



## **Israel Studies International MA Program**

**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**

### **Exile and Redemption in Zionism—Syllabus**

**Prof. Arie Saposnik**

**Fall Semester 2021**

**Thursday, 14:30-18:00**

**Sde Boker Campus, The Ben Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel  
and Zionism**

#### **Course Description:**

Was modern Zionism a continuation of traditional Jewish messianic longing or a rebellion against it? “Exile” and “redemption” are perhaps the twin poles that most defined traditional Jewish thought. “Exile” has also been a central term in much of Zionist thought—the “problem” that Zionism set out to correct. If “negation of exile” was so central to Zionism, is it also the case that the solutions it sought were based on visions of redemption? While language related to redemptive and messianic ideas was common in Zionism, some scholars have argued that this was little more than rhetoric aimed at mobilization of masses. Others have suggested that it is language that ought to be taken seriously. In what ways did the language of redemption function in Zionism? In a movement that was at the forefront of the secularization of Jewish culture, what could notions of “redemption” mean?

This course will seek to understand how Zionist thinkers understood these terms and how they constructed their images of the past and their visions of the future based on them.

#### **Structure:**

The course will be conducted seminar-style. The focus will be on a shared, close reading of texts (we will spend a significant amount of time reading together) and interpretations of them. We will be combining readings of secondary literature (research that scholars have conducted on the topics we are discussing) and primary sources (writings and sources produced by the historical actors at the time).

### **Course Requirements:**

- Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend class regularly and to participate actively. Participation, of course, must be based on consistent reading of the relevant materials for each given meeting. The class will be conducted seminar-style, and all students are expected to be active participants and to prepare points for discussion of the reading material.

### **Written Assignments:**

- Midterm paper: The midterm paper will focus on textual analysis of one of the texts read in the class. It will constitute 30% of the final grade. **Due date: December 9.**
- Final paper: The final paper will maintain the textual focus, but will expand to analysis of two or more texts, which you will be asked to compare and contextualize. **Due Date: February 11.**

We will discuss how to approach writing these papers over the course of the semester.

## Class Schedule and Readings:

### 1. **October 21—Introduction: Why “Exile”? Why “Redemption”?**

Film: James’ Journey to Jerusalem

### 2. **October 28—Biblical Foundations, Exile and Redemption in Jewish Thought and Experience**

Arnold Eisen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflection on Homelessness and Homecoming* (Indiana University Press, 1986), xi-18.

Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 244-286.

Moshe Idel, “Multiple Forms of Redemption in Kabbalah and Hasidism”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101:1 (2011), 27-70.

### 3. **November 4: Exile and Alienation as a Common Cultural Trope and as Modern Experience**

Franz Kafka, “Before the Law”; “The Metamorphosis”

Koichi Togashi & Doris Brothers, “Are We All Refugees?”, *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 41:2 (2021), 128-137.

Steven Burr, *Finite transcendence: existential exile and the myth of home* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), pp. TBA

### 4. **November 11: Modernity and Redemption, Modern Political Messianisms**

David Ohana, “J. L. Talmon, Gershom Scholem and the Price of Messianism”, *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008), 169-188.

#### **B: Redemption and the Jewish Encounter with Modernity**

Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 287-324.

Israel Bartal, “Messianism and nationalism: Liberal optimism vs. orthodox anxiety”, *Jewish History* 20:1 (2006), 5-17.

**5. November 18: Proto-Zionist stirrings and Transformations in Messianic Expectation**

Forerunners of Zionism—Aklalai, Kalischer, Hess, in Arthur Herzberg, *The Zionist Idea—A Historical analysis and Reader* (Jewish Publication Society, 1997), 103-139.

**6. November 25: Zionism and “Negation of Exile”**

Zali Gurevitch and Gideon Aran, “Never in Place: Eliade and Judaic Sacred Space”, *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 87 (1994), 135-152.

Haim Hazaz, “The Sermon”, in *The Sermon and Other Stories* (Toby Press, 2005), 233-249.

Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism* (University of Chicago Press, 1996),

**7. December 2: Death and Rebirth in Zionism**

Leo Pinsker, “Autoemancipation” in Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea*, 178-198.

Arieh Saposnik, “Exorcising the ‘Angel of National Death’—National and Individual Death (and Rebirth) in Zionist National Liturgy in Palestine, 1903-1914”. *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:3 (Summer 2005), 557-78.

**8. December 9: Redemptive Celebration and Commemoration**

Arieh Saposnik, “The Desert Comes to Zion—A Narrative Ends its Wandering”, in *Exodus in the Jewish Experience—Echoes and Reverberations* (Pamela Barmash and David Nelson, eds.), 213-246.

Yael Zerubavel, *Desert in the Promised Land* (Stanford University Press, 2018),

Springtime in the Holy Land, Spielberg Film Archives

**9. December 16: Redemptive Historiographies—Zionism Narrates Itself**

Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor—Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Schocken, 1989), 81-103.

Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (University of Chicago Press, 1949), 1-19.

Saposnik, *Zionism’s Redemptions—Images of the Past and Visions of the Future in Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2021), ch. 4.

## **10. December 23: WWI and the Balfour Declaration as Redemptive Moments**

Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (HarperOne, 2014), 1-28.

Eytan Bar-Yosef, “The Last Crusade? British Propaganda and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 36:1 (2001) 87-109.

Elie Podeh, “Diversity within a Show of Unity: Commemorating the Balfour Declaration in Israel (1917-2017)”, *Israel Studies* 22:3 (2017), 1-30.

## **11. December 30: Sites of Redemption**

Arieh Saposnik, “Wailing Walls and Iron Walls: Soldering the Sacred and the National at the Kotel, 1929 and Beyond”, *American Historical Review* 120:5 (December 2015), 1653–1681.

Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (University of Chicago Press, 1997), pages TBA.

## **12. January 6: Zionism and the Christian Holy Land**

Sergio Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land, 1895-1925*

Shalom Goldman, *Zeal for Zion: Christians, Jews, and the Idea of the Promised Land* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014), Introduction.

## **13. January 13: Assessments—Was (or is) Zionism a Redemptive Movement?**

Eli Lederhendler, “Interpreting Messianic Rhetoric in the Russian Haskalah and Early Zionism”, in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Jews and Messianism in the Modern Era—Metaphor and Meaning* (Studies in Contemporary Jewry, an Annual, Vol. VII, Oxford University Press, 1991), 14-33.

Arthur Hertzberg, “Introduction”, *The Zionist Idea*