

From the “Research Field”

Preface

The new section “Research Field” aims to provide readers with a unique perspective on an academic field that many of us, scholars and students are engaged in. In each issue this section will deal with a different subject related to *Israelis* field of interest.

The current issue focuses on Israel Studies in the United States. In recent years the field has grown dramatically with the establishment of dozens of programs, academic chairs, and centers across the globe and especially in the United States. This comes as a surprise given the crisis in the humanities that we see in department closures, budgetary cutbacks, and the decline in student enrollment. Why then is Israel Studies so popular and how is these studies expansion being realized? What are the challenges that these studies face in today’s academic climate?

To answer these and other questions we turned to two experts on the subject – Dr. Mitchell Bard, a foreign policy analyst and the executive director of American Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE), a non-profit organization whose goal is to promote Israel Studies in American universities; and Dr. Miriam Shenkar, a researcher and lecturer at Ohio State University on the history and philosophy of education. Her book *The Politicization of Israel Studies* (2012) examines Israel Studies as a field of academic research.

The two articles that appear in this issue are based on the scholars’ academic background and personal experience. Dr. Bard, writing in a semi-personal, semi-scholarly style, relates his experience as an anti-BDS activist and AICE director, and presents an overview of Israel Studies development in recent years. Dr. Shenkar focuses on Ohio State University where an Israel Studies academic chair was established in the history department in 2014.

We wish to express our sincerest gratitude to Drs. Mitchell Bard and Miriam Shenkar for their positive response to our request and we hope that our readers will find great interest in the new section.

The editorial board

Israel Studies in the United States: A Growth Industry

Mitchell Bard*

In the last decade, more emphasis has been given to building up the field of Israel Studies to offer students the opportunity to study with authorities on Israeli history, politics, and culture. For decades, few courses were taught about Israel; Middle East Studies departments were dominated by Saidians who effectively removed Israel from the Middle East or, to the extent Israel was discussed, it was as an example of colonialism, imperialism, and the reason for many of the region's problems.

On many campuses, the problem has been that few courses related to Israel are offered and even fewer professors are qualified to teach them. A study of the top 17 political science departments, for example, found that six had no tenured or tenure track faculty members with a specialty in the Middle East and only five had a faculty member whose principal specialization was the Middle East. Five of the seventeen departments offered no courses on the Middle East and no department offered more than four courses.¹

More recently, I looked at the number of Israel related courses offered in 2015-16 at Harvard. In the fall, I searched the word "Israel" and found 37 courses; however, of those, the only courses related to the history, politics, or culture of the modern state were courses on the ethnography of the Middle East, a summer school course on international conflict, and a divinity school course on religion, conflict, and peace. In the

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1 Joel Beinin, "Middle East Studies After September 11," 2002 MESA Presidential Address, *MESA Bulletin* (Summer 2003).

spring not one course on Israel was listed in the online catalogue.

The place where one would expect to find courses on Israel is the Center for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES), and yet in the fall, only two out of 126 courses offered by the center and affiliated departments directly related to Israel, one on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the other an advanced seminar in Modern Hebrew: Israeli Culture: Cinema & Literature. In the spring, CMES offered 47 courses at Harvard, none of which related to Israel.²

Another study found that in 2006 an astonishing 53 percent of the major universities offered zero courses on Israel and 77 percent offered zero or one.³ Four years later, after the creation of new centers of Israel Studies, the growth of the Brandeis Summer Institute (which trains faculty to teach courses on Israel), and the expansion of AICE’s visiting scholar program, a Brandeis study found a 69 percent growth in courses that focused specifically on Israel in the same 246 institutions surveyed earlier.⁴

Starting in the mid-1970s Arab governments and individuals began to make large gifts to universities to create chairs and centers in Arab, Middle Eastern, and Islamic studies. That funding has grown exponentially following 9/11, with Arab states and individuals investing at least \$1.9 billion in American universities from 1986 to 2015. By comparison, gifts from Israel total less than \$15 million and the government does not fund chairs or centers in the United States.⁵

While Jewish donors have little or no control over who a university hires with their donations, and history has shown that some schools choose professors whose views are not consistent with the pro-Israel views of the investors, Arab donors have little to worry about. They know the positions they fund will be given to academics who share their

2 Mitchell Bard, “Still Looking for Israel at Harvard,” *Jerusalem Post*, June 30, 2016.

3 *In Search of Israel Studies: A Survey of Israel Studies on American College Campuses*, Israel on Campus Coalition, Washington, DC 2006.

4 Annette Koren and Emily Einhorn, “Searching for the Study of Israel: A Report on the Teaching of Israel on U.S. College Campuses 2008-09,” Brandeis University, <http://hdl.handle.net/10192/23441> (January 2010).

5 “Foreign Gifts Report,” U.S. Department of Education, April 1, 2016.

world view and who invariably are anti-Israel and content to present a one-sided, sanitized version of Islamic and Middle Eastern history.

The Israeli government has left the task of supporting universities to American philanthropists who have a long history of generously supporting academic institutions, as is evident from the large numbers of hospitals, law schools, libraries, business schools, and other buildings with the names of prominent Jewish donors. The exception to the apparent preference for capital investments over human ones has been in the fields of Jewish Studies and Holocaust Studies.

“Prior to 1940 a few chairs of Judaica had been established in major universities, almost always due to the philanthropy of local Jewish communities,” according to Judith R. Baskin. Later, Arnold Band noted, Jewish Studies programs began to receive most of their funding from general university funds, but “From the 1970s, Jewish/Judaic studies continued to thrive and expand in a variety of North American institutions of higher learning, in significant part though the philanthropy of individual donors.”⁶ Holocaust Studies is a newer field that also developed primarily because of the demand by donors. Today, both fields are robust with large numbers of named chairs and courses as well as healthy enrollments.

Ironically, one of the impediments to the growth of Israel Studies has been the attitude of some faculty members in Jewish Studies. Many departments do not consider modern Israel relevant while others believe you cannot separate the study of Israel from Judaism. Some professors covet the money donated for Israel Studies, while many inside and outside of Jewish Studies fear that the creation of centers of Israel Studies ghettoizes the field.

The ghettoization argument is an important one. In theory, by creating an independent or quasi-independent program in Israel Studies, only students very interested in the topic may take the courses. This depends a lot on cross-listing and the acceptance of Israel Studies courses for

6 Judith R. Baskin, “Jewish Studies,” in: Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, The Gale Group, Farmington Hills, MI 2008; Arnold J. Band, “Jewish Studies in American Liberal-Arts Colleges and Universities,” *American Jewish Yearbook*, 67 (1966), pp. 1–30.

meeting major requirements. Howard Wachtel, the founder of the center at American University, has been vocal in opposing the integration of Israel Studies in Jewish Studies departments in part because of the fear that non-Jewish students may be discouraged from taking a course associated with Jewish Studies. Other scholars, such as Daniel Pipes, have argued that Israel belongs in Middle East Studies departments and that the focus should be on reforming that discipline to restore it to its once prominent place as a home for serious scholars as opposed to anti-Israel polemicists.⁷

Meanwhile, most donors prefer to invest in Israel programs *for students*, such as Birthright Israel and Israel advocacy training where they can see the immediate impact of their support. Investing in faculty and especially graduate students, requires a more far-sighted donor who appreciates the benefits of having the long-term presence of a scholar with academic prestige who can educate generations of students.

Of course, this is not true of all philanthropists, and a growing number are funding chairs, programs, and centers in Israel Studies. This, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon. The founders of the programs in Israel Studies at Emory and American University argue over which program was created first, but there is no doubt that both were established in 1998 and, for at least five years, were the only ones of their kind in the United States. It was not until 2003 that the Taub Center for Israel Studies was established at NYU.

Meanwhile, the American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (AICE) was stimulating new growth and interest in the field (2006–2016) by sponsoring more than 100 visiting Israeli scholars at more than 50 universities, placing postdoctoral fellows in Israel Studies with mentors at major universities and building a cadre of young scholars to fill new positions through the AICE Scholar Award program for graduate students.

The AICE program had multiple objectives including:

- Exposing American students to Israelis.
- Offering students a chance to study with Israel’s top scholars.

7 Norvell B. De Atkine and Daniel Pipes, “Middle Eastern Studies: What Went Wrong?,” *Middle East Forum*, 9 (1996), pp. 60-74.

- Increasing the number of courses related to Israel.
- Shifting the focus away from the conflict to treating Israel the same way other area studies are examined.
 - Toward that end, AICE brought scholars from more than 20 different disciplines (e.g., music, art, film, literature, law, psychology) to give students a chance to see Israel through a variety of lenses.
- Educating Jewish students, first and foremost, but also engaging non-Jews. On many campuses a diverse audience was attracted to courses on Israel, including students from Muslim countries (many of whom had never met an Israeli) and students serving in the U.S. military.
- Demonstrating the value to the university and community of having an Israel scholar on campus to encourage the creation of a permanent program in Israel Studies.

The AICE program was extraordinarily successful. A review by Brandeis concluded:

The program's success is evident in the enthusiasm of the VIPs' students, their department chairs, and university administrators. Other indicators of achievement include: the number of courses offered, the depth and breadth of the subject areas, the numbers of students enrolled, the number and variety of extracurricular activities on and off campus, and the large number of individuals reached by the work of the VIPs in the public arena... As a result of AICE initiatives, Israel has moved from its place as an isolated "extra-curricular" topic into mainstream classrooms and core curricula. In addition, the way Israel is discussed on college campuses has shifted. AICE programs have succeeded in incorporating rigorous scholarship and debate into discussions on Israel that were previously dominated by polemical hyperbole.⁸

8 Annette Koren and Emily Einhorn, *Expanding the Study of Israel on Campus: The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise 2005-2009*, Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 2009, p. 2; Annette Koren, *Advancing Israel Studies in U.S.*

AICE's visiting Israeli scholars also have been a catalyst for the creation of many new chairs, programs, and centers in Israel Studies, including those at UCLA, Berkeley, Ohio State, Maryland, San Francisco State, American University, Wake Forest, and the U.S. Naval Academy. After sending one of our first two visiting professors to UCLA, for example, we received this letter from Prof. Steven Spiegel, Associate Director of the Burkle Center for International Relations:

I just want to take this opportunity to thank you again for the matching grant that AICE provided UCLA's International Institute for the 2005-2006 academic year. Your grant ignited the spark that enabled us to raise the matching funds. As a consequence, we will be bringing Professor Aharon Kleiman of the Political Science Department at Tel-Aviv University for the year. He will be teaching four courses, but, more importantly, he will be a presence on campus and in the community. I know that his services will make a major difference in our ability to present our students with a more complete understanding of Israel and its problems throughout the coming academic year.

I should add, however, that it appears that your grant will have a much longer term impact. One potential donor has now given a third of the funds toward a chair which would allow us to bring an Israeli visitor annually. We are very hopeful that actually having an Israeli academic in residence for a year will convince him to provide the remaining amount so that Professor Kleiman will be the first of many regularly scheduled Israeli visitors. Once he sees how valuable this arrangement will be, we are very hopeful that he will make it possible to have an annual visitor. Certainly, the fact that we were able to raise the funds for next year has already been a major factor in encouraging him to come this far and to consider an additional contribution.

Universities 2005-2008: The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA 2008, p. 3.

Moreover, we used this matching grant as a sign of the importance of a potential Israel Studies program at UCLA in dealing with other potential donors. I am pleased to report that one of these donors has agreed in principle to fund a Chair in Israel Studies whose occupant will specialize full-time in the study of some aspect of Israeli history, sociology, foreign policy, politics, etc. As you know, this position will be essential to encouraging graduate students to enter the field and for the continued education of our undergraduate students.

AICE received similar letters from other schools. This program, along with the generosity of donors at other institutions have helped to create at least 40 centers, chairs, or programs of Israel Studies worldwide (excluding Israel), 29 of which are in the United States.⁹ Most of these have been established in the last 10 years.

One catalyst was the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation's gift of \$15 million to Brandeis, which was matched by other donors to establish the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies in 2007. The Foundation was also the lead funder for programs at the Universities of Oklahoma and Texas where the foundation had longstanding relationships. Other philanthropists have stepped forward to fund the other programs, centers, chairs, and visiting scholars that have subsequently been established.

When AICE started the visiting scholar program, the idea was to strategically place professors where they could have the greatest impact. AICE did not believe every university needed a program in Israel Studies (though they should all have courses) because the demand was not that great on every campus. Donors, however, do not always think strategically and will give to their alma maters, schools they believe tolerate anti-Semitism, or specific schools that may not provide the same academic "bang for their bucks".

Perhaps the most significant investment in Israel Studies was at

9 "Israel Studies Centers and Professorships Outside Israel," Association for Israel Studies, <http://www.aisisraelstudies.org/ais/centers.ehtml>, accessed August 16, 2016.

Berkeley. Why? Well, Berkeley is one of the world’s great universities, but it also has a longstanding reputation as Ground Zero for anti-Israel activity and, today, has on its faculty the founder of Students for Justice in Palestine, the principal sponsor for the anti-Semitic boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaign on American campuses.

While serving as AICE’s visiting Israeli Professor in Berkeley’s Department of Education, Hanan Alexander of the University of Haifa did what too few professors are willing to do; that is, get involved in campus politics. His tenure coincided with the introduction of a divestment resolution for the first time in Berkeley’s student government. He not only spoke during the debate on the issue, he personally met with key members of the council to educate them as to why divestment was not only bad for Israel, but also bad for the Palestinians. He helped sway the key votes that defeated divestment.

Meanwhile, he was working with other faculty to build the infrastructure for a program in Israel Studies. Berkeley had earlier become a cautionary tale for philanthropists after a well-meaning donor gave the university \$5 million for a visiting Israel scholar position and the university turned the program over to faculty whose first choice was a post-Zionist.

Alexander worked with Berkeley faculty to create a program with ties to the prestigious Boalt School of Law that could not be hijacked by nefarious Middle East Studies professors. Thanks to a substantial initial grant, the Berkeley Institute for Jewish Law and Israeli Law, Economy, and Society (now the Berkeley Institute for Jewish Law and Israel Studies) was established. Within months, the institute had offered students more positive programming related to Israel than Berkeley had probably offered in its entire history.

Berkeley is still a political hotbed, but the Institute has been a game changer in leveling the playing field and presenting students with the opportunity to learn about Israel’s complexity rather than be restricted to the propaganda bombardment on Sproul Plaza. The Institute also emulated American University’s interdisciplinary model, bringing faculty from various disciplines into the program’s development and governance, and enhancing the curriculum to include Israeli culture in addition to history, politics, law, economics, and other social sciences.

The growth in Israel Studies is also reflected in the establishment

of minors at a number of schools, including Maryland, American University, SUNY Binghamton, the University of Colorado Boulder, and Susquehanna University. While there has been some discussion of the possibility of creating a major, the consensus to date has been that a major in Israel Studies would not be worthwhile until the field is more widely accepted and jobs created. In the short-term, a student with a PhD in Israel Studies is likely to have a more difficult time finding a position than one with a degree in an established discipline.

Overall, Israel Studies has been on a rapid growth trajectory and has the opportunity to expand further as more philanthropists recognize the importance of giving students the chance to have first-hand experience with Israelis and to learn from experts in the field. Donors must also recognize the impact of a professor not only on the students in the classroom, but also the tremendous positive impact they can have within their department, on the campus environment, and in the community. Universities also are likely to support the expansion of Israel Studies because of its popularity among students and because development staff see openings for cultivating new donors.

Placing Israel Studies in the Historical Lens: A Case Study of Ohio State University

Miriam Shenkar

Israel Studies entered the university level through the phenomenon of privately endowed chairs (Shenkar 2012). By comparing the chair holders with the institutional history of the universities where they were placed, I found a surprisingly strong emphasis on history even when located within political science and other social science disciplines. By studying the Department of History of the Ohio State University, which received an Israel Studies Chair in the fall of 2014, I point to the salience of the historical lens in Israel Studies.

This case study examines the issues involving social sciences and the humanities within the trajectory of finding space for an Israel Studies Chair.

Utilitarian goals versus the pursuit of classical knowledge have been at odds since the very beginning of the research university. Israel Studies as an area of study reflects both classical and forward-looking goals. This involves placing a civics-oriented curriculum within a historical framework and the media clamor for international experts. Situating Israel Studies in the Department of History also illustrates the specialization and general education tracks so prominent in educational history.

Established as a land grant institution following the 1862 Morrill Act signed by President Abraham Lincoln, Ohio State University was first known as the Agricultural and Mechanical College. Yet, despite the utilitarian focus, the public voiced its criticism of a purely technical- or mechanical-based college.

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Joseph Sullivant, one of the first trustees of the college, advocated teaching “all that was worth knowing” and promoting a broad and liberal foundation (at least as far as the trustees had the financial means to do so) (Goerler 2011). As that was not the case, he promoted the subjects best calculated to impart knowledge regarding the practical duties of life; yet, he also acknowledged that only a general and liberal education prepared graduates for their specific vocations as well as for the leadership positions vital to the growing democracy (Joseph Sullivant’s address to the first board of trustees, noted in the proceedings of the board of trustees, 1871, 27).

Many of the early trustees were not university graduates. It was not unusual for them to nevertheless serve on such a board, as even Justin Morrill, the innovative legislator behind the public funding of higher education, was without an academic background.

What constituted the ideal educational institution, which educational goals should be set, and how to fund these goals, were important decisions. Not only was federal land that could be used for other purposes being set aside for a place of study, but the students filling these places could also engage in other spheres of productive activity (such as more farming). The trick was to convince the taxpayer that selling land to raise funds for higher education was not a “waste” of agricultural land that could be put to better use as a farm. Proper administration of the sale of federal lands was required, as well as continuous oversight of the funds used by the educational institutions.

Viewed in the context of the post-Civil War period, the Morrill Act reflects the broad changes that were sweeping the country. Although it passed in Congress before the Civil War, President Buchanan refused to sign it. It took President Lincoln, a great advocate of self-improvement and education, to sign it in 1862. The loss of power in the South was now felt in terms of the lack of legislative opposition to land grant institutions, a concept that had been linked to unwanted federal control of education. But the postwar period brought with it the recognition that the great loss of life on both sides had decimated the leadership potential for the future. Something radically new was needed to replenish this “stock”. The proposed land grant institution legislation could be used in various ways, such as improving the already existing private and elite-

oriented colleges. Unlike these colleges, however, the new land grant institutions' legislative proposals included mandatory military training and civics.

The trustees of the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College first met under the leadership of then Governor of Ohio Rutherford B. Hayes. The mid-nineteenth century visions of the curriculum of the Agricultural and Mechanical College were then duly recorded as the proceedings of the trustees' meetings minutes and preserved in their original handwriting in yellowing and lined ledger notebooks housed at the Ohio State University Archives, as the Record of the Proceedings of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College and The Ohio State University from May 11, 1870 to June 25, 1890.

Governor Hayes focused on the importance of the newly included instruction in military tactics (trustees minutes 1870: 3). Mr. Sawyer, another trustee, tried to pass a resolution restricting the course of study at the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College only to that pertaining to agriculture, stock, and the mechanic arts, or anything pertaining to their progress and development (trustees minutes 1870: 4). Although Sawyer's resolution was turned down, it led to the articulation of views as to how broad the curriculum should be and the purpose of this new form of education.

A contrast was made with the higher education that prevailed in Europe. The land grant mandate was to function as a new, democratizing agent. In terms that pointed to the liberation pedagogy advocated in postmodern, postcolonial discourse (Freire 1998), the trustees analyzed the overall purposes of education as central to changing the social, political, and economic structure. They stated that while the purpose of education for the wealthy in Europe was to educate highly trained servants, America had to be different.

Mr. Jones, another trustee, presented the failure of European institutions to educate "thinking people" rather than machines. This failure was linked to the limited focus on utilitarian, agricultural, or mechanical content. A new kind of higher education – funded by the public – must provide various types of knowledge, the trustees felt. Mr. Horton, another trustee, confirmed that this new institution had to be different from European universities. He looked at the goal of this new

educational venture as the education of first class American citizens, who happen to work as farmers and mechanics. This would be different from Europe where education was conceived as befitting a class of farmers' servants as in England; or machine workers, as in Prussia; but as the preparation of men for any sphere of life. For this purpose he strongly advocated the classics and the humanities.

On January 5, 1871, Dr. Townshend, a faculty member, put forth a resolution to the trustees that the new college should educate farmers as farmers, and mechanics as mechanics. He said that the course of instruction in the Ohio Agricultural and Mechanical College should embrace not only the sciences that pertain specifically to agriculture but whatever practical instruction will make the labor of every industrial class more successful and elevating (trustees minutes 1871: 27). The broad concept of education included women by chance rather than design, with Alice and Henrietta Townshend, his two daughters, being the first female students enrolled (Goerler 2011).

In 1872, an Ohio working farm was proposed where students would conduct systematic experiments with different types of grain, such as wheat, corn, and oats, as well as cost analysis. This farm would incorporate a scientific approach with agricultural concerns (Trustees Minutes 1872: 48-53). Although not the main focus of the university, an agricultural extension program has remained an important part of the Ohio State land grant mission.

The agricultural-utopian vision articulated in the land grant institution legislation as expressed at Ohio State, with the combination of technical knowhow and a broad curriculum to enable participation in civil affairs, points to a similarly desired utilitarian and humanitarian focus within the pioneering Labor Zionist ethos. Promoted as a way to settle the West, the land grant institution was to include military training and surveying skills in addition to experimental agricultural techniques, and studies that promoted the "civilizing" lessons of classical literature.

The dreams of the early trustees of Ohio State regarding what the institution could accomplish in terms of broadly "educated" farmers and mechanics echoed idealist philosophy such as Rousseau's vision of learning from nature. History and literature were extremely important to the European, Romantic vision of the gentleman scholar. Land grant

institutions incorporated this into the leadership goals. The planners, legislators, trustees, and academics negotiated a uniquely American cultural identity that was nevertheless rooted in classical European civilization (Goerler 2011).

In the third annual report of Ohio State University the early trustees discussed how to combine the broadly defined humanities curriculum with agricultural programming. One of the conclusions was that finding the right faculty was crucial to achieving educational goals.

The Rev. Joseph Millikin was hired to fulfill a multi-faceted role. Although Millikin had planned on becoming a preacher in the Presbyterian Church, he decided to teach instead, first accepting the professorship of Greek language at Miami University in Ohio. He was then recruited to the state capital, in Columbus, to fill one of the first positions opened at the new Ohio State land grant institution. He was offered a chair in English and Modern Languages and Literature, with the position of librarian added, as well as history professor, depending on which books could be found and purchased.

Not surprisingly, the argument was soon made for another professor. John T. Short was hired in 1879; his responsibilities were described as Assistant Professor of History and Philosophy. The idea of combining English, Philosophy, and History was for the students to achieve a multidisciplinary understanding of literary, philosophical, historical, and economic subjects. The historical component was to focus on the United States, a required course in the freshman year. To reflect the broad humanities offerings, the name of the institution was changed in 1879 to the Ohio State University (Trustees minutes 1879: 184).

The curriculum also focused on the study of the English Bible, but within a secular context. With a clergyman involved in the academic arena, the search for a moral vision and outlook was transferred to a secularized setting. This was accomplished through the analysis of authors, such as Dickens and Browning, with their own set of moral and religious overtones (Leonard 1992).

The overwhelming demands made on these "interdisciplinary by necessity" humanities professors concerned the trustees. When John Short submitted his resignation to the trustees in 1883, they accepted it, but lamented that they were losing a ripe scholar, able instructor,

accomplished author, and above all a true Christian gentleman (Trustees Minutes 1883: 254). When he died shortly after, they were concerned that his untimely demise was partially due, no doubt, to his unremitting labors on behalf of the university, and they announced that in his death, education had sustained a great and irreparable loss, with literature shorn of a shining ornament (Trustees Minutes 1883: 267).

David Hollinger (2007) and Gerald Graff (1994) examined the ways in which history and English literature were used as instruments of political education to buttress identity politics. Linking American identity to the classical study of European civilization became a way to fight the emerging Marxist revolutionary theories by creating a sense of national fellowship that bypassed social class in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The link between history, language, and identity was evident in the English and History department subjects (S.A. Leonard 1992, unpublished dissertation). From 1882 to 1885, the university offered courses on the history of the English language, the history of English literature, and American and European history. Millikin designed a historical-based literary survey curriculum. For a brief period a woman instructor, Cynthia Weld, assisted in teaching some of the courses, although she was never considered for a permanent position. Weld justified the way in which a historical curriculum encouraged critical thinking about masterpieces through contextualization. This was an interesting early defense of the historical method, enabling one to read for context and critical interpretation (Leonard 1992).

Rev. Millikin's survey class combined a panoramic view of history with a literary-based depth in order to contextualize a personal connection. This combination preceded the famous Contemporary Civilization Survey Course at Columbia University during WWI, which was introduced to justify America's entry into the war (Menand 2010).

Pouring over the handwritten record of dissension among the trustees regarding what should be taught and what was worth knowing, I marveled at how relevant some of those curricular discussions were to the current day angst over the declining role of the humanities in higher education (ibid.) The importance of history in teacher preparation programs has significantly declined (Murrow 2006). Universities have

cancelled history course options, and even whole departments. The focus on the historical lens in Israel Studies is even more unusual in light of the scientific (and social science) bias in higher education nowadays.

A grand vision to prepare for a better society following the terrible losses of the Civil War evokes the discourse on the politicization of Israel Studies (Shenkar 2012). The anguished calls in the Jewish community and academe for a return to civility and mutual acceptance come at a time when Israel is increasingly the subject of BDS (boycott, disinvestment, sanctions) actions.

The calls in the academic arena to establish Israel Studies chairs are fascinating in terms of the juxtaposition of breadth versus depth views of ideal candidates and what they can accomplish. While these appeals reflect an increasingly hostile climate and intellectual anti-Israel narrative, it was thought that the tense situation could be mitigated by enlisting donors for privately endowed chairs (Kramer 2001).

Tension between institutional and donor expectations would seem to develop when Israel advocacy is not the stated priority of academic or donor intent, particularly for faculty members facing years of tenure and promotion struggles (Shenkar 2012). Utopian descriptions by donors and administrators regarding the scope of what an Israel Studies Chair could accomplish required reversing decades of campus-based anti-Israel rhetoric. Such high expectations reveal the gap between faculty, administrators, and donors. Thrown into the mix is the donors’ lack of control over the scholars chosen for the chairs. To come to the attention of the committees appointed for that purpose, many of the academics considered for such positions had, in the “worst case scenario”, a record of published works that were acclaimed precisely because they were severely critical of Israeli policy. Even in the “best case scenario” no academic would self-identify as interested in filling an advocacy role (ibid.). The donors of the privately endowed chairs had unrealistic visions of what could be achieved in terms of Israel advocacy. This was combined with meager understanding of the university policies preventing public interference in academic governance (Robbins 2008).

I found that the arguments and justifications for the array of subjects at the Agricultural and Mechanical College that best reflected the

goals of the fledgling institution to be similar to the utopian vision in establishing an Israel Studies Chair. Some of the calls to establish a chair expressed the expectation that the candidate could teach Hebrew literature and Zionist history, as well as offer solutions to the regional conflict or at least explain its sources. These “essentially contested concepts” are considered especially problematic in that they reflect perceptions that only one side of the conflict is rational and genuine; in other words, they are by definition related to the personal commitments of the narrator (Voll 1996). As the pace of the politicization of Israel Studies increases, scholars who explain the Middle East conflict find it more and more difficult to work their way up the tenure and promotion ladder (Shenkar 2012).

On March 6, 2008 Ohio State placed a call in a Jewish newspaper in Columbus, Ohio for a donor for an Israel Studies Chair (*The New Standard* 7). The call was phrased as An Open Letter to the Ohio Jewish Community about Israel Studies, and was submitted by Matt Goldish, then director of the Melton Center for Jewish Studies, who also held the Melton Chair in Jewish History that had been established in 1966. The center’s stated purpose was to help the greater Jewish community in developing Hebrew teaching resources, progressive pedagogical techniques for teaching Jewish subjects, and other educational aids including programs for adult education (Silva and Wachs 1977).

Samuel Melton was the first individual to provide for the full endowment of a faculty chair in any subject at the Ohio State University. As an alumnus of the university (1923), he recalled a course in philosophy that had covered all the major intellectuals of Western civilization but glossed over the Jewish contributions. This was the motivation behind his impetus to enact changes (Silva and Wachs 1997).

The call for an Israel Studies Chair summarized the accomplishments of the Melton Center in serving students in Jewish Studies, while pointing out the need for a new specialization in Israel Studies. Although courses on the Hebrew language and modern Israeli culture were taught, there was no expert in the fields of Zionist history and Israeli politics and economics to teach students and the community. The call noted that the media, the public, and even students, thirsty for information, often turned to people who lacked an intimate

and academic knowledge of Israel.

Matt Goldish, the former director of the Melton Center for Jewish Studies, concluded the public appeal with a personal call for a donor for an endowed chair in Israel Studies at Ohio State. He pointed to the Israel Studies Chairs and Centers that had been endowed in recent years at Brandeis University, the University of Maryland, American University, New York University, UCLA, Rutgers University, Yeshiva University, and other institutions. No greater honor could be given to a loved one, he suggested, than to name an endowed university chair in Israel Studies in their honor, and no greater gift could be bequeathed to Ohio youth than an education about Israel.

The call was preceded by a university document that the center had circulated in 2006 describing the rationale for a chair in Israel Studies, and focusing on the problems at Ohio State. Although the university had not suffered from virulent anti-Israel activism as on other campuses, concern was expressed over the changing atmosphere. Palestinian human rights discussions had become the latest forum for student-organized anti-Semitic diatribe. The best defense, it was argued, was to educate both the university community and the public. An Israel Studies Chair holder, it was proposed, would, as a senior scholar in the field, provide the community with an established authority able to participate in public discussions on Israel-related topics. The Israel scholar would serve as a spokesman on Israel issues before the press, as well as connect Ohio State University more solidly with the larger alumnae body and potential donors.

To launch the funding process, a visiting professor of Israel Studies was brought to Ohio State for 2009–2010. This endeavor recalls the traditional emissary (*shaliach*), experts in Hebrew and Israeli culture who were funded by various communities, the Zionist Organization, and Israeli government (Shenkar 2012). Matt Silver, for example, was brought in from the Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel (in Israel). After immigrating to Israel, Silver completed his MA and PhD degrees in Modern Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He also spent time on the *Ha'aretz* newspaper editorial staff. His publications focused on the American Jewish contribution to Israeli history, including a book on Leon Uris's impact on Israel's founding narrative (Melton Center Annual Report 2008-9). The endowment for

this position came from a variety of sources, including the American-Israel Cooperative Enterprise (AICE).

After years of searching, the Schottenstein family of prominent merchants agreed to pay the cost of a full time chair holder. After vetting a list of candidates, the call for a full-time Israel Studies Chair was answered in the fall of 2014. While the envisioned senior scholar in a full professor position could not be met, a promising young scholar was selected who still faced a thorny climb up the promotion ladder. The vulnerability of an untenured position in terms of public visibility and professional opinion on Israel's position in the media and university community is acute, all the more so if that opinion is not critical (Shenkar 2012).

Alexander Kaye was hired as an assistant professor in the Department of History and was the Saul and Sonia Schottenstein Chair in Israel Studies designate. He received his doctorate in history from Columbia University in 2012. His work covered classic historical themes in Jewish intellectual history such as the legal philosophy of religious Zionists in the twentieth century, and he studied the work of the great Columbia University Jewish historian Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. While this resumé is not unusual for Israel Studies Chair holders in terms of historical focus, one element of his biography does stand out. He holds a rabbinical ordination from Yeshivat Chovevei Torah. An ordained clergyman academic brings this institutional and intellectual history back to the 1870s–1890s.

In 2014 when the history department became the inevitable home of the Israel Studies Chair designate, Alexander Kaye, an ordained Rabbi, I too saw the continuity in the line and authority returning to the ministerial – humanities based professors of a bygone era. The clerical focus was reminiscent of the early chairs of Jewish studies in the twentieth century (Ritterband and Wechsler 1994).

The importance of a clerical background to the interpretation of historical events can be linked to the concept of the broadly defined background of the “gentleman scholar”. That concept eventually gave way to the more narrowly defined “expert” in a specific area rather than a general liberal arts background, which was part of the evolution of academic specialization and orientation (Becher 1989).

Francis Weisenburger (1969) traced the development of the Department of History at Ohio State University in terms of specialization. In 1873, seven departments were established but no separate history department, which meant that one person could teach various general courses in liberal arts education, which led to the lumping together of History with English and modern languages.

By 1885, when the official history department was established at Ohio State University, the discipline had become more narrowly focused. The requirement for expertise in history as separate from literature and philosophy was evident in the hiring of George Welles Knight. This scholar received the first specialized doctorate in history granted by the University of Michigan with his dissertation on the timely topic of the history and management of land grants for education in the Northwest Territory. The study became one of the first monographs published by the American Historical Association (established in 1884) in the *American Historical Review* (founded in 1895). The Trustees of Ohio State authorized Professor Knight to visit Europe and spend \$200 on books, maps, charts, and other supplies to improve the pedagogical tools used in the teaching of the field (Trustees Minutes 1885: 367).

Conclusion

Ohio State University’s Department of History received an Israel Studies Chair in the early 21st century. To understand how this came about, I examined the placing of an Israel Studies Chair in the Department of History with the main dilemma of the modern land grant and the research university; that is, of utilitarian versus traditional goals of knowledge formation. The history department, with its focus on national identity and the classics, became the likely home for Israel Studies with a similar knowledge focus.

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