Editors' Note

In the spring of 2011, the two of us took over the editorship of the newly renamed, and somewhat reshaped, official journal of the Association for Israel Studies. The former *Israel Studies Forum* thus became *Israel Studies Review*. The current issue is the last that we will be editing, after 25 issues comprising over 200 articles written by almost as many different authors, some of whom were chosen by more than a dozen guest editors who produced our special issues. About two hundred colleagues wrote book reviews and review essays, and many more have served as peer reviewers of articles submitted to us for publication.

We are proud that, from all we can see, ISR has succeeded in fulfilling its mission over the past 10 years as the main platform of the AIS and has established a highly respected academic status. Our 'impact' metrics rose steadily on the Scimago (SJR) index from .102 in 2016 to .310 in 2019. And we are ranked in the second quartile in the fields of Cultural Studies and History.

As of the next issue, ISR will be edited by a new team of editors: Oded Haklai, a Professor at Queen's University in Ontario; Adia Maoz-Mendelson, an Associate Professor at The Open University of Israel; and Rami Zeedan, an Assistant Professor at the University of Kansas. This will also be a transition of generations, a reflection of a living, vibrant, and ever-changing organization.

The past decade of academic research on Israeli society was conducted against the background of the dramatic political and social developments taking place in Israel. During this period, Israel's politics accelerated into a process of illiberalism and populism that distanced it from the Western European model—with which it likes to compare itself—and strengthened its resemblance to other democracies that underwent similar processes, such as Hungary, Poland, India, and Brazil, as well as President Donald Trump's America.

There is perhaps some degree of symbolism in the fact that our editorship ends almost simultaneously with the fall of Trump in the United States and Netanyahu in Israel. Perhaps soon we will see the same thing

happening to Erdoğan, Bolsonaro, and others of their ilk. Can it be that Israel is entering an era of deeper change? Alas, that is not likely to happen before the new editors take over.

An overall look at the articles published in the last 10 years makes clear that it is difficult to find any comprehensive theoretical innovations or far-reaching paradigm shifts that took place. This is particularly notable in comparison to the burst of originality animating Israeli social science research in previous decades, illustrated by developments following postmodern and post-structural theories. A similar phenomenon occurred after the intellectual drama provoked by the 'new historians' and critical sociologists, when we experienced the fruitful tension generated by the stormy debate between the conservative establishment and the (then) young, post-Zionist upstarts. Likewise, the developments in feminist theory that expanded research methodologies in Israel seem to have reached their height prior to the last decade. Thus, it would not be unfair to conclude that most articles published during this period reflected important but nonetheless 'small' topics, micro-issues, or were rereadings of historical events and phenomena not based on comprehensive, innovative new theories.

More important is the observation that a review of a decade of articles published on Israel—and not only in ISR—indicates that most scholars of Israeli society refrained from dealing with its most important issues, namely, the future of the Occupied Territories, our relations with the Palestinian people, and the definition of Israel's collective identity and future. Although ISR did publish more articles on these provocative topics than did other journals dealing with the study of Israeli society, their number was not large.

Did this comparative paucity express a reluctance on the part of scholars to touch sensitive political issues? An unwillingness to drag these issues into a heated national debate? It seems to us that the answer is deeper than that. Our collective avoidance of dealing with these questions was a product of the success of the hegemony in convincing Israelis at large that such a problem simply does not exist. Since 'there is no partner', nothing can or should be done. Thus, given the absence of international pressure, the weakness of the Palestinians, and the changes in the Middle East, there is no need to reach a settlement at all, and Israel can continue the never-ending process of creeping annexation, indefinitely.

That this was a misconception was clearly revealed in the latest Knesset election campaign and its aftermath. Almost everyone seemed to agree that 'there was no difference between right and left' and that the Palestinian issue should not be placed on the agenda; in fact, it should not be addressed at all! Nevertheless, when Operation Guardians of the Wall

erupted in May, it destroyed this erroneous belief within a week. It became clear, even to those who would have preferred to close their eyes, that the continuation of the Occupation and the lack of serious confrontation with the problem of relations between the two peoples underlie a long list of difficulties and ailments that corrode the foundations of Israeli society. The avoidance of dealing with the issues brought to the fore in the 1967 War inescapably lead to the question of the Nakba and the unresolved issues of 1948.

Now, with the political change in June, there is at least a chance that there will likewise be a change in consciousness, and that this may, among other things, lead to the growth, flourishing, and renewal of the academic pursuit of this important aspect of the Israeli project. One indication is the growing interest in looking into the One-State Solution, evidenced by the extensive attention given to Ian S. Lustick's new book *Paradigm Lost*. Another is the revival of the idea of confederation as Two-State Solution 2.0 (or maybe 3.0?). Naturally, we are not seeking here to determine the direction of the solution—that is a matter of political and ideological preference. However, the AIS and its scholarly journals must be involved in the fray.

Scholarly researchers into Israeli society thus have an imperative intellectual assignment—to better understand the nature of that society and to analyze it more deeply than the shallow, biased, and distorted political and media discourse. If such an assignment will be taken on in the next chapter of our journal, we will all be blessed and most gratified.

As set out by guest editors Avi Bareli and Tal Elmaliach, this is a special issue with the theme "Israel: A Case Study." If the meaning of this phrase is not immediately obvious, just turn to the first page of the introduction, and you will be enlightened. Then, right after the articles that they chose for this issue, there is a particularly interesting essay in the Teaching Israel Studies section. In it, Daniel Stein Kokin explores the use of classic Israeli popular songs in teaching about Israel. Even if you cannot imagine yourself actually doing that, we suspect you will enjoy the article.

We end, as usual, with a small selection of reviews of the large number of recently published scholarly books on Israel. This selection represents an exact balance between the primary topic of so many of these books—the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, of course—and everything else related to Israel. We retire in the hope that someday the balance will be shifted overwhelmingly toward the latter group.

In closing, we want to thank those who worked with us over the last 10 years. Without their help, ISR would have been diminished—or even extinguished. First, the associate editors, Matthew Berkman and Shira Klein, who helped us cope with the gratifying, but heavy, increase of articles submitted over the last few years. Then, our Israel Studies coordinator

at the University of Maryland, Avis Koeiman, who kept us organized; the wonderful people at Berghahn Books, Vivian Berghahn and Janine Latham, who kept us on time; and our incredible, eagle-eyed, indefatigable copyeditor and typesetter, Shawn Kendrick, who kept us correct. We also want to thank the contributors, reviewers, and guest editors (far too numerous to mention here) who have worked with us over the years in this shared scholarly enterprise. Lastly, of course, we thank the members, board, and officers of the Association for Israel Studies, who entrusted us with their journal.

— *Yoram Peri and Paul L. Scham*