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קמפוס אקדמי אחוה - 132840					

Torchlighters chosen for 65 years of statehood

14 people to light anniversary beacons, including noted historian Muki Tsur, Orthodox feminist and philosophy scholar Tamar Ross and Beduin Achva Academic College president Elian Elkarnoy

• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

The Ministry of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs has released the names of the 14 beacon lighters who will participate in the opening ceremony on Mount Herzl to mark the 65th anniversary of Israel's Independence on May 15.

Among them will be a veteran of the War of Independence whose personal history and that of the development of aviation in the State of Israel are symbiotic. Danny Shapira, formerly Israel's chief test pilot, is a graduate of the first pilot's course of the Israel Air Force, and also the first graduate of the course for combat pilots.

He participated in most of Israel's wars, and has flown over a hundred types of aircraft, many on dangerous missions. Shapira is widely acknowledged the best pilot Israel has ever had, and he is held in such high regard that in 2009 Zinko studios made a documentary film on his life. His two sons Ronen and Oded are also pilots.

Teacher and historian Muki Tsur is a kibbutznik who has been a member of Kibbutz Ein Gev since 1956. He is a former secretary of the Kibbutz Movement, having served in that role for seven years.

A graduate of the Hebrew University Jerusalem, he studied Jewish philosophy and kabbala, as well as the history of the early Zionist movements in the Land of Israel, and continues to research all three subjects.

Tsur was among the founders of Hamidrasha in Oranim as well as in Bina, a secular yeshiva in Tel Aviv. He teaches in both, as well as in other places, believing strongly in the importance of imparting Jewish tradition, regardless of the extent to which one is religiously observant.

David Blumberg is the chairman of the board of directors of the National Library in Jerusalem, currently celebrating its 120th anniversary, and painstakingly and effectively preserving the cultural and spiritual documents of the Jewish People and the State of Israel from ancient times to the present day. The library disseminates their content and strives to provide as much access as possible with the aim of helping to create a more enlightened society. Under his direction, the library is going through a process of renewal to enable it to meet the demands and developments of the 21st century.

Blumberg also chairs the Adi Foundation named in memory of Adi Blumberg Dermer, a promising young artist who passed away in the prime of her life. The foundation promotes art and culture and offers valuable encouragement to young artists.

Tamar Ross is an Orthodox feminist and a Jewish philosophy professor whose main area of expertise is the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the Musar Movement, the ideology of the mitnagdim who fiercely opposed the rise of hassidism, and gender issues in Judaism.

Ross has authored books and articles on Jewish ethics, theology and contemporary issues such as orthodox Jewish feminism.

Prof. Meir Buzaglo is both a mathematician and a philosopher, but prefers to focus on the latter. His research interests are philosophy of Judaism, the Masorti (Conservative) Movement in Israel, philosophy of language and Jewish tradition, cognition and concept expansion. Buzaglo is particularly interested in reviving interest in sacred poetry and has created a website for this purpose.

Dov Tzur is the Mayor of Rishon Lezion and Iris Halperin is the principal of the Haviv School one of the city's oldest educational facilities. Founded in July, 1882 by

Jewish immigrants from Europe, Rishon Lezion is steeped in contemporary history, and has preserved many of the traditions of its founding fathers.

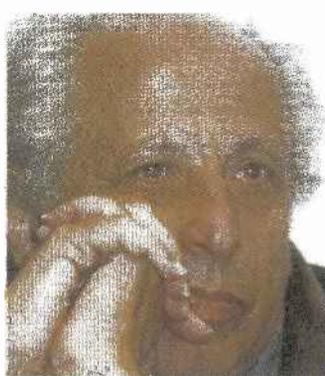
David Ben-Gurion, Israel's founding prime minister, was head of the workers union at the Rishon winery before entering politics on a grand scale.

Tzur represents both local government and the Israeli melting pot, in that he is the son of a Holocaust survivor who lost his whole family in Europe and a mother who was born in Syria. Halperin, who has been a professional educator for 24 years, represents the tradition of Hebrew education and the revival of the Hebrew language.

Bilha Ben-Eliyahu, who lectures extensively on Hebrew literature, has won an envied reputation for the unusual insight she demonstrates in her interpretations and critiques. Ben-Eliyahu has an in depth background in history, Bible and language.

Prof. Elian Elkarnoy is a Beduin who resides in Rahat, and is the president of Achva Academic College which is under the geographic jurisdiction of the Be'er Tuvia Regional Council. He is the first Beduin to head a general facility for higher education in Israel. Despite some opposition to his appointment, Elkarnoy has proved himself worthy, and is also a convincing advocate for the teaching of Arab customs and traditions.

Dafna Shimshon is of Indian descent. Her parents are members of the Bnei Israel who initially encountered enormous difficulties in being



MUKI TSUR
(Courtesy PMO)



BILHA BEN-ELIYAHU
(Courtesy PMO)

recognized as Jews in Israel. Her father was one of the leaders in the struggle for recognition.

Shimshon is writing her father's biography which describes the transition of the Bnei Israel from India to Israel, the humiliations they suffered and the triumph they experienced when they eventually won their battle.

Veteran journalist Rino Tzror, in his radio programs and in the films he produces and directs, demonstrates a rare sensitivity for other people's problems, and shows the human face of Israel in its many varieties, with all its problems, all its warts and all

its social issues.

Ran Hadvati is a field worker for the Council for the Preservation of Heritage Sites in the Sharon Region. A kibbutznik and a farmer, he is among the founders of the museum on Kibbutz Ein Shemer.

The future is represented by two teenage beacon lighters who are group leaders of Zionist youth movements.

Agatha Parczik, 18, is a member of the left-wing Hashomer Hatzair youth movement and Elian Elbaz is a member of the right wing Betar youth movement. While their ideologies are different, their end goal is the same.