The Covid-19 pandemic rocked the daily routine of senior women researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and they decided to document themselves to researching the field. Here are three women who speak about their personal and professional challenges that women face, and the surprising ways they coped during the current health crisis

Galia Hish and Yoel Tsafrir

The family pushed me toward education

During ordinary times, senior Hebrew University researchers are busy with groundbreaking research, teaching and other academic obligations. But these are not ordinary times. The coronavirus made them focus their academic and research talents on urgent public health issues. That is what happens to all the women at Hadassah, who led the drive to recruit students to help at the hospital. "During the first few months of the pandemic, I opened my door to all my colleagues," Prof. Ronit Calderon-Margalit told the Jerusalem Post. "I opened my door to all my colleagues." The women provided an important resource for recruitment-process making and served as a consultant to the "Corona Cabinet." Prof. Niv agrees that there is a hurdle for women medical researchers and lab technicians were recruited and, together with Prof. Dan Ben Yehuda, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Head of the Hematological Department at Hadassah, they carried out more than 40,000 coronavirus tests. The medical students also volunteered to help at the Hadassah- Teddy Stadium and in the homes of people with suppressed immune systems. They all participated in a "framework" to help treat the population of Jerusalem, who suffered from high rates of Covid-19.

How did the women where you grew up impact your career choice?

Prof. Ben Yehuda: "My home definitely had an impact. When I was there, my old- er brother, who was then seven, died of pneumonia that same day I decided that I would become a doctor. I grew up in the shadow of his death. When I got to med- ical school, I felt everyone I met, from the first time I met them to the end of my studies, was medical. It was a family of academicians. We moved to Israel when I was 12 and it was clear that I would have an academic career too. I wanted to study something with life-saving therapeu- tic applications, so after my PhD I worked for an exciting biotech start-up, in the com- putational development of cancer drugs. After that, we travelled to New York, where I did a post-dox at Cornell's Medical School. Although I enjoyed the start-up, I wanted to return to academia and I was accepted at the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition at Hebrew University's Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment in Rehovot. After that, I had to make a decision. I had to have a bridge between the two worlds, and that's what I do in my work as well -- I connect between dis- ciplines. That is how I imported computa- tional methods that were less common here in the fields of food and agriculture. I chose to focus on researching the sense of taste -- I research biological receptors and how they enable spatial and chemical knowledge of taste molecules. It's a fascinating field from a physiological, psychological and chemi- cal perspective. I served as VP for Research at the Hebrew University, Hadassah Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine, where I continued as a faculty member.

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Prof. Masha Niv: "Today, I heard about the school's International Master of Public Health program, as well as the program for national research on the qu- ality of health in the community. Jaffa is a part of the city's food and agricultural system, and I think that everyone is insured a huge benefit that doesn't exist in many countries and that has a real impact on public health. For example, one of its achievements is in- creasing the share of 56-74-year-olds who are tested for early detection of colon can- cer from 10 to 23 -- a huge success which has resulted in a drop in diagnoses of this common type of cancer." Prof. Niv: "I was born in Moscow to a family of academicians. We moved to Israel when I was 12 and it was clear that I would have an academic career too. I wanted to study something with life-saving therapeu- tic applications, so after my PhD I worked for an exciting biotech start-up, in the com- putational development of cancer drugs. After that, we travelled to New York, where I did a post-dox at Cornell's Medical School. Although I enjoyed the start-up, I wanted to return to academia and I was accepted at the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition at Hebrew University's Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment in Rehovot. After that, I had to make a decision. I had to have a bridge between the two worlds, and that's what I do in my work as well -- I connect between dis- ciplines. That is how I imported computa- tional methods that were less common here in the fields of food and agriculture. I chose to focus on researching the sense of taste -- I research biological receptors and how they enable spatial and chemical knowledge of taste molecules. It's a fascinating field from a physiological, psychological and chemi- cal perspective. I served as VP for Research at the Hebrew University, Hadassah Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine, where I continued as a faculty member.

Prof. Ronit Calderon-Margalit: "Today, more than 50% of medical students are women, which was not the case when I was a student. Women are more driven towards science than in the past. At Hadassah, nearly 50% of the senior doctors are women, but I am almost only at the one meetings at the hos- pital's department heads. There are fewer women at the top of the pyramid. The same is true for medical school dean. There was only one other woman in this position in Israel over the years. She moved from the United States."

Prof. Niv: "The Covid-19 crisis may have caused a significant regression in the ad- vancement of women. Studies show that female researchers' productivity is ham-pered mostly by institutional challenges from home and a division of labor that is still present. As a mother of three girls aged 3, 10 and 11, I am lucky because my husband is supportive and helps with the children. But not for everyone, and it's not always enough.

For example, doctoral students can ap- ply to prestigious scholarships within a specified time limit, and not all foundations agree to defer an application due to child- birth. I served as VP for Research at the Hebrew University and Head of the Hem- atology Laboratory, which appealed but was unable to obtain higher ed- ucation.

Since 2017, I am also the Dean of the Hematology Department, a researcher who was a post-doc at Cornell's Medical School. After that, we travelled to New York, where I did a post-dox at Cornell's Medical School. Although I enjoyed the start-up, I wanted to return to academia and I was accepted at the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition at Hebrew University's Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment in Rehovot. After that, we travelled to New York, where I did a post-dox at Cornell's Medical School. Although I enjoyed the start-up, I wanted to return to academia and I was accepted at the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition at Hebrew University's Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment in Rehovot. After that, we travelled to New York, where I did a post-dox at Cornell's Medical School.

During the first few months of the pan- demic, Prof. Calderon-Margalit, who was previously unknown to the public at large, found herself in the medi- a more than ever before. She and her colleagues from the Hebrew University- Hadassah Braun School of Public Health and Community Medicine appeared in the government cabinet and in the Knesset, coronavirus, education and children's wel- fare committees. "The feeling was that dis- crimination was in the air," she said. In this manner. After studying the literature from Israel and around the world, she concluded that the mobility data, we say, at least until the arrival of the British variant, children seem to have been infected at a higher rate than adults. This only advantage of locking down children was maybe to reduce the movement of adults who had to stay home with them. The third lockdown was not effective, and we all agreed that Israel's policy toward the disease was wrong, which is lockdowns. We lost the public's trust and cooperation."

Prof. Niv, how did you start research- ing the sense of taste and smell, which is a symptom of Covid-19?

"In March 2020, when the first reports of Covid-19 came out, we realized that taste and smell. I dove into research in two parallel channels -- in Israel with doctors from Hadassah who had been working with the Coronavirus, education and children's wel- fare committees. "The feeling was that dis- crimination was in the air," she said. In this manner. After studying the literature from Israel and around the world, she concluded that the mobility data, we say, at least until the arrival of the British variant, children seem to have been infected at a higher rate than adults. This only advantage of locking down children was maybe to reduce the movement of adults who had to stay home with them. The third lockdown was not effective, and we all agreed that Israel's policy toward the disease was wrong, which is lockdowns. We lost the public's trust and cooperation."

"Today, I am the head of Hadassah's Hematological Department, a researcher who manages the drug development research. Since 2017, I am also the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine."