Israel’s Basic Questions Revisited

Experts discuss Zionism and Jewish statehood
It is a great pleasure to be able to offer this second issue of *Israel Institute Magazine*. We are very excited to be able to share with you insights from the work of the Institute over the last several months. In this issue of the magazine, you will be able to read about our ongoing discussion on Zionism, a topic that has been the focus of many of the Institute's recent activities and the research of many of its affiliated scholars.

The subject of our annual conference, held this past fall, was the continuing relevance of Zionism as an organizing concept. It is no secret that Israel is undergoing a period of significant change. The founding generation is dwindling and the second generation of state leaders – those who were children when the state was created but who turned Zionism from a revolution into an established, enduring and functioning state – are themselves passing on the reins to a generation that was born after the state was created.

The Zionism that powered the transformation of the Jewish people from a diaspora nation into a sovereign nation-state must, naturally, evolve. In this issue of *Israel Institute Magazine*, we report on our annual conference and the ideas that it raised in relation to the meaning of modern Zionism for today’s Israelis and for diaspora Jews. In addition to coverage of theoretical debates, you will also find insights from people who are putting modern Zionism into action on the ground, for instance by founding new urban communities or strengthening traditional Zionist projects such as kibbutzim.

In these pages, we include not only our observations on Zionism but also those of some of our grantees. Institute post-doc, Dr. Reut Itzkovitch-Malka, working this year at Stanford, shares her thoughts on the primary system in Israel while James Eastwood, a doctoral candidate at the University of London, writes about ethical training for IDF soldiers. Dr. Avi Shilon, who will be an Institute post-doc next year at NYU, shares his observations about Menachem Begin, the subject of a biography that he has written. Additionally, Program Director Michael Koplow reviews a book on the early Arab-Zionist encounter written by Prof. Jonathan Gribetz, a recipient of an Israel Institute grant.

This issue of the magazine contains profiles of Prof. Anita Shapira, an Israel Prize-winning historian and member of our advisory board, and of Brig. Gen. Shlomo Brom, who is serving this year as an Israel Institute fellow at the Center for American Progress, a Washington D.C. think tank. It also has insights from the Institute’s president, Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich, who writes about the challenges and changes in modern Zionism.

Finally, we have several articles about the ongoing activities of the Israel Institute and its grantees, including our “News & Notes” section, where you can get updates about what we and the scholars, artists and practitioners in the Institute network have been up to.

Putting this issue together has been fun for us both because of the joy we get from sharing great ideas but also because of the pride we feel in the work that members of our affiliated community are doing to enrich the conversation about Israel across such a broad range of areas. I hope you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we do bringing it to you!
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Program Director: Dr. Michael Koplow
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Zionism emerged in the late 19th century as the ideology and movement of Jewish nationalism. The Jews, it argued, were a people and a nation and as such were entitled, like all other nations, to self-determination and statehood. A Jewish national state would resolve the anomalies caused by exile and dispersion and normalize Jewish life. The quest for normalization has been a key component of Zionist ideology.

In the final years of the 19th century and during the first half of the 20th century Zionism registered a long list of impressive achievements. From a small group of visionaries it developed into a mass movement. It transformed and expanded the small Jewish community in Palestine. It obtained from Great Britain the Balfour Declaration and embedded it in the British Mandate in Palestine. Under British protection it built an embryonic state, and by 1948 it achieved statehood in part of Palestine, west of the Jordan.

But there were limits to this success story. Zionism failed to become the gripping mass movement of the Jewish population in Eastern and Central Europe. A massive immigration to Palestine in the 1920s, when it was possible, failed to happen. The Jews chose either to stay put or immigrate to America and other attractive destinations. Zionism’s dark prophecy – that the anomaly of Jewish life would end in a catastrophe – materialized during the Holocaust. Zionism failed to move the bulk of the Jewish population out of Europe and was quite helpless when its leadership found out that the Holocaust was being perpetrated.

The Holocaust played a major role in the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948. A sense of guilt and a recognition that Jewish life had to be normalized underlay the U.N. partition resolution in November 1947. Israel had yet to fight a difficult and costly war from which it emerged victorious. But victory and statehood did not lead to the normalization sought by Zionism. The Arab world, defeated in the battlefield, refused to accept Israel and has conducted a political
campaign, rejecting Israel's legitimacy and boycotting it directly and indirectly. It took thirty years for the first Arab state, Egypt, to make peace with Israel and establish “normal peaceful relations” with the Jewish State. Egypt has since been joined by other Arab states that made full or partial peace with Israel, but large parts of the Arab and Muslim worlds continue to deny Israel's very legitimacy and, when they accept the reality of Israel, refuse to accept Zionism as a legitimate nationalist ideology.

Dealing with this hostility remains an important challenge for Israel and the Zionist movement, but it is only one of several challenges. In an entirely different context, Israel has to define its relationship with the major Jewish communities living in Western countries. These communities are integrated in free and thriving democracies, have a special bond with Israel and have no intention of making aliyah. The mantra used by Israel’s leadership that all Jews should move to Israel is meaningless. Israel's political and intellectual elite, in league with their Jewish counterparts abroad, should redefine Zionist ideology and make it meaningful to diaspora Jews, the young generation in particular.

This is important but not as urgent as the need to deal with the new wave of efforts to delegitimize Israel and Zionism. To some extent it is a new incarnation of older attitudes, however it also feeds on the failure to deal with the lingering Palestinian issue. The core of the settler movement in Israel argues that it represents Zionism's second wave. (The first wave, so the argument goes, was led by secular Zionists who achieved statehood in a portion of the historic homeland. The ongoing second wave, made possible by the 1967 war, is led by Orthodox Zionists whose mission is to add “the land of the Bible” to the Jewish state.) It should be emphasized that the settlement project is not the sole obstacle to Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. Powerful forces among the Palestinians and in the Arab and Muslim worlds continue to reject the very idea of Israel and assume that time and numbers are on their side. If Israel is to preserve its legitimacy, it must define the nature of its polity and its boundaries. It must redefine Zionism in a fashion that turns it once again into an ideology attractive to its own population and to the Jewish diaspora, defendable against regional and international foes who are not going to go away.
A Far-Reaching Impact

The Israel Institute speaks to Brigadier General (ret.) Shlomo Brom about Zionism, national security and his experiences working at an American think tank

IIM: Early Zionist discourse included key ideological concepts on the importance of security, land and social equality. How relevant are such ideological pillars to modern Zionism?

BROM: The central idea of Zionism was for Jews to have a haven, and specifically to have a country that could serve as a haven for diaspora Jews who had been persecuted throughout the years for being strangers in different lands. A country is defined as an autonomous territory for a particular population and, in the case of Israel, it was meant to provide autonomy for the Jews. As far as the concepts of land and security go, the goal was to guarantee the fate of the Jewish people. I want to emphasize that this concept went beyond physical security. It was about the protection of Jewish sovereignty as a value. This distinction is very important given the debate underway in Israel today. The strongest reason in favor of keeping or relinquishing land must be Israel's ability to attain physical security for the Jews living on this land while retaining the vision of a national state for the Jewish people. Land without Jewish sovereignty is meaningless.

As for the concept of social equality, I think this is actually a representation of something greater – the concept of Zionism as a set of values. Beyond the physical elements of land and population, a country must be based on a set of values. I think that this concept is clearly expressed when you look at Zionist literature such as Altneuland. Theodor Herzl depicts a country that is based on certain values, such as democracy and equality. Equality does not just refer to income equality as established by the kibbutz system, but also political equality. David Ben-Gurion spoke a lot about the fact that Israel must be a model nation. Whether he succeeded in that vision or not is up for debate but that was the vision, and I think that the fact that this was the aspirational discussion during the creation of Israel is salient. I think that people who are willing to relinquish these original values, or choose to focus only on some at the expense of others, damage a very substantive part of Zionism.

IIM: The recent political debates in Israel seemed to emphasize a choice between values. Specifically, there seemed to be two camps that emphasized security and socioeconomic issues, respectively. Do you think this distinction was overemphasized as part of the elections cycle or is there a deeper rift in Israel about these two issues?

BROM: Given limited resources in a country, sometimes there is tension between security and domestic issues and it becomes necessary to find a compromise between the two. People are not advocating one rather than the other. It's not as if people who prioritize security discount domestic concerns or vice versa. The essence of the debate is only about the nature and degree of compromise. Both camps recognize the importance of both sets of values.

Moreover, while there are points of tension at times between these two concepts, there needn't always be tension between them. For instance, if a society promotes and preserves social equality, then it becomes much easier to mobilize citizens in pursuit of common goals. Of course, the ability to mobilize citizens toward common goals is a crucial factor in national security. So there are cases where security and socioeconomic or other domestic concerns are complementary and mutually reinforcing rather than conflictual. The debate that you see on television derives from the fact that, during elections, people focus on the tension between these values instead of the points of overlap.

IIM: Does the fact that there was recently such intense focus on socioeconomic issues indicate a greater confidence among Israelis about Israel's security situation and its ability to ward off threats?

BROM: I think the opposite is true, actually. I would argue that our problem is that too many Israelis don't understand that we're already an established nation. They don't understand that our physical survival is not our biggest concern. When I look back on the current situation with the wisdom of age, I have the benefit of observing larger trends. Thirty or forty years ago, the security situation was much worse than
it is today. There was truly a threat to Isra-
el's physical survival and future as a nation. 
Nowadays, I'm certainly not saying that 
the situation is perfect or denying that we 
still face significant challenges, but we're 
not really confronting a threat to Israel's 
existence as an established country. Today, 
I would refer to many security issues as 
security discomforts rather than security 
threats. We would like to live without being 
uncomfortable and, certainly, it's unpleas-
ant to run to the bomb shelter. But it's a little 
disingenuous to speak of last summer's war 
as if “the entire country was under threat.” 
Arguably, with the exception of the south, 
most of the country was not really under 
threat. Israelis today are not accustomed to 
the type of low-level security discomfort 
that, in the past, was taken for granted as 
a fact of life in the region.

IIM: Many current policymakers in 
Israel are viewed as heirs of Labor 
Zionism versus heirs of Revisionist 
Zionism. Where are the tensions and 
the overlaps between these two camps 
when it comes to security strategy?

BRIGADIER GENERAL (RET.) SHLOMO BROM is currently an Israel Institute Visiting 
Fellow with the National Security and International Policy team at the Center for 
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regional security talks during the 1990s and he continued to be involved in Track II 
dialogues on these subjects after his retirement from the IDF. He was named deputy 
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Brom is the author of Israel and South Lebanon: In the Absence of a Peace Treaty 
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Comparing the camps using this metric, 
there is a difference between the right-
wing and the left-wing, and the modern 
left-wing tends to be more focused on indi-
vidual rights, both in the form of human 
rights and in general. Ironically, though, 
this is actually a huge deviation from the
traditional Labor Zionism, which was far more collectivist than any mainstream party today and, ideologically, prioritized state interests over individual interests.

**IIM: What is the role of the international community in Israeli security?**

**BROM:** Let me start by saying that the role of the international community is far greater in the 21st century than ever before. No country, not even a superpower, can undertake its security alone. For instance, the United States today, even after emerging as the dominant world power after the Soviet Union’s collapse at the end of the Cold War, relies on other countries in the security sector. The United States could not effectively tackle security issues such as terror without collaborating with other countries. For this structural reason, the international community is very important in the arena of modern security.

Having said that, we now need to take a step back and ask: how are we defining security and power? Power can be defined as a country’s ability to utilize its force as it would like to. And in this capacity, the international community has much more influence than it did in the past. Individual countries are more constrained in their use of force.

**IIM: In this context of increased international involvement, what are the chief areas for collaboration?**

**BROM:** The world today is more complex than it used to be. In the past, international relationships took place primarily between states and representatives of states. Today, as a result of globalization, there are many more actors in the field. Collaboration with international corporations, for instance, is huge. Israel’s relationship with Intel, for example, is far greater and arguably more significant than its relationship with some countries. I certainly wouldn’t say it trumps Israel’s relationship with a country like the United States, but I’d be tempted to say it’s more important than Israel’s relationship with a country such as Belgium. So, Israel and Israelis are currently building relationships at several levels, from countries to organizations and individuals.

Granted, one can argue that relationships between corporations and organizations are merely a reflection of the relationship between their host states, but I think that’s not true. Take the United Nations, for example. The U.N. is more than just a collection of its member states – it’s a very complex organization with its own internal mechanisms. So you need to have a specific relationship with this organization that goes beyond just a relationship with the countries that are part of it. I think you can see the role of organizational mechanisms by looking at the vastly different type of relationship that Israel has with different councils and sub-organizations within the United Nations.

Even on a state-to-state level, it depends on the type of state Israel is dealing with. Who has a role in decision-making in a particular state? When Israel is dealing with a democracy, then there is an important role not just for collaboration between governments but, perhaps even more so, for collaborations on the ground at the individual level. But even here, certain groups of individuals have more of an influence on decision-making. Intellectuals, for instance, can frequently have a great deal of influence on policymakers and on public opinion. So collaboration with these groups is extremely important.

**IIM: Can you speak about your own experiences this year at a think tank?**

**BROM:** Working in a U.S. think tank has two primary benefits. First of all, it is a learning experience about a particular country and a particular society. More specifically, it helps you educate yourself about a country’s challenges and subsequent policies, because delving into these issues is exactly the nature of work at a think tank. This experience has been extremely valuable, because when I return to Israel I will have a better grasp of the United States, what the rationale may be behind its policies, which forces or mechanisms are driving certain policies and so forth. As part of my work at a think tank back in Israel, I write papers that recommend certain informed policy prescriptions. If I am able to understand Israel’s environment in a better or broader sense through my time in the United States, this will allow me to generate better policy papers. This type of effect can be amplified if ties are created between Israeli and American think tanks that serve as the basis for ongoing collaboration. Such collaboration, usually in the form of annual or semi-annual meetings, is obviously not as intensive as spending the year in the United States, but it can be illuminating, especially when combined with the year abroad.

The second benefit to being at a U.S. think tank is the influence in the other direction. Just as I am learning more about Americans by being here, my colleagues are learning more about Israel and its policies through their dialogues and interactions with me. I can tell you that, after several months of being here, my colleagues regularly ask for my take on news that they see coming out of Israel. This type of connection has a broader impact, particularly in the United States. In the U.S., policy scholars at think tanks tend to be closely linked to actual policymakers in government. There’s a great deal of consultation with think tank professionals by government officials. And there’s often a revolving door, where senior scholars from think tanks will later be appointed to certain expert positions in government. So being able to engage think tank colleagues in informed dialogue on Israel has the potential to have a very far-reaching impact.
The Way Forward

The Israel Institute’s third Annual Forum tackles the challenges and opportunities in a turbulent region

BY JILL WYLER

Months of news about the turmoil in the Middle East, its impact on Israel and questions over the future of American hegemony in the region made the Israel Institute’s third Annual Forum, titled “The United States, Israel and the Middle East: The Way Forward,” particularly timely. The forum, held in New York City on October 26, 2014, gave audience members a better understanding of the current security challenges facing Israel and the broader Middle East, as well as America’s role in shaping the future of the region.

The event featured Dr. Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations, Mr. David Ignatius, an editor and columnist for the Washington Post and Major General Yaakov Amidror, former National Security Advisor of Israel. It was moderated by the Israel Institute’s president, Ambassador Itamar Rabinovich.

There was wide agreement among the panelists that the Middle East has been in tumult over the past several years to what may be an unprecedented degree. The region has undergone a complete disintegration of the old order, as evidenced by the increase of sectarian violence in Iraq, civil war in Syria, chaos and political violence in Yemen and an unstable security situation in Libya. Islamic extremism, most prominently embodied by ISIS, is on the rise across borders. The increasingly precarious situation has forced the Obama administration to constantly be playing defense in an attempt to mitigate regional turmoil.

According to Yaakov Amidror, three major factors triggered the escalating changes in the region, some beginning decades ago. The first was Ayatollah
Khomeini’s success in taking power in Iran in 1979, which served as an inspiration for Islamists elsewhere in the region as an example of a sharia-ruled state. The second factor was Afghanistan’s success in fighting against the Soviet Union, which symbolized the ability to fight and win against a superpower. The third factor was the outbreak of the “Arab Spring.” The combination of these three factors has created a combustible and volatile Middle East where the old assumptions about stability no longer apply.

According to Amidror, “what is currently happening in the Middle East is a historic trend and it is impossible to put a stop to historic trends.” David Ignatius strengthened the feeling of inevitability, asserting that, “the neighborhood was hit by something it has not yet understood, absorbed or figured out a clear response to.” Richard Haass described this geopolitical situation as analogous to the decades-long political and religious struggle that transformed Europe in the early 17th century. In short, the region is experiencing a political sea-change whose end and ultimate resolution are nowhere in sight. Moreover, as Ignatius put it, “the problem is we cannot speak with any clarity about the new order.”

In the face of such turmoil and uncertainty, the big question for the panel experts was, how shall the U.S. deal with the current complex situation in the Middle East?

A number of panelists suggested that the United States must be a leader of necessity. Ignatius noted that in all his years of experience in the region he cannot remember a time when there was such a strong outcry for American help and intervention. He emphasized that, while the U.S. does not have a magic formula to bring order to the region, America’s full disengagement would be severely destabilizing, with catastrophic consequences for American allies such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Amidror concurred, noting that there is currently no alternative to American involvement, given the limited capabilities of the U.N., E.U. countries or even Russia to intervene substantively in the region.

Nevertheless, while Ignatius and Amidror agreed that U.S. involvement was critical, they were not optimistic that it was forthcoming. Ignatius noted that American involvement in Syria has been minimal and is unlikely to substantially increase, lamenting that “a stronger American policy in Syria might have prevented the catastrophic situation that we are facing now.” Amidror also emphasized the challenge of garnering American political
will for extensive continued involvement in the Middle East. As he put it, “the Americans are fed up after 100 years in which they saved the world.”

In contrast to Amidror and Ignatius’s views on the efficacy of American power in tamping down regional turmoil, Haass was skeptical that a stronger and more involved U.S. would have been able to change the face of things. According to Haass, “there are developments taking place in the Middle East that transcend the ability of any outside actor, no matter how competent, to control.” As an example, he pointed to ISIS and the difficulty states have in successfully confronting violent non-state actors and insurgents. Haass further cautioned against looking to American involvement as a cure, noting that the U.S. “bears a great deal of responsibility” for the current situation and, to a degree, has actually contributed to regional instability. Therefore, Haass argued for a middle ground of “something between washing our hands and thinking [the U.S.] can remake or reorder this part of the world.” He emphasized that America must be much more cautious today than it was in the past, particularly given that the old order in the Middle East was better for U.S. interests than the current chaos. This drew broad agreement from the other panelists, with Haass neatly summarizing his view that “it ought to become a rule that you don’t use military force, or other tools to foster political change in countries, unless you have a pretty good sense of what is going to come afterwards, or what you are prepared to do to see that the consequence is better.”

In light of this, panelists offered potential concrete paths toward this type of more cautious policy. In analyzing the situation in Syria and noting that Syrian President Bashar Assad was losing ground to extremist rebel groups, Ignatius argued that America should focus on finding local national groups it can support, and work with regional governments that it can trust, such as Jordan. Haass, while stressing caution, mentioned that America should not be bound at this point in time by a focus on preserving existing borders for their own sake. He emphasized that “the map [of the current Middle East] is not sacred,” and pointed to support for an independent Kurdistan as a potential policy.

Turning to Israel, Amidror acknowledged that the regional turmoil created more challenges, but added that it also created opportunities. He was hopeful that Israel would be clever enough to understand those opportunities and identify any common basis for creating and enhancing better relations with its neighboring countries. The panelists largely agreed that solving the Palestinian issue was an important element of improving relations with other countries in the region, due to the enormous pressure on Arab leaders by their people on that matter. Haass granted that ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would likely not affect other significant problems in the Middle East, such as ISIS’s growing power or the Syrian civil war, but emphasized that the stalemate with the Palestinians has caused a harmful diplomatic vacuum for Israel. He believed it could be ameliorated by finding a way to restart efforts toward a permanent and lasting solution for the Palestinian issue.

Also among Israel’s key challenges, the panelists pointed to the Iranian nuclear threat as a main issue going forward. In particular, in a scenario that he described as “a nightmare for everyone,” Amidror said that Iran’s development of nuclear weapons would trigger nuclear aspirations among many other countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey.

In this state of threat and uncertainty, the panelists were cautiously optimistic about U.S.-Israel operations. Ignatius conceded that there was currently a high level of mutual mistrust between the countries, but emphasized that Israel remained a “bright spot” in an increasingly troubled and tragic region. Haass strengthened that point by adding that, despite a contentious relationship between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a strong and deep relationship between the two countries has continued unhindered. Ultimately, as Ignatius emphasized, “a stronger U.S.-Israeli

“A strong U.S.-Israeli understanding about the future and an ability to work together with a dynamic strategic understanding is important during turbulent times.”

— DAVID IGNATIUS
Basic Questions Revisited

An exploration of Zionism, Jewish statehood and Israel's identity challenges in the 21st century

BY NOA LEVANON KLEIN

In March of this year, Israel’s government called for early elections, a move largely triggered by political disagreements within the governing coalition over nationality and national service that cut to the very nature of the state itself. Campaign slogans leading up to the latest election, as well as the coalition discussions that followed it, highlighted divisions between factions in Israel over the role of different national values. Debates raged between the parties about the relative importance of socioeconomic concerns and security concerns. In the days prior to the election, controversy erupted over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s articulated position on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, Israeli borders and the feasibility of a two-state solution. Even within the right-wing bloc that was included in or courted for the coalition, different emphases on welfare, NGOs, settlements and other issues illustrated additional division over values. In short, from the nation-state bill to arguments about the appropriateness of buses on Shabbat, political issues in Israeli news point to an increasingly divided society debating over the meaning and importance of democracy, equality and religious identity in a Zionist context. These arguments are not, however, new or a function of the current Israeli government. They rather hearken back to the very beginnings of the Jewish nationalist movement that came to be known as Zionism and the challenging interplay between preserving and strengthening a nation and building a state. The questions over what Zionism entails, how Israel’s Jewish identity
inform the institutions of the state and how Israeli Jews and diaspora Jews engage with these issues in different ways are not new phenomena or abstract questions. They are ones that Israel has constantly wrestled with to varying degrees throughout its history, and they are more relevant to the real world than ever.

At a conference this past October, entitled “Israel: Basic Questions Revisited,” the Israel Institute hosted a day of debates to tackle these questions and place them in the proper historical and political context. In introductory remarks, the Institute’s Executive Director, Ari Roth, explained that Zionism remains “a core feature of identity for those within Israel, and those who identify with Israel [in the 21st century, yet] its precise meanings have changed.” To explore the evolution of this concept and examine modern manifestations of Zionism, expert panels discussed the meaning of modern Zionism, the meaning and place of Judaism in a ‘Jewish State’ and Israel’s role relative to diaspora Jewry and other nations. The event featured a wide array of prominent scholars and policy experts including renowned historians Anita Shapira, Derek Penslar and Noam Stillman; legal scholar Ruth Gavison; political scientists Kenneth Stein and Yoram Peri; think tankers Elliott Abrams of the Council on Foreign Relations and Tamara Cofman Wittes of Brookings; former Israeli government ministers Dan Meridor and Yuli Tamir; former National Security Advisor Yaakov Amidror; Israel’s former Supreme Court President Dorit Beinisch; and journalist Jeffrey Goldberg.

In seeking to define Zionism, Prof. Yoram Peri, who heads the Israel Studies Center at the University of Maryland, quoted the renowned Israeli author Amos Oz when considering these fundamental questions. Zionism, Oz says, is a “family name” that can pair with many first names – national, religious, secular and so forth. Also grappling with definitions was Prof. Derek Penslar, a historian of modern Judaism and Israel Studies at Oxford who called Zionism a keyword, “a term that has a specific special and chronological origin, but then takes on multiple meanings in time and space.” Zionism “can mean all sorts of things: It’s a theory, it’s a practice, it’s an international movement and developmental project. It’s an effect, it’s an ideology. And outside of the Jewish world, Zionism has also had many meanings that diverge, or can diverge considerably, from meanings attached to it within the Jewish communities of the world, including Israel.” Penslar identified at least eight categories of Zionism, ranging across behaviors and ideologies. These included action-based philanthropic Zionism in the diaspora, premised on “building and sustaining the Jewish State;” so-called Hebraic nationalism, which focuses on Hebrew language and literature as a source of a cultural emotional attachment to the land of Israel; and even catastrophic Zionism, which originated in the “existential fear” resulting from the mass persecutions of Jews in the first half of the twentieth century and culminating in the Holocaust. Penslar emphasized that the varieties of Zionism in his typology were just the ones associated with the Jewish world and that...
he had not delved into connotations of Zionism in the non-Jewish world, which are often negative.

The most well-known version of the term Zionism, upon which the institutions of the state are based, is political Zionism as articulated by Jewish thinkers and leaders such as Theodor Herzl, Leo Pinsker, and Ze’ev Jabotinsky. In its early days, the term described the effort to bring about a sovereign state for the Jewish people, one of many nationalist movements aspiring to such a goal in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Following the establishment of the state of Israel, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion declared that, post-statehood, Israeli patriotism could and would replace Zionism. Yet today, more than 67 years after the establishment of the state, Zionism remains a term with relevance and resonance for Jews and non-Jews, both in Israel and abroad. As politics have evolved over the 67 years of Israel’s statehood, the term has taken on new meanings for different groups, making Zionism a hot-button topic in a way that is reminiscent of the movement’s early days.

This diffusion is starkly exemplified by the ongoing debate over a proposed nation-state bill that, according to its language, seeks to “[define] the identity of the state of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People, and [anchor] the values of the state of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.” Proponents claim that such a bill will merely solidify the national principles articulated in other founding Israeli documents. To wit, they note that the “Jewish and democratic” formulation appears in previous basic laws, such as Israel’s basic law on human dignity and liberty. Meanwhile, critics say that this bill prioritizes the Jewish identity of the state over democratic consensus. Arguably, this debate glosses over an important preexisting issue: the term ‘Jewish State’ is not an explicit one. As several conference participants noted, the precise Jewish identity of Israel is, in and of itself, unarticulated and left deliberately ambiguous.

Ruth Gavison, a law professor who specializes in legal frameworks surrounding Israel’s vision as a Jewish and democratic state, emphasized that the meaning of Judaism from a legal and legislative perspective is “very thin.” Rather than articulating a set of ideological tenets about Judaism, Zionism merely affords Jews a platform—in the form of a state—in which their majority within a territorial base permits them to determine the meaning of their Jewishness and the way that Jewish culture is transmitted nationally. “It’s not only about existence, it’s about the culture, about the possibility [to have a state where] Hebrew is the language, the Jewish calendar is the calendar and Jewishness and Judaism are not totally privatized,” Gavison explained. Zionism, and the ultimate creation of the state of Israel, brought about a unique new reality for Jews, in which they finally had agency over religious and cultural practices in the public sphere. But the freedom of choice that comes with being a majority Jewish culture has inherently engendered an ongoing debate about religious practice.

Former government minister Dan Meridor, in explaining the ambiguity about Jewish practice in the country’s founding documents, argued that it was a deliberate innovation of Zionist thinkers such as Herzl and Ben-Gurion: “Centuries ago, the Jewish nation was defined by a religion. What Zionism did was define Judaism differently. In the past, if you left religion, you left the Jewish people. Zionism emphasized that Jews are a nation, not just a religion. That national identity, not the religious identity, is the basis for self-determination.” This distinction between Jews as a nation and Jews as a religion, said Meridor, is what enabled the pursuit of Jewish sovereignty in the pre-independence era. Therefore, in discussing Israel as a Jewish State, he noted that it is important to speak “in national terms, not in religious terms.”

Yet, as Derek Penslar noted in his classifications of Zionism, a number of categories of Zionism that have developed since the term’s conception in the 1800s are rooted in religion. For instance, prior to the development of political Zionism, there was the phenomenon of messianic-restorationist Zionism, a Judeo-Christian tradition rooted in the belief that Jewish presence in the holy land would hasten the arrival of the messiah. Additionally, there is Halachic Zionism, which sees Jewish religious fulfillment through the act of dwelling in the land of Israel; it has been historically more important to religious Zionists than the messianic element of Zionism and continues to be a powerful force behind religious Zionism. Such Zionism is the driving force of the settler movement, which views the elements of Zionism and traditional Judaism as inseparable.

In stark contrast, another major stream of Zionism is fervently secular. Labor Zionism, most prominently evoked by the kibbutz movement, was critical in the lead up to and early days of the state through its promotion of industry, trade unionism and collective agricultural settlement. Territorial control in this particular tradition was strategic, rather than ideological, meaning that borders were drawn with an eye to promoting security and sovereignty, regardless of biblical significance. In practice, Labor Zionism helped build up the state’s military institutions and promoted immigration and immigrant absorption, as part of the notion that Zionism is “a project for personal and collective transformation.”

Both Halachic and Labor Zionism retain active and ardent constituencies in Israel, unsurprisingly heightening the debate over religion in Israel and the religious identity of the state. The prominence of this debate, however, can sometimes obscure two key intervening variables: not all of Israel’s citizens are Jewish and, conversely, not all Jews are Israeli citizens. Critically, Israel’s current Jewish identity manifests itself not because of theocratic
rule but rather because of a substantial Jewish majority in Israel. In this capacity, Dan Meridor emphasized the important role of non-Jewish citizens in Israel, noting that they had more of a say about the Jewish nature of Israel than did Jews in the diaspora. “Decisions regarding the state of Israel – language, war, peace – are made by me, and by an Arab living in Nazareth. They’re not made by anybody who’s not a citizen of Israel,” he explained. “The shareholders of the state of Israel are the citizens of Israel. What is the role of Jews in diaspora? I would say that in our basic belief, vision, ideology, Jews in the diaspora are option-holders, not shareholders. They cannot vote.”

This important distinction between citizen voting rights and diaspora opinions has a far-reaching impact, well beyond the issue of Jewish practice within Israel’s borders. Notably, it affects Israel’s relations with the international Jewish population as well as its policies and relationships in the international community more broadly.

Prof. Kenneth Stein, a professor of Middle Eastern history and political science at Emory University, contended that the citizenship distinction between Jews in Israel and Jews in the diaspora meant that the question of “what does it mean to be Jewish in a Jewish state” is vastly different from “what does it mean to be an American Jew and support the Jewish state.” Likewise, because Jews in America were not as well-versed as Israeli Jews in much of Zionism’s political and intellectual history, manifestations of Zionism in the diaspora are more varied. According to Stein, the importance of Israel to American Jews has diverse foundations, ranging from a historical reminder of the need for Jewish strength to a platform to preserve U.S.-based Jewish identity. Indeed, Derek Penslar identified this as an entire category, noting that Zionism for Jews in the diaspora could be an expression of ethnic identity, with Israeli symbols such as the flag used as a way of displaying Jewish identity and solidarity and not necessarily as a coherent ideology. But beyond this, as Stein mentioned, a critical number of American Jews simply do not identify with Israel at all as part of their Jewish identity.

This ambivalence on Israel and Zionism among diaspora Jews is reflected in the lack of international consensus on
Life in Israel as a Project

The early waves of Zionist immigration to Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine saw idealistic youths leaving their homes and families to build a state in harsh and uncharted land. These days, those making aliyah (immigration to Israel) land in an established and technologically connected nation, yet American immigrants to Israel still seem to feel stirrings of the original Zionist vision.

According to Teddy Fischer, the co-founder of an egalitarian minyan in Tel Aviv who moved to Israel from Massachusetts, immigrants, in contrast to native-born Israelis, are making a choice about engaging in the Zionist project through the act of moving. “You don’t need to found a kibbutz or a community, you can just participate: be there, pay taxes, take part.” Because such action is voluntary, “it’s a huge expression of Zionism,” he explained. This notion was especially poignant to Fischer at his job as a structural engineer. “I’ve worked in infrastructure in America and when you build something there, it’s great. But in Israel, it has meaning,” he said. “You’re literally building the land, putting something there that wasn’t there before. There’s a song we sang in the first grade, Eretz Israel Shelhi, with the line, [‘Who built this? Who made this? All of us together.’] No one sings songs about paving roads in the United States.”

Benji Lovitt, a comedian and educator from Texas, concurred. “I made aliyah from the US in 2006 after several years of working for Young Judaea Israel Programs. After managing a summer teen tour during the Second Lebanon War, I never thought I could do more for Israel than then. How wrong I was... Living in Israel is the most meaningful thing I have ever done – helping to raise morale of my fellow olim and friends abroad when times are tough, trying to do my little part to make the country a better place and just being a part of the lucky few to live in the place our people yearned to return to for 2000 years.”
Election Season, Again

Israelis went to the polls in March, for the fourth time in less than ten years. Examining how Israelis elect their leaders helps explain their frequent returns to the voting booth.

BY DR. REUT ITZKOVITCH-MALKA

The Israeli political system is an enigma, presenting us with a clear dichotomy. On the one hand, it is a clear success. Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East – a region dominated by repressive and authoritarian regimes – and a developed, Western, OECD-member state. The political system can certainly claim (some of) the credit for this: it largely manages to channel societal inputs, to handle the country’s pressing security issues and to preserve an effective rule of law. On the other hand, the system is often characterized as dysfunctional, broken and corrupt. The unique and obscure electoral system, combined with the social diversity of Israeli society, results in a large, fragmented party system, making it hard for governments to form, survive and enact policy. Political trust in democratic institutions is dropping sharply and public dissatisfaction with the system and its leaders is growing.

Many of the problems of the Israeli political system are attributed to its electoral system. This system is unique from a comparative perspective and is often characterized as an “extreme” electoral system. When
voter turnout and party fragmentation. Even in Israel’s most recent election, which saw a rise in votes for the traditional mainstream parties of Likud and Labor (in a union with the centrist Hatnua party) relative to more extreme parties on the right and left, the victorious Likud party was ultimately only able to garner a quarter of Israeli votes. Among the contributing factors to this phenomenon, aside from the electoral system, are the growing personalization of politics and the candidate-selection methods that parties use in order to formulate their electoral lists.

As a researcher of Israeli politics, focusing on various aspects of political representation, I find the unique institutional arrangements in Israel fascinating. I believe that studying these arrangements using a comparative perspective can benefit our understanding of both Israel and other countries. The events surrounding Israel’s most recent elections, on March 17th, 2015, illustrate the trends and challenges that I study.

Analyzing the political scene in the months and weeks surrounding Election Day reveals a number of interesting discoveries. First, let’s recall how it is that Israel faced elections again, only two years after the previous ones. By doing so, we can get some insight into the difficulties of sustaining a stable coalition in Israel. In early December 2014, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fired two of his senior cabinet ministers – Yair Lapid, who served as the Minister of Finance, and Tzipi Livni, who served as the Minister of Justice. The two also happened to be the leaders of two main coalition partners in Netanyahu’s coalition – Yesh Atid and Hatnua, respectively. By doing this, Netanyahu broke his own coalition, forcing new elections upon the system. Netanyahu claimed that the two were disloyal to him, frequently publicly criticizing him and the government’s policy. This was an unsurprising finale for Netanyahu’s 26-month-old coalition, which was characterized by constant inner disagreements and tensions. It is also a prime example of the difficulties of governance given oversized, ideologically dispersed coalitions.

Second, as stated, no single party represents a large constituency of voters. Going forward, the Likud party, which claimed the largest voter block, holds only 25 percent of the Knesset’s 120 seats. This has a number of important consequences. One is that a coalition government is a given in the Israeli political reality. Granted, coalitions are a feature of most

Dr. Reut Itzkovitch-Malka

Dr. Reut Itzkovitch-Malka is an Israel Institute Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law at Stanford University. Her research interest centers on political representation from a comparative politics perspective, in particular legislative studies and gender and political representation. She has conducted large-scale, cross-national comparative research focusing on legislators’ perceptions of representation and on the link between such perceptions and party unity. This research provides a first-time inside look into the dynamics surrounding party unity and the drivers behind legislators’ behavior. She also researches a broad range of issues related to gender and politics, including women’s substantive and descriptive representation, the adoption of gender quotas for women and the gender gap in voting. Itzkovitch-Malka received a Ph.D. in political science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2014, where she won the President Fellowship for outstanding doctoral students. She holds an M.A. with honors in political science and a B.A. with honors in political science and history, both from the Hebrew University.
parliamentary democracies. However, unlike most coalition governments in Western democracies, the Israeli coalition has to include a large number of parties to reach a majority and therefore combines parties from a wide ideological spectrum, leading to the governance issues we are accustomed to see. This is not a new phenomenon: a recent study showed that in the year 2010 Israel had the largest number of parties in a ruling coalition, compared to more than a dozen other Western democracies, including Germany, Sweden, Japan, Ireland, the Netherlands and even Belgium. The other consequence is that, based purely on math, the Prime Minister’s party – the senior partner in the coalition – is not able to constitute a majority in its own coalition. This forces it to give big “payoffs” to its other coalition partners, such as important ministerial and committee positions. This too is not an unusual scenario in Israeli politics. It has been two decades since the Prime Minister’s party had a majority in its own coalition, which again brings us back to issues of governance and stability.

Third, the constant emergence of new parties, which is yet another reason for the weakening of large parties and the growing fragmentation of the party system, is very much still present in Israeli politics. This election it is the Kulanu party, headed by former Likud MK, Moshe Kahlon. In the previous elections it was the Yesh Atid party, headed by the popular journalist and publicist, Yair Lapid. In 2006 it was Gil, the pensioners’ party; in 1999 it was Shinui, the ultra-secular party. Such parties often become the “elections’ surprise,” winning a relatively large number of seats, but they usually only survive one or two terms and vanish as quickly as they appear. Nevertheless, they contribute to the continuous shrinkage of large parties and to the extremely large number of parties, both in the parliament and in the government.

Given these problems, the Israeli political system is constantly debating a reform. This election it was Netanyahu who launched his campaign by promising Israeli voters to change the system of government by offering a new law, according to which the head of the largest party will automatically serve as Prime Minister and enjoy a fixed term. While most reform initiatives fail, this past term the Knesset did pass a minor reform, raising the electoral threshold from 2.5 to 3.25 percent. This was done in order to deal with some of the problems of Israeli politics: to reduce the number of parties in the Knesset and in government, to strengthen large parties and to ease governance. However, many claimed at the time (myself included) that this minor reform consists of a mere cosmetic change that would not be able to solve the inherent problems of Israeli politics. And indeed, even with the increased electoral threshold, the leading party has been faced with the same challenge of piecing together a patchwork coalition.

As it appears now, the 2015 election was no different than the ones preceding it. Unless a serious reform is undertaken, Israel will continue to suffer from a hyper-fragmented party system, coalitions will continue to include (too) many parties and governance and stability will be constantly challenged. Yes, the consensual elements in Israel’s institutional design – the proportional representation electoral system, the multi-party system and the oversized coalitions – are suitable to the state’s diverse and multi-faceted nature. Nonetheless, moderating some of the more extreme features would certainly benefit the system. Here, I believe, the comparative perspective might come in handy, as we can learn from the experience of others. As far as institutional design goes, being special is not necessarily an advantage.
Military Ethics

Examining military pedagogy provides insight into the role of ethics and morality in the IDF

BY JAMES EASTWOOD

In what has now become a familiar pattern, the events in Gaza last summer generated an international debate about the morality of the conduct of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu restated the oft-repeated claim that the IDF is “the most moral army in the world,” while a host of critics and non-governmental organizations pointed to a number of transgressions of international humanitarian law. Inside Israel itself, controversy over the so-called “Hannibal Procedure” (according to which massive force can be used to recover captured soldiers, even at the risk of their death) also put Netanyahu’s claim under scrutiny.

My doctoral research does not aim to prove or disprove either of these sets of claims. Rather, it investigates why and how arguments about the morality of the IDF have acquired such importance in Israel in recent years. Where has this intense interest in military ethics come from? How does it manifest itself inside the IDF? What purposes does it serve, and what are its consequences for Israeli politics and society more broadly?
improving combat motivation ahead of reducing the level of violence used. One example of such educational techniques was the use of drama workshops to explore moral issues that soldiers had encountered or might encounter at checkpoints. Rather than acting as a method of disciplinary accountability, these sessions were aimed at turning the soldier into an empathetic subject who remained morally pure. By contrast, the discussion of ethics during operational debriefings, where disciplinary and legal procedures may have followed, was rare.

Further evidence for the importance of ethics can be seen at Israeli pre-military academies, where I carried out fieldwork and conducted interviews. These academies now attract over 3,300 students per year, making them the largest pre-army education program. Although these academies began in the national religious movement, they represent an increasingly diverse student body, with a growing number of secular students and students from the social periphery. These academies propagate a culture of self-improvement, in which personal, moral and religious education is seen as a vital constituent of military preparation. They bind a project of individual ethical self-cultivation with the pursuit of “meaningful service” in the IDF. Academies have succeeded in significantly increasing graduates’ rates of enlistment.

A common argument is that the scale and intensity of Israel’s counterinsurgency operations since the collapse of the Oslo Process in 2001, combined with international attention, have necessitated this concern with ethics. Military ethics, in this view, are seen to provide external legitimacy to Israel’s wars. There is truth to this argument, but my research indicates that it does not tell the whole story. For one thing, existing scholarship indicates that this role of external legitimation has tended to be taken up by the growing military-legal apparatus – including humanitarian lawyers inserted into the operational decision-making process – rather than ethics training. Another consideration is that the IDF’s interest in military ethics pre-dates more recent international controversies.

A more convincing account of the importance of ethics to the IDF relates to internal factors, and specifically to the patterns of military mobilization and organization that have taken shape in Israeli society. In this internal context, it is necessary to understand the importance of ethics in the IDF as a practice that helps to secure the military participation and motivation of soldiers.

To explore this issue, I began by looking at the history of ethics in the IDF, examining the development of the IDF ethical code and the related philosophical debates over IDF ethical doctrine. My findings suggest that the IDF code of ethics, first authored in the 1990s, did not originate from a concern by military leadership about the level of violence used against civilians in military operations. Instead, it was drafted (and later redrafted) in order to find new ways to motivate soldiers to serve in the military, initially to cultivate their sense of professional identity and later to strengthen a sense of cultural, national and moral identification with the IDF.

From this starting point, I examined the current methods of ethical pedagogy used in the IDF, both for officers and for regular soldiers. A major concern of IDF ethical pedagogy is helping soldiers to maintain their humanity or, literally, “keep a human image.” Operationally, I noticed a prioritization of improving combat motivation ahead of reducing the level of violence used. One example of such educational techniques was the use of drama workshops to explore moral issues that soldiers had encountered or might encounter at checkpoints. Rather than acting as a method of disciplinary accountability, these sessions were aimed at turning the soldier into an empathetic subject who remained morally pure. By contrast, the discussion of ethics during operational debriefings, where disciplinary and legal procedures may have followed, was rare.

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James Eastwood

James Eastwood is a Ph.D. student at the School for Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, working under the supervision of Prof. Laleh Khalil and Dr. Yair Wallach. His research concentrates on the intersections between ethics and militarism in Israeli society, with a particular emphasis on the role of soldiers’ testimony. He is an Israel Institute Doctoral Fellow.
to combat units and officer courses. Their success and rapid expansion is a clear sign of the central role that ethics play in military motivation in Israel.

This strong emphasis on ethics in Israeli military service has also had interesting consequences for the character of political contestation in Israel. The final part of my research explored the work of the veterans’ political organization, Breaking the Silence, an organization founded to articulate a moral critique of Israeli occupation through the collection of soldiers’ testimonies. Examining the process of testimony collection and the public educational activities of this group, I noticed the continued importance of moral language in the discourse of this organization.

By focusing on the ethics of IDF action, this controversial organization has been able to insulate itself somewhat from criticism and consequently gain access to audiences who might be otherwise unwilling to listen to its arguments (including pre-military academies, where Breaking the Silence manages to be very active). However, this focus has also constrained the organization, limiting its political critique to a moral denunciation of the actions of the military and state. Very often, as I witnessed in observing its educational activities, soldier testimonies are perceived as evidence of the need for purely moral improvement within the framework of the status quo rather than for the transformative political response (territorial withdrawal) that the organization calls for.

Taken together, these various contributions of ethics to the Israeli military suggest its profound importance in sustaining combat motivation, but also in shielding the military from public criticism. In my view, this explains the central role of morality in debates about operations such as those recently undertaken in Gaza. The arena of military ethics has proven operatively and ideologically useful to the IDF and that is the primary reason for its prominence. Assessments of whether and how far this has, in practice, protected civilians in times of war will have to be debated separately.
Echoes of Revisionism

Ideological Struggles of Early Zionism and Their Impact on Modern Israel

BY DR. AVI SHILON

In the summer of 2004, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon surprised the world with the announcement of a plan to disengage from the Gaza Strip and a few settlements in northern Samaria. From the moment his plan was made public, Israeli society was set abuzz. The idea of evacuating Jewish settlements was contentious and led to disturbing predictions of the future. Many were apprehensive of a civil war.

At that time, as I was completing my M.A. in Jewish history at Tel Aviv University, I came across Open Season, a book by Yaakov Shavit published in 1976. The book was named after the so-called “season,” a series of operations undertaken by Hagana and Palmach men in 1944 and 1945 against the dissident factions of the Etzel (or Irgun), led by Menachem Begin. The national institutions of the Yishuv (the Jewish population in Palestine) had decided to pursue the dissident factions as a response to the latter’s violent actions against the British, which were undertaken without the Yishuv’s approval and were considered by its leadership to be dangerous and counterproductive to the Zionist cause. During the “season,” members of the dissident factions were extradited, imprisoned and even severely
beaten. With the preparations for the Disengagement in the background, I thought that it would be interesting to explore how the broader Yishuv had coped with the stress of intra-Jewish conflict.

I wanted to examine the events of the “season” from the side of the victimized group because, at this point, the academic research on the Zionist Right was relatively meager. This original academic project on the “season” sparked over a decade of research on the pre-independence Revisionist Zionists and one of their most prominent figures, Menachem Begin.

My research on Begin and his Etzel organization uncovered a picture that was more complex and interesting than the conventional myths. For instance, one of the best-known independence-era stories involves the “season” itself. I found that the well-known narrative, according to which Hagana men had persecuted Etzel men and Begin ordered his men not to respond in order to avoid a civil war, was more complicated. Indeed, Begin ordered restraint during actual events of direct conflict, but was not necessarily as calm in response to the intra-Jewish tension during this time. When many of the men of the Irgun were jailed, and Etzel members increased pressure on Begin to retaliate, he suggested a rather extreme solution – in protest of the Hagana’s behavior, Etzel men would converge in Jerusalem and commit suicide en masse, evoking Masada. His deputies perceived this as a momentary mental collapse due to the pressure weighing on him and did not relate seriously to the suggestion.

Begin’s suicide proposal seems to suggest a tempestuous character, as well as a worldview framed by the traditional pattern of Jewish persecution and redemption, both of which would have echoes in his later behavior. Reading early stories of Begin led me to believe that this Israeli leader, who is mainly known to the public by his years as prime minister (1977-1983), could not be fully understood without examining his leadership of Israel in the context of his prior moves in the Etzel and in the opposition. For this reason, I was inspired to research and write a comprehensive Begin biography.

The importance of Begin is immense as regards broader trends in Israeli society. Many elements of Israeli society were greatly influenced by Begin’s years in power.
incarnation of the Revisionist party, has come to be seen by most Israelis as pro-traditional although the founder of Revisionism, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, was a well-known and avowed secularist.

I arrived at some interesting and unexpected conclusions. Firstly, Jabotinsky’s disposition toward religion was more complex than generally depicted. He indeed began his political journey in hostility to Rabbinical Judaism. He was inspired by the liberal outlook of central Europe and desired to create the character of a new Jew. But from the 1930s and on, he developed an attitude that may be defined as religiosity. He emphasized the importance of the spiritual dimension in modern life in regards to the need of man, secular and rational as he may be. But he did not have in mind the manner in which his heir, Begin, tightened the bond between religion, in its Orthodox version, and the nation. This is the crucial difference between Begin and Jabotinsky. It is also a significant difference between Begin and Ben-Gurion – who wanted to draw a direct line from the Palmach to the bible and establish modern Jewish nationalism in Israel upon the basic principles of the biblical era rather than rabbinic principles that had been developed by Jews in exile.

Begin endeavored to impart traditional Jewish values to Israeli society, and his attitude toward religion is the foundation upon which the bond between the Mizrahim and the Likud was woven, since the Mizrahim also understood Zionism as the expression of the national dimension of the traditional liturgical writings, rather than as a new occurrence. Furthermore I found that Begin’s heirs are in fact close to the early Jabotinsky secular outlook on religion. However, the identity of the movement that Begin brought about – both the political alliance between the Right and the religious faction, and an affinity for Greater Israel that, since 1967, became a substitute for the affinity for tradition – have contributed to the Likud being perceived as pro-traditionalist, contrary to its original mode.

Most recently, I have switched my focus slightly from the Revisionist movement to a different stream of Zionism. My latest research has dealt with the later years of David Ben-Gurion, a period that has been scantily researched. By digging in his archive and conducting new interviews with his compatriots late in life, I wanted to shed light on a rare perspective: how the founding father viewed his handiwork after he created the establishment and broke away from it. The resulting book, *Ben-Gurion, Epilogue*, is due to appear in English and is now in the process of being translated.

Ben-Gurion was a fascinating figure also in his later years. From my perspective, his greatness stems from his dynamic way of thinking and his ability to change his positions and practices throughout his life. This was not because he was drifting with every new trend; on the contrary, he always anchored his positions in a well-explained worldview, based on history and his philosophical values. Rather, he was willing to change because he believed that unexpected turns and twists are history’s bread and butter and they require the will to adapt.

In fact, this way of thinking is also one of the main differences between Begin and Ben-Gurion. While Begin was preoccupied by the need to preserve Jewish tradition also in the modern era, Ben-Gurion had always strived to adjust it to the needs of the future. This difference between them has affected many of their deeds and thoughts and, jointly, has shaped the main streams of political thought and activity in Israel today.
A Different Lens

Young Israeli Writers Introduce Other Young Israeli Writers in the U.S.

BY MARGE GOLDWATER

A merican readers have long been famil iar with such Israeli writers as Amos Oz, David Grossman and A.B. Yehoshua, but Israel has a new crop of writers who are beginning to grab some of the headlines. Among them is Assaf Gavron, whose most recent novel, The Hilltop, explores Zionism and its manifestations in Israel today. The Hilltop, which has been hailed as “one of the most important and interesting books of recent years” by the prestigious Bernstein Prize jury in Israel, was awarded its top honor in 2013. Noted scholar Robert Alter observes in the Jewish Review of Books: “The effect in this novel is a probing representation of the settler movement and the ambiguous relation to it of the Israeli government and of the consumerist world of secular Israel.” Bringing the perspective of someone born and bred in Israel in the 1970s and early ’80s, Gavron uses the surrounding conflict as a thread woven into all his work. He has delved into the dilemmas of Israeli life in his previous books, including Almost Dead (2010), which featured a Palestinian narrator and a Jewish Israeli protagonist.

Gavron is an alumnus of the Israel Institute’s Schusterman Visiting Artist program. In its efforts to introduce contemporary Israeli writers to American audiences, and, in particular, to college students, the program has brought writers and other artists from Gavron’s generation to American campuses to teach over the past several years. And they, in turn, have introduced the work of their peers to their students. This enables the program to highlight contemporary Israel through a unique cultural lens.

Gavron, for example, while teaching in the United States, introduced students to a younger generation of Israeli writers including Matan Hermoni, Alex Epstein, Dror Burstein and Dror Mishani.

Dror Burstein later became a Schusterman visiting artist himself. In addition to his career as a successful novelist, Burstein holds a Ph.D. in Hebrew literature and also writes on art and music. Two of his books have been translated into English – Kin, and most recently, Netanya. As a program participant, he taught “Israeli Culture in Literature since the Seventies” at Clark University in Worcester, MA, in Fall 2013. His students read modern works by Sami Berdugo, Etgar Keret and Assaf Schur, in addition to the writings of Israeli literary patriarchs. (He also taught a course on “The Book of Genesis in Art and Literature” nearby at the College of the Holy Cross, while he was in residence at Clark.)

Another program participant, Shimon Adaf, offered a series on film to fiction at the University of Vermont in 2011. In an era of declining humanities enrollments, film/fiction courses are particularly effective at drawing students. A year later Adaf won the prestigious Sapir Prize, Israel’s most prestigious literary award, for his book, Mox Nox. Coming from a Moroccan family, Adaf was able to offer an unusual Israeli perspective to students through his exploration of Mizrahi identity. Adaf gave his personal perspective on the role of ethnicity and minority in Israel during an interview in Strange Horizons in 2013: “Growing up, in Sderot, a small town in the south of Israel, and coming from a religious Moroccan family, that is, a minority in local terms, I couldn’t be further off the conventions of the national story. I felt alienated from Israeli fiction—it was hard for me to identify with the narrative being told and retold in Hebrew books, the characters, the major themes. For me, speculative fiction, both SF and fantasy, offered a different model of identification, and a way to deal critically with the ones found in local literature.”

Like Burstein and Adaf, program participant Sami Berdugo also taught a class in Hebrew literature — at Wesleyan University in 2013. Berdugo, like Adaf, is of Moroccan heritage and is another member of the group of younger writers from the periphery who are now gaining prominence in Israel. In his work, he chronicles some of the struggles of growing up as an outsider. The short film, Shouk, entitled Trade in
English, based on one of Berdugo’s stories, won the Van Leer Award for Best Animation Film last year; he is currently working on other film projects evolving from his writing.

Berdugo, who incorporated the works of many modern Israeli writers into his course, said that the biggest challenge in teaching Hebrew literature on an American campus was overcoming the students’ lack of knowledge about history. While he focused on style and text, he also spent a great deal of time providing context.

Almog Behar, another writer-scholar who participated in the visiting artist program, also noted the importance of context. While he was in residence at Cornell University, Behar gave a course on the literature of Jews from the Arab-Islamic world. He also lectured on the use of Arabic in new Hebrew poetry by writers from the Middle East and North Africa and gave readings of his poetry at Cornell, Harvard, the University of Colorado and other campuses during his semester in the United States.

For Behar, the challenge in the classroom was teaching students coming from different academic backgrounds. Some came from Arab Studies and others from Hebrew Studies and they were unfamiliar with the connections between the two languages, literatures and cultures in modern times.

Bringing younger and fresher writers to teach in the United States helps provide in-depth and contextual knowledge on Israel for Americans who are increasingly curious about the country and its culture. The arts in Israel are thriving at the moment and increasingly accessible abroad, with dance companies touring worldwide and films being screened at festivals and commercial theaters in countries around the world. But among these, literature remains the easiest to export and continues to offer a wide range of viewpoints on modern Israel. By bringing Israeli writers to the United States, the Israel Institute’s Schusterman Visiting Artist Program helps broaden American exposure to Israeli literature and, in this way, to Israel itself.

The Hilltop, a depiction of life in a West Bank settlement, has been hailed as the “Great Israeli Novel” (Time Out Tel Aviv) and is the winner of the prestigious Bernstein Prize

Netanya seeks to transform human history into an intimate family story, and demonstrates how the mind at play can bring a little warmth into a cold universe.
Perspectives on the Past
Anita Shapira, noted historian and biographer, speaks to the Israel Institute about Zionism and Israel as topics of contemporary history

IIM: What are the challenges of studying contemporary history, particularly social processes that may still be in a transformative stage?

SHAPIRA: Studying contemporary history is always open to two types of problems. The first problem is that it requires writing without perspective. We don’t know the results of the processes that we’re researching. In many cases, within fifty years, people will look at our accounts as something obsolete and unsupported by documentation.

The second problem is that, when we write about the heroes of the recent past, we are judged by those who knew these heroes personally and were familiar with their way of thinking. This is something very specific to contemporary history. If I write about Napoleon or Julius Caesar, I will not have their family members, friends or adherents criticizing me for not understanding them as I would when writing about David Ben-Gurion or Yigal Allon. Contemporary history is too recent for people to be capable of disregarding their personal involvement in the drama of history, and the result is that people who disagree with the historian will justify their criticism by saying, “I know this fact personally – I was there.” Direct testimony is very powerful, but it’s not always accurate.

When thinking of contemporary history, I always remember what Zhou Enlai [the first Premier of the People’s Republic of China] said when he was asked for his thoughts on the French Revolution. He answered, “It is too early to tell.” The same is true about contemporary history as a whole. On the other hand, the fact that we are near to the recent past, and thus we share some of the same convictions or relate to the same problems as the heroes of that period, gives our writing an immediacy and authenticity that is sometimes lacking in the dispassionate discussions of earlier periods of history.

IIM: What are the unique challenges of studying Zionism as a historian?

SHAPIRA: We have the challenge of examining a process that is still in the making because we are talking about a process that is not yet completed. As long as the conflict between Jews and Arabs continues, we remain part of the period of the establishment of statehood and of Zionism that has not reached completion. As a result, we face the challenge of being too close to ongoing events and not having perspective. We are involved in what is happening around us. We cannot be neutral. Although we try to be objective and unbiased, we can only say with certainty that, to the best of our knowledge, we are portraying the history of Zionism in the most honest way we can. Is the result a true depiction of the way things are? Yes, from our perspective, but not from the perspective of the Palestinians. Therefore, I presume that when the conflict ends, it will be time to rethink and rewrite the history of Zionism, from a more dispassionate perspective.

IIM: What is the role of biographies in historical research as an academic tool?

SHAPIRA: Biographies are one genre of historical work. The fact that we focus, first and foremost, on a certain figure gives us a unique opportunity to present the broader background as we wish. This is something that is not available to us when we write about a small, specific period of time, in which case we have to go into detail about all of the events of the period. In this way, writing a biography is very rewarding because you feel that you can present the historical vista in the way that you find most satisfactory.

IIM: In particular, what is the role of new biographies of well-known leaders, about whom plenty of biographies already exist?

SHAPIRA: This question is not only relevant to biographies but also to history in general. For instance, historical books about the Second World War number in the hundreds, if not the thousands. However, this doesn’t necessarily mean that the books are repetitious. First of all, there are new documents that get declassified and can be given prominence in new research. But it’s more than that. As time goes by, we get a new perspective about facts that, fifty years earlier, we may have taken for granted. Changing perspectives are sometimes due to the changing of weltanschauung, of the social climate, of culture, not necessarily
connected to the discovery of new facts or documentation. History is in a state of constant flux because each new generation of scholars rewrites history. The same is true of biographies.

Biographies of George Washington written two hundred years ago are not similar to biographies written recently. There is still room for new biographies to be written, and this is true about every subject. Take, for example, Theodor Herzl, whose first biographies were published sixty or seventy years ago. There is now room for a new, updated biography that would not only take into account our traditional knowledge of Herzl’s family or of Vienna and the Hapsburg Empire at that time, but would also include a psychological perspective that was lacking in the early biographies. Our present attitude to the heroes of history is less reverential than in the past. Therefore, even if we don’t have new materials, the biography is nonetheless different. If you read my biography of Ben-Gurion and compare it to the biographies that came out earlier, you will see that, although it includes many of the same facts that were mentioned in the previous biographies, the portrayal of the subject matter is different. For this reason, as I said, history is always in flux. That is the beauty of it. Historians are not simply repeating what the documents say. New scholars bring their own understanding to the old documents, and as a result, the conclusions are always new and challenging.

IIM: How can historians relate to the abundance of biographies on a certain topic, and differentiate between authoritative and non-authoritative ones?

SHAPIRA: Scholars have to use their intuition and their experience. Historical writing is never something objective. The more sensitive the biographer or historian is, the better the work is. The product depends on the character of the historian or biographer and his or her ability to arrive at conclusions based on the gathered materials. The conclusions of various scholars throughout time will not always be the same, nor should they be.

Scholars reading a collection of biographies need to use their judgment about both new and old works to determine which they find more or less convincing. Older accounts might remain relevant despite new perspectives or materials. New biographies are not necessarily better; some recent works have advanced bizarre conclusions that should not be accepted simply because they are new. The assessment of the biographies relies on the wisdom of the scholar reading them.
IIM: Why was Ben-Gurion of particular interest to you as a subject of study?

SHAPIRA: The fact is that Ben-Gurion was not my first choice as a topic of a biography. He was my last choice. I wrote about Berl Katznelson, Yigal Allon and Yosef Haim Brenner, and only afterward did I write about Ben-Gurion. In a way, I was reticent to write about him because Ben-Gurion was a success story and I like heroes who have some tragic elements and whose life story is not all light. Nevertheless, in all of my books, Ben-Gurion was an eminent figure – the hero behind the scenes, the hero behind the heroes. In the biography of Berl Katznelson, he was his best friend and his adherent. In the biography of Yigal Allon, he was the evil hero who ruined the career of the ‘golden sabra’ Allon. I also wrote at least two history books in which Ben-Gurion was a hero. I wrote about his attitude toward the bible and I wrote about his clash with the military command during the War of Independence. Although these books were not biographies, Ben-Gurion played a major role in both.

Lately I felt that the time was ripe to write about Ben-Gurion. He was the central figure in the establishment of Israel, and you cannot write constantly about the establishment of Israel without referencing him. So now that I was older, more experienced and, I would say, more forgiving, I was willing to write about him directly. I came to understand, through writing about him, that no great leader can escape tragedy. Even Ben-Gurion, with his great success, was deserted by his friends and by the Israeli public in the end, and he died lonely and neglected. The tragic end made me understand Ben-Gurion in a way that for me was new and rewarding. He had an interesting and moving human side that somehow previous writers had overlooked.

IIM: What would you characterize as the major trends in the historiography of Zionism in the past century?

SHAPIRA: When Zionism started, it was mainly a cultural movement. It was only after the appearance of Herzl that it became a political movement. So the first accounts of the history of Zionism were actually accounts of the ideology of Zionism. Only at a later stage did we start to get accounts of the political development of Zionism. These covered not only the Zionist idea but also the Zionist political organization. In the third stage of writing, at the time when Labor Zionism came to power, social and economic developments became a major theme. Academic writing about the history of Zionism actually did not start before the 1960s, which means that it’s a very, very young field of study. I was among the first generation of writers on this topic and it was like discovering an unknown continent. Whatever topic we wrote about, we were the first ones to touch it, and it was a very gratifying feeling to be able to discover this unknown land of Zionism. In the ’60s and ’70s, there was still an ongoing collision between academics and political writers who presented history as representatives of a certain political movement. So at that time, academics were the first to try to bring objectivity to writings on Zionism. Later on, in the late 1980s, we saw the emergence of the New Historians, who challenged not only the doings and misdeeds of the Zionist movement but also challenged the basic idea of Jews having the right to establish a state of their own in Palestine. This was a big conflict in the late ’80s and early ’90s and, as a result of this fight, as always tends to occur when we have a clash of schools of thought, both sides benefitted. Today, we see a more sophisticated account of Zionism that takes into consideration the other side’s opinion, but on the other hand, does not give up the idea of a Jewish State and the basic justice of Zionism.
Defining Neighbors
A Search for the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter

BY DR. MICHAEL KOPLOW

The 21st century has seen a vigorous assertion of religion’s role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Long viewed as a nationalist struggle over territory, the last fifteen years have been marked by the strengthening of Islamist groups such as Hamas and the resulting decline of the Palestinian Authority; the rise of national religious political parties in the Knesset; and a new emphasis on the explicitly Jewish character of Israel. Furthermore, a prominent flashpoint of conflict has often been the Temple Mount – an explicitly religious site – whether it be the 2000 visit by Ariel Sharon that is viewed as the starting point of the second intifada or the riots that broke out last fall over Jewish prayer at the site. Many view this emphasis on religion as a new and dangerous development that threatens to turn an intractable but often low-grade conflict into one in which violence is constant and inevitable. To the extent that a conventional wisdom on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict exists, it is that introducing more religion into a nationalist confrontation will only make things worse.

Gribetz maintains that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is not merely a contest over land, but a contest over identity and history. That the earliest encounters between Zionists primarily along religious and ethnic lines without inevitable conflict. According to Gribetz, Jews and Arabs in pre-WWI Ottoman Palestine did not automatically relate to each other as political actors under the frame of a nationalist territorial struggle, but primarily along religious and racial lines. The primary – although not sole – categories for identifying the other side were not Zionist and Palestinian, which are both terms born out of competing nationalisms, but Jew, Christian, and Muslim. The overarching effect was that today’s antagonists viewed each other not in ways that were automatically zero sum and hostile, but in ways that allowed for mutual respect and shared heritage if the parties so chose. While the relevance of this history lesson to today’s situation is unclear, it does serve as a useful demonstration of history’s fluidity, as well as a specific reminder that the seemingly path determinant violence that currently plagues interactions between Israelis and Palestinians was not preordained.

In Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter, Jonathan Gribetz does an impressive task of forcing readers to rethink this narrative by depicting a late 19th century and early 20th century Palestine in which Arabs and Jews related to each other primarily along religious and ethnic lines without inevitable conflict. According to Gribetz, Jews and Arabs in pre-WWI Ottoman Palestine did not automatically relate to each other as political actors under the frame of a nationalist territorial struggle, but primarily along religious and racial lines. The primary – although not sole – categories for identifying the other side were not Zionist and Palestinian, which are both terms born out of competing nationalisms, but Jew, Christian, and Muslim. The overarching effect was that today’s antagonists viewed each other not in ways that were automatically zero sum and hostile, but in ways that allowed for mutual respect and shared heritage if the parties so chose. While the relevance of this history lesson to today’s situation is unclear, it does serve as a useful demonstration of history’s fluidity, as well as a specific reminder that the seemingly path determinant violence that currently plagues interactions between Israelis and Palestinians was not preordained.

Gribetz maintains that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is not merely a contest over land, but a contest over identity and history. That the earliest encounters between Zionists
and Arabs in Palestine took place against a backdrop of feelings of shared commonalities and history was, in Gribetz's words, “not incidental but in fact crucial to how all parties experienced the encounter.” Jews and Arabs related to each other along religious and sometimes racial lines, and these feelings of shared heritage oftentimes led to a desire to understand, rather than demean, the other, in ways both simple and complex. Gribetz lays out a number of instances in which this occurred, examining a variety of primary sources such as the writings of prominent intellectuals, early Zionist newspapers, and Arab literary journals, with a common thread of using textual encounters to elucidate how each side's perceptions of the other side were formed and what variables were key to forming these perceptions.

The most fascinating chapter is Gribetz's dissection of Zionism or the Zionist Question, a manuscript written by the prominent Muslim diplomat and intellectual Muhammad Ruhi al-Khalidi whose aim was to explain both Zionism and Judaism to Muslim readers. The manuscript is one that treats Jews respectfully, but ultimately concludes that Zionism cannot be allowed to succeed. Unlike what one might expect, however, al-Khalidi's argument is not based on political rejection of Jewish nationalism or the Jewish connection to the land of Palestine. In fact, al-Khalidi devotes multiple chapters to Jews' historical connection to the land of Israel, which he entirely accepts. Al-Khalidi's rejection of Zionism was a religious one that saw Zionism as being contrary to the precepts of Judaism itself. Al-Khalidi seized upon an erroneous interpretation of the philosophy of Moses Mendelsohn to assert that Jewish nationalism in the form of Zionism and Jewish religion were incompatible. That is, al-Khalidi related to Zionism and Jews on a religious plane and based his argument on internal Jewish dynamics interpreted through a Muslim religious prism. His rejection of Zionism relied on viewing Zionists as having a primarily religious identity that precluded their political identity. The chapter is a fascinating vignette into a mode of thinking that confounds most modern perceptions of Arabs' approach to Jews in early 20th century Palestine.

In looking at other Arab intellectuals by delving into the pages of Arab journals, Gribetz's findings are similar; Arab writers approached Zionism by examining Judaism as a religion, with a particular focus on the bible and biblical history. Many Arab intellectuals also saw Jews and Arabs as belonging to the same racial category and thus created a link that used Jews as proof that Europeans (thought of as a racial category) were not inherently superior to Easterners. Jews provided hope that, just as they had succeeded in the West despite being Semitic foreigners, Arabs could do the same. Similarly, the tolerance historically shown to Jews under Arab and Muslim rule relative to what they found under European rule bolstered these authors' pride in their own Arab and Muslim identities, providing another data point for Gribetz's thesis that competing nationalisms did not always dominate the Jewish-Arab encounter.

Gribetz's chapter examining Zionist newspapers looks at the other end of this equation, and similarly finds Jews viewing their Arab neighbors not as Palestinians or even always as merely Arabs, but in many instances as Muslims or Christians. This religious angle led Ottoman Zionists and First Aliyah Zionists to view Muslims as cousins but to view Christians as antagonists, which is a position that would be unfamiliar to modern Israeli Jews. Unsurprisingly, the more socialist and nationalist Second Aliyah Zionists did not define their Arab neighbors as falling into religious categories but rather viewed them along nationalist and class lines. An important component to defining one's neighbors is self-identity, and Gribetz elegantly establishes the way in which different groups of Zionists' view of themselves influenced how they viewed others. Thus, more religious Zionists naturally separated Arabs into Muslims and Christians, and Sephardic Zionists who themselves often had dual identities as Arab Jews were more apt to make this religious distinction than to view all non-Jews in Palestine as Arabs.

Gribetz's facility with languages and archival materials is evident in Defining Neighbors, making it a notable work of pure history. However, the use of sources does raise methodological problems of how much one can generate convincing theories from such a narrow foundation. While Gribetz does note that the texts on which he has focused do not constitute a representative sample, it makes generalizations about how Jews and Arabs defined each other difficult absent evidence that the views illuminated in the book were widespread or particularly influential. As fascinating as al-Khalidi's views may be, they are gleaned from the unpublished manuscript of a political and intellectual elite; similarly, there is no evidence of how wide a readership Jewish newspapers like Ha-Herut or Ha-Zevi enjoyed, and in fact Gribetz makes the case that many articles may have been written by the same person or a small handful of people. The argument in Defining Neighbors is tantalizing one and is certainly plausible based on the evidence presented, but plausible is not the same thing as probable.

Despite these unanswered questions, there is no question that Defining Neighbors is an imposing work of scholarship and an important historical and historiographical contribution to the field. It demonstrates Ecclesiastes' precept that there is nothing new under the sun as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict possibly moves back to the future in terms of having a noticeable religious dimension. More optimistically, it reminds us that categories that we think of as conflictual have been used in the past to bridge rather than exacerbate divides. Finally, Gribetz reminds us through his work of the importance of understanding the other side, but even more so of how vital it is to talk to the other side and persuade through words rather than resort to violence. Perhaps everyone would be better off if Israelis and Palestinians tried to learn new lessons from the history of their early encounters.
Israel Institute Doctoral Fellow Yemima Cohen was recently invited to present her research at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. Cohen, who is writing her dissertation in sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, gave a lecture about Jewish holy sites entitled, “Speedily and In Our Days: Temple Activism and Collective Memory in Israel.” She was invited to speak by Dr. Johannes Becke, a 2013-2015 Israel Institute Post-Doctoral Fellow whom she met at the Israel Institute’s 2014 Leadership Summit. “For me, this is a very happy outcome [that was] certainly a result of the summit,” Cohen said.

The Israel Institute will be supporting three scholars — Sujata Ashwarya Cheema, Hana Kubatova and Guilherme Casaroes — as participants in the upcoming 2015 Summer Institute for Israel Studies (SIIS). SIIS brings faculty from universities in North America and around the world together for seminars at Brandeis University and in Israel that help them design courses in Israel Studies for their home universities. The Israel Institute also helped sponsor the SIIS Annual Symposium, which was held on April 19, 2015, for previous Summer Institute alumni.

Image: Doctoral and post-doctoral fellows gathered at the Israel Institute’s Leadership Summit last summer.
New Scholarly Work

The Israel Institute recently supported the publication of Dr. Lihi Ben Shitrit’s upcoming book, *Righteous Transgressions: Women’s Activism on the Israeli and Palestinian Religious Right*. The book, which will be published this coming fall by Princeton University Press, explores how women in conservative religious movements expand spaces for political activism. *Righteous Transgressions* examines how and why women-led activism happens in some movements but not in others. Ben Shitrit demonstrates that, in some contexts, women are able to overcome conservative gender roles within their communities and be celebrated for taking on behaviors that would normally be considered inappropriate. Looking at the four most influential political movements of the Israeli and Palestinian religious right – the Jewish settlers in the West Bank, the ultra-Orthodox Shas, the Islamic Movement in Israel and the Palestinian Hamas – *Righteous Transgressions* reveals how the bounds of gender expectations can be crossed in the least expected places.

CONFERENCE COLLABORATIONS

The Israel Institute helps sponsor national and international conferences hosted by universities and think tanks in the United States and abroad. In recent months, the Institute has supported:

3. A conference on “The Culture of Language: The Role of Israeli Culture in the Hebrew Language Classroom” led by the Institute for the Advancement of Hebrew Research Colloquium at Middlebury College in April 2015.
4. A conference entitled “Rapprochement, Change, Perception and Shaping the Future: German-Israeli and Israeli-German Diplomatic Relations” held by the Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz in April 2015.
5. An event “Examining U.S.-Israel Relations at a Time of Change in the Middle East” hosted in April 2015 by the Center for American Progress.
6. A conference at Cambridge University on “Diaspora and Modern Hebrew Literature and Culture” held in May 2015.
Our Fellows Around the Globe

Curious to know where our junior and senior fellows are conducting their research this year?

2014-15 DOCTORAL FELLOWS

Yemima Cohen, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
James Eastwood, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London
Oded Erez, UCLA
Anat Goldman, University of Washington
Elyakim Kislev, Columbia University
Susanna Klosko, Brandeis University
Yael Lifshitz Goldberg, New York University
Nimrod Lin, University of Toronto
Jason Olson, Brandeis University
Elad Popovich, Haifa University
Anne-Sophie Sebban, Sorbonne University
Ori Swed, University of Texas at Austin
Marc Volovici, Princeton University
Zehavit Zaslansky, Cambridge University

2014-15 POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS

Dr. Ofra Amihay, Georgetown University
Dr. Tali Artman-Partock, Cambridge University
Dr. Johannes Becke, Oxford University
Dr. Cameron Brown, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Dr. Kfir Cohen, UC Davis
Dr. Liat Eldor, Wharton Business School, University of Pennsylvania
Dr. Roey Gafter, Tel Aviv University
Dr. Randall Geller, University of Toronto
Dr. Reut Itzkovitch-Malka, Stanford University
Dr. Sebastian Klor, University of Texas at Austin
Dr. Lior Libman, University College London
Dr. Daniel Mahla, Berlin Technical University
Dr. Liora Norwich, Brandeis University
Dr. Shani Oppenheimer Weller, University of Colorado*
Dr. Shay Rabineau, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Dr. Yonatan Sagiv, SOAS, University of London
Dr. Giddon Ticotsky, Stanford University
Dr. Sharon Weinblum, Oxford University

2014-15 FACULTY EXCHANGES

Prof. Oren Barak, Cornell University
Prof. Yuval Ben-Bassat, UC Berkeley
Prof. Ariel Bendor, University of Maryland
Prof. Moshe Maor, New York University
Prof. Benjamin Miller, Dartmouth University
Prof. Ronen Perry, Oxford University
Prof. Sammy Smooha, New York University

Dr. Shayna Weiss, Bar Ilan University
Dr. Simon Williams, Harvard University
Dr. Rona Yona, New York University
Dr. Hila Zaban, SOAS, University of London

*Supported in partnership with the Haruv Institute

ISRAEL STUDIES IN EASTERN EUROPE

For the second year in a row, the Israel Institute sponsored and organized an intensive survey course on modern Israel at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, Hungary. The course, which was designed in conjunction with ELTE Prof. Zsófia Kata Vincze, featured two local scholars and five guest lecturers from Israel and the United States teaching on subjects from Israeli foreign policy to the history of Zionism. Over 200 students enrolled in the class. “This course was designed to cut through sensationalist media headlines or slogans about Israel and, instead, provide students with an academic analytic approach to understanding the country through a variety of perspectives,” Vincze said. “It was very beneficial and we hope that it will be repeated in future years.”
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Catch up with our 2014-15 interns, all recent college graduates placed at Israeli think tanks for a year.

**LINDA DAYAN**
Moshe Dayan Center for Middle East Policy
Bard College ‘14

Over the past few months at the Moshe Dayan Center, I’ve had new and exciting opportunities to assist academic fellows, as well as to research independently with the guidance of experts. I’m currently working with Professor Ofra Bengio to help her compile academic content on the evolving Kurdish situation in the Middle East into a new book, and I’ve edited a master’s thesis on Kurdish women in Turkey to be published by the Center. I am also the new English-language editor of Beehive, the MDC’s monthly Middle East social media analysis publication.

My personal project at the moment is ISIS English-language social media. I pay close attention to the microblogging website Tumblr, where European, American and other international ISIS militants and their supporters can recruit and disseminate their messages unhindered by the censorship and oversight of more popular platforms, like Twitter. On certain corners of the website, one can easily find ISIS propaganda, glorification of jihad and even detailed instructions on evading the authorities and entering Syria through Turkey. My article on ISIS blogs on Tumblr was run in Beehive in both English and Hebrew.

**REUBEN BERMAN**
Reut Institute
Columbia University ‘14

While at the Reut Institute, I have worked on a number of different and fascinating projects. My primary focus through January was on facilitating Firewall: Israel Legitimacy Hackathon, an event created to build technological tools to help fight against the delegitimization of Israel. We spent months talking to different people and organizations handling delegitimization, and asked how they felt technology could help them improve their methods. Reut then built teams of on-the-ground activists and cyber and technology developers to design and prototype these ideas, that came together for three days in January to complete their projects. Following the hackathon, I began to work on Reut’s follow-up research in the field of delegitimization. This intensive process will help us build Reut’s understanding of the current environment of delegitimization and glean lessons from the hackathon.

I am also working on an outline for a paper that will cover Israel’s relationship with diaspora Jewish communities. It focuses on the recent strain on the partnership that stands at the heart of modern Jewish history, that between the Jewish people and the Jewish State.

**TOVA COHEN**
Taub Center for Social Policy Studies
University of Colorado ‘14

At the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, I work to get our research about socioeconomic issues in Israel out to the English-speaking world. I’ve been working on a variety of projects, many involving English-language online platforms and social media.

I assist in the effort to make Taub research available to broader audiences through the maximization of English content. This involves writing and managing English advertising campaigns and strategizing, as well as writing and implementing a long-term strategic plan to disseminate the Center’s research to as many eyes as possible and come up with new ways to measure and optimize its impact. My work has also involved leading the launch of the new Taub Center website and ensuring greater access to the organization’s research on social policy.

In addition to these larger projects, I work with various members of the team to complete smaller projects. I have also had the opportunity to attend presentations with the researchers at the Knesset or for groups of philanthropists and students. My boss and colleagues at the Taub Center continually offer me opportunities to be involved in a variety of projects and I’ve learned a great deal.
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Catch up with our 2014-15 interns, all recent college graduates placed at Israeli think tanks for a year.

CAROLINE KAHLENBERG
Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies
Middlebury College '14
As an intern at JIIS, I am predominantly working with Professor Yitzhak Reiter on his forthcoming book about conflicts at holy sites in the region. It details historical and contemporary disputes over sacred sites, including conflicts between religious groups (such as Jewish-Muslim disputes regarding authority over the Western Wall/Temple Mount) as well as conflicts among religious groups (such as the intra-Christian struggle for authority in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). In the process of conducting research and editing these chapters, I have learned that even the very smallest, seemingly bureaucratic changes regarding these sites – such as the rebuilding of a ramp to the Temple Mount or the removal of a ladder at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre – can spark fierce conflict and even violence across the region. At the same time, I am learning about creative conflict resolution methods that lend themselves to peace, or at least toleration, between different groups. In addition to this work, I also help in grant writing, which gives me a window into JIIS’ different projects regarding Jerusalem’s economy, education, culture, environment and efforts in conflict management.

MAYA KORNBERG
Institute for National Security Studies
Stanford University '13
My work at the INSS, on a range of projects, has spanned multiple topics. I wrote a chapter on processes that the Arab Israeli community has undergone over the past decade, for a forthcoming book on that subject. The chapter looked at integration and segregation processes, characteristics of Arab protests, changes within Arab society and insights gleaned from opinion polls of the Arab Israeli community. I am also working on a chapter in a book on spoilers in the peace process. My chapter focuses on Israeli leadership as a spoiler in the peace process, using the examples of Netanyahu in the Kerry Initiative and Barak in the peace process with Syria. I also recently finished an article on homeland security. In addition, I published two op-eds in the Jerusalem Post. The first article was about how the millennial generation relates to the concept of peace differently, and the second was about an INSS project that brings together prominent Israelis to look at alternative meanings of the concept of security. There are five groups — environmental, gender, identity, human and social security — and I moderate the latter group. My latest project explores the shift of the Israeli left over the past two decades in regards to security issues.

URI SADOT
Institute for National Security Studies
Hebrew University '10; Princeton University '13
During the past six months at the INSS I mainly supported the work of INSS Director, Gen. Amos Yadlin, both in his research work on Israel’s strategic assessment, as well as in his diversified work routine as director of a large think tank. I have been integrally involved in the make-up of his many media appearances and articles, and even had the privilege of co-authoring with him a piece for Ha’aretz entitled “Zionism is Not on the Decline,” appearing in late 2014. The article came as a response to a much-cited article by former-Mossad Chief Shabtai Shavit, who argued that Zionism is at a nadir.

In tandem, I conducted independent work on Israel’s settlement demographics, which saw air as a co-authored article on ForeignPolicy.com. I have also participated in the production and publication process of several INSS publications including a booklet published soon after the conclusion of Operation Protective Edge and the INSS’ annual strategic assessment for 2014. During my time at the INSS, I’ve greatly expanded my knowledge of Israel’s national security, and made significant contacts, learned from leading authorities and practiced key skills that I am certain will be useful for me in the future.
The Israel Institute works in partnership with leading academic, research and cultural institutions to enhance knowledge and study of modern Israel in the United States and around the world. In pursuit of this mission, the Israel Institute supports a diverse range of programs, listed below.

**DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**
The Institute offers fellowships to Ph.D. students in advanced stages of their doctoral process, who are researching and writing their dissertation on a topic related to Israel or incorporating Israel as a case study. Successful candidates reflect the Institute's goal of advancing the study and understanding of modern Israel, and address issues of contemporary, historical or cultural importance.

**POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**
The Institute offers post-doctoral fellowships to highly qualified recent Ph.D.s who are working on Israel-focused topics and who are developing courses on modern Israel. The fellowship appointments are for up to two years and open to academics in a range of fields and departments. Fellows teach classes in Israel Studies and develop their dissertations into books. The Institute seeks promising scholars who can teach about Israel effectively while carrying out an innovative research agenda.

**FACULTY EXCHANGES AND TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS**
The Institute assists in fostering academic exchanges involving senior academics and policy experts between campuses in the U.S., Israel and Europe. Among other initiatives, the Institute has sent professors during the past and current academic years to Princeton University, Cornell University, Dartmouth University, New York University, the University of Pennsylvania and the Lille Institute of Political Science (Sciences Po Lille).

**RESEARCH GRANTS**
The Institute offers grants for scholars, academics and independent researchers to conduct substantive research on issues related to modern Israel. Areas of study include, but are not limited to, Israeli history, politics, economics and law. Grants are aimed at facilitating the research and writing of books or scholarly articles that make a serious contribution to the field of Israel Studies or promote a greater understanding of modern Israel.

**FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANTS**
The Institute offers grants that enable faculty members to develop new courses in Israel Studies. Designed for professors who have some knowledge of Israel but not enough to teach a course in the field, the program is also an opportunity to travel to Israel, hone language skills and take part in any other activities that will assist in developing and teaching Israel Studies courses.
**MONOGRAPH SERIES**
The Institute commissions scholars to write academic books on topics related to Israel that will fill gaps in the field of Israel Studies. The Institute also subsidizes works on Israel that already have been accepted for publication by an academic press.

**ACADEMIC CONFERENCES**
The Institute convenes and co-sponsors academic conferences devoted to the study of Israel and related topics. Each October, the Institute organizes its own conference on major issues and developments in the field of Israel Studies. The Institute is also a supporter of the Association for Israel Studies’ annual conventions, as well as academic conferences at other institutions. The Israel Institute has supported such conferences at Northwestern University, Brandeis University and other institutions.

**ANNUAL PUBLIC FORUM**
The Institute sponsors an annual public lecture or panel discussion featuring prominent figures discussing contemporary Israel-related topics. The event is designed to serve as a high-level forum for policy experts, and an opportunity for them to convene and exchange diverse perspectives.

**ACADEMIC PRIZES**
In collaboration with the Association for Israel Studies (AIS), the Institute co-sponsors two annual prizes that are awarded at the AIS annual convention: a lifetime achievement award and an award for young scholars.

**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS**
The Israel Institute matches young scholars with top think tanks and research institutions in Israel and the United States for a period of a few months to a year. These internships grant college students and recent college graduates access to a broad community of scholars and policy practitioners, while providing important work experience.

**THINK TANK COLLABORATIONS**
The Institute supports senior visiting fellows at leading think tanks. The Institute also supports younger scholars as research assistants, which gives them a firsthand opportunity to work in the policy community and to make vital connections with leading intellectuals outside of their academic institutions.

**SCHUSTERMAN VISITING ARTIST PROGRAM**
One of the largest organized residency programs of Israeli artists ever to launch in the United States, the Israel Institute’s Schusterman Visiting Artist Program brings Israeli artists from various disciplines – including visual art, film, music and choreography – to North America, where they reside for two to four months at some of the nation’s most esteemed universities. To date, 70 artists have participated in this program. The program’s objective is to foster high levels of interaction between the Israeli artists-in-residence and the local communities where they are based, through classes, lectures, exhibitions, screenings, readings and performances.

**TRANSLATION PROJECT**
The Israel Institute supports an annual translation project in order to increase international access and exposure to modern Hebrew literature. Through the translation of recently published Israeli books into English, the project creates a global platform to showcase the work of promising Israeli writers and expand the reach of Israeli arts and culture abroad.

For details about any of these programs, please refer to our website: www.israelinstitute.org

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ABOUT THE ISRAEL INSTITUTE

The ISRAEL INSTITUTE works in partnership with leading academic, research and cultural institutions to enhance knowledge and study of modern Israel in the United States and around the world. Founded in 2012 as an independent, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, D.C. and Tel Aviv, the Institute supports scholarship, research and exchanges to empower the growth of a multi-faceted field of Israel Studies and expand opportunities to explore the diversity and complexity of contemporary Israel.

The Israel Institute provides programs for emerging and senior scholars to encourage new scholarship, facilitate the development of new courses and expand learning opportunities. The Institute is dedicated to promoting new research on Israel and showcasing Israeli literature, arts and culture. The Institute also provides unique opportunities for exceptional college students and graduates to immerse themselves in Israel-relevant work and gain experience in Israel-related research through valuable internship experiences. We invite you to learn more at www.israelinstitute.org or call us at 202.289.1431 for more information.