

San Francisco State University  
Jewish Studies Department  
International Relations Department, Political Science Department  
Spring Semester 2010

**JS 430, IR 430, PLSI 430: ISRAEL DEMOCRACY:  
POLITICS, INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIETY**

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Many people approach Israel democracy as suitors treated a riddle in the ancient Greek tale about a king who wanted to find the right man for his daughter: solve it and the beautiful princess is yours; fail to solve it and you meet your end. According to those who take this approach, solving the riddle of Israel's polity will bring peace not only to the Middle East, but to the ends of the earth; and not solving it will contribute to a spiraling of violence that will reach everyone everywhere.

For those who take this approach, finding the solution to the riddle seems to be getting harder as time goes by and the consequences of the failure seem to be getting harsher. Precisely for this reason, it may be time to consider the possibility that this approach is itself part of the problem. In order to confront the challenges of Israel democracy, one has to treat it not as a riddle that can be solved once and for all, but rather as a developing story in which we must carve out a role for ourselves while we are actually living in it.

Indeed, a usual way of studying Israel democracy is as those who already have a clear understanding of how democracy works and want to figure out how Israel can treat its citizens and neighbors accordingly. Such learning goes inside the theoretics and mechanics of democratic polity and then uses these as standards upon which to judge the degree to which current Israeli governance and society are or are not democratic. There is a ton of literature that has been produced in this mode that is available to all who are interested and engaged.

The problem is that such an approach often leads to a conversation among the deaf: those who criticize Israel for compromising on democracy paradoxically move towards a rejection of its very right to exist; those who defend Israel as being democratic under the most trying of conditions wind up blaming its critics for holding double standards and focusing on the pitfalls of democracy everywhere else. Ironically, what emerges from this study of "democracy in Israel" is that the topic of "Israeli democracy" remains profoundly unaddressed.

This course takes an alternative path. It invites students to come down from the judge's seat in order to take a closer look at the phenomenon of Israeli democracy – one appropriate to what the term would itself suggest: i.e. as a unique and unfolding drama of arranging human relations in the context of the developing and ongoing Zionist project of Israel in the Middle East. This is a drama in which various Jewish and non-Jewish characters are trying to work through their personal and collective

stories, their conflicting commitments, their hopes and disillusionments and their strengths and vulnerabilities even as they make, and bear the brunt of, consequential decisions about their lives every day.

Our assumption is that as students begin to understand Israeli democracy in these terms, they will be much better equipped to consider if and how this drama affects them, if and how they want to be further engaged with it, and if and how they want to interact with the various players. This course is therefore not for those who seek affirmation for what they think they already know and feel about Israeli democracy. It aims to engage students who seek a deeper inquiry into the topic, so that they can address the topic more profoundly.

**Class format:** Keeping with this approach, the course will not directly focus on traditional “topics” such as “religion and state,” “constitution and law,” and “ethnic minorities.” Rather, our learning will be arranged according to six central “themes” that run through the drama of Israeli democracy, each of which will be explored through the study of primary sources from various disciplines (including the arts, eg. literature, film). The course is only an introduction - not a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment – but in providing a fruitful set of entry points, it aims to inspire and compel students to learn more. The six “themes” for the course will be:

- opportunities and challenges of the Jewish political tradition;
- alluring Zionist, non-Zionist and anti-Zionist democratic utopias;
- practicalities and impracticalities of Labor movement pragmatism;
- threatening and empowering diversities;
- logjams and pitfalls in the Arab-Jewish encounter;
- living and managing Holocaust memory.

### **Assignments and assessment:**

Students will be required to read one or two background articles in preparation for classes (sometimes in the wake of them), but the class itself will be devoted to the close reading and discussion of primary sources relating to the six themes mentioned above.

While this syllabus provides a detailed outline of our weekly topics and readings, I reserve the right to make changes as your particular interests and issues arise in the course of our study. At the same time, I am sensitive to the need for material that provides some overview or survey of the field that we will be covering in our learning. For that purpose, you will need to buy two books for our course:

Howard Morley Sachar, *A History of Israel: From the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (Paperback, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007 edition)

Alan Arian, *Politics in Israel: Politics in Israel* (CQ Press, 2005 paperback edition)

I have tried to save the costs of a course Reader by providing PDF files for almost all of the course materials, but **PLEASE PRINT OUT THE PRIMARY SOURCES FOR EACH CLASS RATHER THAN LEAVING THEM IN YOUR**

**COMPUTER.** . I make this request for several reasons: 1) when everybody has a laptop open in class, it is difficult to see faces and engage each other interpersonally around a common text; 2) when a text is printed out, it is easier to highlight and make marginal comments; 3) it takes extra time for people to scroll through a file on their hard drive.

That this course is an introduction to Israel democracy means that it aims to arouse and motivate you to think, read and discuss items beyond what is required for the course itself. While such an outcome is not a requirement of the course and will not affect your grade, I am truly interested in your ongoing learning. In order to facilitate this outcome, I will be do my best to make further readings available to you upon request in PDF format and I will be keeping longer office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays (as of 14:30 p.m.) for those students who want to schedule appointments for further discussion.

### **Assignments and Assessment:**

**Class Participation:** Class participation is a necessary condition for your learning in this course. By that I mean that it is in class that you will be learning the method of study that this course aims to transmit regarding the topic of Israel democracy. Participation does not mean you have to be vocal in every class. It means you have to engage in the process of thinking through the readings, sources, topics and issues of the course. That takes place in between classes as much as inside of them. Class participation will determine 10% of your grade.

**Response papers:** Every few classes I will pose a brief question about a reading or primary source in our course and ask you to submit a one-page single spaced response. Response papers will be graded credit/non-credit. They are meant to be informal reflections on a particular reading/primary source given before or studied in class. The response papers should enable us (you and I) to engage in a short dialogue that keeps both of us honest about what is being studied. Response papers should be written in 12-point type (Times Roman) with normal margins on both sides so I can write comments. From time to time, I might ask particular students if they would be willing to share their reflections in class as part of our learning. The response papers will determine 25% of your grade.

**Course paper:** The other 65% of your grade will be determined on the basis of an exam in which you will be asked to analyze and discuss one reading and one primary source relating to Israel democracy but were not learned in class. You will be given four possibilities from which to choose the reading and the primary source and you will be able to bring any materials you want to the exam (eg. the survey books I asked you to buy, your notebooks, etc.). I will provide further details regarding the nature of the exam towards the end of the semester. For now, I want only to emphasize that what you write about the reading and primary source on the exam should demonstrate your facility with the content and method of study in the course. While it is important that you amass information from our learning, I will want to see that you are capable of applying it.

Topics and readings:

## **A. COURSE INTRODUCTION**

**Class #1:** Tuesday, January 26:

Topic: Introduction: The riddle of Jenin, Jenin, Jenin;  
Course aims, overview, assignments.

## **B. THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE JEWISH POLITICAL TRADITION**

**Class #2:** Thursday, January 28:

Topic: Democratic and undemocratic foundations in pre-modern Jewish history

Reading: Walzer, Lorberbaum and Zohar (2000) *The Jewish Political Tradition*, Vol. 1, Introduction pp. xxi-xxxii, vii-xii. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sources: Kings Law (*Deuteronomy* 17:14-20); Samuel's prophecy against kings (1 *Samuel* 8:4-22); Josephus on theocracy, etrog revolt (*Against Apion* 11:165, *Antiquities* 13); Yanai vs. Sanhedrin (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 19a-b); Maimonides on apostates (*Mishneh Torah: Laws of Rebels* III)

**Class #3:** Tuesday, February 2:

Topic: Diaspora pragmatism - The Law of the Land is the Law

Reading: Dowty (1998), *The Jewish State: A Century Later*, pp.19-33. Berkeley: University of California Press; Arian (2005), *Politics in Israel*, pp. 150-158.

Sources: Jeremiah 29:7; Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Kama* 113a-b; excerpts from Philip Roth's *Defender of the Faith* (pp. 125-133) and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*

**Class #4:** Thursday, February 4:

Topic: Anti-Semitism as a response to Jewish political idealism

Reading: Almog, (1988) *Anti-Semitism Through the Ages*, pp. 1-25. Oxford: Pergamon; George Steiner (1965), "A Kind of Survivor," *Commentary*.

Sources: Pre-Christian Jew hatred in classical Greek sources; excerpt from Marx's *On the Jewish Problem*; Zamenhoff's principles of *Hillelism*; Hitler's response to Marx and Zamenhoff; Bialik's 1933 prophecy of the Holocaust.

**Class #5:** Tuesday, February 8:

Topic: Memories of Jewish life in Islamic countries

Reading: Goitein (1972), *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts Through the Ages* (pp. 62-88, 229-235) New York: Schocken.

Sources: Excerpt from Yitzchack Bar Asher's *Exodus from Iraq*; Shlomo Bar Etlenu *biKefar Tudrah* (song), excerpt from Dinur's *Israel in Diaspora*;

**Class #6:** Thursday, February 11:

Topic: Educating Jewish Democrats in Israel

Reading: Ruth Gavison (2003) "The Jews' Right to Statehood: A Defense," *Azure*, Summer 5763/2003, pp.70-108.

Sources: David Ben Gurion on the challenges of democracy in Israel; Ben Zion Dinur *Educating Jewish Citizens*

### **C. ALLURING ZIONIST, NON-ZIONIST AND ANTI-ZIONIST DEMOCRATIC UTOPIAS**

**Class #7:** Tuesday, February 16:

Topic: Herzl's Jewish State

Reading: Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 36-64.

Sources: Excerpts from Herzl's *The Jewish State* (preface and pp. 63-75); synopsis of *Altneuland* (Sachar p. 55); comments on Columbus and on Africa; diary entries on the meetings with Rothschild; testimony to the English Commission; Ahad Ha'am's "The Jewish State and the Jewish Problem"

**Class #8:** Thursday, February 18:

Topic: Socialist light unto the nations

Reading: Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 10-13, 69-80, 147-159.

Sources: Syrkin, "Jews and Socialism"

**Class #9:** Tuesday, February 23:

Topic: Revisionist Israel

Reading: Sachar, *A History of Israel* 183-188, 264-267, 708-713

Sources: Sources: from Jabotinsky's "Betar Ideology;" from the poem *Jerusalem 1967* by Yehuda Amichai; and from Gershom Gorenberg's *The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of The Settlements, 1967-1977* (map before page 1, 83-89, 111-112, 138-140).

**Class #10:** Thursday, February 25:

Topic: Brit Shalom's vision of a Bi-National State

Reading: Mendes Flohr (ed.)(1983), *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs* (pp. 3-33). New York: Oxford.

Sources: Statutes of Brith Shalom; Buber on "The Bi-National Approach to Zionism," Ghandi's condemnation of Zionism and Buber's response.

**Class #11:** Tuesday, March 2:

Topic: Zionism as Global Cultural Pluralism

Reading: Schmidt (1995), *Horace M. Kallen: Prophet of American Zionism* (pp. 35-48, 107-120, 166-7,174-177). New York: Carlson

Sources: From the introduction to Alain Locke's *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*; excerpts from Kallen's biography and writings that relate to cultural pluralism as an international philosophy.

**Class #12:** Thursday, March 4:

Topic: Mideast Democracy:

Reading: Economist Intelligence Unit (2005): The Dynamics of Democracy in the Middle East [http://graphics.eiu.com/files/ad\\_pdfs/MidEast\\_special.pdf](http://graphics.eiu.com/files/ad_pdfs/MidEast_special.pdf) (pp. 3-9 and any two non-Israel examples from what follows); Harvard University National Security Center (2008): Can the Middle East sustain democracy? (scholars colloquium)

[http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/middle\\_east\\_sustain\\_democracy](http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/mesh/2008/01/middle_east_sustain_democracy)

Porat "Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Ideology in the Arab Nationalist Movement in Palestine" and Harkabi, "On Arab Antisemitism Once More" in Almog, *Antisemitism Through the Ages* (ibid),pp. 217-239; Wistrich (2009), "Dehumanizing the Other: Muslim Arab Antisemitism Today," Ariel Center for Policy Research website;

Sources: Excerpts from The National Committee for the Heads of the Arab Local Authorities in Israel's *The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel* (2006) and Adalah Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel's *The Democractic Constitution*; Natan Sharansky's *The Case for Democracy*; Yasser Arafat 1994 speech in Johannesburg.

## **D. PRACTICALITIES AND IMPRACTICALITIES OF LABOR MOVEMENT POLITICAL PRAGMATISM**

**Class #13:** Tuesday, March 8:

Topic: Consociationalism

Reading: Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 354-394; Philipa Strum (1995), "The Road Not Taken: Constitutional Non-Decision Making in 1948-1950 and Its Impact on Civil Liberties in Israeli Political Culture" in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. Troen and Lucas, pp. 83-104. New York: State University of New York Press.

Sources: Selections from Knesset protocols on the debates on the Torah as Israel's constitution

**Class #14:** Thursday, March 11:

Topic: Statism

Reading: Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 364 – 376 and Eliezer Don-Yihyeh, "Political Religion in a New State: Ben-Gurion's Mamlachtiyut" in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. Troen and Lucas, pp. 171-192.

Sources: Selections from Knesset Laws and protocols relating to areas of state control: education, Hebraicization of names, multiple citizenship, etc.

**Class #15:** Tuesday, March 16:

Topic: Test cases: The Altelena incident and the Lavon affair

Reading: Ehud Sprinzak (1999), *Brother Against Brother*, pp.17-32. New York, Free Press; Zaki Shalom (2006), *Ben Gurion's Political Struggles, 1963-1967: A Lion in Winter*, pp. 23-35. London: Routledge.

Sources: Film: *Altelena* by Ilana Tsur

**Class #16:** Thursday, March 18:

Topic: The Predicament of the Sabra as an embodiment of Labor Zionism

Reading: Almog (2000), *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew*, pp. 138-159. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Source: Excerpts from Meir Shalev's *The Blue Mountain* (pp. 190-192, 120-127)

**Class #17:** Tuesday, March 23

Topic: Diaspora Jewry and Israel Democracy

Reading: Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 714-731; 929-933; Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 49-53, Beilin (2000), *His Brother's Keeper: Israel and Diaspora Jewry in the Twenty-first Century* (pp. 50-55, 67-72, 98-100 ). New York: Schocken.

Sources: Philip Roth, excerpts from *The Counterlife* (pp. 144-149) and *Operation Shylock* (pp. 310-312); Zeev Chefetz, "The Death of a Slogan," *The Jerusalem Report* 1/11/90; A.B. Yehoshua, excerpt from *Between Right and Right* and "People without a land" in *Haaretz* 12/5/06; Eli Wiesel, "Jerusalem in My Heart," *New York Times* 24/1/2001.

### **E. THREATENING AND EMPOWERING DIVERSITIES WITHIN THE JEWISH MAJORITY SOCIETY**

**Class #18:** Thursday, March 25:

Topic: Enter: Jews from Islamic lands

Reading: Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 19-47; HaCohen (2003), *Immigrants in Turmoil*, pp.129-161, 284-287. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Sources: Excerpt from Eli Amir's novel *Scapegoat*

**Class #19:** Tuesday, April 13:

Topic: Enter: Jews from former Soviet Union

Reading: Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 731-739, 1080-1083; Sharansky (2008), *Defending Identity: Its Indispensable Role in Protecting Democracy*, pp. 157-163. New York: Public Affairs.

Source: Excerpts from D. Marom and M. Miller, *After Exodus: Jewish Encounters in the Unpromised Land*

**Class #20:** Thursday, April 15:

Topic: Enter: Jews from Ethiopia

Background reading: BenEzer, *The Ethiopian Jewish Exodus*, pp. 26-36, 185-198, 206-211. London: Routledge.

Source: Film: *The Name My Mother Gave Me* by Eli Tal-El



**Class #21:** Tuesday, April 20: Special session:

Topic: Israel Independence Day celebrations as a prism on Israeli society

Reading: Schweid, *The Jewish Experience of Time: Philosophical Dimensions of the Jewish Holy Days*, pp. 279-309. Northvale New Jersey: Aronson.

Primary sources: Translated excerpts from Ben Zion Dinur's *Mikraei Chag*

## **F. LOGJAMS AND PITFALLS IN THE ARAB-JEWISH ISRAELI ENCOUNTER**

**Class #22:** Thursday, April 22:

Topic: Laws of Return and No return

Reading: Saadi (2002), "Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity," *Israel Studies* 7:2, pp 175-198. Benny Morris, Benny Morris, "And Now For Some Facts," *The New Republic* (04.28.06); Avi Beker, "The Forgotten Narrative: Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries" in *Jewish Political Studies Review* 17:3-4, pp. 1-17.

Sources: Law of Return; Gabriel Danzig, "Names and Narratives" in Jerusalem Report, 21/2/05; From introduction and Samera Esmeir's article (2007) "Memories of Conquest: Witnessing Death in Tantura" in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the claims of memory*, edited by Sa'adi and Abu-Lughod (New York, Columbia University Press); websites of Justice for Jews From Arab Lands and Jewish Sepharadi Federation.

**Class #23:** Tuesday, April 27:

Topic: Legal test cases on equal treatment of the Arabs

Reading: Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 40-48, 162-163, Dowty, *The Jewish State*, pp.184-215, 288-295, Sprintzak, *Brother Against Brother*, pp. 180-216.

Source: Excerpts relating to the Kaadan case and the debate on Kahane

**Class #24:** Thursday, April 29:

Topic: Arab democratic polity

Reading: Arian, *Politics in Israel*, pp. 439-447, 405-412; Hisham Sharabi (1977), "Family and Cultural Development in Arab Society", pp. 60-72, Keith Dayton talk at the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy (May 7, 2009).

Source: The film *Ajami* (pending release and translation)

**Class #25:** Tuesday, May 4:

Topic: Issues of distance and relation in the Israeli-Arab conflict

Reading: Dowty, *The Jewish State*, pp. 216-248, 294-303; Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 1066-1079.

Sources: “Paradise Reconsidered” on conflict at Neve Shalom; Report from the Kahane Commission on the massacre at *Sabra and Shatilla*; the 4000 Jews rumor regarding 9/11; Israel in Palestinian Textbooks – executive summary from the Palestinian Media Watch Report

## **G. LIVING AND MANAGING HOLOCAUST MEMORY**

**Class #26:** Thursday, May 6:

Topic: Shoah and Tekumah

Reading: Eviatar Friesel "The Holocaust: Factor in the Birth of Israel?" and Yehuda Bauer “The Impact of the Holocaust on the Establishment of the State of Israel”, in Guttman (ed.) (1996), *Major Changes Within the Jewish People in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem, Yad Vashem), pp. 519-544, 545-552.

Source: Excerpts from special ministry of education law on the trips to Poland

**Class #27:** Tuesday, May 11:

Topic: Revenge vs. Justice

Reading: Mankowitz (2002), *Life between Memory and Hope*, pp. 235-242, 302-303. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. Sachar, *A History of Israel*, pp. 371-376, 464-470, 552-562.

Sources: Tekumah film section on Holocaust memory, part 3 (if available); excerpts from Chaim Gouri’s Facing the Glass Booth: *The Jerusalem Trial of Adolf Eichmann*

## **H. COURSE CONCLUSION**

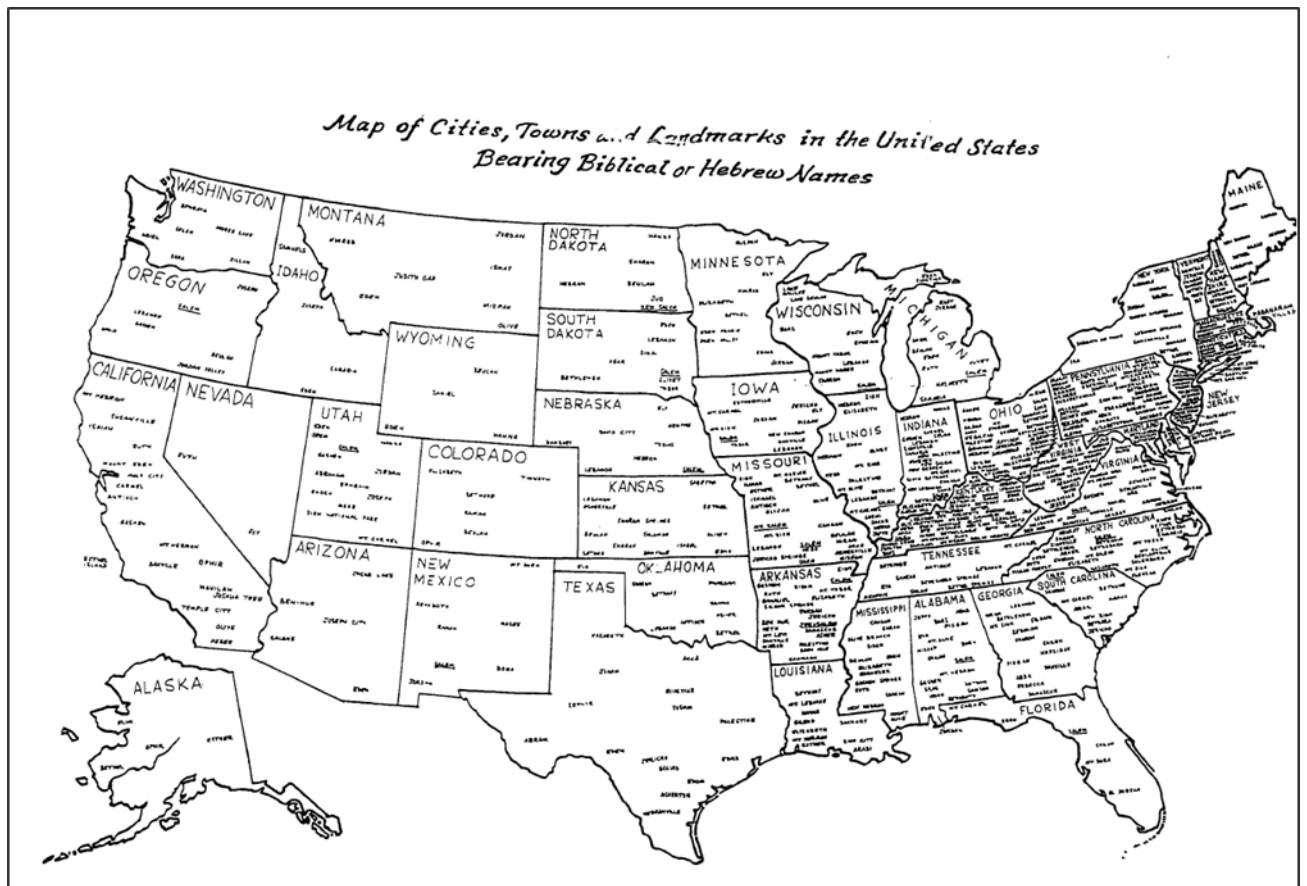
Thursday, May 13: Beyond Introductions: open topics and issues, questions and answers, resources and riddles

# ISRAEL AND THE LIBERAL ARTS: NOTES FROM A TEACHING EXPERIMENT

DANIEL MAROM

## 1. Israel and the World:

In the first session of an introductory course on Israel for college students at San Francisco State University, I began by asking my students to posit why such a small country arouses so much attention around the world. Then, having received predictable answers regarding the media coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the backdrop of 9/11, the concern for a more just global society, I gave each student a document and, having explained its contents to them, asked them if upon seeing it, there might be other answers to my question that they did not consider before. The document was a map of the USA upon which there appeared hundreds of cities, towns and landmarks bearing Biblical or Hebrew place names.<sup>1</sup>



The ensuing discussion enabled me to present the syllabus for the course in terms that the learners had experienced in looking at the map and that had already aroused their curiosity. Together we read from the introduction:

<sup>1</sup> See Lottie and Moshe Davis, *Guide to Map of Biblical Names in America: Land of our Fathers* (New York: Associated American Artists, 1954).

*Israel's population is less than a fifth of California's and its territory is so small that it could fit into many of the America's national parks a number of times. The State of Israel, only 61 years of age, does not yet have a constitution or finalized geographical borders. Some of its founders are still living and can remember a world in which it did not exist.*

*Yet, despite its youth and modest proportions, Israel is also a topic that occupies the attention of great numbers of people from all over the world. Hardly a day passes without this small country being a focal point in the news media, in public protests, and in debates among policymakers and high government officials. Everywhere there are people who love Israel, people who are angry at Israel, people who are ambivalent about Israel and people who are hostile towards it. Some purposely go to visit Israel, some purposely boycott anything to do with it. On the globe today, it may be harder to find people who are totally unaware or are indifferent towards Israel than those who vociferously and actively oppose or affirm its very existence.*

*Why does Israel arouse such widespread engagement? What is at stake about this country in the lives of so many people on the planet who live far away from it? How can I myself begin to responsibly work through the mire of associations, emotions and complexities that inevitably make their claim upon my attention and my loyalties? Can't I just figure this thing out once and for all? Why should I even try?*

*These and other similar questions lay at the base of the learning that will be undertaken in this course. The course is designed to equip and empower those who want to take a deeper look at the topic of Israel without determining in advance what the impact that view will have on their perceptions, attitudes and commitments. The point of our learning will not be to support or negate any particular view of Israel, but rather to experience the added value that learning about Israel can contribute to our understanding of ourselves and the world.*

*To be sure, the complexities of Israel cannot be unraveled too easily. Our course will be an introduction to a riddle whose solutions need to be pursued through further study in, through and beyond the field of Israel studies. However, this introduction aims to be meaningful and consequential in that its fundamental assumption is that in order to study the topic of Israel effectively, one is required to become more aware of the religious and cultural associations and commitments one brings to the topic.*

*To begin studying Israel by focusing on the current phenomenon of the State of Israel is to miss the point, for in looking at the phenomenon today called Israel, we are actually engaging in a profound encounter between differing faiths and cultures – an encounter the roots of which go back to the core of Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Western civilizations. Once we understand the study of Israel in these terms, then we can begin to appreciate and approach more profoundly what is going on today in that small piece of land in the Mideast.*

In writing the syllabus for the course, I chose to put a colon at the end of its title and to add the phrase "Israel and the World." The addition gave expression to the curricular principle on the basis of which I built the framework for the whole of the course and chose its subject matter accordingly: Israel is not only the name of a Jewish state in the contemporary Mideast, but also an idea that has contributed profoundly to the self-definition, lifestyle and activity of many religions, cultures, kingdoms, nations and states over thousands of years of world history. To begin to understand the contemporary phenomenon of Israel and the stake that so many people around the world feel that they have in what goes on in it, one must therefore learn not only recent history of 19th and 20th century Zionism and the Jewish-Arab conflict, but also the larger story of how the Israel idea has affected both Jewish and world history .

According to this approach, interpreting Israel today is an act of dialogue. On the one side of this dialogue is an interpreter who holds a given set of assumptions and self-definitions concerning the meaning of Israel in his or her own local national, religious and/or cultural context. On the other side of the dialogue is a specific version of Israel that has developed over the last century in the Jewish State in the Mideast. To interpret Israel well, I assumed, is to become consciously aware of both sides of this dialogue – each in its own right and both in interaction with each other – and to be equipped with the self-understanding and tools to engage in it effectively.

Being guided by this principle enabled me to develop a coherent syllabus for the course. Thus, following the introduction, the students were presented with a course outline that offers units on seven different "Israels." The first four Israels precede that of the contemporary period: BIBLICAL ISRAEL, RABBINIC ISRAEL, CHRISTIAN AND ANGLO-CHRISTIAN ISRAEL, AND ISLAMIC ISRAEL. Only by the sixth unit does the course get to ZIONIST ISRAEL, and after that, to units on PALESTINIAN ISRAEL and AMERICAN JEWISH ZION.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, looking at the list of readings, primary sources and lecture topics within each unit showed that linkages between the various Israels were offered within the context of learning about each one. In learning about "Biblical Israel," for example, students studied a passage from Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* in which he describes the desolate land he sees on his 1867 visit to Palestine as the fruition of a verse in the book of Leviticus and a passage from Ferdinand Las Casas *In Defense of the Indians* in which he differentiates the natives of the new world from the Canaanites of the Bible to spare them of European extermination. Similarly, for the unit on "Islamic Israel" they had to read Zvi Werblowsky's "The Meaning of Jerusalem to Jews, Christians and Moslems" and to study a passage from Alex Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in which the black leader describes the transformation he underwent with respect to racial identity when he was initially denied entry to Mecca.

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<sup>2</sup> For a copy of this syllabus, see [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/syl/israel\\_Marom.pdf](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/syl/israel_Marom.pdf)

At the stage of initial presentation of the course, however, students were made to understand that they would not be studying contemporary Israel *per se*. Nor were they going to get a complete historical-cultural introduction to that Israel and all that is at stake for others in it. What they were being offered was an invitation to explore themselves and their own local worlds through the prism of Israel. To the degree that this invitation was accepted and the exploration led to greater self-understanding, my assumption was that this would provide the motivation and initial framework for further study of Israel.

In looking at the course requirements, students were further led to understand that in addition to "covering the material," they were being asked at various points in the course to give expression to their learning on Israel in terms that consciously give voice to their developing understanding of themselves, their cultures and the world around them. Thus, beyond lecture and discussion of readings of secondary materials, each class would also include close study of primary sources relating to Israel from students' own cultural background and that of others sitting around the table. As well, the short "response paper" assignments that they were required to submit from time to time both checked their understanding of a reading or a session and asked them to reflect on the topic we had studied.

Consistent with this approach, the final paper assignment required students to choose a primary source relating to Israel from which ever "Israel tradition" that had attracted their interest and to present and analyze it in light of the larger understandings about the Israel idea and modern Israel that we had learned in the course.

For some Israel scholars, this approach might appear to be very unorthodox – even if it is comprised upon some of the finest fruits of research on Israel from a variety of disciplines. But for the diverse group of students sitting around the room it seemed quite legitimate. For Jewish students, the study of Israel here emerged as a topic with universal significance rather than simply being religiously or ethnically self-referential. This aspect turned out to be even more significant, since many were either converts or children of intermarriage.

On the other hand, two African-Americans among the group now noted that the course included a reading and session on "African-American Israel" and a student who had grown up in a home and community of "Messianic Jews," the interplay between first three Israels offered a key to self-understanding. Ironically, one student with an International Studies background who had already participated in many courses on Israel, but now found interest in this "introduction" because it offered a different perspective.

All this goes without mentioning what turned out to be of great immediate significance to the learners: the opportunity studying about Israel this way provided them to engage in intercultural encounter (more on this below). In the end, most of

the students who came to the first class in the course wound up choosing to participate in it throughout the semester and some of them brought others along with them. All in all we had a group of thirteen.

## **2. Behind the Curtains of Teaching Israel: A Philosophy of Israel Education:**

What can the study of Israel contribute to learners who treat it as a villain or as a superhero in a global reality media program? What can it contribute to those who not only have not been to Israel, but have never left the confines of America? What is it about Israel that, when studied, can help engage such learners with deeper issues concerning their own everyday lives? What can they take from studying Israel that will enhance their thinking about anything and everything once they finish their academic studies? How can the study of Israel engage students with the world at large?

In order for Israel Studies to be equal to the complexities of their being taught in liberal arts programs, these and a host of similar questions need the attention of educational researchers and the results of their inquiries should be made available to the community of Israel scholars at large. The course described above is the product of one such research effort undertaken in the field. I was invited to teach two undergraduate semester courses on Israel, 24 sessions, each of which was 75 minutes long. The first course was "Introduction to Israel Studies," offered by the Jewish Studies department and the second "Israel Democracy: Politics, Institutions and Society," offered by the Jewish Studies, International Relations and Political Science departments. The university graciously offered me room to be creative in devising these courses as long as I held myself to academic standards and protocols.

This arrangement enabled me to consciously experiment with an instructional approach to the teaching of Israel that I have developed over the years, but now in application to some of the particular challenges of doing so in a liberal arts framework. This effort involved the careful design of the syllabi and pedagogy for the two courses according to my larger approach to the teaching of Israel, ongoing deliberation on and revision of the approach in the context of the implementation of the two courses, careful evaluation of and response to student work and keeping records of all the above. These elements are the basis upon which I now describe the outcomes of this curricular experiment.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This research experiment was based upon methodological guidelines suggested by Seymour Fox's approach to curriculum planning and evaluation. See, for example, "The Vitality of Theory in Schwab's Conception of the Practical" in *Curriculum Inquiry* 15, 1, pp 63-89; "Theory into Practice (in Education) in *Philosophy for Education* (Jerusalem: Van Leer, 1983); "The Scholar, the Educator and the Curriculum of the Jewish School" in S. Fox and G. Rosenfield, eds., *From the Scholar to the Classroom: Translating Jewish Tradition into Curriculum* (New York: Melton Research Center for Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977, pp. 104-115; *Analysis of the Content and Use of a History Curriculum* (Hebrew), with Leah Adar (Jerusalem: Hebrew University,

A critical point in my development of these courses is that my efforts were guided by a larger philosophy of Israel education that I encountered many years ago in studying with Mordecai Shalev. Critical, I say, because too often the task of teaching Israel is seen as a technical matter. Israel Studies scholars often assume that the subject matter in teaching Israel is a given and all he or she needs to begin teaching it is various pedagogical or didactic devices or technological tools. Such an approach limits the educational possibilities at hand, for the very choice of subject matter is itself part of the task of teaching Israel.

This issue applies to the teaching of any topic, but it is particularly relevant to the teaching of Israel. The seduction to focus study about Israel to recent military or political developments in the Mideast is great for university departments, faculty and students alike. Though today's news can often offer rich entry points for deeper and broader learning about Israel, to limit one's focus to the dramas of battle and negotiation and to constantly link everything to the urgencies of the present can ultimately narrow the educational purview of studying Israel and contract students' understanding of international relations, political science and of the military.

Meanwhile, Israel Studies offers a vast ocean of possible topics, issues and aspects both within and beyond the domains of geopolitics and war. In teaching Israel, one might focus not only on the 1948 War of Independence, but also on the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and the ensuing Babylonian exile. Similarly, alongside the central topic of the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel, one might also teach the history of Jewish minorities in Arab lands and its impact on their emigration and life in Israel. The list goes on and on, so that everything from hi-tech economics to genetic history can be interesting and relevant.

Given that one can and must choose from out of this ocean of possibilities those topics that make learning Israel meaningful, the question of which conception of the meaningfulness of Israel one is working with becomes a very practical one. In the case of my courses, the work of constructing the syllabi was undertaken as a conscious and systematic application of Shalev's approach to this question. In or to present what really lay behind my teaching of Israel, therefore, I must expand on Shalev and his approach and then after go on to describe how I applied it to the specific context in which I taught.

Shalev is a leading Israeli thinker, literary critic and educator who devoted over 40 years to designing and teaching a curriculum called *Galut U' Geulah* [lit. exile and redemption] and to personally teaching it to generations of teachers from diverse backgrounds all over Israel. Shalev taught *Galut U' Geulah* in year-long in-service

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1978); and "The Art of Translation" in S. Fox, I. Scheffler and D. Marom, *Visions of Jewish Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp 253-295. In particular, I was guided by Fox and Scheffler's theory of five levels on the continuum between philosophy and practice in education that I summarized on pages 72-76 of "Four Lessons on Education that I learned from Seymour Fox" (Hebrew) in *Educational Eclectics: Essays in memory of Shlomo (Seymour) Fox by Graduates of the Mandel Leadership Institute* (Jerusalem: Keter Press and the Mandel Foundation, 2009), pp. 43-92.



courses – ranging from six to two weekly hours at institutions such as *Beit Berl* College, *Beit Ha-Sefer LeOvdei Horaah Bechirim*, *Kerem* Teacher Training Institute for Humanistic Jewish Education and the *Yad Yitzchack Ben Zvi* Institute. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that it is hard to find a graduate of these courses who does not speak of its having had a transformative impact on their lives and on their sense of Israeli identity.<sup>4</sup>

As I understand it, *Galut U' Geulah* is a master curriculum in the teaching of Israel to Israelis that is based on the assumption that Israel cannot be learned profoundly when it is taught only as a topic or a story of its own. The typical narrative of Israel's history – one that begins with a description of the Jewish condition in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, moves on to the Zionist movement's efforts to establish the State of Israel that came to fruition in 1948 and then continues on from there by tracing Israel's history from 1948 to the present – is itself embedded in a broader and deeper geo-cultural context that gives it profound and ongoing meaning and significance.

In this cultural view of the world, today's Israel stands at the nexus between three larger cultural-historical movements, each of which is based on substantive cultural foundations that both cohere and conflict with each other: Judaism, Humanism and Zionism. By calling them cultural-historical movements, I mean to distinguish them from fixed and frozen philosophies or ideologies - a definition that is perhaps suggested by the repetition of the "ism" suffix, but which is ultimately narrowed if taken too literally. Shalev approaches Judaism and Humanism as two long standing civilizational traditions in response to which Zionism emerged over the last century and which, being living and developing frameworks, continue to define Zionism as it continues to grow and develop as a cultural-historical movement in its own right.

Shalev's Israel is not an embodiment of historic Zionism alone. Even though its establishment as a modern state was made possible by the Zionist movement, the founding chapter in Israel history reflected one particular attempt to integrate and solve the conflicts between Judaism and Humanism as they were given expression at a specific time and place in history. With all its achievements, that result was not comprehensive or total. To hold onto this particular solution as the be all and end all of Israeli existence is to be blind to the deeper existential predicament that generated it in the first place and that will continue to determine its development and growth in the future.

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<sup>4</sup> Shalev taught *Galut U' Geulah* on the basis of approximately 50 source compilations that he himself edited. It was only recently, however, that notes on the lectures that he gave in teaching primary sources from these compilations were published. These notes were taken by Shalev's student and colleague Anat Shabo and they appear in a three volume Hebrew rendition of the curriculum with his own introduction, published by Beit Ha-Sefer LeOvdei Horaah Bechirim in 1991-1998. Shalev also wrote a shorter two page introduction to his course years before in a document entitled *Galut U' Geulah: Noseh Integrativi*. See also notes taken by Yonina Florsheim on some of Shalev's later lectures in *Yahadut Vehumanism* [lit. Judaism and Humanism] (Jerusalem: Kerem Teacher Training Institute for Humanistic Judaism, 1995).

Thus, in Shalev's view, conflicts between Judaism and Humanism continue to find expression in Israel's existence after it was established and its fate is bound up with continuing efforts to solve them. In some cases, such solutions might be generated in critique of the specific Zionist solution which was relevant when Israel was established. As he sees it, Zionism itself presents a challenge to its own continuity if those who sit on its accomplishments do not continue to take on its defining challenge as an ongoing project. For Shalev, to be Israeli is to maintain the infrastructure that Zionism produced while never losing sight of the fact that this infrastructure exists as part of a much larger whole and therefore must be constantly transcended. It is to take on the task of constantly managing the interplay and conflicts between Judaism, Humanism and Zionism.

It is in reference to the tensions between Judaism and Zionism, for example, that Shalev posits the paradoxical riddle of Israel's founders: those who rebelled against Jewish religion brought many of its long unfulfilled aspects to fruition. This tension also helps him cast the tensions between Israel's founders and the masses of Jews from Arab lands who came on aliyah once it was founded as a clash between those who rebelled against their religious forbears to establish Israel and those who came to Israel in deference to their religious forbears and made it a much broader and more feasible entity.

Shalev similarly focuses on the interplay and conflicts between Judaism and Humanism to account for and to address the challenges of the uncompleted task of developing Jewish democracy in Israel. On the one hand, through the bible and through Christianity, Judaism provided a cultural and intellectual basis upon which Humanism developed modern democracy and its emphases on liberty and equality (though the encounter between the two worlds is also studied with respect to the Holocaust). On the other hand, the task of developing a final framework for democracy in Israel will be impossible without (re)integrating Humanism's emphasis on human authority and creativity into the Jewish legal system.

The tensions between Zionism and Humanism help define the Israeli-Arab conflict for Shalev as well. To be sure, given that Christianity and Islam grew out of Judaism, the conflicts between Judaism and Zionism find expression here too - both locally and in terms of international involvement in the Mideast - particularly given the history of Western anti-Semitism and its center having moved, in response to Zionism, to the core of the Arab world. However, in focusing on the Mideast conflict, Shalev also treats it in detachment of the history of monotheism, using the events that led to the 1948 war of independence as a test case for universalizable principles of morality as developed in the tradition of Humanism.

It is important to emphasize that Shalev's understanding of Israel and of Israeli learners is not the subject matter of *Galut U' Geulah*. To make it such would be to turn it into an ideology rather than a curricular philosophy. Indeed, in Shalev's view, a terrible flaw in Zionist education was that it focused on teaching its own solution to

the conflict triangle as its own exclusive subject matter. *Galut U' Geulah* is offered as a corrective in that it places the study of the interplay and conflicts between the three cultural-historical movements at the center of the curriculum and provides the learner with a learning and living framework to come to terms with them as a continuing project.

I could carry on at length about Shalev's curriculum by delving into specific aspects such as its psychoanalytic view of culture in the life of the learner and of society, its grounding in academic research and its sophisticated pedagogical use of primary sources. For our purposes, however, suffice it for me to say that Shalev's curricular philosophy stands out opposite less sophisticated approaches to the teaching of Israel that treat it as a symbol or an ideology that impose on learners a kind of requirement to adhere to a party or anti-party line, to participate in an insider's celebration or to be recruited in the line of duty.

He does, to be sure, privilege the study of the interplay and conflicts between Judaism, Humanism and Zionism as they find expression *within* Jewish sources over and above approaches that wind up detaching Hebrew-speaking Israeli Jewish learners from the cultural sustenance that they can derive from their Jewish cultural heritage and Hebrew literary reservoir. However, his approach ultimately leaves these learners inside the project of Israel with ample room for creativity and critique at all levels: political, social, religious, cultural, civic, legal, and global.

### **3. From a philosophy of Israel education to the construction of a course syllabus:**

Once I adopted Shalev's larger set of aims and assumptions for the teaching of Israel, the choice of subject matter and mastery over it fell much more easily into place – though not, of course, perfectly. Though it is not a direct application of *Galut U' Geulah* and though many of the sources I included in my course were not from his original compilations, my fundamental assumption was that the plane on which my learners could learn about themselves through the study of Israel was in the working through of that part of their own cultural lives which has been affected by Shalev's Judaism-Humanism-Zionism triangle.

A considerable challenge in planning my “Israel and the World” course in light of Shalev's approach was that I could not treat my students as if their natural environment was Israel or as if my aim was to deepen their Israeli identity. To be sure, my working assumption was that as with Shalev's Israeli learners, for non-Israelis - Jews and non-Jews alike - the deeper connection with Israel is often latent or even suppressed, but once it is brought to the surface, it creates a strong incentive for continued and more systematic learning about Israel. As I see it, even students from countries with no cultural connection to the biblical tradition of monotheism or very little encounter with Jewish people had some internal attachment to Israel in that they

were, in many cases, affected deeply by the Marxist tradition, which itself was affected deeply by Shalev's conflict triangle in the life of Marx himself.

Be that as it may, the immediate question here was what are the specific points at which the interplay and conflicts between the three cultural-historical movements do indeed connect authentically with my students' lives? Given that Israel is a part of world history and of American culture and identity, some level of curricular and pedagogical correspondence between *Galut U' Geulah* and my course had to be possible. Since Shalev himself presented Judaism's transformations into Christianity and Islam as part of *Galut U' Geulah* and since he drew sources from the history of modern democracies and cultures of European nations in teaching the conflicts, I had a basis upon which to build. But in stretching his curriculum to fit the lives of non-Israeli and non-Jewish learners, I took further steps in these directions.

For students with a Christian background, for example, it seemed to me that the interplay and conflicts between Judaism and Zionism find expression in the changes that early Christianity did and did not bring about in its approach to the Land of Israel. As is well known, Christianity redefined Biblical monotheism beyond the local Israelite national framework in which it originated and transformed it into a universal religion. The attempt to move beyond the framework of Judaism necessarily limited the role of the Land of Israel in the Christian configuration of the world. In theory, the whole breakdown of the world into the domains of Zion and exile should have evaporated.

Yet, at the same time, the Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection against the backdrop of the Land of Israel and it plays an important role in various texts in the New Testament and in Christian sacred literature that describe the future redemption at the end of days. That Jews were exiled from the Land of Israel and that they were often persecuted and suffered in their exile was also often brought as evidence for the truth of Christian teachings.

Studying this theme and the primary sources in which it is given expression in the context of a unit on "Christian Israel" does not necessarily do more than inform learners about an important chapter in religious history that also sets the framework for learning later chapters. However, when such a unit is studied in the context of learning about modern-day Israel and the relationship of modern-day Christians, Christian communities or lands with Christian majorities to contemporary Israel, the possibility of it becoming more than an insular academic or intellectual activity significantly increase. How much more when others around the seminar table come from different religious backgrounds or make conflicting assumptions about the relevance of "Christian Israel" to what goes on in and around modern Israel.

I assumed that making this linkage explicit can increase the possibilities. Thus, after studying the role of Jerusalem in the eschatological image of redemption in the Book of Revelations, I thought that watching Martin Himel's documentary *The End of*

*Days* on how North American fundamentalist Christians relate to Zionism and Israel and interact with Israeli Jews could enhance the linkage that students make between the ancient past and current day events. However, in between these two poles is a whole series of issues that could also enable the learner to make the transition less radically.

How was the dual approach to Israel negotiated in the newly Christianized Roman empire's policy towards the Land of Israel and its Jewish population in the fourth century? Did this duality play a role in the Crusader conquest of Jerusalem? In the establishment and culture of Protestant and Puritan kingdoms? In the national self-definition and foreign policy of modern nations whose majority Christian populations became secularized? In the USA's special relation with Zionism and modern Israel? In the approach of American Evangelists, of Mormons, of African-American Christian leaders such as Martin Luther King, of leaders of anti-Christian Black Muslim, Rastafarian and left-wing cosmopolitan communities? Does it find expression in your own family or personal life or that of someone you know well?

On the face of it, linking Shalev's approach with the lives of American Jewish students would be somewhat more straightforward than with those of Christian background. However, as Shalev himself admits, the experience of Jews in modern democratic English speaking lands adds a new chapter in the working through of his geo-cultural triangle that requires special attention. Extending his approach to bear upon this chapter is a challenge that I took upon myself long before this experiment – one that led me to delve into the history of English speaking Jewry and develop a new pedagogies and source anthologies.<sup>5</sup>

This effort had led me to the conclusion that in Shalev's curricular scheme, the defining conflict for many American Jews ought not be the classical Zionist dichotomy of "exile and redemption" that defines his larger view of the conflict between Judaism and Zionism (again, these are the English terms for *Galut U' Geulah*). Rather, *Galut U' Geulah* meets American Jews in the form of a conflict between "two promised lands." In order to build a bridge into the cultural-historical interplay and conflicts that lay at the core of Shalev's curriculum, one must therefore engage them with local American Jewish primary sources that help them confront the predicament of "two Zions."

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<sup>5</sup> In his introduction to *Galut U' Geulah* (p. vii), Shalev identifies three central phenomena that Zionism did not foresee that need clarification in his curriculum. These include the transfer of the center of anti-Semitism from Europe to the Moslem world, the restoration and empowerment of ultra-orthodox anti-Zionist Jewry in and due to Israel and "The enormous capacity of Western society in general and Anglo-Saxon countries in particular to absorb Jews of this generation and to thereby bring about their assimilation has advanced in giant steps." Shalev adds that "many Zionists acknowledge that the classic Zionist diagnosis and prognosis that were valid with regard to central and eastern Europe are not valid regarding Anglo-Saxon countries and the United States in particular." I gave the source compilations that I edited the title *Angleterre: Jews and Judaism in English Speaking Lands*. I also developed a pedagogy for English speaking tour education in Israel for the Melitz organization based on Shalev's approach, called *Masaot: Jewish Cultural Journeys in Israel*.

For this purpose, I developed a new unit on Emma Lazarus' poem that is engraved on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, "The New Colossus" – an effort that required me to undertake historical research and literary analysis of my own.<sup>6</sup> The last lines of this work by the American Jewish poet are particularly well known to Americans and English speakers the world round and have led to the sonnet's inclusion in the canon of Americana: "Give me your tired, your poor,/ Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,/ The wretched refuse of your teeming shore./ Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,/ I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

What I first discovered in my research on this poem and on its widespread popularity and what I eventually enabled my students to explore in learning it was that it reversed the original symbolism of the statue so as to portray it as the biblical matriarch Rachel welcoming the Judean exiles to Babylon back to their promised land. A second research discovery then enabled me to pedagogically build the conflict of having "two promised lands": as a proto-Zionist thinker and leader, Emma Lazarus had a year earlier written "The New Ezekiel" - the only other poem in which she employed the "The New..." construction. Here, Lazarus describes the present day return of Jews to the Land of Israel as the fruition of the prophet Ezekiel's "Dry Bones" vision of redemption. In her essays from this period, Lazarus shows that she is aware of this duality and she presents her own solution to the conflict between the two visions of redemption.

Prior implementations of this unit inspired me to think that my analysis was sufficiently correct to use it as the focus on our learning in the "American Jewish Zion" unit of my introductory course on Israel Studies. Learning it in this context, however, would necessitate an addition. After focusing on the conflict between two promised lands in American Jewish Zion, I would have to try to raise the question of how this conflict might affect the way many American Jews see contemporary Israel. Students' strong engagement with this unit in and beyond class seemed to corroborate my assumption that it did indeed provide an authentic connection between Shalev's curricular approach and their lives.<sup>7</sup>

I should point out that the strength of the curricular linkages upon which I based my teaching of Israel to non-Israelis and non-Jews according to Shalev's approach was designed to work in the other direction as well. That is, when learners came to the chapter on "Zionist Israel," they had to come to terms with the fact that, contrary to their intuitions and expectations, modern Israel was established by revolutionaries

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<sup>6</sup> See my article, "Who is the 'Mother of Exiles'? An Inquiry into Jewish Aspects of Emma Lazarus' 'The New Colossus'" in *Prooftexts*, volume 20, number 3, autumn 2000, pp. 231-261.

<sup>7</sup> Given that all my students in this course were American and about half were Jewish-American, I originally thought of beginning the course with this unit, but then I ruled it out on the basis of the assumption that the full force of discovering that America was an alternative Zion would become apparent only after they learned the concept of redemption in the unit on "Biblical Israel." This assumption was supported by the fact that in teaching the latter unit I could make references to Biblical sources we had studied in the former. The strong impact of the unit, however, led me to think that it would be worth trying out the alternative sequencing.

on the basis of a profound critique of Jewish religion and that many of them did so with a strong desire to enable Jews not only to protect themselves from adversity and persecution but also to participate in the bettering of the human condition at large.

As expected, Jewish and non-Jewish students alike were confounded by this paradox and found it difficult to assimilate. It was difficult because in trying to incorporate this deep paradox into their existing world views, they needed to become conscious of the sources of their original expectations concerning Israel as the consummation of Jewish religion or particularity and reorient their understanding of what contemporary Israel is all about.

This affect was compounded by the study of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as being related not exclusively to contemporary matters of conquest, territory and democratic rights, but also to challenges engendered by centuries of complex relations between Judaism and Islam and between Jews and Arabs. Again, the inclusion of this aspect into the larger picture of the goings on in the contemporary Mideast necessitated their reconsideration and also raised the question of the impact of the learners' cultural or religious background on their original approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

##### **5. From the syllabus to the classroom: teaching Israel on one's feet:**

Shalev's is one of many possible curricular philosophies for the teaching of Israel. Its academic standards and emphasis on conflict and plurality made his approach quite relevant for liberal arts education, but when it came to actually teaching the course I had designed in a living classroom, it was not as straightforward as it might have originally appeared on paper.

My students' cultural and religious lives were not as clear and cut, of course, as the assumptions I made about them above might suggest.<sup>8</sup> They were not simply "of Christian background" or "American Jews." As they openly shared with me and other members of the class, some were converts to Judaism or children of intermarriage. Those who affiliated themselves with Christianity moved between different Protestant denominations over the course of their lives. Others saw themselves as wholly secular or atheist, defined by their religious background only inasmuch as it presented a challenge to their civil values (which, they made very clear, was quite a lot). The Messianic Jewish student was preparing to live in Israel sat together with a student who was born in Israel and had come with her family to live in America.

However, this did not render my curricular emphasis on their development as cultural agents irrelevant. To the contrary. That my students had to manage multiple

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<sup>8</sup> All references to my students are made anonymously. In some cases, I have changed identifying details so as to further ensure their anonymity.

cultural and religious elements inside and between themselves only made my focus on conflicts between traditions more relevant to their learning. Our classroom could be a living laboratory for them to explore and discuss issues of central concern to their self-definition as members of a multicultural society. That we were a small group facilitated this aspect of the course and enabled me to run it in a seminar study mode more than as a lecture series.

A problem that I did discover, however, was that engaging my students in outward discourse on these aspects of their lives involved what seemed to some as a departure from a strict liberal arts approach. Entering the course, my assumption was that since liberal arts education aimed to connect learning with the lives of students and the world in which they lived, there was room for them to discuss issues of culture, religion and identity that emerged from our learning – particularly if that discussion produced in turn new questions and a deeper motivation for learning in and beyond the demands of the course. As long as there was a clean transition and distinction between empirical study and classroom discussion, no external pressure on personal introspection or outward exhibition, respectful discourse between all, room for open inquiry and criticism, and no attempt on my part to direct learners to any particular conclusion about their lives or those of others, including this kind of discourse as a component of a larger approach to learning about Israel could provide an opportunity for meaningful study.

A problem here was that Israel was such a controversial topic on campus that my predecessors and superiors took extra special care to adopt an impartial and impersonal approach in teaching it, and, for that matter, for teaching Jewish topics altogether. Thus, when one of my students responded to a question concerning Jewish practice by saying that “we Jews do” so and so, another student interjected and exclaimed “we were told that it is not proper to speak in the first person plural in our courses since it can be interpreted as being exclusionary.”

Later this student came to discuss this issue with me in my office hours and explained that he was particularly sensitive in this case because the student who said “we Jews” was a Messianic Jew. He expressed this sensitivity even while, or perhaps precisely because he was the child of a marriage between a Jewish father and a Christian mother who himself was confused about his own Jewishness. This response only strengthened my resolve in this matter, for it showed me this student’s pain and confusion around issues of identity. I was not going to solve his issues for him, but it seemed to me that liberal arts pedagogy does not mean that one just throws information at the student and leaves them totally alone to think about all the connections. Would that not be equivalent to teaching how to write without examining student work?<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> I was influenced here by ideas that were articulated by ideas articulated by the founder of cultural pluralism, Horace M. Kallen (1882-1974), who, in addition to being a leading American social and educational theorist in his time, was also a leader of American Zionism. Kallen's philosophy of



I decided to clarify my approach to my students in the next class so as to clear the way for further discussion among them as we learn. As it turned out, they voiced their satisfaction with our classroom discussion and found it to be beneficial to their learning. As time went on, I found them listening more closely to comments made by their counterparts and even asking each other questions directly. My sense was that the liberal arts framework uniquely enabled such conversation in that, more than many other frameworks, it brought people of different backgrounds and on diverse journeys to learn with and from each other as they focused on a theme that is common to their separate paths.

Even so, I learned that an open and public conversation that explores one's particular religious or cultural lives does not happen automatically or easily. This point was highlighted in response to a film I showed in my class on "Israel Democracy." Since there were over thirty students in that class, its character was more of a lecture course than a seminar. At specific intervals, I did, however, turn to my students with invitations to open discussion, here asking them questions and there inviting theirs.

In this particular moment, we were learning about diversity in Israeli society. I had brought in Eli Tal-El's film *The Name My Mother Gave Me*, which documented a visit that a group of Israeli high school immigrant students of Ethiopian and Russian background took together to Ethiopia, guided by their veteran Israeli educators. The film included discourse between the students at specific points on the trip at which they openly discussed its impact on them personally, how it made them change the way they saw each other as Jews and as Israelis, and the way they saw the rest of Israeli society. I presented this discourse as an example of how diversity might play itself out differently in a national democracy like Israel than in a civic democracy like America.

There was a deep silence in the classroom when the film was over. Clearly my students were captivated by its human drama, particularly one section in which one of the students on the trip who had immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia reconnects with his mother, whom he had not seen in 14 years. I let the silence sit for a bit and then tried to take advantage of the few minutes that remained by asking two questions. First, I wanted to know if any of the students had ever participated in or even knew about a similar educational trip to the homeland of an American minority group. Of particular interest to me was if there were visits to Africa where African-Americans and Americans of other backgrounds could better understand each other. Second, I asked if any of the students experienced the kind of discussion we saw in the film with other students of different religious or cultural background. In both cases the

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education offers a viable alternative to the definition of "liberal" that would sacrifice engagement with one's own cultural growth and one's capacity to interact with members of others cultures for the sake of a civically neutral playing field. In his view democracy begins where sameness ends. See my article, "Who's Afraid of Horace Kallen? Cultural Pluralism and Jewish Education" in *Studies in Jewish Education*, volume XIII (2008/9), pp. 283-337.

students did not answer, but when I asked if the silence meant that the answer was “no,” many students nodded (after class, I actually checked this with other students I saw in the hallway).

As I learned, the challenges to discourse around issues of self-definition and belonging meant that it would not take place unless I made special efforts to enable it and that I did so carefully and sensitively. On the other hand, it seemed to me that to forfeit the opportunity just because of these challenges would be educationally negligent. As it turned out, this aspect of the "Israel and the World" course gently jelled into one of its most successful components. Some evidence for this came from the student who visited my office to complain to me about the "we-they" issue at the beginning of the course. In the opening to the final assignment, he wrote:

*The path through this course for me has not necessarily been a complicated one. However, it was one I was fairly resistant to. This class asked of the students things that were not normative to the college course work I had engaged in previously. To be blunt, I am more accustomed to a rigid, academic, removed mode of study (e.g. not saying “we“ or “I“ in reference to Jews which is something that was strictly enforced by the Jewish studies professors. One would be corrected in class for using what was considered to be exclusionary language. It now feels overly politically correct. This could be a product of the excessively contentious atmosphere on campus in relation to Israel). In retrospect, this method was not compatible with the content of this class. In a recent reread of the course syllabus two things stood out, “The point of our learning [will be] ...to experience the added value that learning about Israel can contribute to our understanding of ourselves and the world.”. This concept is somewhat new to me, I have never used education in quite this way. I do not associate any kind of familiarity with my studies, not even in the emotionally draining courses like Anti-Semitism and Genocide. I am the student, and there is a subject. My previous feeling is that once the two overlap then I lose objectivity. What I now feel is that objectivity is not always necessary to learning, in fact, at times that rigid method of study may impair one’s ability to learn.*

I must emphasize that employing this approach did indeed demand that I be disciplined about not directing the learners to adopt any particular conclusion regarding their culture and identity other than that they are part of what they bring to the study of any topic and that study can help one construct them more profoundly. In my own case, this meant that I had to relinquish the role of Jewish educator that I had played in many contexts over the years – and, to some degree, on the boundaries of what Shalev might have considered to be successful in the employment of his approach. The test case for me was particularly in my work with Jewish students. One student’s work brought this point home quite profoundly. She had devoted the final paper to an analysis of films that depict Jewish immigration to America in light of the conflict of "two promised lands" that had emerged in our study of Emma Lazarus' "The New Colossus." In the conclusion to the assignment, this student spoke about how this research related to her own sense of ancestral connections – something

I felt she was trying to work through in the paper as a whole. Though this comment was instructive for me as a Jewish educator, I had to read it differently in the context of my course:

*The question arises whether adaptation or assimilation is more successful, or whether to reject the idea of both and form a compromise of the two will work out best is still being answered by our society today. My family immigrated to America from Eastern Europe, and beyond hearing a couple stories of the old country from my great-grandmother upon request, nothing was mentioned as to who I should feel comfortable identifying with. For my family I'm sure there were negative experiences surrounding their heritage, and therefore the lack of acknowledgement about our immigration to this country makes sense, but it also makes the pain from that experience easier to repress. Without these hardships, it is hard to assume what the possible outcome would be, but today my family is happy with being American. We do not identify ourselves as Jews, or Europeans, or anything except American, and this has probably led to a decrease in my family's communication. We have no ties to any old country, and when I refer to my family, I mean my immediate family rather than my ancestors. Some cultures are able to feel a deep connection with their ancestors, and their heritage, but along with that comfort of being able to qualify as a certain culture group, there are always downsides as well. My family is not oppressed by any other group, and we can acknowledge our lack of historical ties to any certain land.*

#### **6. Application #2: Studying Israel democracy as re-exploring cosmopolitanism:**

The previous section provides significant background for understanding how I further applied Shalev's approach to the design and teaching of the second course on "Israel Democracy" and how that application enabled me to profoundly connect our learning with their lives on other equally if not more meaningful levels. Here, I could not employ as broad a perspective as in my first course because the specificity of the topic demanded greater focus. As my hosts and the title of my course instructed me, the subject matter had to relate directly to the workings of Israeli democracy today, its politics, institutions and society.

To be sure, Shalev's geo-cultural triangle plays itself out in the topic of Israeli democracy in a very profound way. Clearly, Israel's attempt to develop democracy necessitated its confronting conflicting tendencies both from within Judaism's legal and political tradition and opposite the humanistic tradition that contributed to other modern democracies - just as these two traditions also offered many resources for the development of a unique and coherent form of Zionist-Jewish democracy.

However, the linkage between a Shalevian study of Israel democracy and the world of my students would have to be made differently than the kind that I made with students in the course on "Israel and the World." Rather than expand out from the study of Israel to Shalev's three cultural-historical movements as they connect with

the lives and contexts of the learners and then focus back on modern Israel, here I would have to first take students outside of their worlds to explore Shalev's triangle as it relates to the topic of Israel democracy and then to help them look back at their own worlds through different eyes.<sup>10</sup>

A critical question for me in planning this course was therefore what a Shalevian study of Israel democracy could ultimately add to the political and social self-understanding of students who lived in America and who had limited or no immediate stake in Israeli politics and society. In response, I adopted the assumption that the deeper link would be in the challenges that such study could posit to my students' implicit notions of how particular and universal commitments ought to be managed in democratic society and in international relations. Studying Israel's democracy provided students in a liberal arts environment to come to terms with their own blend of particularism and universalism as it relates to American democracy and society, to their ideas about other members of other societies and to the relations between peoples.

Initial investigations that I made concerning the student population at the university in which I taught and in the course on Israel democracy pointed me in this direction. From interviews with university staff and a short survey questionnaire that I gave out at the beginning of the course, it seemed to me that while my students may or may not know much about Israel, many or even most will bring to the topic a liberal bent that deemphasizes the importance of particular group identities and differences in favor of a broader civic idealism that treats people as individuals bound by democratic arrangements at the local, national and global level. As I would later learn, this liberal bent found expression in the lives of many of my students in their approach toward their own cultural backgrounds and towards those of their fellow students. Particular cultures and identities were seen as a challenge to democracy more than a support.

Clearly, such a bent jibed well with emerging trends on and off campus towards a view of Israel as being reactionary, nationally chauvinistic and non-democratic - a symbol of all that was constraining the globe from becoming a better, more equitable place for the whole of humanity. Given this prior orientation, the seduction for me as a committed Israeli to advocate for Israel rather than to teach it in a way that would contribute to my students' growth was considerable. To overcome it, I had to conceive more clearly what exactly it was that I thought that learning about Israel democracy could contribute to my students' political and social education.

What emerged from the process of self-clarification was my assumption that studying Israel's democracy could enable students to grapple with a more radically or wholly civic cosmopolitan view of the world. I would confront them with what may

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<sup>10</sup> In employing this approach, I was influenced by the second definition of relevance in Israel Scheffler's essay "Reflections on Educational Relevance" in *Reason and Teaching* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 126-135.

be seen as a more extreme position to help them take closer account of the universal and particular aspects of their own outlooks on politics and society. By that I did not mean that my aim would be that they forgo a radical view of the world. Again, to adopt such an aim would be to go against the larger purposes of a liberal arts program and/or to be suspected of undertaking a vicarious and more sophisticated form of advocacy on behalf of Israel.

Rather, my objective was to enable students to come to terms with the realization that a civic cosmopolitan orientation was itself a matter of choice, that it had its own local historical and cultural roots, that there were alternative global, social and cultural ideals that were being embraced by others on the planet and that civic cosmopolitan views were not invulnerable to challenge and critique. Having done so, they could and would want to undertake the lifelong project of choosing their own ideals and commitments on the basis of constant examination and revision of the universal-particular issue.<sup>11</sup>

I presented the course as an opportunity to learn the topic of Israel democracy as a complex and open-ended story more than as a tribunal hearing aimed at judging the degree to which Israel complies with democratic theory. My aim in doing so was to try to take the students beyond what was familiar to them and enable them to encounter something different than what they already knew. By this I mean not only that I wanted them to get beyond the prevalent mode of approaching the topic of Israel democracy in the media and on the street – one that I saw as being simplistic, unsophisticated and self-referential - but also that they be open to and curious about a democratic society that thinks and works differently than their own. Thus, I began the introduction to the course syllabus as follows:

*Many people approach Israel democracy as suitors treated a riddle in the ancient Greek tale about a king who wanted to find the right man for his daughter: solve it and the beautiful princess is yours; fail to solve it and you meet your end. According to those who take this approach, solving the riddle of Israel's polity will bring peace not only to the Middle East, but to the ends of the earth; and not solving it will contribute to a spiraling of violence that will reach everyone everywhere.*

*For those who take this approach, finding the solution to the riddle seems to be getting harder as time goes by and the consequences of the failure seem to be getting*

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<sup>11</sup> In constructing the course accordingly, I was informed by important insights that I gained from a book of short essays entitled *For Love of Country* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002). Edited by Joshua Cohen, this anthology begins with Martha Nussbaum's philosophical-educational case for cosmopolitan values to guide our teaching over and above those that she calls "patriotic." She argues for putting right before country and universal reason before the symbols of national belonging. Then follow sixteen short but poignant responses to Nussbaum's essay by prominent authors, each of them critiquing her claim at some level, and the book concludes with a final reply from Nussbaum herself. What emerges from this anthology is a broad but nuanced continuum of assumptions and counter-assumptions regarding the role of particular contexts, orientations and loyalties in an education that aspires to engender concern for humanity at large and conscientious involvement in efforts to attain global justice and equality. I would like to thank Yonatan Ariel, director of the *Makom: Engaging Israel* unit at the Jewish Agency, for referring me to this anthology.

*harsher. Precisely for this reason, it may be time to consider the possibility that this approach is itself part of the problem. In order to confront the challenges of Israel democracy, one has to treat it not as a riddle that can be solved once and for all, but rather as a developing story in which we must carve out a role for ourselves while we are actually living in it.*

*Indeed, a usual way of studying Israel democracy is as those who already have a clear understanding of how democracy works and want to figure out how Israel can treat its citizens and neighbors accordingly. Such learning goes inside the theoretics and mechanics of democratic polity and then uses these as standards upon which to judge the degree to which current Israeli governance and society are or are not democratic. There is a ton of literature that has been produced in this mode that is available to all who are interested and engaged.*

*The problem is that such an approach often leads to a conversation among the deaf: those who criticize Israel for compromising on democracy paradoxically move towards a rejection of its very right to exist; those who defend Israel as being democratic under the most trying of conditions wind up blaming its critics for holding double standards and focusing on the pitfalls of democracy everywhere else. Ironically, what emerges from this study of “democracy in Israel” is that the topic of “Israeli democracy” remains profoundly unaddressed.*

*This course takes an alternative path. It invites students to come down from the judge’s seat in order to take a closer look at the phenomenon of Israeli democracy – one appropriate to what the term would itself suggest: i.e. as a unique and unfolding drama of arranging human relations in the context of the developing and ongoing Zionist project of Israel in the Middle East. This is a drama in which various Jewish and non-Jewish characters are trying to work through their personal and collective stories, their conflicting commitments, their hopes and disillusionments and their strengths and vulnerabilities even as they make, and bear the brunt of, consequential decisions about their lives every day.*

*Our assumption is that as students begin to understand Israeli democracy in these terms, they will be much better equipped to consider if and how this drama affects them, if and how they want to be further engaged with it, and if and how they want to interact with the various players. This course is therefore not for those who seek affirmation for what they think they already know and feel about Israeli democracy. It aims to engage students who seek a deeper inquiry into the topic, so that they can address the topic more profoundly.*

Having extended this initial invitation, the challenge for me was then to choose the themes, topics, readings, primary sources and assignments that would enable students to learn Israel democracy as they would a story. Thus, rather than focusing the course on traditional “topics” such as “religion and state,” “constitution and law,” and “ethnic minorities,” I broke it down according to six central “themes” that I chose on

the basis of Shalev's triangle of conflicts as they play themselves out in the story of Israel democracy. These themes both lead into and run through this story in a way that enabled me to teach them both in historical-chronological sequence and as related aspects of a complex whole.

The themes I chose were: A) OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE JEWISH POLITICAL TRADITION; B) ALLURING ZIONIST, NON-ZIONIST AND ANTI-ZIONIST DEMOCRATIC UTOPIAS; C) PRACTICALITIES AND IMPRACTICALITIES OF LABOR MOVEMENT CONSOCIATIONALISM; D) THREATENING AND EMPOWERING DIVERSITIES; E) LOGJAMS AND PITFALLS IN THE ARAB-JEWISH ENCOUNTER; and F) LIVING AND MANAGING HOLOCAUST MEMORY.<sup>12</sup>

The course was designed as an introduction to the topic of Israeli democracy- not as a comprehensive and exhaustive treatment. In attempting to provide a fruitful set of entry points to an increasingly engaging and complex story, it aimed to inspire and compel students to learn more. However, as I saw it, the main pedagogical challenge went beyond the telling of the story. Even if my lectures were successful in arousing students' curiosity and facilitating their undergoing a profound encounter with the phenomenon of Israel democracy, my assumption was that their learning would be complete only if I enabled them to re-examine their ideas of civic cosmopolitanism in light of this encounter. What would be the pedagogy for that?

### **7. Application #2 continued: between subject matter and student:**

The coursework involved many opportunities for me to raise issues with respect to the deeper linking theme and for students to make connections on their own. One example of such an opportunity emerged in the teaching of the vision of Israel as a bi-national state as forwarded by the Jewish philosopher and Zionist leader Martin Buber (1878-1965). I consciously chose to teach this topic because I knew that for many of the students, Buber's ideas would give voice to their own cosmopolitan sentiments. As Paul Mendes-Flohr explains in his excellent introduction to the anthology of Buber's writings on Jewish-Arab relations (which I gave out to my students as a background reading), Buber was a most extreme voice in early Zionism in that he argued for the freezing of the whole Jewish effort to enable Jews from all over the world to immigrate to Palestine until it was agreed upon in advance and coordinated with local Arab leaders.<sup>13</sup> For many of my students, the more I spoke about Buber's ideas and efforts, the more he seemed to become something of a hero for them – a fact that was corroborated by their comments in one of the response paper assignments that they submitted.

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<sup>12</sup> For a copy of this syllabus, see

[http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/syl/democracy\\_Marom.pdf](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/syl/democracy_Marom.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> *A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs*, edited by Paul Mendes-Flohr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 3-34.

However, keeping with Shalev's view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as an expression of a larger conflict between the traditions of Zionism and Humanism, I made sure to expose students to other aspects of Buber's ideas and activities that stood in tension with all that had originally aroused their identification. The simplest level here was to point out that Buber's idea was not that Palestine be a civil democracy as in America but rather a unique bi-national Jewish-Arab arrangement. Beyond that, it was important to point out paradoxes and contradictions in Buber's approach and in others to his approach: while he engaged in profound intercultural and interreligious dialogue in many of his writings about other peoples, cultures and religions, he himself did not engage in a broad and systematic dialogue with Palestinian Arabs or delve deeply into a study of Islam (save in its Sufi form). Nor, I added, did many Arab or Moslem leaders choose to publicly identify with Buber's followers in the *Brit Shalom* organization.

The conflict between Zionism and Humanism found most profound expression, however, when we studied Buber's long and systematic written response to the Indian leader and symbol of non-violent resistance Mahatma Gandhi, after the latter publicly denigrated Zionists in 1938 for claiming Palestine "which belongs to the Arabs" and for using biblical sanction to justify it. Gandhi's alternative suggestion was that Jews remain in their lands, including Nazi Germany, and pursue his method of passive non-violent resistance even at the price of death. Seeing as students had developed an inner identification with Buber, reading through Gandhi's argument with them in preparation to study Buber's letter of rebuttal enabled me to pedagogically set up a dramatic conflict that would engage them in a deeper inquiry into their own ideas about the role of national identities in a cosmopolitan world. After all, what could Buber say in response to Gandhi?

As we went through specific points of Buber's response, I felt the students' learning and engagement more than at most other points in the course. Here they encountered Buber's very poignant corrections to Gandhi's facile assumptions about the prospects of passive resistance to Nazi power. Then, they were faced with his bold accusations of Gandhi's double standard in disavowing the Jewish nation what he naturally assumed was the right of Indians. Finally, they were confronted with a systematic argument regarding the criteria for justifying claims to a particular land – including those based on profound cultural connection – and their application to Zionism and its cultural-historical affinity to the biblical land of Israel. Particularly powerful was a passage in which Buber's tone is one of reproach, as if Gandhi was actually contributing to the problem rather than to its solution:

*In the midst of your arguments, Mahatma, there is a fine word which we gratefully accept. We should seek, you say, to convert the heart of the Arab. Well then – help us to do so! Among us there are many foolish hearts to convert – hearts that have fallen prey to that nationalist egoism which only admits its own claims. We hope to achieve this ourselves. But for the other task of conversion we need your help. Instead, your admonition is addressed only to the Jews, because they allow British bayonets to*



*defend them against bomb throwers. Your attitude toward the latter is much more reversed: you say you wish the Arabs had chosen the way of non-violence; but according to the accepted canons of right and wrong there is nothing to be said against their behavior. How is it possible that in this case, you should give credence – if only in a limited form – to the accepted canons, where you have never done so before! You reproach us, that, having no army of our own, we consent to the British army preventing an occasional blind murder. But in view of the accepted canons you cast a lenient eye on those who carry murder into our ranks every day without even noticing who is hit. Were you to look down on all, Mahatma, on what is done and what is not done on both sides – on the just and unjust on both sides – would you not admit that we certainly are not least in need of your help?<sup>14</sup>*

Of course, given the lecture format and the large group of students in the class, it was difficult for me to gauge just how engrossed they were by our study of Buber and if indeed there was significant learning going on. I might have been more enamored with myself than attentive to their body language. In speaking about Buber's letter to Ghandi, I therefore tried to take the extra step of framing his response in terms of the larger question of cosmopolitan and national values so as to invite students to explore our topic in terms that relate back to their own views of the world beyond the question of Israel.

Yet I could not know from their responses that they had really made the connection, certainly not right then and there and perhaps over time as well. One student came up to me after class nearly in tears, exclaiming that while he was shocked and confused by Buber's response to Ghandi, he could not deny that he was persuaded by it. But does that truly signify success? The ongoing reference to Buber in student work throughout the course showed me that at the very least, this unit had captured their attention, but it was hard for me to know for sure just how far they had taken our learning into their worlds.

The "Israel Democracy" course offered many such opportunities to connect students with our study, some of which I used to invite them to make further connections and others at which I myself did not see the connection until they did. The effort compounded itself as we explored the same issue of cosmopolitan versus national commitments through diverse topics ranging from the development of Palestinian identity, collective memory and treatment of internal diversity to the naming of Palestinian and Jewish settlements (eg. the name of the Palestinian town of Jenin is Arabic for the Biblical *Ganim*, which was then used for a small secular Jewish settlement that was established next to Jenin, but was evacuated in 2005 in the context of the Israeli disengagement from Gaza).

At times, responding to whatever questions and issues students brought up necessitated my improvisation. At one point, for example, students expressed their

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp. 123-124.

bewilderment as to why dialogue between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs was so difficult, so I brought in a person I knew who had participated in a dialogue that went on for two years before ultimately failing and asked her to tell the story. At other times, I illustrated points by using instances from my own life as an Israeli as if my personal first-hand experience were a text as well. While students pointed out the dangers of partiality in my report, they often expressed appreciation for such testimony because they felt that it brought the living realities we were studying into the classroom.

Since the lecture format offered insufficient time for the kind of discourse with students that would enable me to bring our learning more into their individual worlds, I used the written assignments to add such an opportunity. In response paper assignments, for example, I would often ask an extra question in which the linkage had to be made explicitly. Thus, after studying an article in which the legal scholar and former director of the Israeli Civil Rights Association Ruth Gavison explores the Jewish right to statehood in light of international law,<sup>15</sup> I asked the students not only to summarize her claims, but also to share their views on them as well.

The final exam offered me one of the best opportunities to interact individually with students around the course's core issue, so I invested much time and effort to articulate questions that would enable me to do so. Thus, along with the compulsory assignment that asked them to interpret Israel's Declaration of Independence in light of the six themes we learned, I asked students to "share two thoughts that you have in response to the Declaration, how does it add, change or re-affirm your understanding of Israel democracy?"

In addition, students had to choose one of three other possible assignments, so in each case, alongside the central assignment, I made sure that each included a similar kind of direct linking question. For example, for one optional topic that related to debate between Ruth Gavison and others over the issue of legally allowing small communities to be established in the Galilee exclusively for secular Jewish Israelis, I asked students to compare this debate to the way such an issue might be debated in America. For another optional topic, after asking students various questions relating to our course on the basis of the philosopher Charles Taylor's short essay entitled "Why Democracy Needs Patriotism?"<sup>16</sup> I also asked them how they themselves respond to Taylor's claims with reference to their views on Israeli and American democracy.

Obviously, I did not grade students on the basis of their opinions. But in preparing for the exam, I did tell them that in evaluating their answers to these kinds of questions, I would be looking at the level of their articulation, the development of their ideas and the inclusion of learning from our course into their considerations. In some of the responses I had seen the failure of all my efforts and the over

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<sup>15</sup> See: <http://members.ngfp.org/Courses/Gavison/Azure.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> See pages 119-121 of *For Love of Country*, op. cit.

ambitiousness of my approach. I thought that I must have gone so far over these students' level of study that I wondered, painfully, if and how they had gotten through many of the readings. This applied in particular to students who had trouble articulating themselves in writing or in grasping complex topics. With others, there was significant evidence of student growth and learning over the course of the semester.

Various comments that one student made in a series of exchanges that we had over the course of the semester demonstrated that she had become engaged with the kind of learning I had hoped to engender. As it turned out, none of these communications were face to face. All were either in the context of written assignments, e-mails or the final exam. In what follows I give excerpts from this student's writing that demonstrate the different kinds of connections that she made between our study and her world.

*...What "right" does anyone have to any piece of land? There is nothing inherent about any land mass itself that says "this land belongs to this people"...As we discussed in class, Obama even said that Jews "deserved" to have a state because of their suffering. I understand now, that is missing a whole lot...I also understand that just giving a group of people some land and saying "here come together from all over the world and build a first world democracy" isn't quite as simple as it comes out, for a billion different reasons.*

*...I think the biggest struggle for me this semester has been trying to think outside of America...Living in America, I don't believe I had ever heard an argument that I thought was successful in articulating an argument for the separation of cultures. Such arguments are easily dismissed with words like "racism." But Gavison walks a very fine line and in my opinion diligently avoids those claims. While I don't necessarily agree with everything, it has certainly opened up my mind vastly on the issue...*

*...We here in America are constantly striving for this idealism of social and political correctness, but there are points of view in the world that pull the rug out of what we believe in here in the states. For instance, if two groups of people do not want to live together, what is wrong with a law that says they don't have to?*

*...Meanwhile our hypocrisy is right underneath our own nose, as the Native Americans were given settlements to retain their culture. So when is it ok to give a certain group a right, and when is it ok to deny another group that same right? These are questions that have become much more complicated to me than they were before, but I mean that only in the best of ways.*

## **8. Towards an expanded literature of approaches to teaching Israel on campus:**

Intentions are one thing. Outcomes are quite another. In these notes on my experiment, I have tried to give articulation to one vision of teaching Israel that is appropriate for a liberal arts education. This articulation included description of a wide range of elements, including the larger curricular philosophy that guided its conception and design; the organizing principles for the selection and presentation of subject matter; a report on the extra learning that was necessary for teaching; aims, guidelines and indicators for effective interactions with students; modes of evaluation; and reflections on student responses drawn from their written assignments and from various interactions in and outside the classroom.

Yet, what I have summarized above does not represent the greater part of what took place in my experiment in the teaching of Israel, both from the perspective of my planning and teaching and with respect to students' learning and experience. It is a glimpse of what I discovered is possible in the teaching of Israel in a liberal arts program when such teaching is treated as a topic worthy of systematic development and reflection.

Even at this initial level of inquiry, the experiment leaves me with many topics and issues for further consideration: Were my students telling me everything about their experience of learning in my courses or were they holding back? How did they receive my comments on their written papers? What impact did my courses have on their learning relative and in relation to other learning experiences they had had at university? What would my colleagues in Israel Studies or at the university see that I had not seen had they observed my classes? Did I spend too little or too much time on the Palestinian conflict, pre-Zionist history, Holocaust memory, economic inequalities and government corruption, the details of Israeli coalition politics? How could I improve on the study of primary sources in the short time span allotted for classes? Did my approach differ with others teaching "loaded" topics in liberal arts environments? Was my approach transferable to other Israel Studies scholars and Israel educators who had not learned with Mordecai Shalev and had not benefitted from years of experimenting with his approach?

These and many other queries may or may not be worth pursuing. My aim in sharing my notes was to model one kind of research that I think could be beneficial in an effort to enhance the educative capacities and impact of the field of Israel Studies at large. If, in addition to a random offering of course syllabi, scholars teaching Israel on campus also had access to a series of diverse conceptions of the teaching of Israel that are articulated in terms similar to those I have used to describe my own, I believe that it would provide them with richer reference points for crafting their own.<sup>17</sup> How

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<sup>17</sup> See for example: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/isdf/syllabitoc.html>. In and of themselves, syllabi do not reflect approaches to teaching a particular topic. As I have illustrated in my paper, they are the outcome of intense efforts in educational planning and they come to life in living applications.

much more could this be the case if these were accompanied with a critical comparison of the aims, contents and methods of each conception; documentations and discussions of live interactions between instructors and students; critical appraisal of examples of student work and instructor response; and evaluations of outcomes by outside researchers.<sup>18</sup>

To some, the efforts and resources that would be necessary to produce such a database would seem to be a luxury for such a small field, one that is miniscule in liberal arts education in comparison with subject areas such as history, literature or philosophy. Even if it is true that the educational challenges of teaching Israel in a liberal arts environment are greater, the opportunities for teaching Israel on campus and the community of scholars teaching Israel are simply not that large.

In response to this perception, I could argue that the field of teaching Israel on campus is constantly growing and that if Israel is taught more effectively, it could grow even more. I could also argue that if the educative aspects of teaching Israel in line with the values of a liberal arts program are not given stronger expression, students will not be provided with a sufficiently viable alternative to efforts to hijack this field for the purposes of de-legitimization and counter-advocacy. I could even argue that the educational impact of resources that are already being invested in advancing the field of Israel Studies and the teaching of Israel on campus could increase exponentially with this extra input. Teaching Israel effectively inside liberal arts programs might make it an attractive option for adult education programs beyond campus in liberal circles in America, Israel and all over the world.

However, equally if not stronger claims for efforts towards the deepening and sophisticating of the teaching of Israel come from within the activity itself. Teaching Israel more effectively beautifies the field. Energies invested towards that aim are equal to the profound value of the topic of Israel itself. When students in liberal arts programs learn Israel well, such learning really can enrich their lives, contribute to their worlds and expand their capacities to derive all that this broad and deep phenomenon has to offer them when it is encountered honestly, freely and profoundly. Israel is such a rich and unique topic that when ways for teaching it effectively in liberal arts programs are developed, such teaching has the potential of making important contributions to liberal education altogether.

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<sup>18</sup> Developing indicators to determine the impact on students of a particular approach to teaching Israel is a challenging, but not necessarily impossible task. This is a point that emerged in conversation I had with Annette Koren of the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, who came to observe two of my classes. On the one hand, university departments do not always grant permission to interview students if they sense that this will somehow be perceived by them as imposing pressure to take a particular stance on Israel or any other subject. On the other hand, to determine deeper impact, one cannot be satisfied with statements made by students at the time of the learning. One also has to have benchmarks for their engagement with Israel before the course and to follow its development in their continued learning and thinking after the course is over. Nevertheless, such research is critical both for those who would administer and fund the teaching of Israel and for those who want to improve their teaching.