

NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF THE

AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES

WINTER 2022

**OUR
GLOBAL
REACH**

CONCORDIA

A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR



Dear friends of the Azrieli Institute,

I am delighted to welcome you back to another exciting year of learning about Israel!

Several projects that we started during the pandemic are now reaching maturity. For example, the first dozen films have been uploaded as part of our special Israel studies documentary series on the Concordia Library website for easy use and reference by our faculty and students; the scholarly manuscript series in Israel studies that we launched with McGill-Queen's University Press will feature the publication of the first two

monographs this year; and the annual competition for the Azrieli Institute – Concordia University Library Best Book Award in Israel Studies continues to attract an ever-growing and widening pool of interest and submissions.

The end of the pandemic also allowed us to support our students and researchers to resume their scholarly activities in Israel and elsewhere. The institute maintained its tradition of representation at the annual meeting of the Association for Israel Studies, which took place on the campus of Bar-Ilan University in June 2022, and at the Annual Meeting of the European Association for Israel Studies, which was hosted by Oxford University in September.

We were thrilled that Concordia President Graham Carr participated in a Canadian university presidents' mission to Israel in August where he co-signed a memorandum of understanding with Arie Zaban, president of Bar-Ilan University, in support of a joint summer field school between the Azrieli Institute and the Martin (Szusz) Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology.

All in all, we look forward to yet another exciting year full of initiatives, programs and learning.

Whether in person or online, please join us at our upcoming events and activities during the 2022-23 academic year!

Warmest wishes,

Csaba Nikolenyi

Director, Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies
Professor, Department of Political Science

RANDY'S CORNER: A YEAR IN REVIEW



As feature writer and editor at the Azrieli Institute, I am proud to showcase the multifaceted nature of Israel through covering distinguished speakers, events and film screenings. “Randy’s Corner” (name coined by former marketing and social-media coordinator Lisa Komlos) is now a regular feature of the monthly newsletters, receiving exceptional reader feedback.

Intended to educate, challenge and inspire, articles cover a range of themes including medical advancements, green technology, human rights and diplomatic relations:

- “Global Challenges, Israeli Solutions”: Tel Aviv University’s partnerships with local communities in agri-tech and safe water
- “A Come-from-Behind Story”: Israel’s evolving experience in sports
- “When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Get Creative: Israel’s Innovations for Pandemic Relief”
- “Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue”: The critical gains (but also lost opportunities) of the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials

- “A Common Goal”: The complex experience of Arab players on Israel’s national soccer team
- “Getting to That Moment of Silence”: It took 50 years of lobbying to finally commemorate the 11 Israeli athletes murdered at the 1972 Summer Olympic Games
- “Morocco: Exporter of Oranges and Broker of Peace”: The central (and underpublicized) role played by Morocco in fostering peace in an often hostile neighbourhood
- “Divers by Day, Smugglers by Night”: Classic Israeli chutzpah in the Mossad’s rescue of Ethiopian Jewry; the stuff of legends

Stay tuned for more fascinating discussions, showcasing the diversity that is Israel!

Randy Pinsky

Feature writer and editor
Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies

GREETINGS FROM OUR MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



Hello and welcome!
After two years of online events and talks, we were thrilled to attend the 2022 Association for Israel Studies Conference at Bar-Ilan University, where we continued our pursuit of forging strong alliances with our

partners from Israel and around the world.

Working behind the scenes as the marketing and communications coordinator, I have seen the success of our efforts as our monthly subscribers have grown almost twofold. This accomplishment could not have been possible without our committed team.

During the pandemic, we quickly pivoted and hosted seminars, talks, award ceremonies and movie screenings online so that our community (now international!) could continue enjoying all that we have to offer.

Whether you’re looking for a quiet place to study or do your research, our extensive library has all the resources you need.

I’m excited for the year ahead and for the great work we will continue to do!

Corey Newman

Marketing and communications coordinator
Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD AND CONTEST WINNERS



Mitchell Stein
Sarna-Weigensberg Award
(undergraduate)

"I am honoured and grateful to be the recipient of this year's Sarna-Weigensberg Scholarship. As a student nearing the completion of my minor in Israel Studies, I am proud to have gained invaluable knowledge in the study of Israeli history, politics and culture through this wonderful program. I am grateful for the support in allowing me to further pursue my academic goals, and the opportunity to continue in the work paved by those before me, including the namesakes of this scholarship, Libby and Israel Sarna and Jean and Harvey Leslie Weigensberg.

Thank you very much for this honour!"



Amber Amiga
Sarah Morris Scholarship
(undergraduate)

"I am currently in my third year at Concordia, majoring in history. Raised in a Jewish-Israeli home, I was always aware of the importance of keeping Jewish traditions alive and supporting Israel. As I moved on to CEGEP and later university, I committed myself to being familiar with facts about Israel and the Middle East. It was also then that I realized my love for Israeli and Jewish history, from ancient times to modern Israel. I am very grateful that my studies here at the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies have been recognized with the Sarah Morris Scholarship. This is particularly special as the past couple of semesters have been quite challenging due to the pandemic!

Todah rabah!"

Montefiore Graduate Student Awards



Francis Parenteau (PhD, Health, Kinesiology and Applied Physiology)
"Pomegranate: The Sacred Fruit of Israel and Its Effect on Blood Vessels"



Cynthia de Patrillo (MA, Religions and Cultures)
"Religion on Television: From Israel's *Shtisel* to America's *Big Love*"



Alexei Perry Cox (PhD, Humanities)
"Balance/unbalance: tipping the scales of in/justice through equipoise poésie"



Lou Laverty (PhD, Religions and Cultures)
"Zionism and Immigration to Israel"

Student Photo Contest



1. First-Place Ensemble:
Justin Joven
2. First-Place Picture:
Mitchell Stein
3. Second-Place Picture:
Jonathan Punski



AZRIELI SCHOLAR HEADED TO BRANDEIS



The Azrieli Institute extends its best wishes to former visiting scholar **Jonathan Ghariani** on his new ventures at Brandeis University, Massachusetts. Ghariani will continue his research on Arab-Israeli relations and advances (and roadblocks)

to meaningful peace in the region in affiliation with the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies.

Ghariani received his PhD from University College London, analyzing challenges “in dealing with the intractable issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

In “From Covert Relations to the Abraham Accords,” presented at the institute on October 14, 2021, Ghariani examined the implications of the recent normalization in the region and Morocco’s potential role as peace broker.

He is currently working on a book regarding the often shrouded past of Israeli-American relations. In spite of the claimed historical friendship, Ghariani observed that the Eisenhower administration had refused Israel desperately needed support during the 1956 Suez Crisis, partnering with the oil-wealthy Arab states against the Soviet Union. It was only when the volatility of the Arab regimes became apparent that Israel was considered a more strategic ally.

“There are no real ‘friends’ or ‘enemies’ in politics,” remarked Ghariani. “The crux of international relations is rather more a consideration of shared interests, an allyship of convenience.”

There is hope that Saudi Arabia will be next in extending the hand of peace. “When that happens, it will be a big game-changer,” Ghariani shared.

ACADEMIC VISITOR CALLS FOR A RETHINKING OF GOVERNANCE



With concerning rates of distrust of government, scholars are taking a closer look at conventional understandings of leadership. As many do not feel the current political and private spheres adequately respond to citizen needs, the question arises:

Is there a third option?

The Azrieli Institute was honoured to invite **Lilach Ben Zvi** from the University of Haifa as an academic visitor in her postdoctoral work on an alternative: a civil-society-led public sphere. She is also affiliated with the Shalom Hartman Institute, a leading centre of applied Jewish thought and education.

“Lilach’s scholarship is a great complement to [our] work expanding [the institute’s] reach in Montreal and throughout Canada,” noted Canadian director Karen Kollins.

In January 2021, Ben Zvi presented “Neither Private, Nor Political: The Public Sphere in Yeshayahu Leibowitz’s Theory”

at the Azrieli Institute. Leibowitz (1903 – 1994) was an Israeli Orthodox intellectual known for his “controversial yet thought-provoking take on political philosophy,” observed institute director Csaba Nikolenyi.

In response to concerns about injustices, Leibowitz advocated for limiting state power. According to Ben Zvi, the dichotomy between the (overly state-intervening) political and (allegedly state-absent) private spheres misses the critical need for an ongoing and free debate regarding the principles and values important to citizens.

Based on Leibowitz’s political work, she thus proposed the *public* sphere as the missing third option — one which is connected with, yet distinct from, the other spheres and led by a vibrant civil society that holds the government accountable.

“This rethinking,” concluded Ben Zvi, “enables us to re-observe the ability of citizens to shape our civil consent as an eternal struggle, protected from the powerful political sphere.”

TEACHING CANADIAN JUDICIAL DEBATES IN ISRAEL



In May, Department of Political Science professor **James Kelly** offered an intensive seminar about Canadian politics at Bar-Ilan University's Faculty of Law.

Entitled “Judicial Power and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,” the seminar discussed the role played by Canada’s Supreme Court in upholding constitutional protections. With courts playing increasingly active roles in policy arenas — known as the “judicialization of politics” — this timely topic provoked many engaging debates.

Students “evaluate[d] the policy impact of judicial decisions” regarding topics such as marriage equality and sexual identity, safe injection facilities and minority-language instruction.

“It was a very rewarding experience,” shared Kelly, impressed by his students’ familiarity in discussions about judicial power. This is particularly the case given that Israel is considering introducing a notwithstanding clause such as Canada’s, in which parliament can temporarily override the charter of rights in extreme situations.

Harnessing their inner *Sanhedrin* (court of Ancient Israel) analysis skills, the Bar-Ilan students gained a greater understanding of legal nuances and their potential policy implications — critical for their future careers.

CITIZEN-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DURING COVID



From top left: Lihi Lahat, Francesca Scala and Omer Keynan

From its onset, the pandemic threw everyone for a loop: How to work remotely? What are the best means for balancing office and home life?

Even concepts such as “time” and “well-being” required a rethinking — the research focus of Azrieli affiliate associate professor **Lihi Lahat** of Sapir Academic College, Israel, **Francesca Scala** of Concordia, and **Omer Keynan** of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. With a recently acquired Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, the team analyzed how time and well-being were represented on social-media sites during the pandemic.

“COVID shook us up and challenged our perceptions,” shared Lahat. “It made us rethink how we’ve done and have been doing things.”

For instance, while working from home “was an [uncomfortable] encroachment” for some, noted Scala, for others “it was liberating, enabling pockets of innovation and creativity.” Lahat, Scala and Keynan argue that there is a need for more government-citizen collaboration to ensure policies resonate with the realities of those they impact.

The researchers presented “The Government-Citizen Relationship as Reflected in Facebook: A Comparison of Israel and Ontario during COVID-19” at the 2022 Association for Israel Studies conference at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Examining online communications provided a pulse on concerns as well as views about the government.

“Social media is a valuable way of gauging trends,” observed Scala, with Lahat echoing, “Policymakers could learn from Twitter.”

In “‘Smart Cities’ and/or ‘Smart Communities’: Challenges, Conflicts, and Opportunities,” presented at the Azrieli Institute on April 5, 2022, Lahat and her colleague Regev Nathansohn from Sapir Academic College made reference to Haifa’s citizen-led *Na L’Katen* (“Fix It Please”) Facebook group as an example. Comments shed light on issues such as trust and distrust between residents and the local government.

“There is the need to engage in new and innovative ways ... [and] listen to the voices less heard,” stated Lahat. “We don’t have any other option today.”

THE NOBLE POMEGRANATE: BIBLICAL FRUIT AND NATURAL FUNGICIDE? Winner of the Coopération Québec-Israël Grant



The Azrieli Institute and Concordia University are proud to announce a research collaboration with Israel in agricultural sciences. Azrieli faculty member **Isabelle Benoit Gelber**, assistant professor in the Department of Biology, was co-awarded the prestigious

Coopération Québec-Israël 2021 – 2022 grant in affiliation with **Victor Rodov** and **Dov Prusky** of Israel's renowned Volcani Institute on the topic of "The Use of Agricultural Residues for the Research of Antimicrobial Molecules."

Awarded through the Ministère des relations internationales et de la Francophonie, the grant promotes cross-country research collaborations.

The Volcani Institute is Israel's national agricultural research and development centre, specializing in applied solutions to global challenges such as food security, poverty eradication and the promotion of sustainable crops.

This partnership is a valuable opportunity for enhancing scientific and technological ties between the Quebec and Israeli research labs. Laughed Benoit Gelber, "It's not such a big world of people working with fungi, and an even smaller world of those also interested in Israel!"

In particular, both regions share an interest in "circular economy" or finding alternative uses for perceived waste. Indeed, there is much development on the beneficial properties of agricultural residues (the "leftovers" from a harvest such as corn husks, peels, leaves or wheat straw) for clean energy such as biofuel.

Benoit Gelber and Rodov's work is focused on the potential utility of the unused parts of Israel's most iconic fruit: the pomegranate.

In April 2022, PhD student Francis Parenteau of Concordia's Department of Health, Kinesiology and Applied Physiology was one of the recipients of the Azrieli Institute's 2022 Montefiore Graduate Student Award, and spoke about the pomegranate's status as a "medical superfood" known for its heart-healthy benefits. The Quebec-Israel partnership is examining the potential properties of discarded byproducts in the pomegranate-juice economy.

Employing a patented Israeli innovation for extracting the pomegranate seeds from the fruit, the skin and rind are dried, pulverized and combined with fungi components to test their antimicrobial responses.

The Quebec-Israel research partnership has found that, when combined with various fungal pathogens, the ground pomegranate residue inhibits the growth of a tomato-plant pest — essentializing the notion of "valorizing waste" through acting as a potential natural fungicide, as stated by Benoit Gelber.

"This project promotes collaboration, knowledge-sharing and the development of a lasting institutional partnership between Quebec and Israel to deal with the global problem of the emergence of new pathogens," noted the researchers.

Indeed, with ever-changing challenges due to the effects of climate change, the potential of such research for global public health is all the more crucial.

Congratulations to the recipients of the Coopération Québec-Israël grant!

SELECT PUBLICATIONS



1. **Sigal Barkai** and **David Pariser** — “Israeli art education imagined cartographies” (*Arts Education Policy Review*)
2. **Jonathan Ghariani** — *Israel and Morocco: From Clandestine Partnership to the Abraham Accords* (Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies Occasional Papers, Issue No. 1)
3. **Eran Eldar** — *Attrition, Army and Civilians on the Northeast Front, 1967 – 1970* (Bar-Ilan University Press)
4. **Lihi Lahat** and **Itai Sened** — “The politics and policies of sleep? Empirical findings and the policy context” (*Policy Studies*)
5. **Csaba Nikolenyi** — “The Presidency of Israel” (*The Palgrave International Handbook of Israel*, ed. P.R. Kumarswamy)

HISTORY IN THE MAKING



From left to right: Susanne Aschi-Glesius, consul general, Federal Republic of Germany; Csaba Nikolenyi, director, Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies; Trudis Goldsmith-Reber, professor emerita, McGill University; Lilach Ben Zvi, Shalom Hartman Institute; Paul Hirschson, consul general, State of Israel

Seventy years ago, representatives of the State of Israel and the Federal Republic of West Germany signed the Luxembourg Agreement, a landmark accord in which Germany agreed to make reparations for the crimes committed during the Holocaust.

Although the agreement created a lot of controversy at the time in both states, it nonetheless paved the way towards the eventual establishment of diplomatic relations as well as a new standard in moral consciousness and responsibility.

Germany's ongoing commitment to Israel was most unequivocally stressed by former German chancellor Angela Merkel in her 2015 address to the Knesset. She famously said, "[We] stand by our special historical responsibility towards the State of Israel ... [a critical] part of my country's *raison d'être*."

Beyond diplomacy, the two countries currently boast thriving commercial and academic relations. In fact, of all European Union member states, Germany has the largest number of university-based academic centres and institutes devoted to Israel studies.

In anticipation of the 70th anniversary of the Luxembourg Agreement, the Azrieli Institute hosted and promoted some important events last year, and has several collaborative ones planned for the 2022-23 academic year.

Of particular note was the 75th anniversary of the Nuremberg Trials convicting former Nazi leaders, and the 60th anniversary of the spectacularly covert Mossad operation to locate and try Adolf Eichmann. Gains that have been made for addressing past wrongs, the means of attaining some measure of closure and setting standards for human-rights atrocities were all explored.

On a similar theme was the hosting of lawyer-historian Rachel Blumenthal regarding German compensation payments. Her book, *Right to Reparations: The Claims Conference and Holocaust Survivors, 1951–1964*, evaluated the advances made in restorative justice and recognition for the past. Yet it also uncovered the unsettling reality of mismanagement of survivor funds, leading to questions about steps ahead.

Our programs on the theme of Germany-Israel relations during the 2022 fall term include the screening of three documentary films followed by discussions with the directors. The opening film, *Reckonings* by Roberta Grossman, was introduced by Israeli consul general Paul Hirschson and consul general of the Federal Republic of Germany, Susanne Aschi-Glesius. We were also honoured to have Trudis Goldsmith-Reber, professor emerita of McGill University, share her insights (photo above).

The Azrieli Institute was pleased to partner with Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University and Congregation Shaar Hashomayim to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Munich Olympics massacre with a special screening of the award-winning documentary *After Munich*. Other films include *Speer Goes to Hollywood* about Albert Speer, one of Hitler's closest confidants and his chief architect, as well as *Gamechangers*, about the historic football match between the Israeli national team and Germany's Borussia Mönchengladbach in 1970.

Throughout the year, we not only look back on the turning points of Israeli-German relations after the Holocaust, but we also look forward to new partnerships with centres of Israel studies in Germany. Together, we anticipate rich and fruitful discussions regarding issues of common interest and concern in Israel, Canada and Germany.

GLOBETROTTING AFTER THE PANDEMIC



The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies attended the 38th Annual Conference of the Association for Israel Studies. The theme was “Israel: Conflicts and Mobility in a Diverse Society.”

We are pleased to say it was a productive week with fascinating lectures and panel discussions including political culture in Israel, Israeli society, policymaking, government formation, Judaism and the state, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, government-citizen relationships, and more.

Congratulations and *kol hakavod* to the chairs and members of the conference program committee for putting together a wonderful and inspiring event, and to Bar-Ilan University for being such a gracious host!

We look forward to next year’s conference at New York University from June 26 – 28, 2023.



Leah Adoni
Undergraduate research assistant

This past summer, I got to spend 10 incredible days in Israel on a Birthright trip. As we made our way through the wonders of nature like Rosh HaNikra Grottoes, Ein Gedi Nature Reserve, the Jordan River and Mount Hermon, I was once again reminded of Israel’s astonishing natural beauty, often overlooked due to complex historical, religious and political challenges. I was excited and moved when we climbed Mount Masada to watch the sunrise.

We ended our trip in Jerusalem. A beautiful city that is highly significant to many communities, Jerusalem was certainly one of the highlights. From heartbreaking moments at Yad Vashem (the World Holocaust Remembrance Center) to our very own B’nai Mitzvahs at the Kotel (Western Wall), it was a meaningful, powerful trip I will always remember.



Mitchell Stein
Undergraduate research assistant
Summer in Oxford, Israel and JFNA participation

I was proud to have spent several weeks at the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) at the University of Oxford as an Elie Wiesel – Martin Luther King, Jr. fellow. In the program, we had the opportunity to hear from leaders in the study of antisemitism and policy, including the legendary Natan Sharansky. Speakers included Montreal’s own Charles Asher Small (pictured at right), founder and executive director of ISGAP, and the Honourable Irwin Cotler, former Canadian minister of justice and Canada’s special envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism.

In May, I was also privileged to participate as a Jewish Changemakers fellow at the Jewish Federations of North America Conference (JFNA) in Washington, D.C., as part of a delegation of students advocating for policy advancements protecting Jewish and minority communities. I then joined a group of Montreal-based students on a visit to Israel in July, where we had the chance to further explore Israeli culture and history. I’m grateful to have had these opportunities that allowed me to leave a small impact on the Jewish community, both locally and internationally.

THE AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES AT A GLANCE



30+

Countries Reached

Over the past year, our audience has grown to over 30 countries. We are now on every continent on the globe!



1,500+

Subscribers

We have grown twofold from the previous year. We now have over 1,500 monthly subscribers with over 15,000 emails sent!



28+

Events

We hosted 28 online, in-person and hybrid events this past year with over 1,200 participants!



1,743+

Minutes on Screen

We have spent more than 1,743 minutes (29 hours) in events including 29 speakers, 6 film screenings and 9 award winners!



26+

Publications

There have been over 26 publications by institute fellows, researchers, staff and affiliates!

Our global reach: Canada, United States of America, France, Germany, Israel, Monaco, Ukraine, Spain, Portugal, United Kingdom, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Australia, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, Switzerland, Norway, China, Russia, Nigeria, Iran, Romania, India, Colombia, Hungary, Turkey, Zambia.

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