

Editors' Note



Dear Reader,

From time to time we are reminded that Israel is a paradise for scholars, particularly in the social sciences. It serves, not just as a laboratory with easy access to virtually any research field, but also as a sort of societal particle accelerator within which processes are speeded up and lengthy periods of incubation are not required for researchers to study their development.

Instead of asking what has happened in Israel since the publication of our last issue only six months ago, we really need to ask what has *not* happened. The ethnic tensions that erupted with the trial of Margalit Tzanani and the public outcry that followed the firing of economist Shlomo Peretz, after his condemnation of discrimination against Mizrachi Israelis by 'audacious whites' (*khatzofim levanim*), are just a few examples. Prior to that, attacks on women and their growing exclusion in the military and from the public space, along with Yair Lapid's decision to establish a new, anti-religious party, were some of the topics that (again) brought the religious-secular issue to the headlines. A series of new bills pending in the Knesset express the intensity of the Jewish-Arab conflict, and, as if all that were not enough, the social protest movement continues to raise questions about the growing economic disparities within Israeli society.

None of these issues, which filled dozens of pages in daily newspapers and hours of television and radio programs, has been resolved. Rather, and this is also so emblematic of Israel, each simply disappeared from public attention as soon as a new problem moved into focus, which in turn briefly dominated the media and public space until submerged by the next sensational headline or tweet.

While it is not the role of the *Israel Studies Review* to chronicle all of these events, we do try to keep a finger on the public pulse in our Forum section. This issue's Forum takes up one of the questions that has engaged recent Israeli discourse: is there a process of 'religionization' (expressed by the brand-new Hebrew word *ha-datah*) that is increasingly pervading Israel

and Israeli society? A new survey by the Guttman Center of the Israel Democracy Institute, published in January 2012, provides much data on this topic, but it calls for a deeper analysis that goes beyond statistics. We have therefore asked Tamar Hermann, Shlomo Fischer, Asher Cohen, Bernard Susser, Nissim Leon, and Yaacov Yadgar—scholars who deal with these subjects (i.e., religious-secular relations or the state and religion)—to present their perspectives in our Forum.

We continue with our effort to inform academics who are interested in Israel but do not keep up with the Hebrew literature to be better acquainted with Israel's amazing wealth of publications in so many fields. Thus, we present a review essay by Hanna Herzog that examines the state of gender and feminist studies through a comprehensive survey of the dozens of books published in Israel, about Israel, and in Hebrew on gender and feminism in the research, philosophy, and teaching literature from 2006 to 2011. In a second review essay, Jonathan Mendilow comprehensively discusses six new books in English on the situation of Israeli Palestinians in the Jewish state. The book reviews section includes five reviews of recent publications on different aspects of Israel.

In between the Forum and the review essays, we present a selection of articles from various disciplinary vantage points. Israeli elections are the focus of a piece by David Nachmias, Maoz Rosenthal, and Hani Zubida that investigates the relationship between first- and second-order elections (i.e., national and local electoral contests) and propounds a new theory based on recent Israeli data. The sociology of the former Soviet immigrant population in Israel today is the topic of an article by Larissa Remennick and Anna Prashizky that examines attitudes toward religion in this significant portion of the populace 15 to 20 years after the 'great *aliyah*' of the 1990s.

As a supplement to the section in our last issue on military sociology, we include a piece by Oren Livio that explores the role of discourse as it affects draft avoidance (*hishtamut*) in Israeli society. Finally, we go back to the early Yishuv with an article by Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman that analyzes the role played by religion and tradition in wedding ceremonies, using as an example the debate within the prominent Shertok family in 1922 over the desire of Ada Shertok and Eliyahu Golomb to forgo any wedding ceremony whatsoever.

In this issue we also provide our readers with a tool to encourage and simplify the use of the ISR for research purposes. We have prepared a comprehensive index that includes all of the articles and reviews that have appeared from 1985 to 2011 in the ISR and its predecessor publications, the *Israel Studies Forum*, the *Israel Studies Bulletin*, and the *Association for Israel Studies Newsletter*. The index will also appear as a searchable database on the ISR's Web site.

Lastly, we are pleased to announce that JSTOR has agreed to include the ISR and index its articles, beginning later this year. Thus, articles published in the ISR and its predecessor publications are or will soon be available in over a dozen online databases, including Academic Search Premier, CIAO, the Index for Jewish Periodicals, Index Islamicus, International Political Science Abstracts, and more.

Enjoy your reading.

— *The Editors*