

# Editors' Note



Dear Reader,

The positive feedback we have received since the appearance of the first issue of the (renamed) *Israel Studies Review* last May has exceeded our expectations, and we are grateful to everyone who responded. Of course, we have built on the work of the previous Editorial Board and the support of the Association for Israel Studies. We are appreciative that the innovations we introduced, including the Forum section and the review essays of books published in a particular field in Hebrew, have received such approbation. We encourage all of our readers and friends to continue sending us more ideas for topics, sections, and issues to deal with.

We would like to mention one comment that we received relating to the critical approach taken by four out of five scholars who discussed the state of Israeli democracy in the previous issue's Forum section. How is it, this colleague wondered, that Israeli scholars view Israel with such critical eyes when, as we all know, Israel's development and achievements are near the top rung of so many important international indices, such as the Index of Human Development and more. This is indeed a valid point. One possible answer is the following: while objective data support the high status of Israel compared to many other advanced democracies, Israeli scholars' criteria are not relative but, rather, may be based on the original high ideals, hopes, and aspirations of the Jewish national liberation movement that envisioned and founded the state.

Indeed, the protest movement and tent cities that erupted in Israel in the summer of 2011 demonstrated that these ideals and aspirations have not faded away but, on the contrary, are now being maintained and furthered by a new generation of young Israelis. We have no doubt that the events of this summer will be remembered as among the most important episodes of Israel's social and political history, and, as scholars, we already foresee the dozens of research projects that will study them and the consequences that are sure to ensue. Wearing our editorial hat, we will be happy to receive articles on this phenomenon and hope that some of you will take this hint.

Other features of our last issue also created some stir. As we expected, Ian Lustick's provocative article on Israeli emigration generated a vigorous discussion, and we are now publishing a critical comment on it by the eminent demographer Sergio DellaPergola, followed by a brief response from Lustick.

In the current issue, we are proud to present an exceptional contribution, unique in its substance and controversial in its theses. This special article deals with the theological sources of the contemporary Israeli cultural crisis. Its author, Admiel Kosman, a philosopher, poet, and scholar of Jewish philosophy, argues that the cause of Israel's cultural malaise—which he does not shy away from terming a “cultural collapse”—is a legacy of Jewish theology, specifically, the particularistic, separatist, or “seclusionist” tendencies of the Jewish people. He asserts that our self-perception as the “chosen people,” so deeply rooted in the Jewish psyche, has resulted, in some instances, not only in a sense of Jewish superiority over other nations, but also in a similar sense of superiority and disdain within and among the subgroups composing today's Israeli Jewish mosaic.

Kosman advises us to resolve this crisis by adopting the worldview of some of the philosophers who have been relegated to the margins of Jewish theology. He contends that a successful resolution of the current predicament is inherent in the dialogic idea formulated by the giants of twentieth-century Jewish philosophy: Buber, Rosenzweig, and Levinas. Kosman envisions the construction of another brand of Judaism, one in which dialogue is deemed a major value and which generously welcomes the ‘other’—whether outside or inside the Jewish people—with open arms. Needless to say, we expect this significant article to create controversy. We welcome this debate and, of course, will be happy to publish appropriate responses.

A major part of this issue is devoted to the study of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In November 2010, the Open University of Israel and the Section of Military Sociology of the Israel Sociological Society (ISS) jointly organized a symposium entitled “The Sociology of Military Knowledge.” The organizers aimed at highlighting the manner in which the Israeli community of scholars researches the military, the main research trends, the themes that are explored (and those that are less explored), and the barriers faced by scholars.

We are publishing three pieces presented at this symposium that deal with (1) the links between military knowledge production and the cultural representations of wars (Zeev Lerer and Sarit Amram-Katz), (2) the state of research on gender and the military (Orna Sasson-Levy), and (3) the internal social research conducted by the military on reserve forces and the changes in its approach over time (Yehudith Sher and Hadass Ben-Eliyahu). This

section was edited in collaboration with Yagil Levy of the Open University, who is co-chair of the Section of Military Sociology of the ISS, and we thank him for his contribution. We hope that these articles will be of interest to all those concerned with civil-military relations in Israel.

This issue also includes two general articles from very different fields: Israeli cinema (Hizky Shoham) and international relations (Amira Schiff). In his review essay, Calvin Goldscheider reviews two major new publications on anthropology in Israel. We conclude with reviews of eight very different books on Israel.

For those already looking ahead to next year, we can let you know that one of our issues will be devoted to the topic "Law and Society." You are cordially invited to submit contributions to this special issue. We are also particularly seeking articles on subjects such as the Israeli middle class, gender and family, and foreign workers in Israel, as well as any other themes that are appropriate for this multi-disciplinary journal.

Pleasant reading. We hope you enjoy this issue and look forward to your comments.

— *The Editors*