ISRAEL AND WATER CONFERENCE

In the Middle East, water scarcity is not just a problem; it is a way of life. Yet Israel, located in one of the driest regions in the world, is recognized not for its water scarcity, but for its creative and innovative approaches in addressing this challenge.

These approaches—as well as their potential for facilitating peacemaking in the region—were the focus of the conference “Israel and Water: Scarcity, Innovation and Cooperation”, organized by AU’s Center for Israel Studies. Held at AU on March 4, 2014, the conference brought together academics, scientists, entrepreneurs, and policy-makers to learn and reflect upon diverse Israeli methods of water management and collaboration. Entrepreneurs like Asaf Barnea, founder of Kinrot Ventures, highlighted Israel’s success in des salination and waste water re-use.

Keynote speaker, Alon Tal of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, heralded Israel’s innovations but addressed “the perils of viewing water technology as a panacea in resolving conflict in the Middle East”. “To facilitate peacemaking it is not enough to simply increase quantities of water in the region, even with the most sophisticated technologies. That part of it cannot be divorced from water governance and building relationships of trust and equity between conflicting parties,” said AU professor Eric Abitbol, a speaker at the conference.

I had feared that WATER would be a reason that peace could not come to the Middle East. At the conference I learned that to the contrary, water may be a major basis for cooperation among the countries in the area.” —Lee O, conference attendee

The Jordanian water minister, His Excellency Dr. Hazim El-Naser, joined the conference via Skype to discuss the historic Red Sea Dead Sea Water Conveyance project agreement he signed in December 2013.

The first ever regional project endorsed by Israelis, Jordanians, and Palestinians aims to create a pipeline between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea to address the drying of the Dead Sea and drastically bolster the area’s water supply. Because of the urgent need for water by all parties, says El-Naser, “It opens the gates for major regional cooperation.”

AU DEBUTS ROTHFELD COLLECTION OF CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI ART

Last fall the American University Museum in the Katzen Arts Center and the Center for Israel Studies were thrilled to exhibit the Rothfeld Collection of Contemporary Israeli Art to the public for the first time.

The collection, a gift of Donald Rothfeld of New York City, NY, in 2011, is dedicated to former Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren, who attended the exhibition opening. It includes 165 pieces of contemporary, mixed media Israeli art and chronicles Israel’s history. The numerous prominent and emerging Israeli artists represented include Moshe Kupferman, one of the most prominent Israeli painters as well as a Holocaust survivor and a founder of the Kibbutz Lohamei Ha-Getaot; Elad Lassry, whose work was shown at MOMA; Siglat Landau; and Yael Bartana.

“The Rothfeld Collection is stunning,” says museum director and curator Jack Rasmussen, “Don Rothfeld pursued artists who were technically sophisticated (whether with video, photography, sculpture, or paint) and had something to say about Israel and the world we live in. Viewers are deeply engaged from the moment they look beneath the beautiful surfaces and find reality looking back.”

Israeli pianist Alon Goldstein performs in the AU Museum Galleries

American University Museum
NEWS FROM THE JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM AND THE CENTER FOR ISRAEL STUDIES | FALL 2014

Clive Lipchin, Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and Monther Hind, Palestinian Wastewater Engineers Group

cont’d on page 4

Michael and Sally Oren and Donald Rothfeld at the Rothfeld Exhibition opening

Peter Starr, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences added, “We are honored to provide a home for this outstanding collection. What Don Rothfeld has assembled, with great passion and aesthetic acumen, is a testament to the vitality of contemporary Israeli art, and of the culture in which it thrives.”
USA, GERMANY AND ISRAEL: TRANSATLANTIC TRIANGLE UNITED BY VALUES & CHALLENGES?

In April CIS hosted the conference “USA, Germany and Israel: Transatlantic Triangle United by Values and Challenges?” The conference, co-sponsored by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, discussed the political, economic, and cultural relationships between these three countries. In panels on the rule of law, the economy, religion, and Israel’s relationship to the West, experts identified affinities and shared values, while simultaneously highlighting differences and challenges.

Former Israeli Foreign Minister and Tel Aviv University Professor Shlomo Ben-Ami gave a presentation on a range of Middle East foreign policy issues, including the Geneva interim agreement over Iran’s nuclear program, the impact of the Arab revolutions on the Middle East, and the current Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. Ben-Ami participated with Prime Minister Barak in the Camp David Summit, after which he led the Israeli team in all phases of the negotiations with the Palestinians. His latest book is Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Arab-Israeli Tragedy.

The panelists explored Israel’s relationship to the West. Each country learned different lessons from the twentieth century about militarism, nationalism, and religion. However, Israel, Germany, and the United States share three central elements: the rule of law, a market economy, and civilized, peaceful dispute about the role of religion. On the basis of these common values, the panelists concluded, these three countries will remain strong partners in the future.

SHLOMO BEN-AMI: GENEVA, THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS AND THE PROSPECTS OF AN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

Former Israeli Foreign Minister and Tel Aviv University Professor Shlomo Ben-Ami gave a presentation on a range of Middle East foreign policy issues, including the Geneva interim agreement over Iran’s nuclear program, the impact of the Arab revolutions on the Middle East, and the current Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. Ben-Ami participated with Prime Minister Barak in the Camp David Summit, after which he led the Israeli team in all phases of the negotiations with the Palestinians.

THE FOUNDERS OF ISRAEL AND THEIR RELEVANCE TODAY

Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Inaugural Lecture Series

Capacity crowds turned out for The Center for Israel Studies Seymour and Lillian Abensohn Chair Inaugural Lecture Series: The Founders of Israel and Their Relevance Today. Three of the world’s leading scholars spoke about central figures who helped create the Jewish state and their legacy for the State of Israel today. The lectures were each introduced by the inaugural Abensohn Chair, Dr. Michael Brenner.

- Derek Penslar, University of Toronto and Oxford University, discussed Theodor Herzl’s “Charisma and Leadership”.
- Anita Shapira, Tel Aviv University, Israel Democracy Institute, and the Itzhak Rabin Center, spoke on David Ben-Gurion in “Leadership and the Shaping of History”.
- Jehuda Reinharz, president of the Mandel Foundation and president emeritus, Brandeis University, spoke about Chaim Weizmann, “Statesman Without a State”.

Derek Penslar

Anita Shapira and Noah Nunez-Gross SIS’15

Eli Salzberger, University of Haifa and Dorit Beinisch, former president of Israeli Supreme Court

Derek Penslar

Shlomo Ben-Ami

2 Yediat | Fall 2014
**ARi Shavit’s My Promised Land**

A standing room only crowd filled the Abramson Family Recital Hall in the Katzen Arts Center to hear Israeli Journalist Ari Shavit discuss his book *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* with The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg and NBC’s David Gregory. In a private meeting afterwards, twenty Jewish student leaders asked Shavit questions about his presentation earlier in the day, and his views on some of the most pressing issues facing Israel and the Jewish people. Shavit also asked several questions of the students, seeking to “take the temperature” on campus and better understand the experience of Jewish students at AU. The program was co-sponsored by the Israel Institute.

**AU Commemorates 70th Anniversary of the Rescue of Bulgaria’s Jews**

AU’s Jewish Studies Program, Center for Israel Studies and the Embassy of Bulgaria presented a special screening of *The Optimists: The Story of the Rescue of the Bulgarian Jews from the Holocaust*, with Her Excellency Elena Poptodorova, Bulgarian Ambassador to the United States, and the film’s director, Jacky Comforty.

The Optimists tells the dramatic story of Christians and Muslims from all walks of life who acted individually and together to foil the Nazis’ plans to send Bulgaria’s Jews to concentration camps. Ambassador Poptodorova notes that the film is “an illustration of a truly unique act of valor in the dark history of WWII, shrouded in secrecy during the Cold War era... While Hitler was imposing his Final Solution all over Europe, Bulgarians did what was deemed unthinkable under the circumstances of the time – they preserved the 50,000-strong Jewish population of ‘old’ Bulgaria, saving it from certain death.”

**Heartbeat**

Heartbeat kicked off a world tour with an uplifting concert in November at American University in the School of International Service Building Atrium. The performance featured Jewish Israeli and Palestinian musicians aged 17-21 performing a unique hip-hop blend, interweaving Eastern and Western music styles to amplify their message of cooperation, equality, and respect.

Heartbeat unites musicians, educators and students to build mutual understanding and transform conflict through the power of music. It was founded in 2007 with a Fulbright-mtvU Fellowship by SIS Social Enterprise Masters student Aaron Shneyer. Heartbeat empowers Israeli and Palestinian musicians by creating opportunities for them to hear each other and work together to build trust between their communities.

In addition to performing original music, Heartbeat members shared their experiences of growing up amidst the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and their creative effort to build a better future in the region. “We believe that the silent majority of Israelis and Palestinians desperately wants the same thing yet has almost no opportunity to be heard and we understand that music is an incredibly powerful tool to amplify the voices of the silent majority,” Shneyer said.
NEWS FROM THE FACULTY

Lynn Addington, School of Public Affairs (SPA) was named editor of the international journal Homicide Studies.

Dan Arbell, Israel Studies scholar in residence, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) just published The U.S.-Turkey-Israel Triangle (Brookings).

Boaz Atzili, School of International Service (SIS) was promoted to Associate Professor. His Good Fences Bad Neighbors: Border Fixity and International Conflict (University of Chicago Press) won the Edgar S. Furniss Book Award from Ohio State University’s Mershon Center for International Security.

Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman, Distinguished Professors in the Department of History, (CAS) won the National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies for FDR and the Jews (Belknap/Harvard University Press).

Michael Brenner, co-edited an issue of Journal for Modern Jewish Studies. He was elected to the American Academy for Jewish Research and was awarded the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Erran Carmel, Acting Dean, Kogod School of Business (KSB) took students in his undergraduate business course to Israel last March 2014 to study firsthand Israeli businesses. Carmel co-chaired the March 2014 Israel and Water conference at American University.

Max Paul Friedman, Department of History (CAS), is a 2013-14 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow and 2014 American University Scholar/Teacher of the Year.

Gershon Greenberg, Department of Philosophy and Religion, was visiting professor to the Department of Jewish Thought at Hebrew University in spring 2014.

Gail Humphries Mardroesian, Emerita, Department of Performing Arts (CAS) directed students and alumni in staged readings of a new drama Signs of Life.

Alan Kraut, Department of History (CAS), completed his year as President of the Organization of American Historians. He is also chair of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island History Committee.


Pamela Nadell, Department of History (CAS) was elected vice-president for program for the Association for Jewish Studies. New publications include “‘Diamonds are a Girl’s Best Friend’” in Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Becoming Americas.

Naima Prevots, professor emerita, Department of Performing Arts (CAS), contributed an essay about her father, Reuben Wallenrod, and his immigration to Israel and then America to Summer Haven, The Catskills and the Holocaust.

Maina Chawla Singh, scholar in residence, (SIS) spoke about her book Being Indian, Being Israeli in many U.S. cities as well as at the NIMOUD Conference in France.

Myra Sklarew, professor emerita, Department of Literature (CAS) and former president, Yaddo Artists Community, is completing a book titled A Survivor Named Trauma: Holocaust and the Construction of Memory.

Jeffrey K. Sosland, School of Advanced Professional Studies (SPEX), served as a panelist on “The Future of Water Cooperation in the Region” at the AU conference Israel and Water: Scarcity, Innovation and Cooperation.

Russell Stone, Department of Sociology Emeritus (CAS), participated in the program planning committee for the 30th annual meeting of the Association for Israel Studies.

Howard M. Wachtel, professor emeritus, Department of Economics (CAS) and Founding Director of the Center for Israel Studies, serves as a member of the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise’s Israel Scholar Development Fund Advisory Board.

Thomas Zeitzoff, Department of Justice, Law and Society (SPA), published “Terrorism and Voting: The Effect of Exposure to Rockets on Voting in Israeli Elections.” in the American Political Science Review.

WATER cont’d from page 1

A special thanks to the partners in and outside of the AU community who helped make Israel and Water: Scarcity, Innovation, and Cooperation a success:

AU partners: Center for Israel Studies (CAS), Kogod School of Business, AU Global Environmental Politics Program (SIS), Department of Environmental Science (CAS), William K. Reilly Fund at Center for Environmental Policy (SPA), Center for Environmental Film-making (SOC), AU Office of Sustainability.

Non-AU partners: American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Arava Institute for Environmental Studies Additional Support was provided by the Embassy of Israel, Maryland/Israel Development Center and Richard * and Lois England (*deceased).

CAS DEAN’S AWARD

Lillian Klein Abensohn, a scholar of Hebrew Bible, received the College of Arts and Sciences Dean’s Award at a dinner at AU President Neil Kerwin and Ann Kerwin’s home in recognition of her many contributions to the college.
Four AU faculty from the School of International Service (SIS) and Kogod School of Business (KSB) accompanied their students to Israel on intensive academics experiences this year. These academic study trips were in addition to over six dozen students who studied for a semester at Israeli universities, went on birthright trips or travelled on their own this summer. Students were eager to speak about their experiences.

**ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING IN A CONFLICT ZONE**

SIS faculty members Eric Abitbol and Ken Conca traveled to Israel and the Palestinian West Bank from June 7-20 with seven SIS students to evaluate the environmental peacebuilding significance of cooperative household-level wastewater treatment systems. This was the second year of the SIS sponsored practicum, working with Israeli and Palestinian partner organizations, the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (AIES) and the Palestinian Wastewater Engineers Group (PWE).

**PROSPECTS FOR PEACE**

SIS Professor Guy Ziv, who teaches U.S./Israel Relations and Negotiating Israel/Palestinian Peace, led nine students to Israel this past summer to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as well as how security, environmental, and human rights issues converge to inform both domestic and foreign policy in Israel. The students described their study trip with SIS Professor Guy Ziv on “Prospects for Peace” as “a life changing experience.”

**INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: ISRAEL**

KSB Dean Erran Carmel took 20 students from his class to Tel Aviv over spring break to experience Israeli entrepreneurship first-hand. The group spent time at a 3D printing firm, in the Weizmann Science Park, the Israeli stock exchange, and a major high-end tire supplier owned by an AU alumnus’ family. They also visited with students of the Management College of Rishon; these students visited AU later in the year.

**PHOEBE BRADFORD RECEIVES ISRAEL WRITING AWARD**

Congratulations to Phoebe Bradford SOC’14 who received CIS’s award for the best paper or poem related to Israel for her paper “Meduzot’s Magical Multiplicity”. Phoebe’s paper examined the use of alternative narrative devices in Shira Geffen and Etgar Keret’s 2007 Camera D’Or winner, Meduzot (“Jellyfish”). The paper explored the contemporary female experiences in Israel using the backdrop of Tel Aviv and was an essay for her class on Israeli film. Phoebe, who graduated cum laude with a degree in film & media arts, stated that film is the most accessible medium for storytelling, and that the “Israeli Identifies in Film” class taught her to question assumptions and learn to ask the right questions. “Unraveling identity issues about a complex culture like Israel was so much easier through film,” she said. “The images in the class also made me want to join a birthright trip.” Phoebe is currently a videographer and photographer in Brooklyn, NY, and also holds the position of Creative Director for Boundary Stone Films, a D.C. based production-company.

The award was created by Literature Professor Emerita Myra Sklarew in honor of Benjamin and Eva Wolpe Reinkel and in memory of Harry Rinkel.

“Beyond Ol’ Man River: Edna Ferber’s Novels,” Eliza McGraw, Department of Literature.

Dove’s Cry screening followed by screening of Album 61 as part of the Washington Jewish Film Festival. Talkback with Director Ganit Ilouz moderated by Dan Chyutin, Schusterman Visiting Israeli Film Professor. Co-sponsored by WJFF and CIS.

“Environmental Issues Transcend Borders: Water, Energy and Gas in Israel and the Middle East”, Arie Neshet, Tel Aviv University. Co-sponsored by CIS and SPA Center for Environmental Policy.

“Environmental Peacebuilding” panel discussion with Directors of the Earth Middle East Gidon Bromberg, Nader al-Khaeeb, and Munqeth Mehyar Co-sponsored by Washington College of Law, SIS Global Environmental Politics Program and CIS.


“From Eden to Exile: Unraveling Mysteries of the Bible”, Eric Cline, George Washington University.

“Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East: Egypt and Israel in 1978” William Quant, University of Virginia. Co-sponsored by American University Negotiation Project and CIS.

“Tel Aviv After Dark”, Eyal Rob, Tel Aviv University. Co-sponsored by CIS and AU Students For Israel.

“Tensions Within Israeli Identity” Israeli film screenings (Peeping Toms, Ballad of the Weeping Spring, My Father, My Lord and Jaffa) with talkbacks by Dan Chyutin, Schusterman Visiting Israeli Film Professor.


“The Judaic Turn in Israeli Cinema”, Dan Chyutin, Schusterman Visiting Israeli Film Professor.


“Tensions Within Israeli Identity” Israel film screenings (Peeping Toms, Ballad of the Weeping Spring, My Father, My Lord and Jaffa) with talkback by Dan Chyutin, Schusterman Visiting Israeli Film Professor.

“The Future of the Jews, How Global Forces are Impacting the Jewish People, Israel, and Its Relationship with the United States” Amos Perlmutter Memorial Lecture by Ambassador Stuart E. Eizenstat. Co-sponsored by School of Public Affairs and CIS.
FROM THE DIRECTORS

This was an exciting year for the Jewish Studies Program and Center for Israel Studies. The Center celebrated its 15th anniversary year with a whole range of public events exploring Israel in all its complexity. Our explorations continued this fall, highlighted by an October 28 talk by scholar and philosopher Moshe Halbertal capping our conference, “How Jewish is the Jewish State? Religion and Society in Israel.”

Upcoming books by our faculty exemplify cutting edge scholarship. In the spring semester Richard Breitman and Guy Ziv will speak about their new books. Breitman’s To the Gates of Jerusalem is based on the diaries of James G. McDonald, first U.S. ambassador to Israel. Ziv’s book asks Why Hawks Become Doves: Shimon Peres and Foreign Policy Change in Israel. Our scholarship and work in the classroom is augmented by regular public programs open to the community exploring Jewish civilizations and the Jewish experience in its historical and contemporary contexts.

Our accomplishments rest on your continued generous support. Please consider gifts to CIS and JSP to sustain these vital efforts.

CENTER FOR ISRAEL STUDIES

American University’s Center for Israel Studies is one of the nation’s premier centers for educating about today’s Israel—its achievements and its challenges. Our approach is multidisciplinary, going beyond the Arab-Israeli conflict to study modern Israel’s history, vibrant society, culture, multiethnic democracy, and complex geopolitical issues. The center’s goal is to enhance scholarship and knowledge in the university and the wider community about a multifaceted Israel. Using AU’s expertise in global education, and its central location in Washington, D.C., CIS seeks to connect Israel to the next generation of young leaders and to serve as a national and international hub for nurturing and catalyzing Israel studies.

JEWISH STUDIES PROGRAM

American University’s commitment to the Jewish Studies Program dates back to the early 1970s. Since then, AU’s Jewish Studies Program has included a major and a minor and offered courses across the curriculum, including in our General Education Program, for all AU students. The program takes great pride in being the first in the nation to offer a minor in Israel studies.