

Newsletter for friends of the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I hope all of you had an enjoyable, restful and productive summer and fall. We certainly look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events in 2018!

Once again, we have an ambitious and exciting year ahead of us that will strengthen the institute's leadership in Israel Studies on North American campuses. I am humbled and delighted to have been renewed in my role as director for another term and look forward to accomplishing our common goals and objectives.

From the many significant achievements that marked the past academic year, I want to highlight two that help define several of our new programs. The first was the international symposium, "Faces of Israel at EXPO 67," which I had the privilege of co-chairing with Loren Lerner, professor of Art History. A selection of the papers presented at the symposium are now being prepared for publication. We are also putting the finishing touches on an online exhibition that will showcase the Israel pavilion at Expo 67. The project provided wonderful training opportunities for a number of our graduate and undergraduate students who were involved both as presenters and conference organizers. If you were not able to join us at this symposium, visit concordia.ca/azrieli to see videos of most of the talks.

The second major step in our continued growth and development last year was the launch of the Azrieli Institute-Rothberg

International School (Hebrew University) summer semester, which allowed a group of 11 undergraduate students to go on a faculty-led summer program to Jerusalem. The students spent a month in Jerusalem and completed two courses: one on Israeli history and another on Israeli politics. Their learning was supplemented by a number of field trips that introduced them to the multiple voices of Israeli society.

We look forward to starting our student recruitment for next year's summer semester in the coming months and would like to thank Concordia's Office of the President, Office of the Provost, Office of the Dean of Arts and Science, Department of Political Science, Department of Religions and Cultures and, last but certainly not least, Concordia International for their collaboration in establishing this successful program.

Moving forward, this year we are launching our faculty research collaboration with the Ben-Gurion University Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism located on the university's Sde Boker campus in the Negev Desert. This was formalized by an interuniversity agreement during Concordia President Alan Shepard's visit to Israel last year on the mission led by the mayor of Montreal. Within the framework of this agreement, Ira Robinson, professor of Religions and Cultures, will be spending some research time at our partner institution in December. We will have a research workshop in Sde Boker that

will bring together our respective faculty and graduate students. We look forward to holding an international conference in Montreal at the end of the academic year to mark the 70th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel.

As always, I owe my deepest gratitude to our associate director, Norma Joseph, professor of Religions and Cultures; our group of advisors, Loren Lerner, Bina Freiwald, professor of English, Meir Amor, associate professor of Sociology and Anthropology, Lorenzo DiTommaso, professor of Religions and Cultures, and Ira Robinson, and to my assistant, Jennifer Solomon, for their tireless work and selfless dependability throughout the year.

Wishing you all an exciting and productive 2018 academic year.



Csaba Nikolenyi

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

SUMMER SCHOOL IN JERUSALEM DELIVERS INTIMATE AND INTENSIVE STUDY OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY AND POLITICS

Concordia students get hands-on and up-close introduction to country thanks to a pilot project with Hebrew University



Eleven Concordia students participated in the Institute's summer school at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2017.

There are some things you can learn in the classroom and some things you can't — you need to be in the field, talking to real people, listening to real voices.

Over the course of four intense weeks last summer, a group of 11 Concordia students did just that, participating in a summer school program at Jerusalem's Hebrew University that taught them about Israel, its religion, its history, its tumultuous politics and its simmering conflicts. Yet the learning was also done in its streets, museums, historical sites and beyond.

"The main goal of the program was to bring students in contact with the actors and the voices they were studying about," says Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies director Csaba Nikolenyi. The program is run in partnership with the Hebrew University's Rothberg International School.

"When we learned about the politics of Jewish and Arab relations in Israel, we did the readings, we looked at video clips, we engaged the material in the classroom," Nikolenyi says. "But then we also had a very rich, full-day trip to a northern Israeli Arab town, where we actually engaged the practitioners of this political issue, and asked them very concrete questions that emerged from our class discussions."

Still, the students were able to adapt to the sudden introduction to Israel's wealth of culture and history. Nohely Devoto, who used the program to complete her BA in psychology, says she signed up simply out of curiosity.

"I didn't know much about Israel, and I was very, very intrigued," she says. "It was something completely out of my comfort zone. Everything was new to me and I absolutely loved it."

Students were required to take two courses. Nikolenyi taught Israeli Political System, and the Hebrew University's David Mendelsson taught Israel: Religion and State. Both courses were by design introductory courses, as most of the students were not political science or religion students. Most of them weren't Jewish.

"We went to the desert, we went to an Arab village, we went for Shabbat dinner with the professor and his wife, which was the real Jewish experience for me. We went to a service at a synagogue," added Devoto. "If I hadn't been there with this program, I wouldn't have been able to see so many of these things up close."

Participants say the program will have an effect on them that long outlasts the time spent in Israel. For fine arts student Duane Drover, the trip will allow him to share his



Hebrew University seen from Jerusalem. Photo: Marco Plassio, Wikimedia Commons

experiences with those looking to convert to Judaism. His temple, he says, “will use me in the future to teach new people coming in about some aspects of Israel, especially the political one.”

Stephanie Chabot, who just completed her BComm, says the trip completely opened her eyes to an Israel she was unfamiliar with, despite having travelled to the country before. “This trip was just a different perspective — you saw as many perspectives as they could cover. It was very enlightening and that helped us understand the conflict a lot better,” she says. “It was very interesting to learn so many different things and then come home and have such a better understanding of the situation.”

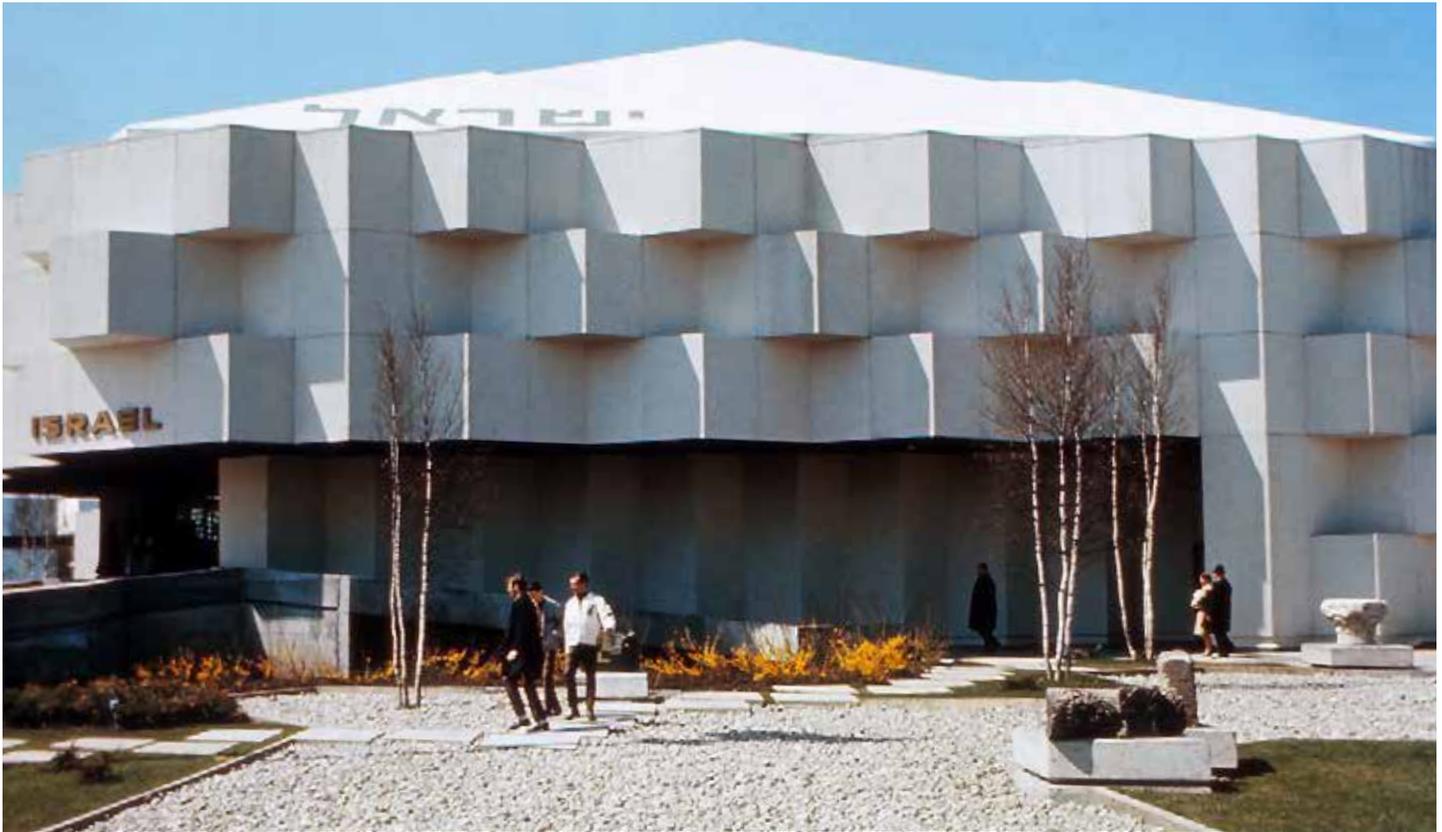
“The fact that the students were able to successfully negotiate that steep learning curve was both gratifying and encouraging,”

says Nikolenyi. The field portions were especially rewarding. “The growth that I was able to see, in terms of the students’ understanding of the complexity of the material, was far more robust than what you can achieve in a 13-week lecture course,” he says.

Using the pilot project as both a template and a prototype, Nikolenyi is planning on a repeat trip in summer 2018, with 12 to 15 students. He is confident it will happen. “There is a formal agreement signed by the two schools,” he says. “It’s a very strong commitment that we both want to go ahead and keep this going and keep making it even better.”

2018 Summer Program

The Azrieli Institute and Concordia International will offer a new Azrieli Institute Summer in Jerusalem program at Hebrew University’s Rothberg International School for 2018. This program provides students with the opportunity to earn six Concordia credits while spending approximately four weeks in Jerusalem. Watch for news in early 2018 or **call 514-848-2424, ext. 8721.**



The Israel Pavilion at Montreal's Expo 67

There are few events that define Montreal in the past century more than Expo 67. Between April and October 1967, Expo drew the world's eyes to what was billed as the city's "global coming-out party." As Montreal marked Expo's 50th anniversary, Concordia's Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies hosted a two-day symposium and exhibit examining Israel's role at the world's fair.

"Faces of Israel at Expo 67," held May 23-24, 2017, drew speakers from Ottawa, Toronto, Israel and Europe, and featured a mix of photo installations, screenings of newsreels, and discussions on history, media, traditions, nationhood and the young women who served as hostesses at the Israel Pavilion, among other topics.

Azrieli Institute director Csaba Nikolenyi says he began thinking about the exhibit while on sabbatical last year at Jerusalem's Hebrew University. "I had a lot of conversations about plans and ways to mark the 50th anniversary," he says. Only when he returned to Montreal and met with Loren Lerner, professor of Art History, and State of Israel Consul General Ziv Nevo Kulman that the program began to take shape. "Once they lent their enthusiastic support and visionary resolve, I knew we were in business!"

Thirteen of the hostesses who worked at the Israel Pavilion were at the symposium. Two of the hostesses, Sara Riesman and Kaya Deckelbaum, joined the conference for "The Israel Expo 67 Hostesses: The Spirit of the Pavilion," a talk moderated

by Nikolenyi. The talk preceded the vernissage for "1 of 13 in '67: Memories of a Hostess at the Israel Pavilion from the Archive of Sara Riesman," an exhibit curated by Alyssa Hauer, one of Lerner's MA students.

As Riesman told Monika Kin Gagnon, the host of Concordia's Thinking Out Loud podcast, Expo became a kind of condensed global village for visitors, and gave them a taste of societies and cultures that had previously been closed to them.

"In those years, media and communications were not as developed as much as they are today," she says. "People were not travelling as much, so Expo offered them an opportunity to visit other parts of the world which they could not have done otherwise."



The Azrieli Institute hosted “Faces of Israel at Expo 67” in May 2017.

“Expo 67 became the centre of the world, not only from a cultural point of view but really because everybody was coming,” adds Deckelbaum.

Working at the Israel Pavilion itself would have been an impressive experience. The building was designed by celebrated Israeli architects Arie Sharon, Eldar Sharon and David Resnick, and moved visitors through and across thousands of years of Jewish history. Artifacts and exhibits there included the Dead Sea Scrolls, biblically inspired art, artifacts and panels on archaeological digs, including Masada, the ancient Jewish fortress, and assorted Judaica leading up to the tools used in Israel’s early pioneer days. A Holocaust Memorial Room led to images of Jewish immigration to the country and the Hall of

New Israel, which emphasized the country bringing life out of the desert.

In their discussion with Gagnon, Riesman and Deckelbaum also describe living in shared apartments in Montreal’s Plateau Mont-Royal neighbourhood, leaving their homes in their El Al-inspired uniforms and hopping on the Métro or into taxis with hostesses from other countries who were also running late. As well, being single and in their 20s, the pair also led exciting social lives, with regular Friday night dinner parties — where they both met their future husbands. The exhibit also touched on Riesman’s anxiety during the Six-Day War Israel fought against Egypt, Syria and Jordan that June.

As she looks back at that exciting summer 50 years ago, she says, “Half a century

is a milestone. Both Montreal and Israel experienced drastic changes in these decades and have become much more sophisticated and multicultural.”

For Nikolenyi, the ongoing relationship between Israel and Montreal is deep and thriving, based not only on identity but also on a common set of beliefs. “Communities and societies that cherish knowledge, art and science can be miles and continents apart,” he says. “But their shared values of progress and education, as well as their shared commitment to human progress, keep them intimately bound and connected.”

Upcoming events

January 17, 2018

Leigh Lerner, Rabbi Emeritus, Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom, Montreal

“*The Mosad Messiah: A Novel That Imagines Tomorrow’s Israel*”

7:30 p.m.

March 22, 2018

Professor P. R. Kumarswamy

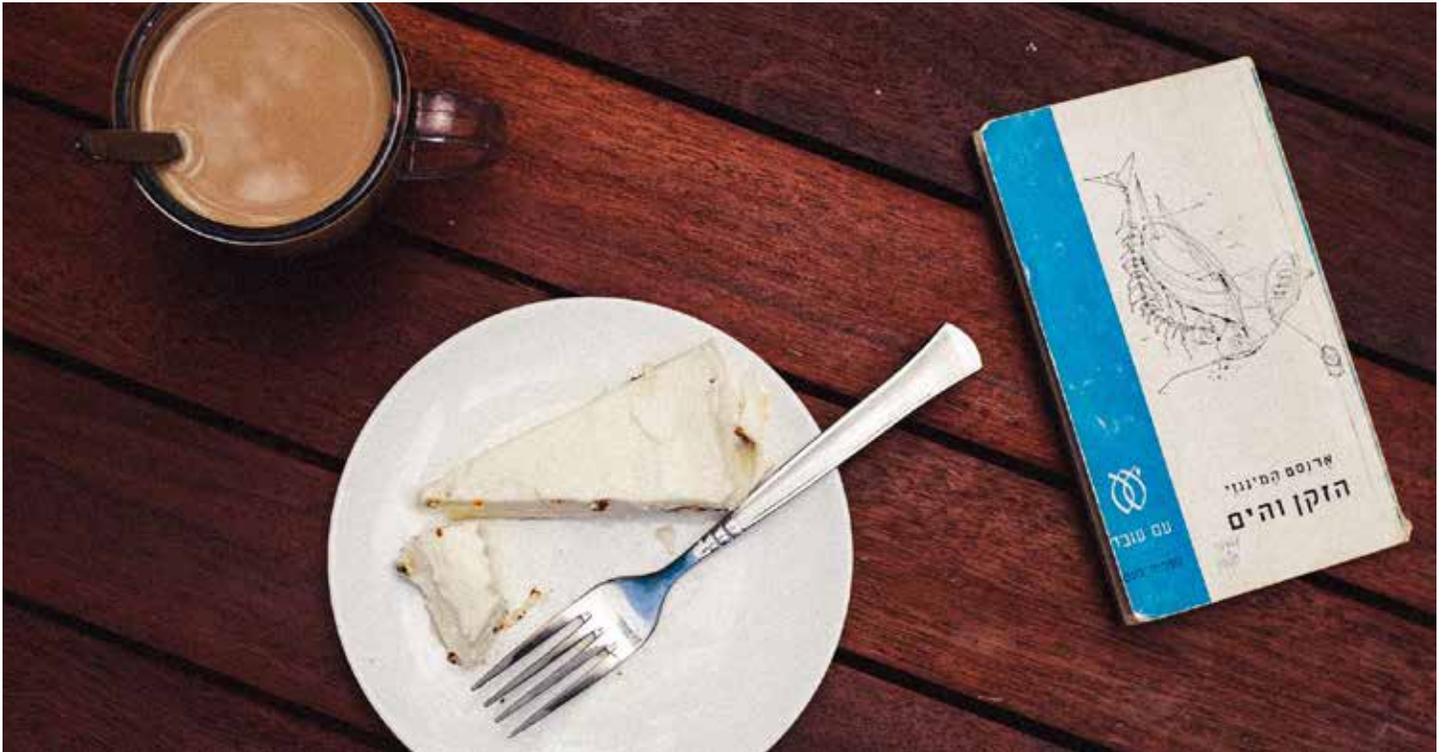
“*Gandhi and the Jewish National Home*”

June 2018

Israel at 70

Visit concordia.ca/azrieli for more information.

SUMMER HEBREW COURSE BUILDS ON IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE



A small group of graduate students spent two weeks learning the fundamentals of Hebrew in July 2017. The course was led by Shifra “Shiffy” Witman, senior Hebrew instructor at Hebrew University’s Rothberg International School, a multiple winner of the Outstanding Teacher Award. Witman is a native Hebrew speaker and has also taught at immersive *ulpan* programs in Israel.

Testimonials:

“The course was a fantastic opportunity to learn Hebrew from a specialist in Hebrew language instruction. I cannot overstate the impact this experience has had on my Hebrew language learning.

Shiffy’s pedagogical approach stressed conversational learning, which meant that from day one we were encouraged to string words together into little phrases. Over the days these grew into more and more complex sentences as we learned new elements and pieced them

all together. The activities we did in class helped make the language concrete and showed how it worked in everyday situations. I think this is an important element in language learning, and one that will strongly support my more scholarly focus on written Hebrew texts.

Shiffy was thoroughly organized, and clearly an enthusiastic and skilled Hebrew teacher. The text she chose was really excellent, and I intend to continue working through the chapters and the series.

I would love for the summer Hebrew program to become an annual event, and I know the other students in our group feel the same. Big thanks to the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies for helping us in our Hebrew learning. We definitely need more opportunities like this in the future.”

— **Claire English**

“My time learning Hebrew at the Azrieli Institute was productive, informative and, most of all, extremely fun! We spent most

of the day speaking in Hebrew and the instructor was engaging and encouraging. The classes were small and the time was well structured, with daily revision as well as interactive learning methods, including games and audiovisual materials. The topics were relevant to everyday life, such as ordering from a menu, asking for directions and apartment hunting. The instructor managed to teach us verbs, interrogatives and cardinal numbers as well as vocabulary in almost every lesson.

I really have no exposure to Hebrew outside of my academic studies, and this class gave me the confidence to practise speaking the language more often. It provided me with a good base for communication and I hope the institute will offer additional classes in the coming years.”

— **Tahmina Tariq**

Lectures from the Association of Jewish Studies

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies hosted two talks over the course of the 2016-17 academic year, in collaboration with the United States-based Association for Jewish Studies' Distinguished Lectureship Program. Speaking were historian Derek Penslar from the University of Toronto, who has taught at Oxford University in the United Kingdom and as a visiting professor at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass., and political scientist Yael Aronoff, director of Jewish Studies at Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Penslar delivered his talk, "The End of the Affair? The Changing Character of the Zionist-Diaspora Romance," on November 4, 2016. He argued that much of Diaspora Jewry's feelings about Israel are rooted in a romance dating back years, perhaps centuries, before the establishment of the Jewish state, but that the emotions underpinning that romance are not set in stone and indeed continue to change over decades.

In a fascinating, wide-ranging talk incorporating notions of romance dating to medieval times through Shakespeare and up to Leon Uris and Woody Allen, Penslar described the emotional attachment American Jews have towards Israel as constantly evolving and highly complex. Pride, shame, compassion, guilt, hope, anxiety, even feelings of erotic love have all been at play in American Jewry's relationship with Israel.

The relationship as described by Penslar began in the heat of post-Second World War, post-Holocaust passions, yet cooled somewhat over the next two decades, until the tumult of late 1960s and early 1970s rekindled it. Those senses of connection and affinity strengthened and weakened over the years, often in relation



Yael Aronoff spoke on "The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers" at the Azrieli Institute on January 26, 2017.

to periods of conflict and peace. Penslar believes that the relationship has now entered a period of "mature" love — like a successful but somewhat stale marriage, past the first flush of erotic and romantic passion and now far more pragmatic and realistic, though still infused with feelings of anxiety and fulfillment.

Aronoff examined "The Political Psychology of Israeli Prime Ministers" on January 26, 2017. Her talk took a close look at the psychology and decision-making processes of key Israeli prime ministers of the last three decades, and how the choices they made regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict evolved and informed their behaviour. Some became rigid hardliners, others became more amenable to peace. The road each prime minister took was as different as their outcomes.

In her talk, Aronoff distinguished six recent prime ministers — Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu — along several lines, including whether they looked to the past, present or future as guidelines along which to base their political philosophies. She argued that those who looked backwards to inform the future policies of Israel, like Shamir

and Netanyahu, were least likely to change their philosophies, while those rooted in the present and the future, such as Rabin and Peres, were best able to adapt to changing circumstances. Yet she also addressed the emotional intelligence of these leaders, meaning their ability to empathize with others and take in differing points of view or opinions. Those whose emotional intelligence was high, like Sharon, often fostered better relationships with political opponents, including Palestinian leaders, than those whose emotional intelligence was regarded as low, such as Barak and Netanyahu.

Smadar Lavie delivers talk on Israeli bureaucracy, gender and nationalism

The Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies welcomed U.S.-Israeli author, activist and anthropologist Smadar Lavie on November 7, 2016, as she gave a talk based on her latest book, *Wrapped in the Flag of Israel: Mizrahi Single Mothers and Bureaucratic Torture*. Lavie, a member of the Mizrahi community of Jews who trace their ancestry back to the ancient Middle East and Central and Southern Asia, addressed what she described as the "lethal bureaucratic entanglements" Mizrahi single mothers face when confronting the State of Israel. She describes the Mizrahi mothers as being "at the forefront of feminist activism" in Israel, yet those "who advocate racial justice are silenced by demands for national unity in the face of an acute threat to the survival of the Jewish state."

Lavie wrote following the talk, "I wanted to thank you for your invitation, welcome and hospitality. I thought the turnout to my talk was wonderful, and the discussion, deep — both on issues relating to the Middle East and on issues relating to theorizing the ethnography of bureaucracy as a form of torture. Please convey my thanks to all the participants in the colloquium."

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

Paula Kabalo discusses unique leadership style of David Ben-Gurion

Paula Kabalo, director of the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism at Ben-Gurion University, spoke at an event co-presented by the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies and the Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev on June 15, 2017, as part of the Kindle Your Imagination Lecture Series. Her talk, "One Leader — A Million Prime Ministers," examined the leadership of Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion during the 1950s and 1960s, and was introduced by Azrieli Institute director Csaba Nikolenyi.

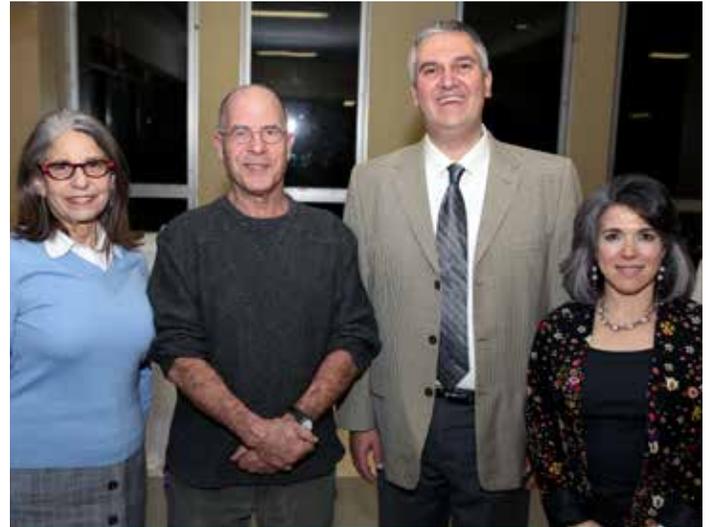
Kabalo stated that Ben-Gurion's leadership depended in large part upon, and was informed by, his close relationship with ordinary Israelis. According to Kabalo's research, Ben-Gurion made a point of maintaining correspondences with his countrymen and -women even during the busiest times of his political career, personally responding to the hundreds of letters a month sent to him, even when they were highly critical of him and his policies. Kabalo says it was evident that Ben-Gurion took letters from average citizens as seriously as if they were from members of the Knesset, no matter the letter writers' background.

By doing so, she argued, Ben-Gurion was illustrating to his co-citizens that they could feel comfortable enough to write to him and feel confident that he would write back. In that way, he helped share the sense that all Israelis were actively participating in the government of their new country.



Csaba Nikolenyi, Paula Kabalo, director of the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism at Ben-Gurion University, and Simon Bensimon, executive director of the Canadian Associates of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, at the Azrieli Institute on June 15, 2017.

CONCORDIA WELCOMES CELEBRATED ISRAELI NOVELIST MEIR SHALEV



Norma Joseph, associate director of the Azrieli Institute, Meir Shalev, Csaba Nikolenyi, director of the Azrieli Institute, and Yael Halevi-Wise, associate professor of English at McGill University.

Internationally acclaimed author and journalist Meir Shalev visited Concordia on November 8, 2016, for a talk organized by the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies. Introduced by Yael Halevi-Wise, associate professor of Jewish Studies and English at McGill University, Shalev discussed his latest novel, *Two She-Bears*, a multi-generational tale of love, suicide, violence and vengeance spanning from the early days of the British Palestine mandate to present-day Israel. The talk took place in front of a capacity crowd of about 120 on the seventh floor of the Henry F. Hall Building, followed by a reception. The Canadian Friends of Tel Aviv University co-sponsored a pre-event cocktail.

Shalev's eight novels and numerous volumes of children's literature and non-fiction have been best-sellers in Israel and Europe. He also writes a column for the weekend edition of the daily Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*. He has won several literary awards, including the National Jewish Book Award, the Prime Minister's Prize and the Brenner Prize.

PROFILE OF JENNIFER SOLOMON, ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES



Jennifer Solomon, pictured with State of Israel Consul General Ziv Nevo Kulman, has been with the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies since 2012.

Jennifer Solomon, BA 96, joined the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies in 2012. Solomon, the Institute's assistant to the director, says she's proud to have watched it grow over the past five years into what it is today. Her job includes managing the Minor in Israel Studies program, working with the Montefiore Graduate Fellows and organizing a variety of seminars, lectures and conferences featuring local and international speakers.

The Institute's diversity often surprises visitors, Solomon points out. One example she cites is the lecture by affiliate assistant professor Ilan Danjoux in 2016, "Political Cartoons and the Israeli Palestinian Conflict." Danjoux's research covered more than 1,200 Israeli and Palestinian editorial cartoons published in the weeks preceding the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000. He examined the cartoon's relationship with violence and its ability to anticipate outbreak of conflict. "That talk attracted people from many different backgrounds," she reports. "We received a lot of positive comments."

Solomon graduated from Concordia in Judaic studies and education in 1996. "I especially remember a presentation I did about *Rehov Sumsum*, the Israeli version of *Sesame Street*," Solomon recalls. "I enjoyed watching how the other students absorbed the show's lessons and learned about Israel." She was also active in Hillel Concordia, a club that enriches Jewish students' experience.

Solomon worked as a financial development officer for the Jewish Public Library in Montreal before arriving at the Azrieli Institute in 2012.

As assistant to the director, her tasks range from dealing with event logistics and helping with day-to-day office activities to recruiting and advising students in the Minor in Israel Studies program. She points out that the minor's students come from a wide range of educational programs. "They're not just from political science and religious studies but also from business, science and arts programs," Solomon says. "Our speakers, too, have been varied. It's fascinating to learn what students want to hear."

Her fondest memory, Solomon says, is of the successful 31st Annual Conference of the Association for Israel Studies hosted by the Azrieli Institute in 2015. The conference's theme was "Sustainable Israel: A Changing Society in the 21st Century." "It was great to bring all the academics and students involved in the Israel Studies association to Concordia and show them all our activities," Solomon says.

She also points to two recipients of the Institute's Montefiore Graduate Fellowship who stand out for her: Jessica Simon, BA 14, the first person to earn a Minor in Israel Studies through the Institute, and Minghui Pan, whose PhD thesis was *The Origin of the Harbin Jewish Community, 1898-1917*. "These students show the wide diversity of our program," Solomon says.

Solomon's hope today "is to see the Institute keep growing, enrolling more undergraduate students in the minor, help graduate students explore new avenues with their research, and continue to branch out to visiting researchers and organize events, especially the upcoming conference celebrating Israel's 70th birthday."

A graphic with a red and orange background. It features a large, stylized number '9' in the background. The text is centered and reads: "Discover NEXT-GEN TALENT now. Learn what distinguishes THE CAMPAIGN FOR CONCORDIA. Visit concordia.ca/campaign." The text is in white and pink colors.

Discover **NEXT-GEN TALENT**
now. Learn what distinguishes
THE CAMPAIGN FOR CONCORDIA.
Visit concordia.ca/campaign.

AZRIELI INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL STUDIES POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS



Amir Locker-Biletzki

Amir Locker-Biletzki

Amir Locker-Biletzki, a historian of the politics, culture and ideology of the Israeli Communist Party, was the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies postdoctoral fellow in **2016-17**.

After earning his BA in history and philosophy at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beer-Sheva and his MA in history and philosophy of education at Tel Aviv University, Locker-Biletzki

completed his PhD at the University of Guelph in 2013. His dissertation, “Holidays of the Revolution: Myth, Ritual and Identity among Tel Aviv Communists, 1919-1965,” analyzed the creation of an Israeli-Jewish communist subculture through its rites, myths and holidays.

During his stay at the Azrieli Institute, “I mostly conducted my research, which focuses on the history of the Israeli Communist Party,” Locker-Biletzki says. “I also participated in the Institute’s events and was part of its intellectual life.”

While at the Institute he worked on a book manuscript examining the way in which the communists in Palestine/Israel conceptualized the presence of Western — that is, British and American — powers in the country and the rise of Zionist settler colonialism. As part of his postdoctoral fellowship, in March 2017 Locker-Biletzki delivered a presentation, “The Settler and the Colonized Consciousness of Israeli Communists,” which explored the writings of an Israeli communist ideologist.

He remains affiliated with the Institute and continues his research. “I’m looking at how the party provided an alternative national identity for Palestinian citizens of Israel,” Locker-Biletzki says. “Under its auspices, Palestinians were able to express a national identity. The party also provided a space for developing modes of a non-Zionist Israeli identity for its Jewish members.

He is now progressing on a book based on his PhD dissertation and started at the Institute, under contract with SUNY Press, to be titled *Holidays of the Revolution: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish-Israeli Communist Identity*.



Sigal Barkai

Sigal Barkai

Sigal Barkai, a researcher and curator of contemporary Israeli art, is the **2017-18** Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies postdoctoral fellow.

Since 2011 Barkai has been the chief supervisor of Art Education at the Israeli Ministry of Education. She was previously a curator at Petach Tikva Museum of Art and an independent curator at various venues in Israel. She has published

several papers about Israeli visual arts from a feminist and sociopolitical point of view. Barkai is conducting research on Israeli artists living and working in North America.

“During my stay at the Azrieli Institute, I am exploring the relations between Israeli immigrant artists and their place of origin,” she says. “I am examining how they define their national identity. Many of these artists are considered to be Israelis even after many years of absence.”

She adds, “Another perspective is how the act of moving away from the homeland affects their self-awareness and their choices of artistic expression, form and media. My assumption is that immigration has far-reaching and complex effects on the artists’ life and work.”

Barkai earned her PhD from Tel Aviv University in 2012. From 2013 to 2017 she was head of the Visual Literacy – Arts Education Graduate Program and the Curatorial Studies Program at the Faculty of Arts of Kibbutzim College in Tel Aviv.

Her upcoming book, *A Stage for Masculinities: Representations of Israeli Soldiers in the Theatre*, is based on her PhD dissertation and will be published by the Open University of Israel Press of Raanana.

Barkai has kept busy since arriving at the Azrieli Institute in fall 2017. In October she presented “Forced Intimacy in the Museum Space: On the Participatory Performance of Israeli Artist Einat Amir” at the 2017 Conference of the Universities Art Association of Canada. The conference was held at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity in Alberta.

She also delivered a lecture on art and feminism in Israel in the Women in Israel class of Norma Joseph, professor in the Department of Religions and Cultures and associate director of the Azrieli Institute. Barkai was a guest lecturer for a graduate student course in Concordia’s Department of Art Education and presented a graduate student-faculty seminar, “In the Eyes of the Beholder: Re-visiting Formative Myths and Stories in Contemporary Israeli Video Artworks” in November.

Visiting Scholars

Gabriel Cavaglion was born in Italy and immigrated to Israel in 1978. He is a social worker, a certified Jungian psychotherapist and associate professor and researcher in the School of Social Work and Department of Criminology at Ashkelon Academic College, Israel. He earned his PhD from the Faculty of Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1998). His recent research focuses on social discourse, symbols and archetypes, and issues related to cultural studies and social-cultural-religious deviance in Israeli society. He was at the institute in August 2016.

Eran Eldar completed his doctorate in Jewish history at Tel Aviv University with his thesis *The Urban Development of Tel Aviv in the Context of Inter-relations between Municipal and State Rule in the Twilight of the British Mandate and the First Decades of the State of Israel*. He has served as a visiting professor of Israel Studies at the University of Calgary. His areas of research are urbanization in Israel, and Israeli society and politics in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Eran was at the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies from September 2016 to April 2017.

Montefiore Award winners



Chloé Collier

Chloé Collier is an MA student at Concordia's Department of Religions and Cultures, and holds a BA from Mount Allison University in religious studies, graduating in 2015 with high honours and distinction. A newcomer to Israel Studies, her previous interests focused on apocalyptic narratives featured in American presidential speeches in times of crisis. Collier's MA research explores disputes related to the sharing of multi-faith sacred spaces and how such spaces

become ideal playgrounds for some on which to assert contesting political narratives, as can be seen in Jerusalem's Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif complex.



Jessica Simon

Department of Sociology and Anthropology master's student **Jessica Simon** is studying issues of identity, community and migration, as well as the identification of contemporary Jewish denominations. Her research focuses on the self-identification of young Montreal adults who have participated in Taglit-Birthright and the importance or impact of the State of Israel on

one's Jewish identity in North America. She is also interested in ethnic studies, languages, socioeconomic mobility, identity and difference, tourism and cultural heritage.



Lindsey Jackson

Two-time Montefiore Award winner **Lindsey Jackson** is a doctoral student in the Department of Religions and Cultures and her research focuses on ritual observance of contemporary North American Jews. More specifically, Jackson is interested in ritual engagement, adaptation and rejection, and the intersection and conflict between tradition and innovation. For her thesis, Jackson is doing an ethnographic study on

circumcision, with a particular emphasis on parents who are choosing not to circumcise their sons.

Student testimonials

"The course material was balanced, neutral and accurate. It was worthwhile for me because I started working as a research assistant for Professor Nikolenyi, and now we are friends. Also, I'm now living in Israel, so all the history and culture I learned about I can now see in front of me." — **Jonathan Punksi, BA 16**

"I was quite fortunate to pursue my minor studies at the Azrieli Institute. The calibre of the faculty, the resources that were made available to help me, as well as the extraordinary networking opportunities afforded to me through the series of events hosted by the institute, proved quite beneficial and engaging." — **Gamal Mansour, BA 17**

Alyssa Hauer, master's student in Art History

Alyssa Hauer is completing her master's degree at Concordia's Department of Art History while working at the Museum of Jewish Montreal. She holds a BA in political science and art history from the University of Toronto. Her current research is centred on Nazi-era looted or confiscated art, and the ways regional context and collective memories affect the development of restitution policies and institutions in Germany and the U.S. She has a concerted interest in collective narratives and oral history, alongside an insatiable curiosity concerning the links between objects, memories and identity.

ABOUT US

The **Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies** unites students and scholars across disciplines in drawing a bigger picture of Israel, its languages, religions, rich history and evolving culture. Its researchers aim to advance how society understands the multifaceted Middle Eastern state by sharing knowledge that benefits Montreal, Quebec, Canada and the world.

Founded in 2011, the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies was born thanks to a visionary gift from the Azrieli Foundation to Concordia University. Today, the Institute serves as fertile and neutral ground for stimulating discovery and discussion. For more information, please visit concordia.ca/azrieli.

1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W., SB-435
Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8
Phone: 514-848-2424, ext. 8721

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 by giving to Concordia.

To support the Azrieli Institute of Israel Studies, please contact our development staff:

Faculty of Arts and Science
Advancement and Alumni Relations
Phone: 514-848-2424, ext. 4379



Find us on Facebook
under **Azrieli Institute**
of Israel Studies



- Learn how Concordia's most ambitious campaign to date will empower tomorrow's leaders: concordia.ca/campaign..
- Discover what Concordia achieved first in Montreal, Quebec, Canada and the world at concordia.ca/concordiafirsts.