)



**Keshar**

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Journal of Media and Communication History in Israel  
and the Jewish World

# KESHAR

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Journal of Media and Communication History in Israel  
and the Jewish World

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*Kesher*, a scholarly journal devoted to the history of the press and media in the Jewish world and in Israel, is published twice yearly by The Shalom Rosenfeld Institute for Research of Jewish Media and Communication at Tel Aviv University. *Kesher* seeks to publish original research articles and academic reviews on all subjects relating to the history, endeavors, and influence of Jewish media and media people, from a multidisciplinary perspective. All articles are peer reviewed blindly by experts, members of the Journal's Advisory Board and, if necessary, externally. Articles should be submitted in Word to [press@tauex.tau.ac.il](mailto:press@tauex.tau.ac.il). A reply will be given within three months. Articles should not usually exceed 8,000 words. The bibliography and notes should appear at the end of the article. Citations should follow the conventions of your discipline.

The editorial board invites reviews of new books in the journal's areas of interest and proposes such reviews itself. *Kesher* also publishes a list of recently approved doctoral dissertations and master's theses along with abstracts of no more than 250 words in length (for master's theses) and 500 words in length (for doctoral dissertations).



## WHAT'S IN *KESHER* 57

### ASPECTS OF GENDER IN THE MEDIA: RAPE, POWER, CONTROL, AND IDEOLOGY

The opening articles of this issue deal with various aspects of gender in the media, specifically, press coverage of a group rape, of a woman who wielded political power, and of self-coverage of women journalists, as well as the social and political reality from the perspective of ideological control. Ella Ben-Atar, Odelia Dayan-Gabay, and Gabriela Jonas Aharoni analyze the dynamic framing of reportage of the alleged gang rape attributed to “our boys” in Ayia Napa, Cyprus, in 2019. Gilad Greenwald examines the gender aspect of the political career of the stateswoman and “strongman” Golda Meir through the prism of the television show *This is Your Life*. Hagit Cohen revisits *Alonekh*, the women’s journal of the Israel Communist Party in the 1950s.

Tiki Balas and Ori Malkin look at the media framing of the “modern tragic heroes” rhetoric in the context of two Israeli prime ministers accused of criminal offenses. Eran Eldar re-examines the intensively media-covered conflict between Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres and its impact on the upheaval in the 1977 Knesset elections. Moti Gigi, Yuval Gozansky, and Eliav Gutman compare the multiple narratives surrounding the 2018 Nation-State Law that appeared in Israel’s Hebrew and Arabic media.

In this issue we also revisit, now in an integrated way, questions of “fake news” and the coronavirus crisis: Adi Shalem-Rabinovich, Hodaya Avikasis, Judith Yehezkelli, and Azi Lev-On trace the main characteristics of the rumors that circulated in social media during the first wave of the pandemic.

Turning to the history of the Jewish press in Europe, Gideon Kouts writes about the end of the era of the Hebrew weeklies in 1886 by describing the death of the pioneer editor Yechiel Brill and his journal *HaLevanon*, in London. Menachem Keren-Kratz investigates *Das Vort*, the Yiddish-language Haredi newspaper that appeared in interwar Vilna.

Our regular sections appear as always.

It is our pleasant duty to congratulate our cover illustrator for many years, Judith Eyal, for winning the prestigious international Michael Marks Award for her work as part of a contest on the theme of the bicentennial of Greece’s independence.

We wish our readers an enjoyable and useful read until we meet again in the spring.

The Editor

## **“THEY’RE OURS” – DYNAMIC MEDIA COVERAGE OF A GANG RAPE: THE AYIA NAPA CASE**

ELLA BEN ATAR, ODELIA DAYAN-GABAY, AND GABRIELA JONAS AHARONI

One of the central roles of mass media is to protect social norms, especially with regard to social taboos. Yet the media is also expected to bring different angles in its coverage of events. How does the media fulfill these two roles when one requires a definitive, unambiguous response and the other, a representation of multiple opinions and perspectives?

This study examines media coverage of an alleged gang rape case in Cyprus in the summer of 2019. It analyzes about thirty reports broadcast on the evening news programs of two television channels in Israel over two weeks, from the outbreak of the story to the return to Israel of the teens suspected of the crime. The analysis employs an original model – dynamic Media coverage Spectrum around the Moral nucleus (MSM) – developed especially for this research. The model presents media coverage as movement circling the ethical core of the social taboo on gang rape. It was found that it circled three elliptical orbits around the non-controversial taboo: the first orbit addressed the question of who was guilty; the second examined the law versus norms; and the third circled dynamically around the semantics of positioning. In each of these orbits, the media presented a different stance toward the perpetrator, the victim, and the severity of the event, depending on the reporting journalist, the constraints of the news outlet, the audience’s empathy with the participants in the event in accordance with the victim’s portrayal, and the public discourse that arose over the case. The study highlights the varying narratives within which the case was framed: gender, social status, ethnic identity of those involved, and the geopolitics of the case. The visual and textual language that accompanied the coverage was diverse, reflecting shifting messages which circled around a fixed taboo core. The study underscores the advantage of the MSM model in analyzing an emotionally, morally, and socially complex event. The findings suggest that despite the recognition given by the media to a social taboo, it is important to develop a critical public discourse about messages channeled through the media regarding adolescents and the moral meaning of sex offenses.

## **THE GENDER ASPECT IN GOLDA MEIR’S POLITICAL CAREER: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON THE TV SERIES *THIS IS YOUR LIFE***

GILAD GREENWALD

Golda Meir’s relationship with the gender issue and the feminist movement was complex and ambivalent. This was evident both on the level of public perception in Israel and around the world, and on that of her own identity as a female leader or as a

feminist. In 1977, the now defunct Israel Broadcasting Authority's Channel 1 aired the television program *This is Your Life* in which Meir was the main guest. While covering mainly Meir's political biography, the three-hour program touched sometimes on the gender issue. This article focuses on examining the latter topic. Through critical viewing and qualitative content analysis of the program, the study sought to examine whether and how the issue of gender stood out throughout Meir's public career. The broadcast was found to include forty-seven gender references. These were classified into six main thinking patterns, among them, Meir's consistent identification with the domestic sphere; her framing as a leader with "feminine" character traits, such as humanity, motherhood, and warmth; questioning her leadership ability in relation to "masculine" issues, such as national security; and many references to her personal relationships. The theoretical novelty of the present article lies in the possibility that it proposes examining the biography of a political leader not only through archival documents and collections but also through the mass media. Its main empirical conclusion is that in contrast to past research, the gender issue seems to have been prominent and significant throughout Golda Meir's political life.

## **FROM YAZUR TO NAZARETH: *ALONEKH*, THE WOMEN'S JOURNAL OF THE ISRAEL COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE 1950S**

HAGIT COHEN

This article discusses the journal *Alonekh – a Monthly for the Woman at Home and in Society*, published as an initiative of the Association of Democratic Women in Israel (ANDI), the women's association of the Israel Communist Party (MAKI). *Alonekh*, first issued in 1951, was published in Hebrew, Arabic, Yiddish, and Bulgarian, with the aim of reaching out to sectors that MAKI sought to recruit. This article is an attempt to clarify how the Israeli reality was reflected in the journal. What was the position of *Alonekh* on the issue of gender equality and advancing the status of women? Did it inscribe on its banner the struggle for women's rights? My purpose was to determine the affinity between gender and class issues raised in the monthly, and to position *Alonekh* both in the context of Israeli women's press published in the 1950s, and the wider context of Communist women's press published around the world.

The article discusses ANDI's activities and the social profile of the contributors to *Alonekh*. It analyzes the topics and issues which appeared in the journal, and interprets its prevalent gender images. ANDI's members participated actively in the struggle for women's rights, and *Alonekh* published extensive reports on the economic, national, and domestic repression of women in Israel – Arab and Jewish, immigrants, and veteran residents. The journal reported widely on the activities of ANDI's members in the struggle for peace in the Middle East, as well as for global peace. Also examined is the affinity of ANDI's members to the USSR, as expressed in the journal's pages.

The article is intended to illuminate the involvement of Communist Israeli

women in the social and political arena. As a Communist women's journal, *Alonekh* expressed the various trends found in the Communist women's press in the 1940s and 1950s. In spite of geographical dispersion and the complex political and social conditions that prevailed, it is possible to position *Alonekh* on the continuum between the conservatism that characterized the Soviet women's press in the 1950s and the feminist discourse that developed in the Communist Party press in the West during that period – a discourse that was ahead of its time and foreshadowed the appearance of the second wave of feminism. Conflicting gender images regarding the woman's place in the family unit and her overall role in society existed side by side in *Alonekh*.

## **MODERN TRAGIC HEROES: A STRUGGLE FOR MEDIA FRAMES IN THE RHETORIC OF PRIME MINISTERS ACCUSED OF CRIMINAL OFFENSES**

TIKI BALAS AND ORI MALKIN

Our article examines the rhetoric of two Israeli prime ministers accused of criminal offenses related to moral integrity. We analyzed rhetorical elements of two media appearances: the declaration of a former prime minister, Ehud Olmert, and the speech of a sitting prime minister (at the time of the study), Benjamin Netanyahu – despite the fact that they were delivered at different stages of the legal process.

The cases are similar due to the fact that the legal proceedings were conducted against high-ranking politicians while they were in office and both were indicted. This not only allowed Olmert and Netanyahu to influence the public and media agenda but also to be characterized as “tragic heroes” in Aristotelian terms.

Although both cases are modern, the study argues that the leaders' media appearances had classical rhetorical elements, rooted in the founding days of democracy in ancient Greece: ethos, logos, and pathos. One of the main purposes of media appearances in such circumstances is to influence public opinion and to try to skew it in favor of the leaders on trial. We assumed that the media texts would include narratives such as: “the accused was persecuted,” “selective enforcement,” and “the public contribution of the accused outweighs the accusations.” Analysis of the speeches confirmed our hypothesis.

In their public appearances both prime ministers attacked the media, and at the same time used it to skew (or attempted to skew) the media agenda in their favor, while trying to strengthen their innocence in the public discourse.

However, differences can be found between the speeches. While Olmert expressed his faith in justice and in the judicial system, Netanyahu highlighted allegations of corruption in the latter and the decay of the rule of law, and complained of persecution on personal and political grounds. We also found that Netanyahu's speech was rife with elements of pathos, and that an ulterior motive was to provoke feelings of anger among his audience and stir them to action and resistance.

The research we conducted was systematic and dealt with a common subject in

social conversations, which are often passionate, emotional arguments laden with prejudices. This study suggests a different observation, using empirical tools. It found that the use of classical rhetorical characteristics allows the depiction of criminally charged heads of state as modern tragic heroes.

### **THE CONFLICT BETWEEN YITZHAK RABIN AND SHIMON PERES: JOURNALISTIC COVERAGE AND IMPACT ON THE RESULTS OF THE 1977 KNESSET ELECTIONS**

ERAN ELDAR

Socio-economic and security reasons, among others, led in May 1977 to the collapse of the ruling hegemony of the Labor Party and curtailment of the path of the historic Mapai movement. In the elections to the Ninth Knesset, the Labor Party was defeated and pushed onto the opposition benches. The defeat was also the result of internal conflicts within the party. Clashes between Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, who inherited the party leadership after the Yom Kippur War, received widespread coverage in the Israeli media and had a major impact on public opinion. To what extent was the party leadership responsible for the collapse of the Mapai government's hegemony? Was intra-party rivalry and opposition to the leaders a catalyst that led, among other reasons, to the political upheaval? This article deals with the roots of the conflict in the 1950s, its essence, the manner in which it was covered in the Israeli media, and its impact on the election results of May 1977.

### **ONE LAW, MULTIPLE NARRATIVES: FRAMING THE DEBATES ABOUT ISRAEL'S NATION-STATE LAW IN THE HEBREW AND ARABIC PRESS**

MOTI GIGI, YUVAL GOZANSKY, AND ELIAV GUTMAN

This mixed methods study examines Israeli press coverage of the public debate on the Nation-State Law. It is based on quantitative and qualitative analyses of 540 articles in seven Hebrew and Arabic newspapers, both online and in print, published in the three years before the enactment of the law in July 2018. The findings reveal significant changes in the framing of journalistic reporting. Most newspapers chose a side in the debate, highlighting either full support for or complete opposition to the law, while emphasizing the dramatic and the sensational. The news outlets in Hebrew focused on the main Jewish political actors and the issue of Jewish identity, while those in Arabic covered mainly Arab-Israeli public figures who opposed the law and saw it as racist.

The news outlets chose to describe the debates over the law in accordance with their perception of their target audience, based on the concept of journalism as engagement – journalism that seeks to become a hub in which a sense of belonging and subjective identity is created. By highlighting issues that were considered important to its

readership, the press ignored other key questions, such as the significance of the law as a Basic Law. The findings raise concerns about the failure of the Israeli press to serve as a space for a civic public discourse that includes diverse voices and opinions.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RUMORS THAT CIRCULATED ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN ISRAEL DURING THE FIRST CORONAVIRUS WAVE**

HODAYA AVIKASIS, ADI SHALEM-RABINOVICH, JUDITH YEHEZKELLY, AND AZI LEV-ON

Rumors are widespread during crises and disasters, and people disseminate them in an attempt to create order, provide meaning, or manage risks in times of uncertainty. The coronavirus has transformed our daily lives and generated concerns about its mode of transmission, infection, and the odds of recovery after contracting it. All of this has led to a proliferation of rumors, fueled by the high availability and the centrality of online social media for receiving and disseminating information.

What were the characteristics of the rumors that circulated on social media in Israel in the first months of the coronavirus crisis? In order to answer this question, we gathered information on some one hundred rumors from Israeli social media sites that disseminated them, and also used questionnaires to survey people from different age groups and areas in Israel. The vast majority of the rumors dealt with health issues, while a handful touched on other aspects of the pandemic.

The findings demonstrated that: (1) most of the rumors dealt with ways to avoid contracting the virus, or ways to recover from it, and generally with the health of those exposed to the rumors – much more so than with more “remote” issues (such as the origins of the virus); (2) many of the rumors included the name of a researcher or an institution (academic, medical or otherwise) from Israel or abroad, supposedly behind a particular theory (probably to establish its credibility); (3) the number of rumors that dealt with diminishing the scale of the pandemic (for example, that establishment institutions had intentionally raised the threat level in order to control the population) was small, but double the number of those concerned with increasing its magnitude (that is, claiming that it might be more severe and fatal than it appeared).

### ***THE LEBANON, 1886: END OF RACE IN LONDON***

GIDEON KOUTS

In the spring of 1886, Yechiel Bril, editor of the Jerusalem-born weekly *Ha-Levanon* (the Lebanon), the first Hebrew journal published in Palestine, arrived at his fourth and final stop – London – following his newspaper’s meanderings around Europe. As a British citizen, he was hoping that he and his family would remain for a lengthy period and could renew the glory of the New Hebrew press of which he was one of the

founders. However, the few months of publishing ten issues of the newspaper were also the last ones of Bril's life. He was not just "one of the victims of Hebrew literature," as stated in one of the eulogies about him. The tragedy of this forgotten key figure in the history of the Hebrew press and the Zionist enterprise is summed up in those months of struggle for the weekly's material and spiritual existence. It is reflected in his tumultuous writing and choice of topics in the final issues of the Hebrew journal, which departed with its editor, leaving his family to continue the Yiddish newspaper he had also founded. Alienation and detachment from further modernization of the Hebrew press, new needs of the local and international Jewish community, changes in the political and social reality, and his stubborn struggle to instill norms that no one wanted anymore, led to their loss. The death of the *Lebanon* and its founder was also the end of a pioneering era in the history of the Hebrew press – that of the weeklies. At the age of fifty, Bril, who fought for the press and Jewish society, was a worn-out man who belonged to the past, leaving behind fans who believed he had missed out on the greatness destined for him, but mostly veteran haters he had acquired due to his style and struggles – despite the hope expressed by his loyal friend Rabbi Yechiel Michal Pines that they should look at "his intentions and not at his actions."

## ***DOS VORT: VILNA'S ULTRA-ORTHODOX NEWSPAPER DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD***

MENACHEM KEREN-KRATZ

As of the seventeenth century, Vilna (Vilnius) became known as one of Lithuania's leading Jewish communities. By the mid-eighteenth century the town's Jewish community had gained international recognition thanks to one of its rabbis. Eliyahu, son of Shlomo Zalman (Ha-Gra), was known for his command of all aspects of rabbinical literature and was called "the genius of Vilna." Because of his opposition to Hasidism, Vilna also became the center of the anti-Hasidic movement—the Mithnagdim.

Due to the influence of modern movements, most notably the Haskala (Enlightenment), secularization and Jewish nationalism, observant Jews who constituted an absolute majority at the beginning of the century, became a minority that feared for its future. Vilna became the capital of modern Hebrew literature and hosted many authors and intellectuals. Many young Jews enrolled in the local university which, unlike other academic institutions, did not discriminate against Jewish students.

Some 80,000 Jews, half of the city's population, lived in Vilna in the early twentieth century, and it was considered one of the largest and most influential communities in the Jewish world. In those years anti-Semitism resurfaced in Lithuania and, at the same time, Jewish Socialists established the Bund, the Jewish Socialist movement, which expanded to communities throughout the Russian Empire. Many Jews also joined Zionist organizations.

After World War I, Vilna was annexed to Poland, which was re-established after more than a century of foreign occupation. Although Agudat Israel, the international ultra-Orthodox organization founded in 1912, began to operate in Poland, the strict Lithuanian rabbis, led by the Chafetz Chaim and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grozinski, were reluctant to collaborate with the movement's leaders, particularly the Hasidic rabbis and the well-educated, modern-oriented German rabbis. Instead, Vilna's rabbis founded their own charity organizations and published the weekly Yiddish journal *Das Vort* (the word).

The journal, which was issued until the outbreak of World War II, reviewed ongoing events within ultra-Orthodox communities in Lithuania, but also reported news from other places, and especially from the Jewish settlement in Mandatory Palestine. It dealt extensively with issues related to traditional Jewish education and promoted support of the ultra-Orthodox education system, and particularly Lithuanian yeshivas. Despite economic and social challenges, Vilna succeeded in maintaining its title of *Yerushalayim De'Lita* (Jerusalem of Lithuania), alluding to its standing as a foremost Torah center.