Gender in Israel

Experts weigh in on historical achievements and ongoing challenges
This issue of the *Israel Institute Magazine* looks at the complex issues surrounding gender in Israel. Israel is a fascinating place when it comes to gender relations. It features not only a blend of religions, but a wide spectrum of religious observance, which makes for an interesting laboratory in which to study gender. It’s a common thing to say that the good old days were never all that good. Thus it likely is with gender in Israel. Israel’s vaunted socialism of the early years probably did not witness the degree of female empowerment that it has in popular recollection. On the other hand, today’s picture is not as cloudy as is often depicted, either.

Politically, Israel has been a path breaker when it comes to gender and power. While Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir ostensibly rose to power at similar times, Gandhi, daughter of India’s founding prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and heir to his political empire, represents a less convincing case for a “breakthrough woman” in terms of political leadership than Golda does. Margaret Thatcher would not be elected for nearly 10 years after Golda’s rise, Angela Merkel nearly 30 years later, and the U.S. and France are still waiting for their first female chief executives! Justices Dorit Beinisch and now Miriam Naor have led Israel’s Supreme Court and, with the significant exception of defense, women have led all of Israel’s top ministries.

In this issue, we explore several aspects of gender, both within Israel’s political system and beyond. Post-doctoral fellow Dr. Shayna Weiss looks at segregated beaches in Israel while Prof. Lihi Ben Shitrit, recipient of both research and publication grants, shares some of her work with us on the activism of religious women, both Jewish and Arab. Prof. Yael Shenker, an expert on Haredi women’s fiction who will be an Israel Institute visiting faculty member next year at the University of Florida, writes for us about gender in national religious films. Our president, Amb. Itamar Rabinovich, explores the issue of gender in Israeli academia.

Of course, there is more than gender in this issue. We will catch up with Dr. Lior Libman, an Israel Institute post-doctoral fellow from University College, London, who will be joining former Israel Institute post-doc, Prof. Shay Rabbineau, as a tenure-track assistant professor in Israel Studies at SUNY Binghamton in the fall. We will explore the recent work of visiting artist Zvi Sahar, a puppeteer who just wrapped up a semester-long residency at the University of Maryland. We will also check in with future and current cohorts of young researchers in our yearlong Israel Research Internship Program. As always, visit our News & Notes section to see who is doing what and where in the field of Israel Studies!

Dr. Ariel Ilan Roth
Executive Director, Israel Institute
Gender and the

Israel’s universities and colleges have made great strides in improving the position of women academics, but ensuring gender equality remains a work in progress

BY AMBASSADOR ITAMAR RABINOVICH

For many years when asked about gender inequality in several important fields of public life, Israelis tended to seek an easy way out by invoking Golda Meir. A country that had a female Prime Minister, so the explicit or implicit argument went, could not really suffer from gender inequality. However, for a while now, this argument has been abandoned, and gender inequality issues are discussed and dealt with in a much more serious fashion. Israeli women are much more assertive and effective in demanding real equality and the country as a whole is more responsive to the dominant trends in other Western societies. This is particularly true of the academy, a field intimately connected to and affected by the scientific and academic communities in the U.S. and Western Europe.

The equality bar in the Israeli academy had to be raised from a fairly low level. Several decades ago the number and percentage of women in the ranks of the senior faculty was low, particularly in the exact and life sciences and in engineering. It was evidently difficult for women to be admitted into the ranks of the senior faculty and even more difficult to get tenure and then move up the ladder. Over time Israel’s universities (and later colleges), under pressure from female faculty members, their allies on campus, and the political system, began to respond. The most important first change was extension of the pre-tenure period for female faculty members who wanted to have children and raise a family. Gradually other steps followed, including affirmative action in recruitment, participation in academic governance, and efforts to increase the number of female students and faculty members in the sciences and engineering. It was also recognized that the issue needed to be addressed much earlier, at home where the stereotypic perceptions of male and female academic preferences and talents are formed early on, and then later in the school system.

The measures taken in Israel’s higher education system and in the educational system at large had an impact, but a limited one. Thus a study conducted in 2010 looking at the percentage of women in higher education faculty in Israel and Europe ranked Israel at the bottom of the list, with 28% as compared to the European average of 40%. The study showed that the phenomenon of lesser and slower progress of women on the academic ladder was not unique to Israel, but that Israel was lagging behind most European countries.

What emerges from the data on the current position of women on Israel’s
campuses is a pyramid. During the past two decades (which, with the expansion of a college system in Israel, led to a dramatic rise in the number of students) more than half of the students for B.A. and M.A. degrees have been women. By 2004 more than half of the doctoral students were women. But the numbers begin to change as one looks up. In 2008-2009 the percentage of women among senior academic staff was 26.3%. Furthermore, the percentage of women was much higher in the two lower ranks (lecturer and senior lecturer) than in the two higher ones (Associate and Full Professor); they made up 51% of lecturers but only 14% of full professors.

The picture is compounded by differences in fields and disciplines. Among female students, there is proportionally high representation in the fields of education, preparation for teaching, and paramedical professions but a low one in mathematics, statistics, computer science, engineering, and architecture. Among the faculty the percentage of women is relatively high in the humanities (38.7%), social sciences (36.3%), and medicine or paramedicine (38.3%) and much lower in the natural sciences and mathematics (16%) and engineering and architecture (14.1%).

It is not difficult to identify the main reasons for these two distortions. Young women are still affected by stereotypes implanted by family and by the early educational, cultural, and media environment of presumably masculine and feminine fields and professions. Furthermore, women still carry the main load in raising a young family to the detriment of their academic career. One egregious manifestation of this issue is the difficulty faced by young female academics in Israel when it comes to doing a post-doctoral fellowship. Israeli universities place a (justified) premium on a post-doc outside the country, and many young female academics hit a stone wall when it comes to persuading a male spouse early in his own career to join them for a year or two overseas.

In short, leveling the playing field and building an Israeli academy with women spread equally across the disciplines and climbing the academic ladder equally is still a project in formation.
Exploring Kibbutz Roots

Israel Institute Post-Doctoral Fellow Lior Libman speaks about her connection to and research on the kibbutz system, her recent class on gender in Israel, and her upcoming job at SUNY Binghamton

**IIM:** You study the kibbutz in Israel. What attracted you to this topic of study?

**LIBMAN:** I am the first-born in the fourth generation of Kibbutz Shefayim, which was founded by the Mediterranean shore, just north of Herzliya, in November 1927. As a child, I loved listening to the stories of my late grandfather, who was one of the first sons to be born in our kibbutz. I was very curious about the history of the ‘pioneers’ in the ‘early days.’ Later, growing up in the kibbutz, I had the feeling of a gap, not only between the past and the present, but also the current gap between the image(s) of the kibbutz, and its reality. This tension made me very interested in narratives and visual images of political ideas, and specifically ‘Leftist iconography.’ While getting a history degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and then an M.A. in cultural studies there, I originally studied non-Israeli cases. But throughout, I gradually realized that I could not translocate the questions and problems with which I am preoccupied, so I decided to take my work back to my home, the kibbutz. I wanted to better understand the place where I grew up and the images that shaped me, to analyze the ‘kibbutz story’ and its discourse.

**IIM:** In the course of your research, what have been some of the most interesting or unexpected findings that you’ve uncovered?

**LIBMAN:** In my forthcoming book, I trace the ways in which the kibbutz was imagined by its founders and members, and how it was represented in public discourse and kibbutz literature, in the first years of Israeli sovereignty. These early years were characterized by major and dramatic structural, political and social upheavals. The kibbutz, which was a dominant and crucial force in the yishuv period, lost its central role in conceiving and directing Zionist policy as Israel emerged as a state. I show that, in this period, the literary representation of the kibbutz was detached from its historical experience. While members of the kibbutz confronted the decline of the kibbutz in practice, realist kibbutz literature did not deal with the actual difficulties that the kibbutz was facing. Instead, the literature used fixed motifs and themes in order to describe the kibbutz, and its values of pioneering Labor Zionism, as unchangeable. I argue that this undisturbed kibbutz-image is a symptom of a cultural trauma of conceptual disorientation that the kibbutz experienced with the foundation of the state. The collective identity of the kibbutz, I suggest, was based on a Hasidic theological model of thought, which the pioneers secularized and nationalized: they viewed the actions of their daily lives as the fulfillment of the Socialist-Zionist cause. This self-perception was no longer tenable by 1948 and thereafter. The new situation was met with shock, evident in the frozen image. I thus redefine the iconic kibbutz image as a signifier of trauma instead of a signifier of utopia. My analysis also modifies the perception of the kibbutz as a secular entity, and offers a cultural interpretation of what is typically considered the social-political collapse of the kibbutz.

**IIM:** How has the kibbutz ethos evolved in Israeli society and what can be learned from studying the kibbutz in the modern era?

**LIBMAN:** Due to its cultural trauma and resultant shock – an inability to develop a new conceptual language by which to comprehend itself in light of the changes in its existential situation – the kibbutz could not become a leading factor in the state: it did not determine, in its own spirit, the policy of and agenda for Israel. Of course, kibbutz members were representative in Labor Movement parties, but the kibbutz itself was not a distinct political force, let alone a principal one. It contributed to society in several ways, enjoyed privileged status and resources, mainly until the rise of the political right in 1977, but generally speaking, the kibbutz was, and, until today still is, more influenced by general society than influencing it.

Nonetheless, as in the past, the kibbutz’s place in Israeli discourse exceeds its proportional role in society in Israel. For better or for worse, in the popular imagination in Israel, the kibbutz was seen as epitomizing ‘Mapai-era Zionism’ [Zionism associated with the progressive philosophy of the Mapai political party, dominant in Mandatory Palestine and Israel from the 1930s to 1960s], without historical distinction. This image of the kibbutz, as ejected from history and essentially fossilized, neutralizes the political potential the kibbutz bears, as it is considered detached, out of date, and
irrelevant. In my mind, therefore, examining the kibbutz with a critical academic eye paves the way to the revitalization and re-politization of notions that the kibbutz may still hold. Reexamining the kibbutz’s historical experiment and experience in order to include Mizrahim and Palestinians, for example – namely, rethinking the kibbutz in relation to questions of exclusion and confiscation, of distributional (in)justice and civil (in)equality – can lead to a deeper understanding of the limitations and faults, together with the achievements, of the kibbutz, and may enable the reclaiming of some of the kibbutz ideas.

**IIM:** Kibbutzim in Israel are often represented as an egalitarian utopia, where women fought, worked, and contributed alongside the men. To what degree is this overstated? In your opinion, how has the gender question manifested itself on the kibbutz?

**LIBMAN:** There is a significant body of work about women in the kibbutz and in the Socialist-Zionist pioneer world. The overall picture reveals that, although an attempt was made to build a new, just society in which traditional gender conventions and roles would be transformed, it was only partly successful. Kibbutz women were free and independent and, according to the kibbutz principles, had equal rights with men. To some degree they worked in agriculture and participated in defense, and were leaders, activists, and writers. But by and large, conservative gender structures did not dramatically change in the kibbutz. More often than not women stayed within the domestic sphere – in charge of child rearing, the kitchen, laundry, and other service functions – just on a larger scale, for the whole community. In the public sphere, women were not as present as men and, when present, their activity and leadership usually related to ‘gendered issues,’ which were not necessarily at the top of the kibbutz movement agenda.

I would also note that ‘gender equality’ or ‘women’s liberation’ on the kibbutz was framed as women working in the fields and shouldering defense missions, not men cooking and participating in childcare. This is, I think, the key point. The kibbutz saw itself creating the ‘New Jew’ – one who redeems the land of Israel through settlement, agriculture, and defense. This model of the pioneer farmer and fighter emphasized masculinity and physical strength. The exertions of female trailblazers on the kibbutz involved moving to the fore by working and fighting side by side.
side with men, not on presenting an alternative to traditional gender norms. When we speak about gender equality on the kibbutz, it is important to take that into account.

**IIM:** You recently co-taught a class on gender at University College London. Could you describe this class?

**LIBMAN:** I was teaching “Rattling the Gender Agenda: Feminist Issues in Israeli Women’s Writings,” a course designed by Dr. Tsila Ratner, my co-instructor. The position of women has been the subject of Jewish and Israeli women writers since the emergence of Modern Hebrew literature. Although marginalized in the literary canon until the 1980s, women writers have provided sharp critiques and insights into women’s lives and the social order that governs them. Israeli feminist critics, like their counterparts elsewhere, expose and question the mechanisms of political/social powers and the ways in which they construct gender identities. In Israel, feminists face unique challenges combating gender bias and inequality amidst war threats, heightened militarism, and deepening religiousness. We focused on this nexus of women, nation, and conflict, and also explored the Israeli context of issues such as the position of women in the family, women’s coming-of-age narratives, and voices of Orthodox women.

**IIM:** Please tell us a bit about your plans for next year.

**LIBMAN:** I am very much looking forward to next year, when I will begin a tenure-track Assistant Professor position at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton. I will be teaching two courses, in modern Hebrew literature and Israeli literature. One of them is an introductory course in which we will read texts from nineteenth-century Europe to present-day Israel, placing them in their historical and cultural contexts. Special focus will be given to Israeli literature, from 1948 on. The second course is an upper-level seminar in which we will explore literature written in Israel from 1948 until today, and major issues in Israeli culture and society such as nation, war and conflict, class, gender, ethnicity, and national minority. I am excited to collaborate with colleagues in my department and other departments, as well as with students, in making Israel Studies a vibrant field and scholarly community in SUNY Binghamton.

**IIM:** In your opinion, what are the most important topics to teach on Israel?

**LIBMAN:** I think one of the most important topics is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the fact that Israel Studies centers on the sovereign nation state, it is impossible to dismiss the place of this issue, even before, but precisely from, the very moment Israel was born. It explicitly and implicitly shapes not only Israel’s history, politics, foreign affairs, or diplomacy, but also its society and culture. Of course, careful analysis should take place in each case, and this prism should not be applied exclusively or automatically. That said, I assume it is not a bold assertion to make that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is inseparable from Israeli imagery and mythology, literature, language, folklore, ethnic, gender and class constructions, national minority relations, and more. I believe these connections should be taught and also addressed in research. Especially in my area of study, the history of the kibbutz, there is a common tendency to overlook the influence of the complicated, direct and indirect, presence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the fate of the kibbutz, and its aspiration to be an exemplary society.

**IIM:** From your personal experience, what are the primary differences between teaching and doing research in Israel Studies in Israel and outside of Israel?

**LIBMAN:** In Israel things are more immediate, and sometimes even intuitively accessible, hence both research and teaching tend to direct attention to the deep dimensions of things we are witnessing, involved in, and debating day to day. In the U.K., my insights come from a different direction: in class, there is a need to provide more background, to introduce and explain notions and concepts that sometimes seem obvious to me. This forces me to return to the basics, to define precisely, and to think anew about things I might have taken for granted. This is a fascinating, refreshing experience, which no doubt influences research, as it opens new reflective questions and critical perspectives.
Are We There Yet?

A discussion on gender in Israel with academic experts reveals complex ongoing challenges amidst historical achievements and lofty aspirations

NOA LEVANON KLEIN

From the images of gun-wielding women soldiers to the legacy of one of the first female heads of government, Israel has created the impression of being ahead of the world on gender equality. Though it is true that an egalitarian intention is deeply imbedded in Israel’s ideological roots, gender dynamics in the nation are complex. To this day, there is a gap between the idealistic vision of gender equality and the realities facing women.

From its earliest days, Zionism sought to build an egalitarian society. Early Zionist writings, including Theodor Herzl’s manifesto, explicitly described the aspiration for women’s equality, and women in the Zionist movement were afforded equal voting rights as early as the Second Zionist Congress in 1898. In the post-WWI era, women voted in local council elections across Jewish communities in Mandatory Palestine and some were even elected, helping secure women’s place in Zionist political institutions.

Likewise, the kibbutzim cropping up around Israel in the decades prior to independence represented themselves as vanguards of gender equality. One of the most-touted emblems of Zionism and Israel’s egalitarian spirit is Golda Meir, who was elected Israel’s first female prime minister at a time when this phenomenon was almost unprecedented.

However, these very real advancements for women have always been accompanied by legal, religious, and cultural crosscurrents reinforcing traditional gender roles.

MASCULINE ZIONISM

The contrast between the vision of a truly equal society and the reality of gender relations was essentially built into Zionism, maintains Prof. Danny Kaplan, a sociologist and anthropologist from Bar-Ilan University.
“As is typical of national endeavors, the national symbols of the Zionist project were very much masculine,” Kaplan explained to the Israel Institute. “To be clear, this was not done explicitly as an ideological attempt to preserve male power and subjugate women. On the contrary... the stated ideals of the Zionist movement were very egalitarian, and, by the way, this was an extremely progressive position vis-à-vis women at the time. But a gender imbalance was created nonetheless because the Zionist project was, in essence, a project of masculinity. The image of the strong ‘New Jew’ that this movement sought was modeled on European ideals such as knighthood and esprit de corps, and this militaristic focus resulted in a status quo where women were relegated to less central roles in the Zionist struggle.”

This celebration of masculinity was apparent on kibbutzim across Israel, argued Prof. Margalit Shilo. “The kibbutz movement held itself up as a bastion of egalitarianism but, historically, it preached equality and usually did not practice it,” said Shilo, a Bar-Ilan history professor specializing in pre-state Israel and a recipient of an Israel Institute research grant. “Women were rarely accepted to the more respected professions on the kibbutz [such as agriculture and defense], which were implicitly seen as the men’s domain... so there was actually a very large gap between perception and reality in terms of gender equality.”

ISRAEL DEFENSE FORCES – OPEN DOORS, BUT GLASS CEILINGS

One of the most striking post-independence examples of the gap between perceived and actual gender equality is the Israeli military. A prevalent talking point in discussions of gender in Israel is the compulsory draft for both sexes. Indeed, Israel is one of the few countries where women have mandatory conscription. Nonetheless, women have been largely constrained in terms of the roles they play in the military. Once the Israel Defense Forces were founded at independence, and the nature of the military was standardized, women — who had occasionally served in combat positions in the pre-independence era — were officially placed in non-combat roles,
or combat-support roles at best. In short, the very vehicle meant to underscore women’s empowerment and involvement in the heart of Israeli society actually entrenched gender separation; it codified sex segregation even as it promoted women’s inclusion into a key state institution.

The situation has certainly improved in recent decades, particularly following a 2007 report by a military committee designed to improve women’s equality, but change has been slow to come. While the IDF asserts that 92 percent of all positions are open to women, only a very small number of female soldiers actually serve in a combat capacity (three percent to four percent). There are also fewer women serving in advanced leadership positions, particularly in combat-related units: not until 2014 was a female chosen as a combat-battalion commander and, even in non-combat positions, the rank of lieutenant colonel has been described as the glass ceiling for women in the IDF. Moreover, the eight percent of positions that remain closed to women are those in various elite combat units. These tend to be the nestling ground of future leaders in the defense establishment, which critics fear is helping to perpetuate the shortage of women in the upper echelons of the military and defense ministry in Israel.

This criticism aside, the dearth of women in combat positions, although an important data point in rounding out the picture of female conscription in Israel, does not constitute an impermeable barrier to greater female involvement in the military, or in Israel’s security arena more broadly. Issues such as personnel, force structure, unit cohesion, and training, which require less direct combat experience, are also crucial components of security, noted Dr. Tamara Cofman Wittes, Director of the Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution and a member of the Institute’s advisory board. “In the current framing, [these] issues often get overlooked in security policy discussions, but they are one significant way more women, who may be less likely to have combat experience, can engage in security-related decision making,” she said. Indeed, the women who have achieved senior ranks in Israel’s military tend to be in such positions, with the IDF’s first female major general serving as the head of the Manpower Directorate. Outside of the military, several women legislators sit on the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, including some who hold no military background beyond standard service.

As Wittes put it, “I’ve never been a believer that there’s something essential about women qua women that means their presence will automatically improve outcomes on issues of governance, peace, or security [but] it’s important to have more women in security policy discussions for the same reason it’s important to have them in the board room – because they help...”

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– DR. TAMARA COFMAN WITTES

*Based on data from the OECD, IDF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics

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**Statistics:**

- **33%** of IDF personnel are women.
- **92%** of all positions in the IDF are open to women.
- **66%** of female high school graduates in Israel continue on to higher education.
- **68%** female labor force participation rate.
- **27%** of current Knesset members are women.
increase the diversity of perspectives, and diversity, studies show, increases organizational performance.” So although the upper echelons of the security apparatus remain male-dominated, the growing awareness of the need to incorporate more women in this arena is slowly allowing women to influence policy through alternative routes.

WOMEN IN POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF WOMEN

A similar debate on the nuances of women’s participation can be raised about Israeli society at large. Israel’s female labor force participation is consistently above the global average, owing in large part to structural and cultural factors. “There is an extensive daycare system in Israel, which goes back decades,” explained Shilo. “The first daycare was established well before Israeli independence, prior even to the First World War. This infrastructure allows women to enter the workforce and succeed in the workforce with greater ease compared to women in many other nations. There is also a very widespread awareness in Israel of the importance of having women participate in the labor force and, accordingly, a high percentage of Israeli women do work outside the home.”

However, Shilo offered a caveat: “When speaking of women in the workforce, we need to take a closer look. It’s telling when you look at where women end up in the Israeli workforce and which jobs they hold. For instance, in politics, people always point to Golda Meir. It is true, she was the third female head of government in the modern world and this was progressive. But after Golda Meir, up until two decades ago, the number of female Members of Knesset was under 10 percent, which is quite low.” While the current Knesset has seemed to usher in a marked improvement, with female Knesset members constituting a quarter of Israel’s legislating body, it should be noted that more than 50 countries from across the globe have a higher percentage of female representation in at least one house of parliament.

That said, from a constitutional legal perspective, women’s rights in Israel have been protected since early in Israel’s history, with the passage of the Law of Equal Rights for Women in 1951 and many subsequent directives on women’s issues ever since. “There is no doubt, according to the interpretations of the Supreme Court and according to Israeli legislation, that there are equal rights for women,” Dorit Beinisch, the former President of the Israeli Supreme Court, told the Israel Institute. She explained that, “the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, which is a core part of Israel’s constitutional law, does not explicitly mention equality, but the Supreme Court ruled quite a long time ago that equality was an inherent part of the right to dignity. Consequently, this Basic Law enshrines the right to equality. This legal precedent is binding.”

The Justice stated, however, that legislation, rather than judicial ruling, was the driver of women’s rights. “Women’s rights are protected by legislation that was initiated by women Knesset members, other [women’s] groups, and a strong lobby, which worked to promote them in various arenas. Women’s rights in Israel are protected in terms of the right to employment, equal wages, and so forth,” Beinisch said.
Beyond the laws themselves, there is also a women-friendly legal and legislative culture in Israel, according to Prof. Hila Shamir, a legal scholar from Tel Aviv University currently serving as an Israel Institute visiting faculty member at UC Berkeley. Shamir noted that many women in Israel serve as lawyers in the public sector (as judges, in the prosecution, and in the attorney general’s office), both in high-powered positions and going down the ranks. As a result, she said, “women’s causes and feminist causes are very much on the agenda in the public sector. Issues such as sex trafficking, for example, became a big issue because women are in positions of power and saw this as a very important issue. Similarly, regarding sexual harassment, Israel has one of the most progressive laws in this area.” While women’s causes are not always translated into effective policy or implemented in practice, Shamir observed that there is enough interest in the public sector to promote such legislation and often enough interest in parliament to pass it. “The presence of women counsels definitely affects the laws on the books, and the fact that there are many women sitting as judges and as lawyers of the state is significant in the way legal doctrine is developed. It doesn’t mean that all the feminist goals are achieved, but it does have an impact.”

**WOMEN AND RELIGION IN ISRAEL**

Yet even in a civil climate that aspires to protect women, it is important to remember that the intersection of religious law with civil law sometimes confounds women-friendly legislation and litigation in Israel. “The question is what the implementation [of Israel’s laws] looks like in practice, and this is a more complicated issue... Practically, I can’t say that we comply fully with laws on equality, particularly if we consider also the religious courts,” Beinisch said. “Marriage and divorce in Israel are under the sole jurisdiction of religious courts. There is a concurrent jurisdiction for civil family courts to adjudicate matters that are not purely marriage or divorce (distribution of assets, alimony maintenance, child custody agreements, and so on) and this mitigates the situation somewhat, but there are limits. As long as there is not an option for civil marriage, there will be a problem of gender equality, despite the efforts of the civil courts and the judicial review by the Supreme Court to intervene where they can.”

A major problem to which Beinisch was alluding was the issue of gets – Jewish bills of divorce that must be granted by a husband before a couple can divorce. Notably, according to Jewish law, gets cannot be coerced, so Jewish women in Israel have little recourse in the face of intransigent spouses. Yet without them, a couple is still considered married. Moreover, Shamir noted that, “the fact that only a religious court can grant an actual...
divorce affects the whole bargaining position of the woman in this situation. Under the current arrangement, the basic bargaining position is tilted toward men.”

But marriage and divorce are not the only area of religious law where women’s equality is under contention. Many of the conflicts that arise in Israel over religion and state are those that relate to women, said Prof. Michal Raucher, a Religious Studies scholar from the University of Cincinnati and a recipient of an Israel Institute research grant. For instance, because of the centralization of the religious authority in the form of the chief rabbinate, formal recognition for feminist Jewish practice has been absent in Israel, with one notable example being the refusal to ordain female clergy under the auspices of the state. Raucher cited women’s prayer at the Western Wall and women’s seats on public buses as two additional issues of religiously based gender discrimination. “Sometimes the intersection of gender and religion occurs even when it’s not an issue about religion, specifically,” she added. “I’m thinking about the 2012 award dinner for Dr. Channa Maayan, hosted by the Israeli Health Ministry. Because the Minister of Health was Haredi, the dinner was structured as a Haredi affair. Men and women were seated separately and Maayan was not permitted to accept the award. Instead, a male colleague accepted it on her behalf. Here’s an area where there was no religious event per se, but because of the intersection of religion and state in Israel, these kinds of discriminatory actions persist.”

This tension between gender and religion can be particularly difficult to navigate for religious women who, on one hand, seek to promote egalitarian practice but also want to be involved in Orthodoxy. This tension was demonstrated earlier this year in discussions of women’s prayer at the Western Wall. A proposed compromise to create a non-Orthodox prayer section at an adjacent location, Robinson’s Arch, forced Orthodox feminists to choose between praying in a (non-Orthodox) mixed prayer space or not praying at all. That said, viewing the intersection of gender and religion as a zero sum conflict is an oversimplification, the religiously conservative position of the rabbinate notwithstanding. While limitations exist, so do loopholes. “Because of the nature of religious practice in Israel, there is a great deal that occurs outside of state-sanctioned religion, so female clergy can have a great deal of leeway in their roles, despite the limitations,” Raucher said.

As the nation approaches 70 years of existence, Israel still has a way to go toward realizing early ambitions of gender equality, but in the military, politics, economy, and broader society, there are also undoubtedly aspects of gender relations in which Israel is ahead of the curve. The interplay between the challenges and opportunities related to gender in Israel makes this an intriguing topic for research and, it is to be hoped, the more awareness and debate that there is surrounding these issues, the narrower the gap will be between Zionism’s ambitious vision and reality.
Upon graduating from Middlebury College in May 2014, Caroline Kahlenberg aspired to gain some hands-on research experience in Israel. During a previous semester abroad in Turkey, Caroline had paid a brief visit to Israel and left seeking a more substantial encounter. “I realized that I definitely wanted to spend a year in Israel,” she explains, “and the only way I could afford to do it is by working.” She found few opportunities to do so, however, until her Hillel director advised her about the Israel Institute’s yearlong internship program in Israel. “There are surprisingly few paths for Americans to work in Israel right off the bat, so when I saw this internship I was really excited.” After a successful application process, Caroline joined the Institute’s inaugural cohort of six outstanding recent college graduates and embarked on a year of living in Jerusalem, studying Hebrew, and working alongside scholars at the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS).

While significant resources have been invested in sending diaspora undergraduates to Israel for short stints, opportunities for postgraduate engagement or professional training are relatively rare, a gap that
“According to participants and their host organizations, the pilot cohort made the most of their opportunities, building skills through hands-on experience and making valued contributions to their think tanks.”

The Institute’s Israel Research Internship Program seeks to address. Since its founding in 2012, the Israel Institute has invested in outstanding scholarship and teaching in the world of higher education, but its original focus was on faculty, doctoral candidates, and postdoctoral fellows. The 2014-2015 academic year saw the debut of the Institute’s first program designed to engage college-age students in Israel Studies scholarship.

The Israel Research Internship Program sponsors recent B.A. recipients from U.S. universities for year-long research assistantships at leading Israeli think tanks. Caroline’s colleagues in the program’s inaugural cohort worked at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), the Reut Institute, and the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies (MDC) in Tel Aviv, as well as the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Jerusalem. A second cohort of three interns is currently following in their footsteps and the next cohort of six interns was recently selected for the 2016-2017 academic year.

**TAKING THE PLUNGE, TAKING THE LEAD**

According to participants and their host organizations, the pilot cohort made the most of their opportunities, building skills through hands-on experience and making valued contributions to their think tanks. In multiple cases, one year led to another. Several of the original interns continue to hone their expertise on contemporary Israel through contact with the think tanks. One has continued to consult with his host think tank remotely even after his return to the United States, while two have transitioned to formal jobs with their host think tanks in Israel, where they have had the chance to mentor their successors in the current intern class. These strong and ongoing connections were established, in part, by the collegial and often laissez-faire nature of Israeli office culture. Indeed, this culture was a key part of the experience for several interns.

Reuben Berman, an intern at the Reut Institute, found the environment surprising and highly stimulating: “Reut is like a boiling pot. There’s a lot of energy, a lot of opinions, a lot of passion, and it’s not too channeled. You interact, you create, you exchange ideas. There’s a real open-door policy here, a democratic structure.” At the Taub Center, intern Tova Cohen appreciated working with “supervisors who were more than willing to involve me in high-level work, including going to the Knesset, meeting with policy makers, and seeing the researchers give presentations on the research most relevant to the Israeli government.”

Multiple interns described their Israeli think tanks as expecting, and rewarding, individual initiative more than might be envisaged in the apprentice role typically reserved for interns in highly structured American work environments. “I had to find my own footing. No babysitting,” explained Linda

Members of the first intern cohort: Maya Kornberg, Caroline Kahlenberg, Tova Cohen, Reuben Berman, and Linda Dayan (not pictured: Uri Sadot).
I work with the JIIS Urban Sustainability Center to create policy packages for Israeli municipalities to encourage sustainable lifestyles for urban resilience. Under the guidance of Valerie Brachya, I have focused my research on the sharing economy – which harnesses local resources to maximize efficiency, reduce waste, and stimulate interpersonal interactions – as a tool for sustainable living and community building. I have coauthored research papers on this topic and built relationships with the international leaders and organizations in the field, including the French Senate, the OECD, and the Paris Mayor’s Office. Our team has helped bring the emerging issue of the sharing economy to the policy initiatives of local leaders and brought Israeli local and national leaders to the table at cutting edge international discussions on the subject.

Outside of the think tank, I’ve worked with Israeli partners to create meal-sharing experiences with asylum seekers in Israel and native Israelis, both to celebrate the culture of the asylum seekers and to build community between the two groups. I’ve also worked with Palestinian partners on a project that helps stimulate the sharing economy in Gaza and the West Bank.

I am on the marketing and communications team at the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel. My role is to disseminate the Taub Center’s research on various aspects of Israel’s socioeconomic condition to English-speaking audiences in ways that are creative and interesting. I am responsible for managing the English content on the Center’s website as well as the Center’s online presence, social media, and advertising. I also assist in communication with English-speaking press and contribute to the production of the Center’s monthly newsletter. In addition, I aid in the general operations of the Center by editing and reviewing publications, assisting in Taub Center events and meetings, and analyzing data to assess the Center’s impact. I regularly attend lectures hosted by the Taub Center or given by members of the Taub Center research team, which recently included a daylong Knesset symposium on employment during which Taub Center researchers presented in six different Knesset committees. I have really enjoyed my experience so far and am learning a lot, both in terms of content and skills.

While at the Moshe Dayan Center, I have had opportunities to assist fellows on multiple research projects, aid in the Center’s transition to a new website, and engage my own research interests. Working with Professor Ofra Bengio I have focused on Kurdish issues, providing research on the status of Iran’s Kurdish minority and Israeli-Kurdish relations. These projects have provided me with valuable knowledge on the nuances of Kurdish affairs. I am also working with Professor Paul Rivlin, editing and researching several articles and conference papers.

Concurrently, I have been able to pursue my own research interests, which culminated in an article on the Kurdish oil industry for the Dayan Center journal, Iqtisadi: Middle East Economy. In addition to these research projects, I provide administrative assistance to Dayan Center programs and assist with Bustan: The Middle East Book Review. At the Dayan Center, I have been afforded amazing opportunities to work with leading scholars, expand my research capabilities, and develop important career-oriented skills.

LEILA COLLINS  
Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies  
Johns Hopkins University ’14

TAMAR FRIEDMAN  
Taub Center for Social Policy Studies  
University of Pennsylvania ’15

ELIYAHU KAMISHER  
Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies  
UC, Santa Barbara ’15
Dayan, who interned at the Moshe Dayan Center. This proved valuable, however, as Linda built a reputation through her analyses of Islamist social media accounts coming out of Syria. “I made a name for myself as the ISIS girl, so to speak,” she told the Institute. Tova was rapidly thrust into a substantial role at the Taub Center: “At first they weren’t sure what to do with me,” she recalled. “They gave me some test projects, figured out what my strengths were, and within six weeks let me be a project manager. It was a unique opportunity to spearhead projects, leading to content that didn’t exist before.”

According to the testimony of their supervisors, these new arrivals were quickly integrated and made essential, often offering original contributions to their organizations. Michal Rubin, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Taub Center, described Tova as “instrumental,” and “an invaluable part of the team.” Meir Kraus, executive director of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, declared that, “In a very short time, [Caroline] really became one of the group. She is really excellent, always initiates, and finds ways to help more.” Martin Ben-Moreh of Reut called Reuben, “a critical part of the team.” Joel Parker, the internship coordinator at the MDC called Linda, “an irreplaceable person...leading the group of interns on a huge project researching the Islamic State.” Indeed, despite the interns’ status as newcomers and the nascent nature of this program, the first run seems to have been mutually beneficial. Parker appreciated the ability to build a long-term relationship, noting that, “a year in, we’re seeing a product we’re really proud of.”

AMERICAN STUDENTS BRING VALUED SKILLS

Each participant brought a unique perspective and skill set to work, of course, but interns and supervisors repeatedly cited their fluency in the two idioms of contemporary international communication – English and social media – as crucial to their contributions. Caroline initially faced a Hebrew language “learning curve” at JIIS, but recognized her added value when she was tasked with preparing English materials for Executive Director Meir Kraus: “Because I was the only native English speaker, I always felt useful on that front.” Michal Rubin described Tova playing a similar role at the Taub Center: “She helped build a major presentation of ours to a U.S. audience, working closely with the Managing Director.” Linda became the English editor of Beehive: Middle East Social Media, the MDC’s online journal tracking trends in Arab, Persian, and Turkish language social media.

Above all, cyber fluency allowed multiple interns to significantly upgrade their organization’s online capacity. Reuben brought the Reut Institute’s campaign against the de-legitimization of Israel into the digital age, directing the first-ever hack-a-thon, an event to create tech solutions to problems of de-legitimization. “A lot of people signed up, some great prototypes and ideas came out of there,” he said. Linda oversaw the Twitter account at MDC, in addition to leading the ISIS social media research project. Tova likewise was the manager of the Taub Center’s English Facebook account, and established their presence on Twitter, something that supervisor Michal Rubin called, “a new frontier for us.” Moreover, Tova spearheaded the construction of the Taub Center’s new website, taking pride in progress that she measured through digital analytics. “Now it’s very cool, user-friendly – the research of the Center is much more accessible and the number of visitors has just skyrocketed.”

Beyond external relations, Tova used digital tools to enhance the Taub Center’s internal evaluation mechanisms, in her words, “developing a system for measuring impact, for us to tell our donors and ourselves,
Building a Cohort Through Learning

During the course of a research internship cycle, the Israel Institute organizes a number of enrichment days for current interns. Enrichment days typically mix intimate conversations with local scholars and opinion leaders, and experiential elements such as walking tours and culinary exploration. This year’s programs have focused, respectively, on the culture, politics, and urban spaces of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv – Israel’s largest cities, each symbolic of a starkly different vision of Israel.

In Jerusalem, the interns enjoyed a tour of ancient Jerusalem artifacts at the Israel Museum, a conversation with Prof. Yitzhak Reiter on the politics of the holy sites, and a walking tour of holy sites in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Quarters of the Old City led by Jonathan Lipnick, tour guide and scholar of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.

In Tel Aviv, Ha’aretz columnist and editor Bradley Burston met the interns for breakfast in Jaffa; they enjoyed a cross-cultural walking tour of the Manshiyya, Neve Tzedek, Shuk HaCarmel (Carmel market) and Rothschild neighborhoods led by guide Iyiyn Sne-Or, and a conversation on Israeli cultural festivals and “urban Zionism” with Dr. Hizky Shoham at Tel Aviv University.

The Institute’s second group of Israel Research Interns — Leila Collins, Tamar Friedman, and Eliyahu Kamisher — explore Tel Aviv and Jerusalem during cohort enrichment days.
In Jerusalem, Caroline (left) and Tova elected to share an apartment.

internally, exactly how we’re doing across all of our projects and what areas require more attention.” Michal Rubin praised as “groundbreaking” Tova’s monthly impact reports that tracked mentions of the Taub Center’s research in the press and the Knesset, as well as visits to the website, posts, and re-posts, and asserted that “we’ll carry this on after she goes.”

At this point, however, Tova hasn’t gone. Now independently employed by the Taub Center, she works as Project Manager, focusing on organizational management, interdepartmental projects, and government relations, even as 2015-2016 Israel Institute intern Tamar Friedman has assumed responsibilities for English communications and social media. At JIIS, Caroline has spent an additional year researching political issues in Jerusalem alongside 2015-2016 intern Leila Collins. At MDC, Eliyahu Kamisher is picking up where Linda Dayan left off. The inaugural class of Israel Institute interns seems to have blazed a trail for successors to follow. In the program’s incoming class of 2016-2017, interns have earned spots at all five previous host institutions, as well as a new placement at the prestigious Israel Democracy Institute.

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE OFFICE
Members of the cohort described the program as sparking personal, as well as professional, growth. “Not my comfort zone at all,” explained Reuben. “This was the first time I was truly on my own, living with roommates I don’t really know, in a city that was unfamiliar to me, totally out there.”

Tova and Caroline assisted each other with acclimation by choosing to room together in Jerusalem’s Nachlaot neighborhood, demonstrating the important relationship-building potential of the program. “We’ve celebrated many holidays here together, for example: walking through our sukkah-decorated Nachlaot neighborhood on Sukkot, introducing our Israeli friends to American cuisine on Thanksgiving, lighting the candles with many friends on the last night of Hanukkah, celebrating and reflecting together at a nearby park on Yom HaAtzmaut, and many more,” Caroline recounted.

Tova concurred: “One of the highlights of this year in Israel has been the decision to live with Caroline. From Saturday mornings spent discussing Israeli politics to our late-night discussions comparing our work lives, having so many shared thoughts and experiences truly enhanced the year and has left me, undoubtedly, with a new lifelong friendship.”

MOVING ON, STAYING CONNECTED
After two years at JIIS, Caroline is heading back to the U.S. to begin a history Ph.D. program at Harvard in the fall. She says that her extended experience of life and work in Israel year has left an indelible imprint. “It’s certainly influenced the direction of the research I’d like to do in the future. Working at an Israeli think tank in Jerusalem has given me the chance to see how substantive research is conducted here, and also allowed me to understand my surroundings in Israeli society and sparked interests and experiences that I would not have expected before arriving.” Staying on in Israel, Tova likewise ascribes enduring value to her internship year: “As a recent college graduate, living and working in Israel has been an unparalleled experience,” Tova said. “Beyond the professional development of non-profit work and personal development by virtue of living abroad, I’m lucky to have two countries I call home, as well as the memories and tools that will propel me forward into the exciting next stage, whichever country that may be in.”

For more information about the Israel Institute’s internship opportunities, please check out israelinstitute.org/internships or contact kmarcus@israelinstitute.org.
Righteous Transgressions

Women’s Activism on the Israeli and Palestinian Religious Right

PROF. LIHI BEN SHITRIT

During the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the demolition of Jewish settlements there in the summer of 2005, Hanna, a well-known activist for the settlement cause, was arrested with a group of young women in a confrontation with policemen. Hanna, who is an Orthodox woman in her late fifties, a mother of eleven children and grandmother of many more, told me what happened after the arrest:

“They kept us for one night in the Russian Compound jail…Then they moved us to another jail. And there I saw the way [the young women] work. First, on the bus…they almost toppled the bus by going wild, they shook it from side to side. Then in jail they were completely unruly…they made a mess of that place…these young and soft and fresh women threw chairs at the door when the guard came over without blinking. They took all the mattresses off the beds and screamed, and the guards just didn’t know what to do with them. When they took us back to Jerusalem they got hold of all the arrest files and tore them to pieces and threw them out of the window; they were uncontrollable.”

Certain rabbis and settlement leaders criticized such acts by young women during the disengagement and later in physical clashes in the Amona illegal settlement outpost in 2006, declaring these immodest
and inappropriate for religious women. But Hanna explained to me Orthodox women’s participation in unruly confrontations using an allegory:

“There is a story about the way the Maccabean rebellion against the Greeks started [in the 2nd century BC]. One of the stories is that there was a law that the right to a bride’s first night was reserved for the [foreign] ruler. And Matityahu’s daughter was about to get married and they found some halachic ways to justify this practice, to accommodate. So everybody was out celebrating and she came out and tore up her clothes and stood there naked. Everyone was outraged and said, “What is this behavior?!”. But she said, “How can you sit here and eat and drink, when you know what is about to happen tonight?! How can you talk with me about modesty and then give me to that villain?!”. And that is what caused the rebellion. Men can philosophize and find halachic maneuvers to justify things but [the woman] sees the larger picture, she sees the humiliation. I don’t know if this really happened or not, but in legend and tradition it is the woman who sees the truth and rebels. And that later awakens the men, because they are the ones who physically carry out the war.”

While in peaceful, routine times, women might be quiet and modest, in exceptional times, according to this narrative, they are the ones who lead the struggle. Hanna does not describe the women’s behavior during the disengagement as “immodest.” On the contrary, acts that may be immodest in normal times – like Matityahu’s daughter appearing naked in front of a party of men – are in fact the most feminine of actions in unusual times. “Of course [settler women] are brought up to be obedient (’tsaitaniyot’),” Hanna told me, “it is not a contradiction. But with this fact you are also more aware of these unusual times,” she said, “times that are out of the ordinary. In ordinary life you can be very obedient.”

Like some Orthodox strands in the Jewish settler movement, many other contemporary religious-political movements around the world advocate conservative gender politics and all of them have women members. Intuitively, we would expect women’s activism in these movements to conform to traditionally feminine roles (for instance, embodying religious virtue through dress and modest behavior; opting for motherhood and childbirthing; and carrying out piety work, charity, education, and other social services for the religious community as an extension of their caregiving roles) but that is not always the case. In some movements, women work within a segregated feminine sphere, and their activism – usually piety and social services – seamlessly adheres to the restrictive gender ideology of their movements. In others, women are involved in mixed-sex, explicitly political public action such as unruly protest, physical confrontations, and even militant action. Like Hanna, they take part in activities that seem to contradict their professed commitment to conservative gender mores, such as a sexual division of labor, sex-segregation, and notions of female modesty and subordination. And in yet other movements women serve in the highest leadership bodies and even run for elected office. What explains this variation, given that these movements all subscribe to a patriarchal gender ideology with strict notions about male and female roles in the public and private spheres?

My book, Righteous Transgressions, examines this puzzle through a comparative study of four groups: the Jewish settler movement in the West Bank, the ultra-Orthodox Shas, the Islamic Movement in Israel, and the Palestinian Hamas. Based on two years of intensive work, my research reveals that certain movements’ ideologies offer women framing tools that allow them to undertake more expansive and even transgressive roles in activism. Specifically, when
movements see themselves as dealing with urgent and existential issues, women activists can find expanded spaces for political activism.

Two of the movements I studied – Shas and the (southern) Islamic Movement in Israel – focus mainly on spreading piety among coreligionists. The settlers and the Palestinian Hamas, on the other hand, also have strong religious-nationalist priorities. Using this nationalist agenda, women activists in the settler movement and Hamas construct what I call “frames of exception” that temporarily suspend some of the limiting aspects of their movement’s gender ideology in favor of its broader goals. In practice, the national struggle allows women to override conservative gender norms in times that are seen as crisis moments. Notably, though, these women are not casting aside the strict gender norms that their movement embraces during its day-to-day existence. It is the crisis state that allows them to behave in what could be interpreted as overstepping gendered boundaries. In other words, certain non-conforming behaviors are still seen as transgressions, but ones that are temporarily tolerated for the sake of the greater good.

To explore the mechanism linking a religious-nationalist ideology to women’s “righteous transgressions,” I spent over two years in Israel and the West Bank joining activists in mosque and synagogue lessons, closed meetings, public lectures, mass gatherings, protests and confrontations, settlement outpost construction, and religious pilgrimages. I collected data on the roles of such women from national databases and archives. I interviewed women activists about their motivations, goals, and constraints, and supplemented these accounts with interviews with the male leadership of the movements. The activists I worked with represent voices from different regions and generations, and the extensive narratives in my book provide rare glimpses into their complex private and public lives.

One of the reasons I wanted to write about this subject was that, although these four movements are well-known, controversial, and politically influential in Israeli and Palestinian politics, I could not find any book in English devoted specifically to women’s activism in any of them, or in all four comparatively. With this work, I aspire to fill a gap in scholarly and general knowledge about these movements and about women’s work within them, showing that women are integral agents in the promotion of the spiritual, cultural, social, and political visions of the Israeli and Palestinian religious right. But even though Righteous Transgressions is unique in its subject matter, it belongs to a growing body of scholarship that reevaluates women’s participation in conservative religious movements in the contemporary Middle East and elsewhere. It poses a question of interest to scholars and students in political science, sociology, anthropology, religious studies, women and gender studies, and Middle East studies: how do religious women overcome the tension between an adherence to contemporary conservative religious politics and the desire to participate actively in furthering political objectives?

After completing this book, I am now working on a new project that has been directly inspired by my work for Righteous Transgressions. The project examines women’s roles in and around sacred sites in Jerusalem. Using three contemporary Jewish and Muslim women’s movements, I explore the dynamics at one of the most studied and visited holy sites – Jerusalem’s Sacred Esplanade and its surroundings. Despite the inexhaustible scholarly and popular fascination that this space has inspired, the gendered dimensions of disputes over this sacred space, and women’s roles in these conflicts, have been largely neglected. I argue that the neglect of gender analysis of contested sacred spaces is detrimental to both our depiction and analysis of the conflicts at these sites. This research continues my engagement with gender, religion, and politics, and it demonstrates how attention to gender and to women’s engagement provides us a window into internal group dynamics that are essential to understanding broader regional conflicts.
As a native Floridian, my fascination with the ocean and how people behave at the shore dates back as long as I can remember. I knew that close to my hometown of Jacksonville, Florida, civil rights activists in Saint Augustine, as well as other places in the American South, had staged wade-ins, at which blacks and whites fought for the right to swim together. I realized that the beach could be a political site, a clarifying tool to study how people work through fears of sex and modernity. More so, I realized that these forces, strong the world over, were particularly salient in Israel. In my adolescence, I had developed an interest in Orthodox Judaism, but struggled with its expectations for women, which were often in conflict with my feminist sensibilities. During my studies, controversies over gender segregation in the public sphere rocked Israel. As a historian, I sensed the controversies were not new, but instead dated further back to the early days of the British Mandate and the state of Israel.

My current book project is a historical exploration of gender segregation that spans the intersections of religion, state, and gender in Israel. My particular focus is the fight for gender segregation in swimming spaces by the ultra-Orthodox community and what it tells us about gender, religion, and politics in Israel.

Seeking a Beach of Their Own

The fight for sex-segregated spaces by the ultra-Orthodox community and what it tells us about gender, religion, and politics in Israel

DR. SHAYNA WEISS
“For many Orthodox Jews, mixed swimming is understood as a violation of Jewish laws of modesty. Swimming spaces were the first non-religious public spaces that were gender segregated in the state of Israel, an example of religious influence in what many would consider the most secular of spaces.”

spaces, beaches, and pools, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, waged largely by the ultra-Orthodox community. For many Orthodox Jews, mixed swimming is understood as a violation of Jewish laws of modesty. Swimming spaces were the first non-religious public spaces—that were gender segregated in the state of Israel, an example of religious influence in what many would consider the most secular of spaces. I study how Orthodox Jews try to prevent mixing of men and women in such non-religious public spaces.

This type of study requires thinking about Orthodox Judaism and Jews in a different way than is usually presented in popular discourse. While Orthodox Judaism presents itself as a centuries-old tradition, it is, in fact, a movement no less radical than its more liberal counterparts, born as a response to the crises of modernity in Enlightenment-era Europe. A historical understanding of Orthodoxy as a fundamentally modern phenomenon highlights the flexibility and diversity of Orthodox responses to modernity. Rabbinic stringency is often a reactionary response to changing norms within communities. For example, current rabbinical bans on smartphones and related technologies are a reaction to their popularity in the Haredi camp, a radical response to grassroots shifts within the community. Focusing solely on these bans, as many commentators tend to do, distorts a proper understanding of Orthodox life, in which rabbis’ dictates do not always match the everyday lives of their followers.

Within Israel, there are two large camps of Orthodox Jews: Religious Zionist and Haredi (ultra-Orthodox). Unlike Religious Zionists, who view the state as part of a redemptive process, Haredi Jews do not ascribe religious value to the state of Israel. Most are non-Zionists, though there is a small but vocal anti-Zionist minority. Haredi men and women do not serve in the Israel Defense Forces, while Religious Zionist men do serve. (Religious Zionist women tend to perform national service in lieu of military service, although a significant minority do serve in the IDF.) Favoring particularly strict interpretations of Jewish law, Haredi Jews tend to reject the value of secular education and prefer to live a separatist lifestyle, in segregated neighborhoods with their own educational and bureaucratic institutions.

My work touches on areas of Haredi life ignored by scholars and commentators who tend to focus on theology, and it turns its attention to pools rather than study halls. Studies of Israeli Haredim have focused largely on their ideological relationship with Zionism and less on how interactions in Mandate Palestine and Israel caused shifts in Haredi identity.
and practice. Rather than focusing on rabbis and their writings, I analyze the actions and communications of ultra-Orthodox community activists. These activists found ad hoc solutions that later set precedent for legal initiatives. Studying how the ultra-Orthodox attempt to make social and political change in public spaces for leisure, in contrast to traditionally religious spaces (e.g. the synagogue or the home), is illuminating.

Because enforcing religiously-based gender segregation in non-religious public spaces requires government involvement, this process is ideal for studying the intersection of gender, religion, and politics in Israel. In Israel, increasing demands for gender segregation test the limits of the self-proclaimed Jewish and democratic nature of the state. Gender segregation is a physical manifestation of the intersections of gender and religion in synagogue-state relations. Demands for this type of separation shift long-standing political alliances and signify changes in Orthodox observance, belying the claims of a never-changing Orthodoxy. Practices of gender segregation have developed as a response to demands for stricter observance, as a marker of piety, and to signify control over a certain domain. Ultra-Orthodox activists who agitated for gender segregation stated openly that they did so less because of technical points of halacha and more so out of a need to create a certain kind of communal sphere that would protect and enable their way of life.

In my manuscript, I compare the 1958 failed fight against mixed swimming in Jerusalem’s first public pool and the 1966 successful establishment of a gender-segregated beach in Tel Aviv. In my research, I have found that campaigns to create spaces amenable to Haredim were more effective than negative crusades against widely accepted breaches of strict Jewish observance. Positive campaigns presented ultra-Orthodox Jews as willing to integrate into the larger Israeli society by virtue of Haredi use of a civic and democratic discourse. Negative campaigns, on the other hand, reinforced associations of Haredi Jews with seemingly archaic religious values and an unwillingness to take part in Israeli democracy. Therefore, the Haredi community favored these positive campaigns to create an ultra-Orthodox subculture in Israel.

The debates over pools and beaches demonstrate changes in Haredi language and practice, resulting in a cultural shift created by political activism. In this context, demand for segregated swimming is best understood as a response to demands for stricter observance, as a marker of piety, and to signify control over a certain domain. Ultra-Orthodox activists who agitated for gender segregation stated openly that they did so because of technical points of halacha and more so out of a need to create a certain kind of communal sphere that would protect and enable their way of life.

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When Anat Yota Zuria was a student at Ma’aleh – a religious school for television and film – she asked to direct, as her final project, a film dealing with religious women at the mikveh (Jewish ritual bath). The college asked her to submit a different film for her final project and wait until after graduation to direct a film about the mikveh. The school, which had only recently been founded at the time of the incident, was wary of a potential backlash against a film about female sexuality in the religious community. The genre of religious cinema was a relatively young one and the school, which was trying to make a name for itself, was careful about tying its reputation to voices that were perceived as inciting against halachic and communal norms.

In 2002, Yota Tzuria debuted her documentary film Tehora (or, in English, Purity), the first in a trilogy dealing with women and religion. Her second film, Mekudeshet (English title: Sentenced to Marriage), dealt with the status of women in rabbinical courts. Together,
the two films raised complex and difficult issues of women whose lives were challenged by the halachic laws related to purity and marriage. These films not only featured authentic voices of women in the Orthodox community but also became a pivotal part of the religious feminist dialogue on a variety of issues: purity consultants at the mikveh; female counsels in the traditionally male rabbinical courts; assistance organizations for women seeking religious divorce decrees (‘gets’); and halachic and medical issues of women who are “halachically barren” (women who are prevented from conceiving children because their ovulation period falls during the period of niddah, when they are religiously prohibited from intercourse). Discussions of these issues in recent years reflect radical changes regarding the role and status of women taking place in the Jewish religious community. The films, dealing as they did with these issues, both reflected and contributed to the erosion of religious taboos.

In 2007, Chaim Elbaum graduated from Ma’aleh. His final project won an award for best film in his graduating class. The film, which was produced on campus, dealt with a homosexual yeshiva student who falls in love with his study partner. In interviews, Elbaum explained that he understood that if he didn’t come out of the closet, he would not be able to create films, and he decided to come out while at Ma’aleh. His final project, while not an autobiography, clearly highlighted the identity of its director as a religious homosexual. Ma’aleh not only awarded the film a prize, but also initiated a school-wide discussion on what it meant to be both gay and religious.

The relatively short passage of time between Ma’aleh’s reticence to have its name associated with a film about religious women at the mikveh and its choice to award a formal prize to a film about religious homosexuality – which arguably raises much more complex and difficult halachic issues – is a testament not only to the evolving position of the school but, even more so, to the intricate relationship between religious cinema and the religious community itself in driving social change.

My research focuses on this relationship. I had already become intrigued by national religious cinema early in my academic career, but at the time, there was a dearth of films to analyze. After writing a master’s thesis on national religious fiction and a doctorate on literature written by Haredi women for a Haredi female audience, I returned to a focus on the religious national community. In the time that has passed since my first acquaintance with national religious art, the offerings in the realm of literature, cinema, television, and culture of the religious national community in Israel have burgeoned. More importantly, the range of topics that they deal with has vastly increased.

One of the most striking phenomena of these new works is how frequently and openly they grapple with the questions of gender and sexuality. In this way, for instance, the national religious newspaper Mashiv HaRuach dedicated two issues to poetry written by women, and different films by alumni of Ma’aleh followed in the footsteps of Yota Zuria and Elbaum, dealing with complex questions about female or homosexual identity. For example, the movie Shira, by Miriam Adler, depicts a woman wearied by motherhood who desires to prevent future pregnancies. Srugim – a TV series about a group of modern Orthodox 30-somethings in Jerusalem, co-created by Ma’aleh graduates Eliezer Shapiro and Hava Divon – features both a religious homosexual character who chooses to get married and a woman facing fertility issues due to early ovulation. A film by Shosha Greenfield, Jeanne D’arc My Love, is a coming out drama that identifies the director as a religious lesbian.

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The recent discourse over gender identity in the religious sphere, and within the art of this sphere, is one that is inherently critical of religious customs. However, the criticism takes place as part of
an internal community dialogue. Even when the dialogue has implications outside of the religious community (for instance, something that impacts secular women in rabbinical courts), its primary focus is on the intersection of halacha with gender and sexuality. The literature and film projects dealing with questions of gender and sexuality in the religious community did not seek to expand discourse in the religious community for the sake of argument, but in order to have an operative impact on lives of individuals and couples within the religious community. As a consequence, the cultural discourse and the religious discourse are intertwined and mutually affect one another.

Of course the cultural products of the religious community do not solely belong to or affect that internal community. The literature and film created by members of the religious national community have, over the years, entered more and more into the Israeli mainstream. A number of popular artists and works documenting national religious life have become household names in Israel, with some now even considered part of the Israeli cultural canon. This phenomenon is not accidental and rather is tied to a key issue that occupies the national religious community: the community's position within Israel and its ability to influence the Israeli public. When Ma'aleh was founded, after the evacuation of Yamit, many in the national religious community felt underrepresented in Israeli society and, consequently, in addition to championing the cause of settlement in Gaza and the West Bank, they felt driven to alter the cultural landscape. So the cultural products generated by the national religious community cannot be wholly divorced from national issues. Originally, this connection between politics and culture drove a homogenous approach to the types of film and literature generated by the community. The tension between individual authors or filmmakers who want to tell their own stories and the greater community that seeks to influence Israeli society is complex, and often jarring to the national religious community. This tension necessarily affects the work of the artists in the community. The hesitance that such artists display when dealing with political questions of the day stems from a desire to be perceived as artists rather than merely religious artists. At the same time, when seeking to make Israeli cultural products, the imprint of these artists' national religious identity is unavoidable because it is an inseparable part of their Israeli identity.

Studying this tension between the individual and the collective is a key element of my research. It is interesting that such tension arises in artistic works dealing not only with communal themes such as nationalist identity and national politics but also with themes that seem highly personal, such as gender and sexuality. By examining the latter themes, my research – much like the film and literature it explores – seeks to generate a wider and more nuanced view of a community that seems unified on its face, but is, in reality, dynamic, multi-faceted, and complex.
Bringing an Israeli Story to Life on Stage

The Israel Institute speaks to Zvi Sahar, a Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artist at the University of Maryland specializing in PuppetCinema.

IIM: How did you get into cinema? Specifically, how did you get into puppetry?

SAHAR: I love telling a story. There are many ways to do this, through cinema, film, dance, poetry, and so forth, and I use puppetry to do it. Part of my attraction to puppetry has its roots in my childhood. My mother is an artist who works with textiles and my father is an engineer. So we’d always had two studios in our home, one full of fabrics and thread and one full of fiber optics cables and soldering irons. Someone was always creating something, and I think that honed my instincts to build things out of various materials.

Professionally, I originally trained to be an actor. I studied acting at the Yoram Levinstein Acting Studio and then worked for four years as an actor with the influential director Rina Yerushalmi and the Itim Ensemble, at the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv. Following that, I worked for two years at the Beersheva Theater and, at that time, I began directing. I went back to school, at the University of Haifa, to study directing formally. It was at this time that I saw a play with puppets that changed my life, by Yael.
Inbar, a master in the field. Shortly afterward, I moved to New York and decided to transition from acting to puppetry. I was accepted into a program called Puppet Lab at St. Ann’s Warehouse, which allows a small group of artists to develop projects for puppet and object theater. Later that year, I received support from the Jim Henson Foundation to develop my puppet show, *Salt of the Earth*. With puppetry, I felt that I had found my voice as a storyteller. It allowed me to use both the stage and physical art to tell my stories.

**IIM:** What are the unique advantages that can be communicated in puppetry in contrast to other forms of cinema?

**SAHAR:** For starters, I’ll compare puppets to actors. The hardest thing for an actor to do on stage is to die; the hardest thing for a puppet to do on stage is to live. The actor is in a constant struggle to pretend that he is something other than himself. He has to neutralize his personality in order to take on the character and distance himself from previous characters that people associate with him. In contrast, the puppet is a blank slate. When you lift it onto the stage, it’s like it’s being born for the first time. There’s no baggage.

Additionally, you can use the materials that make up the puppet to tell their own story, which is not possible with a human actor. For instance, in my show, *Salt of the Earth* (in Hebrew, *HaDerech L’Ein Harod*), the puppet is constructed from a military kit bag used in the Six Day War, which I found in the Jaffa flea market. This material has its own amazing story that is not explicitly discussed in the show, but is expressed visually to the audience. On the puppet’s back, you can see writing on the kit bag, with various dates. The first written entry is June 5, 1967 – the first day of the war – and a location. The second, third, and fourth entries are also a date and a location. The fifth entry is just a date, with no location. We don’t know the story of the kit bag’s owner. We don’t know what happened on the fifth day. Did the soldier go home because his child was born? Did he not fill in the location on the fifth day because he was killed? We don’t know. But the material evokes that uncertainty. In addition to hearing the text that is read by the puppeteer, the audience also sees the material from which the puppet is constructed and it serves as subtext.

Another important element of puppetry as a medium is that puppets are inert and cannot display any emotions. This means that any feeling that the audience has toward the doll is a feeling that the audience has to produce. I create a suggestion or an idea, but the true feeling is generated by the audience members and imposed onto the puppet. For this reason, I think that puppets can generate more empathy, in a way, than actors can.

**IIM:** How do you decide which materials to use?

**SAHAR:** I like to use found objects because I like using objects that have some sort of history, that have their own story. I don’t like building puppets from scratch. I recently did an exercise with my students where they created penguin puppets out of plastic bags. There’s a difference between a penguin constructed out of a Macy’s bag and a penguin made out of a brown paper bag from the street. I asked the students to bring nylon bags to class. I didn’t tell them what they would be doing with them because I wanted it to be an intuitive choice for them. Everyone, at the last minute, grabbed a plastic bag that reflected him or her in some sense. Did they grab something from the recycling bin? Did...
they buy something at the store on their way to class so that they could have a plastic bag? Each of these represents a particular person and a particular choice. In this way, I wanted to show how puppets can be made from almost anything because they are created, ultimately, by the puppeteer.

IIM: How has your experience been teaching in the United States?

SAHAR: It has been wonderful. I am overjoyed. The students are amazing. For the first part of the course, I taught them the fundamental principles of puppetry, but at this point it has gone beyond teaching. I feel like I am truly working with them, that we're creating things together. Because this was a semester-long course that met multiple times per week, I was able to build the curriculum to include both traditional lessons and the creation of independent works of PuppetCinema. Some of the students also work with me in a voluntary capacity on developing the visuals for an upcoming show at the Cameri Theatre, in Tel Aviv – my adaptation of the book, Suddenly, a Knock on the Door, by Israeli author Etgar Keret. I feel that I’ve really gotten to know these students as artists. I feel incredibly inspired by them. The scope of the course allows me to give them a lot, but I am also getting a lot back from them. They’re extremely talented and extremely creative, and I must say, I would be glad to direct any of the projects that they’re doing.

In our course, the students are divided into groups, each doing a different type of puppetry project. One group is using paper silhouettes to depict a story of the war in Afghanistan, based on a personal story. Another group is using found electronic objects to make a puppet that has to live in the world of the theater. Yet another group is using a large puppet to tell an Etgar Keret story entitled “They’re Shooting Tuvia,” which is related to the project I’ll be doing next year at the Cameri Theatre in Tel Aviv.

In general, I love teaching. In Israel, I always made a point of teaching, at least one day a week, from children in second grade to university-level students. I think teaching helps you remain generous and fresh as an artist.

IIM: How did you decide to adapt the Etgar Keret book that you’re working on for your current project?

SAHAR: Suddenly, A Knock on the Door, the Keret book that I’m adapting for PuppetCinema, is a collection of stories. Within this book, the main characters all, in some way or another, yearn for stories – to be part of a story, to discover a story, to identify their life story. His characters experience a struggle between who and where they are and who and where they seek to be. This element drew me to the book because, as I said, I love stories. Furthermore, the characters are all dealing with some sort of catastrophe. Each story starts with some sort of apocalyptic life moment. One of my challenges has been to depict this starting point on stage. I’ve conceived of it as a huge pile of junk in the middle of the set: pieces of iron, rust, liquid smoke rising. The stories derive from this pile. Depending on the story, it’s meant to evoke a house that has collapsed, a world that has collapsed, a society that has collapsed. Some of the characters rise up from the pile, some refuse to
return to the pile; they all have a relationship with the pile.

**IIM:** How have American students and audiences reacted to your art, particularly given your adaptation of Israeli works?

**SAHAR:** I really like working on Etgar Keret’s stories because he has both universal themes and quintessentially Israeli themes. I can see it with my students. They may not understand all of the aspects of a particular story, but they still strongly identify with the stories. Themes like war, survival, or loss are universal. Of course, you always lose something in translation, but a good author can always hit upon this universal thread. I really like the combination of the universal and the Israeli parts. I enjoy working with universal themes, and the Israeli elements help me really connect emotionally to the text.

**IIM:** What, in your opinion, makes Israeli art Israeli? What is Israeli about your own art?

**SAHAR:** This is a very difficult question. In Israel, I am on the steering committee of an organization called Eve Art, which is an association of independent theatre creators in Israel. We constantly grapple with this question of how to identify what Israeli art is.

Speaking for myself and thinking about my art, the Israeli aspect of art is related to what draws me to PuppetCinema. In PuppetCinema, when you tell a story, the elements of the story are deconstructed: the text is read by a puppeteer, while the body of the puppet and the set each create sub-text about the character and the world in which the character is living, respectively. In essence, the story is taking place in three parts, but you can’t truly separate the parts from each other. If I do my job correctly, then whichever component an audience member focuses on at a given moment, it will be a focus point that feeds into a cohesive story. As a result, the viewing experience I’m attempting to create is one that is layered and complex, with elements that are intertwined. I feel like life in Israel is a lot like this. It’s so dense and complex. There are so many angles to Israel. You can’t look at just one and say, “This is Israel!” It’s the synergy of things that seem to clash. There’s an element of paradox.

There is a tough security situation in Israel and so, naturally, this is a theme that comes up a lot in the works that I adapt. But again, it’s not the sole element. It’s not just war and destruction. Even from a pile of seemingly broken things at the center of a stage, stories come out, life comes out.

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**ON APRIL 8 AND 9, 2016, Salt of the Earth, Zvi Sahar’s work of PuppetCinema, was presented at the University of Maryland’s Clarice Center for Performing Arts to two sold-out houses, each of which had waiting lists. In addition to the warm audience reception, there was enthusiastic support for this project by the university itself. “The Clarice brought six actors and tech personnel from Israel for the event, significantly leveraging the Institute’s commitment to the residency,” reported Marge Goldwater, the Israel Institute’s Director of Arts and Cultural Programs. “Experiencing Zvi Sahar’s Salt of the Earth at the Clarice last month was akin to finding an artistic soulmate,” wrote Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig, Associate Professors of Dance and the co-artistic directors of PearsonWidrig DanceTheater at UMD. According to Pearson and Widrig, Zvi has been invited to return to the university in 2017 and 2018 for residencies to work on a collaborative project of PuppetCinema and dance. The two expressed their gratitude to the Institute for “having the vision to bring Zvi for this residency,” and noted that, “We have been creating collaborative experimental dance/spoken word/video performances throughout the world for many years, and have rarely come across an artist whose sensibility and sensitivity resulted in such an awakening in us.”**
The Israel Institute supported a number of workshops and intensive courses related to Israel on campuses across Europe over the past several months.

FRANCE

Historian Harel Chorev, of Tel Aviv University, spent the spring semester on two French campuses, conducting research at CERI, the Science Po Paris Research Institute, and teaching a course at Sciences Po Menton. Some fifty students participated in the overbooked Sciences Po course, on the topic of societies and radical movements in the Middle East. Sciences Po Menton also hosted musician Yair Dalal, who gave a musical performance and led an academic workshop in January. Lecturing in the classroom of Prof. Alain Dieckhoff, Dalal spoke to students about ethnicity and identity in Israel, and the role of the artist in Israel’s multi-cultural society.

Journalist Or Heller held a workshop on “Covering Asymmetrical Wars” in January at the School of Journalism (ESJ) in Lille, where he spoke about his experience covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
A few months later, at Sciences Po Lille, Israeli cartoonist Michel Kichka gave a lecture, workshop, and exhibition, and former Israeli ambassador Daniel Shek held a masterclass on the role of diplomats and diplomacy in the era of mass communications.

CENTRAL EUROPE

At Charles University in Prague, the Institute worked with a local professor from the Faculty of Social Sciences to launch an intensive introductory course on the history, politics, and society of modern Israel. Almost 50 students attended the course, which featured several Israeli experts as guest lecturers.

Tel Aviv lecturer and former Knesset member Dan Korn taught an intensive course entitled “Israel at 68: Politics, Economy, Society” at the National University for Political Science and Public Administration in Bucharest in May.

Israeli sociology professor Natan Sznaider is currently teaching two semester-long Israel Studies courses – a lecture class on Israeli society and a seminar on Hannah Arendt and Eichmann in Jerusalem – at Ludwig Maximilian University. In May, he gave a public lecture in Munich surveying Israel’s changing society and social trends, which was attended by over 100 people, including students, faculty, and members of the greater community.

RUSSIA

Security Studies scholar Dima Adamsky of the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya (IDC) spent two weeks in Moscow in April undertaking an Israel Institute visiting research fellowship, at the Oriental Studies Institute (OSI). As part of his visit, he conducted a seminar on “Regional Geopolitical Trends: A View From Israel” and one on “Change and Continuity in the Israeli National Security Concept.”
As one of its initiatives to foster academic and public discourse, the Israel Institute helps sponsor national and international conferences hosted by universities and think tanks around the world. Since the beginning of the calendar year, the Institute has supported:

1. The San Diego-Israel Water Roundtable, held at UC San Diego at the beginning of March. Dozens of environmental and civic experts participated in the event, which was cohosted by the city of San Diego, the U.S.-Israel Center on Innovation & Economic Sustainability, and Sustainability Matters.

2. A two-day conference on “Israel and the Media,” held at Brandeis University in early April. Among its many panels and presentations, this gathering featured a roundtable with journalists Ethan Bronner of Bloomberg, Jodi Rudoren of the New York Times, and Jeff Jacoby of the Boston Globe.

3. A two-day interdisciplinary symposium at the end of April, entitled “The Molecularization of Identity: Science, Metaphors, and Personhood in the 21st Century.” The event, which Israel Institute post-doc Dr. Ian McGonigle helped organize, was cohosted by the Program on Science, Technology and Society at the Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard’s Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics.

4. An invitation-only Israel Forum at City College, London, in mid-May. This event brought together Israel-focused policy makers to discuss Israel in the wake of regional unrest in the Middle East.

5. A workshop for young Israel Studies scholars from Europe entitled “Promised Lands: Israel-Diaspora Relations and Beyond,” held at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich in late May.

6. A five-day workshop hosted by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations on the topic of “Israel in the Shadow of Conflict.” The event brought leading political science professors from universities across the United States to Israel and included site visits to Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, as well as panels and lectures.
ARTS & CULTURE

- The Institute gave funds to Stanford University to support Dibur, a peer-reviewed online journal for Hebrew and Jewish literature.

- Sharon Vazanna, a dancer and choreographer currently doing a residency at Muhlenberg College as part of the Institute’s Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artist Program, was featured in the New York Times earlier this year, for her part in the 92 St Y’s “Out of Israel” showcase.

- Dancer and choreographer Idan Cohen recently performed with his company at UC San Diego. Cohen’s hosts were inspired to bring him to UCSD after seeing his work two years ago at UC Irvine, where he was an artist-in-residence with the Institute’s Schusterman Visiting Israeli Artist Program in Spring 2014.

2016 Summer Interns

With the generous support of the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Israel Institute is supporting eight interns for eight weeks over the summer, to undertake Israel-related work at research and cultural institutions in the United States.

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<th>NAME</th>
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The Israel Institute also sponsors a yearlong research internship in Israel. For information on this program, please see our article on page 13 or visit our website at israelinstitute.org/internships
What We Do

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.

**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.

**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 a very select group of recent Ph.D.s who are working on Israel-focused topics and who want to make a career in research about Israel. The fellowship appointments are for up to two years and open to academics in a range of fields and departments.

**VISITING PROFESSOR AND FACULTY FELLOW PROGRAMS**
These two programs bring Israeli faculty to universities in the United States and Europe to teach courses on modern Israel. The programs enable Israeli professors to spend an academic year abroad lecturing and expanding their academic circles, while granting students and the surrounding communities access to leading Israeli professors.

**TEACHING FELLows**
The Teaching Fellow Program is for scholars of any nationality and rank with strong expertise in Israel Studies who are free to be placed by the Israel Institute at American colleges and universities. This program provides students from across the United
States with access to academics who are experts on modern Israel.

**PUBLICATION SUPPORT**
Through its monograph series, the Israel Institute provides funding for scholarly works on Israel that have been accepted for publication by an academic press. The Institute also supports the translation of works by promising Israeli authors into English, as part of a project to promote international access and exposure to modern Hebrew literature and culture.

**ACADEMIC CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS**
The Institute supports academic events devoted to the study of Israel at universities and think tanks around the globe. Such conferences span a range of academic topics.

**INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS**
The Israel Institute helps fund college-age scholars who have unfunded internships with top think tanks, research institutions, and arts and culture organizations 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.

**WOMEN’S FACULTY LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE**
Ensuring the strong representation of women in the field of Israel Studies is a crucial step in creating a community of scholars that includes a diversity of perspectives among Israel experts. This initiative aims to help women who are pre-tenured assistant professors at top-tier universities achieve senior academic positions in Israel Studies by sponsoring teaching relief.

**VISITING FACULTY IN CHINA**
Our Visiting Faculty in China program brings both Hebrew teachers and academics in the field of Israel Studies to Beijing, China. Scholars have the opportunity to spend a semester or full academic year teaching about modern Israel at elite Chinese universities.

**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, over 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.

For details about any of these programs, please refer to our website: [www.israelinstitute.org](http://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 cultural 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.