



NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES

SPARKING NEW IDEAS ON ISRAEL

For big thinking on Israel, look beyond the daily headlines. Look beyond the Middle East and look to Concordia University, in Montreal, which is home to the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies.

Anchored in a cosmopolitan university, the institute is becoming the Canadian gateway to the study of Israel.

It serves as a bridge between visiting scholars in Israel Studies who want to share their knowledge with North American students and North American students who want to learn more about Israel.

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies is unique in Canada.

It unites students and faculty in drawing a bigger picture of Israel. Grounded in research, they work to advance how society understands the multi-dimensional impact of the Middle Eastern state.

Shalom!

A YEAR OF STEADY GROWTH AND SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS

Message from Norma Joseph and Csaba Nikolenyi, Co-Directors of the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies

This past year has been a very busy one for the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies. We are delighted to report that we have successfully accomplished two central objectives in our strategic development.

The first was to create a multidisciplinary, 24-credit undergraduate minor in Israel Studies. After careful design, the minor received overwhelming support from the Faculty of Arts and Science's Faculty Council in May. This fall will mark the final steps before enrolment can begin. The minor program is unique in its pedagogical design. It combines three groups of compulsory courses — Hebrew or Arabic language; History and Politics of the Middle East; and Politics and Society of Israel. It also provides a range of Arts and Science electives.

Our second goal was to secure the right to host the 2015 Annual Conference of the Association for Israel Studies, an international scholarly society devoted to the academic and professional study of Israel. We're proud to report that we will host the



Norma Joseph

Csaba Nikolenyi

Association's 31st such meeting at Concordia University in 2015. Receiving approval for this event is an indicator of the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies' emerging international profile. It presages not just another successful year, but a vigorous beginning to a productive and effective research institute.

As our internal structure grew and solidified this last year, our national and international profile increased as well. Local, national and international lecturers came to share their knowledge of Israel. In

the process, the Concordia community obtained a myriad of opportunities to view the land and its people through new lenses. This is part of the prime purpose of the Azrieli Institute.

In just two years, we have developed a unique and fast-growing centre of Israel research in Canada, North America and beyond.

The Institute will continue to cultivate its reputation for academic excellence by emphasizing the dissemination of research in both scholarly

and mainstream publications. We will continue to emphasize knowledge creation and the building of research capacities that propel the comparative and multidisciplinary study of Israel. We will simultaneously build bridges with the non-academic community to share the result of our academic work with society.

The following pages highlight the Institute's exciting achievements, as well as its ongoing activities and future plans. We hope you'll share in our pride in all that we've accomplished.

Csaba Nikolenyi
Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science,
Co-Director, Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies

Norma Joseph
Professor, Department of Religion,
Co-Director, Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies

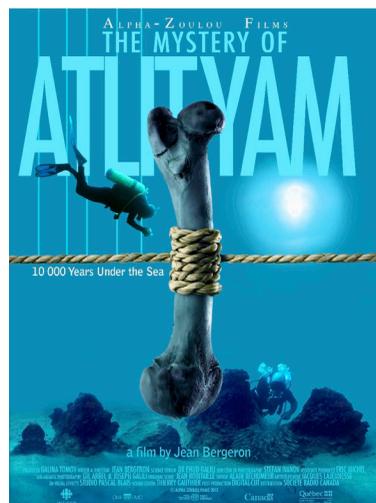
SAVE THE DATE!
Israel at 65 conference
to be held in early
November 2013

On November 11 and 12, 2013, the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies will host a special inaugural conference marking Israel at 65. Ilan Troen, Stoll Family Professor in Israel Studies at Brandeis University and Director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, will serve as keynote speaker. For more information, please visit azrieli-institute.concordia.ca

DISCOVERY AND DISCUSSION

Azrieli Institute events foster academic exchanges and allow for the free flow of ideas

Featuring a range of interesting topics and speakers, Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies events offered something for everyone this past year. They also attracted scores of attendees — even in stormy weather. Among the multiple opportunities for growth and knowledge transfer, guests were treated to:



- A joint lecture with Concordia's Department of Political Science on the political, cultural and transatlantic divide surrounding the Arab-Israeli conflict. The talk was led by Jonathan Rynhold, Bar-Ilan University professor and visiting professor at George Washington University.
- A discussion about Israeli immigration policies toward diverse migrant groups, led by Dvora Blum and Karin Amit of Israel's Ruppin Academic Center.
- A lecture on “designing” Israeli-Palestinian peace, led by Karen Lee Bar-Sinai of the Harvard Graduate School of Design.
- A premiere screening of the documentary *The Mystery of Atlit Yam*, with a presentation from University of Haifa marine archeologist Ehud Galili.
- A presentation on creating a Jewish-Arab society in Israel delivered by McGill University doctoral student Amal Elsana-Alh'jooj.
- A joint lecture with Concordia's Department of Political Science on the strategic geographic location of the Sinai Peninsula in the context of the Egypt-Israel-Hamas triangle. The talk was given by Professor Avraham Sela from Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- A community-wide event featuring Professor Yael Feldman of New York University. She shared her perspectives on the biblical narrative and the Israeli national sacrifice surrounding the story of Isaac.

SHALOM AND WELCOME TO:

Our new academic advisors, professors Meir Amor and Ira Robinson, have been involved with the Azrieli Institute since its inception. Amor brings his expertise as an associate professor of Sociology, while Robinson contributes his insights as a professor of Judaic Studies and interim chair of the Concordia Canadian Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies.

Our new Montefiore fellow, Claire English, who is pursuing Judaic Studies. She will explore people with disabilities in the earliest Jewish sacred texts and their representations in contemporary Jewish society, both in Israel and in North America.

Our new Israel scholars, Liora Norwich and Alon Burstein. A post-doctoral fellow of the

Azrieli Institute, Norwich will examine the spectrum of ethnic minority mobilization in deeply divided societies. Burstein is pursuing a PhD in Political Science and plans to explore the motivations behind the emergence of extremist movements in Israel.

ADVANCING SOCIETAL KNOWLEDGE OF ISRAEL

Azrieli Institute's dynamic researchers eager to share their findings with the world



Publications

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies celebrated new publications in the domain of Israel Studies by advisory group members Meir Amor and Csaba Nikolenyi. Professor Amor's new e-book, *Illumination From the Shadow: A Critique of Ashkenazi Privilege*, is a compilation of his past articles. Professor Nikolenyi contributed a chapter on the Israeli party system to *Israeli Identity: Between Orient and Occident* (David Tal, ed.).

Conferences

The Azrieli Institute's global visibility as a centre for Israel research and solid academic offerings increased significantly this past year, as faculty members continued to present at a number of Israeli and international conferences.

In May, Concordia professors Bina Toledo Freiwald, Ariela Freedman, Csaba Nikolenyi, James Kelly and Brian Lewis participated in the 14th Jeru-

salem Conference at Hebrew University's Halbert Centre for Canadian Studies. That same month, Professor Judith Woodsworth delivered a paper at the Beyond Transfiction: Translators and (Their) Authors international conference at Tel Aviv University. In June, Professors Bina Toledo Freiwald, Csaba Nikolenyi and Meir Amor presented their work at the 29th Annual Meeting of the Association for Israel Studies at UCLA.

Our mission continues

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies supports all forms of research at Concordia on subjects related to Israel. In 2013, our endowment paid out some \$65,000 to advance research activities in the area of Israel Studies. Funding for faculty and graduate students is available and ongoing applications are encouraged.

For more information, visit azrieli-institute.concordia.ca/funding

CONGRATULATIONS

to Professor **Ira Robinson** who was awarded a prestigious Summer Institute Fellowship at Brandeis University's Schusterman Center for Israel Studies. The Center is dedicated to promoting exemplary teaching and scholarship in Israeli history, politics, culture, and society.

A FORUM FOR GROWTH

A number of faculty members associated with the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies benefited from grants and travel subsidies that facilitated their research pursuits:

Yehuda Kaufman and the intellectual history of twentieth century Jewry

Professor **Ira Robinson** (Department of Religion) spent the summer in Israel pursuing research on Yehuda Kaufman (Even Shmuel) (1886-1976), a major intellectual influence on North American and Israeli Jewry in the 20th century. Professor Robinson explored archival resources in order to flesh out

Kaufman's career, beginning with his move to Palestine in the 1920s, until his passing.

The rituals and everyday Life of ancient Jews: Bringing together ancient texts and the material remains in the land of Israel

There is one body of evidence for the study of third-century rabbinic Judaism that is accessible only in Israel — material remains uncovered through archaeological

excavation. Professor **Naftali Cohn** (Department of Religion) and a graduate research assistant explored the material and cultivated relationships with Israeli archaeologists that will form the basis for a future project.

Women in Wadi Ara: Educational choices and the future of a region

Professor **Ariela Freedman** (Concordia Liberal Arts College) worked with Professor David Mendelsohn, academic director of the Givat Haviva Institute in Israel. Givat Haviva focuses on capacity building and empowerment via leadership training and mentorship programs for Jewish and Arab women. Professor Freedman met women from the community who were the first in their families to have attended university.

The Diaspora's homeland: Representations of Israel in Jewish-Canadian writing

Professor **Bina Toledo Freiwald** (Department of English) received a grant to explore diasporic representations of the Jewish state. In the coming year, she will work with a graduate research assistant to examine representations of Israel in Jewish-Canadian writing from Klein to contemporary novelists like Sheila Heti.



OUT AND ABOUT

Campus and community outreach

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies continues to gain increasing prominence both in the media and the community at large.

In the press:

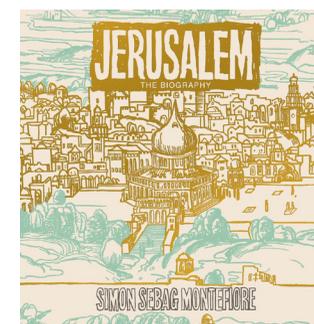
- Former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, Brian Lewis, mentioned the Azrieli Institute in his message in the fall 2012 issue of the faculty's *Connections* newsletter.
- The fall 2012 issue of *Concordia University Magazine* featured an article on the Azrieli Institute that highlighted its rapid development and unique multidisciplinary approach.



- *Israel Campus Beat*, an online student-run publication that covers Israel-related trends and events on campuses worldwide, described the Azrieli Institute as a pioneering centre and highlighted its goals of research and community involvement.

Around town:

- Professor Csaba Nikolenyi introduced best-selling author Simon Sebag Montefiore (*Jerusalem: The Biography*), keynote speaker at the Jewish Public Library's November Jewish Book Month in Montreal. Professor Nikolenyi also gave a stimulating talk on Israel's political situation to Congregation Shaar Hashomayim's Home Study Group, Group Daled, and participated in a panel analysis of Israel's 2013 election results at the Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem synagogue.



- The Azrieli Institute Award for Best Book in Israel Studies, in English or French, was sponsored as part of the library's biennial J.I. Segal Literary Awards for creative works on Jewish themes. This year's winner was Boaz Neumann (*Land and Desire in Early Zionism*).
- Professor Norma Joseph was the guest speaker at Na'amat Canada Montreal's Chanukah event, where she spoke on the topic: *Equality Lost? An Israeli Experience*.

NEW ONLINE TOOL FACILITATES ISRAEL STUDIES

In collaboration with Concordia University Libraries, the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies has created the **Israel Studies Research and Subject Guide**, a new online tool designed to facilitate Israel research. The guide provides access to books, journals and articles in Concordia's database, as well as links to other libraries with Israel-related material.

To access the guide, visit library.concordia.ca/research/subjects/israelst

ABOUT US: AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: SHARON AZRIELI, STEPHANIE AZRIELI, DAVID AZRIELI AND NAOMI AZRIELI

Founded in 2011, the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies was born thanks to a visionary gift of \$5 million from the Azrieli Foundation to Concordia University. Unique in its multidisciplinary focus, the institute unites students and faculty across multiple disciplines in drawing a bigger picture of Israel. Grounded in

research, they work to advance how society understands the multi-dimensional impact of the Middle Eastern state. Their shared quest is to advance knowledge on Israel that benefits Montreal, Quebec, Canada and the world. The institute serves as fertile and neutral ground for stimulating discovery and discussion.

For more information, please visit **azrieli-institute.concordia.ca**

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SECURING A BRIGHT FUTURE

A contribution to the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies is a gift towards education and research. Help us advance knowledge on the state of Israel for the benefit of society by giving to Concordia.