

Editors' Note



This issue of the *Israel Studies Review* is going to press after the new government in Jerusalem has settled in and is trying to practice what was referred to in the election campaign as “the new politics,” a concept that already calls for some serious analysis. However, one of the facts of life for those of us whose careers are subject to a stately academic rhythm is that we are always behind on the latest events, yet still too close to them to be able to provide a deeper perspective. This is by way of pointing out that our articles were all written in 2012, before the latest major political changes took place in Israel, including the latest election. However, we believe that their lasting value will transcend the immediate headlines.

The issue begins, as usual, with our Forum, which discusses a very current issue in Israel of particular interest to our readers—the major attacks on, or abuses of, academic freedom. Issues such as the move to strip the accreditation of the Political Science Department of Ben-Gurion University, the recognition by the government of the College of Ariel as a university based on an order by the commanding general of Central Command pre-empting a ruling of the High Court of Justice, and other incidents have created an ongoing set of arguments that fit neatly into the bitter left/right divisions in Israeli society.

Instead of our usual format of several short pieces with different points of view, we are offering a somewhat longer article, and are soliciting responses that we will publish in a subsequent issue. The author, Professor Rivka Feldhay, was personally involved in one of the recent confrontations, which she discusses along with several of the other incidents that have of late roiled the academic waters.

This issue also presents a wide variety of articles written by scholars from diverse viewpoints and disciplines. Ofer Kenig, Michael Philippov, and Gideon Rahat have examined the phenomenon that Israeli political party memberships have fallen steeply in recent years, a trend Israel shares with other developed democracies. However, because of the introduction of primaries, members now have the opportunity to choose party lists, formerly chosen solely by the top leadership. Party members are older, financially better off, and better educated than the average voter,



but the low participation rate makes it comparatively easy for an external group to “hijack” a party.

Israel is founded on the premise that Jews constitute a nation, but the only accepted definition of “Who is a Jew” is a religious one. Chaim Waxman considers the history and legal aspects of this definition, points out how different the implications of this fact are now than they were earlier in Israel’s history, and suggests how Israel can approach this issue somewhat differently than it has done to date.

Hanna Adoni and Hillel Nosssek use book reading within three different cultural communities in Israel (Russian immigrants, veteran Israelis, and Israeli Palestinians) as a signifier of cultural differences, and even clashes, between them. The authors analyze and document the nature of differences and look at the possibilities for developing a common political culture.

Tamir Sorek discusses a paradox regarding how Palestinian citizens of Israel remember Yitzhak Rabin. Surveys indicate that they now look back on the period of his premiership nostalgically, as a time when being Israeli looked like a realistic option for them. Nevertheless, and in contrast with the situation before 2000, this period is rarely referred to in public political discourse among Israeli Palestinians.

Ze’ev Shavit examines the commodification of the Israeli countryside and how it is marketed to the Israeli urban middle class in the context of place-making and the construction of collective identity. Tali Tadmor-Shimony and Nirit Raichel analyze the role of Hebrew teachers during the eighty years from the start of the First *Aliyah* until the 1960s, in terms of the changes in the Hebrew teachers’ social backgrounds and their understanding of their role as disseminators of Zionism and builders of the state.

In a review article, Eran Kaplan documents and identifies the characteristics of a “third wave” in Israeli historiography, namely the “post-post-Zionists,” finding them distinct but related to their “traditional” and “post-Zionist” forebears.

This issue also includes a selection of reviews of a variety of current books on Israel.

Following the warm reception accorded our first guest-edited issue on “Law and Society” last December, we are preparing to publish a special, guest-edited double issue next December on the family in Israel. Articles have already been submitted and accepted. We look forward to seeing a wide spectrum of reflections and research on this important subject.

As usual, we welcome your comments, and hope you enjoy this issue of the *Israel Studies Review*. Please let us know if you are interested in publishing a response to Rivka Feldhay’s Forum piece.

— The Editors