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Post-Zionism only rings once

The post-Zionists had the feeling that their ideas were taking hold among the public - until the Al Aqsa Intifada erupted. What is post-Zionism, anyway? Why does it frighten its opponents and make even its advocates writhe uncomfortably? And has it really vanished like last year's fad?

By Neri Livneh

The end of this month will mark the first anniversary of the eruption of the Al Aqsa Intifada. It will also mark the first anniversary of the death of post-Zionism as a movement and a social attitude, according to Dr. Ilan Pappé, an outspoken post-Zionist. Prof. Anita Shapira, who takes vehement issue with Pappé's ideas and wrote an entire book to counter post-Zionism ("New Jews, Old Jews"), says that although post-Zionism as a method has not disappeared - and that it is quite probable that a considerable number of its proponents will belong to the next generation of university researchers and instructors - the popularity of post-Zionist concepts has been at a nadir among students and readers since the intifada began almost a year ago.

At least five books on post-Zionism have been written by non-Israeli researchers in universities abroad. There, particularly before the death throes and final demise of the "peace process," the view was that Israel was opening a new chapter, post-Zionist in character, in its history. In the past year, the feeling is that Israel opened the book, gave it a quick perusal, and slammed it shut again.

"If until the past year the university simply tried to curtail me," Pappé says, "today they are actually trying to kick me out. Because today, you can kick out a lecturer in Israel on the basis of his opinions."

It's more reasonable to think that no one will really kick Pappé out of the University of Haifa, where he has tenure and is also a very popular lecturer; and besides, he is involved in an academic debate that is taking place in a setting that is supposed to be open to all views. But the fact is that Pappé and others have the effect of unsettling ideological rivals, both in and out of academia, and making them take a hostile attitude not only toward different opinions, but also toward those who espouse them.

Prof. Yoav Gelber, for example, who is a colleague of Pappé's at the University of Haifa, says he is unwilling to have his name "mentioned in the same newspaper in which Ilan Pappé's name is mentioned. Any self-respecting person will not agree to appear in the same place, or to sit in the same room,

with Pappé, and I am definitely a person who respects himself."

Gelber recently sent a letter to the head of the social sciences faculty at the university, suggesting that Pappé be fired. Three weeks ago, Gelber sent a message to the university's internal communications network in which he likened Pappé to "Lord Haw-Haw" (William Joyce, who was described by journalist William Shirer as "a leading brawler in Mosley's British Union of Fascists," and who broadcast anti-British propaganda for the Nazis and was hung in London in 1946).

Shifting viewpoints

The popularity of post-Zionism as a subject for those interested in researching Israel is at its peak abroad, says Dr. Tom Segev, a historian and a columnist for Ha'aretz. Segev was interviewed hours before he lifted off for the United States, where he will be giving a three-month seminar on this exact subject at Rutgers University. His small book, "The New Zionists," which was published a few months ago by Keter, will appear in the U.S. next year and afterward in other countries.

"Abroad, this is a subject that fascinates everyone who takes an interest in Israel," Segev explains. "There are constant discussions on the subject, innumerable articles. There is tremendous interest in post-Zionism, which is viewed as a central process in Israel, and it's a lot easier for those who observe us from the outside to see what's happening to us."

Since post-Zionism as a political posture is less popular today than it was a year ago, even those who support post-Zionist positions prefer to do so without referring to it by name. Others, who once consented to being considered part of the post-Zionist camp, even though they did not really think they were part of it, now openly dissociate themselves from it. Indeed, the term "post-Zionist" often is used only as a general label of derogation, one which is more cultured than "Israel-hater," with which loyal Zionists brand people whom they perceive as questioning the just cause of the Zionist movement.

In the wider sense, if the term post-Zionism is meant to describe every attempt to examine the injustices perpetrated by Zionism and to reassess Israel's history from a standpoint that is different from the standard version, all those who are identified in this article as "post-Zionists" will undoubtedly agree to be included in the list.

But in the narrower, and more precise, sense, post-Zionism is a political attitude that recognizes the legitimacy of Zionism as a national movement of Jews, but specifies a certain date, a kind of watershed, from which point on Zionism concluded its historical role or lost its legitimacy because of injustices it did to others (not only to Arabs but also, for example to Holocaust survivors

from Europe, Yiddish speakers, Jews from Arab and Islamic countries, ultra-Orthodox Jews and women).

This viewpoint also gives rise to a political conclusion, according to which Israel must disengage itself from its Zionist elements, which are the foundation of its Jewish character, because they are preventing it from being a democratic state. In the eyes of its opponents, this conclusion by the post-Zionists places them in a saliently anti-Zionist camp.

"Post-Zionism," says Dr. Amnon Raz-Karkutkin, from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva, "is actually a kind of general term that was invented in order to stuff into one basket and denounce everyone who does not identify completely with the establishment, or who has anything critical to say about the way history is taught in Israel, or who see the huge damage that Zionism has done to the Palestinians or the Mizrahim" - referring to Jews whose origins lie in Middle Eastern countries.

"Post-Zionism is an empty label," asserts Prof. Yehouda Shenhav from Tel Aviv University. "I think we have to stop using the category of 'post-Zionism,' because people invoke it confusingly. Not everyone who calls for an end to the occupation is necessarily a post-Zionist. People who want to return to the 1967 lines can be Zionists through and through, because they are convinced that nationhood cannot exist without borders. On the other hand, you could say that the settlers are post-Zionists, because their very existence is harmful to nationhood within clear boundaries."

Raz-Karkutkin and Shenhav do not consider themselves post-Zionists, although they are identified as such by their detractors.

"Post-Zionism is a term I abhor," Raz-Karkutkin states. "I am absolutely not a post-Zionist."

A fierce debate broke out over this issue a few months ago in Keshet Hademokratit Hamizrahit (Sephardi Democratic Coalition). Moshe Krief, for example, is one of the sharpest critics in the organization of those members whom he perceives as post-Zionists, such as Shenhav. The debate is of particular interest because the coalition was established on a post-Zionist foundation, which views Zionism as an essentially Ashkenazi ideology and movement that harmed Arabs and Mizrahim.

The coalition was created primarily to right the wrong that was done to the Mizrahim, Krief explains. It is trying to accomplish this by "conducting a trenchant dialogue with Israeli society and trying to tell the history of Israeli society from the viewpoint of the Mizrahim, and not only as was customary in the past, from the point of view of male Ashkenazim. In my view, though, we are not post-Zionists, because we are absolutely not people who want to dismantle the

state."

Krief and other opponents of post-Zionism define it according to what they identify as its conclusions. Many post-Zionists say that Israel stripped of its Zionism should be a "state of all its citizens," meaning a country where there is full equality for everyone including Arabs. Still, post-Zionism is not necessarily a political outlook as much as it is a way of looking at things, of shifting one's point of view.

The conclusions gleaned from that new perspective can be different. Benny Morris, for example, one of the leading "new historians," is a Zionist, whereas Ilan Pappé is an anti-Zionist. Yet both are dubbed by the disparagers as post-Zionists.

The thrust for individuality

In an article he wrote for The New York Times about three weeks ago, Tom Segev argued that the Palestinians are forcing Israelis with post-Zionist leanings to return to the womb of Zionism.

"Post-Zionism is a situation, not an ideology," he says. "It is a situation in which people grow tired of an ideology and a collectivity and want to live their lives as individuals."

Segev's book, "The New Zionists," was written before the intifada erupted.

"I wanted to postpone the book's publication because I don't know what situation we are in now," he explains. "It's not certain that the post-Zionist situation is being nullified, and it's equally not certain that it is not being nullified. Post-Zionism reflects very deep processes within the society, it is more than a caprice of a few people who write books. The fact is that the society allowed Yitzhak Rabin to shake hands with Yasser Arafat and allowed Ehud Barak to conduct peace negotiations because of the conclusion people reached that life is more important to them. But afterward they punished Barak for failing.

"Of course, as soon as bullets start flying and people are blown up, there is a kind of reversion to Zionism, but it's possible that people will accept a situation in which terrorism exists and the need to strive for peace still exists. You have to remember what engendered post-Zionism: It was born out of the first intifada, which in large measure was victorious. Post-Zionism said, 'Let's give up the territories, because we are simply fed up with dying, with doing reserve duty, and so forth.' Who says the second intifada won't produce a similar result?"

"The fact is," Raz-Karkutkin says, "that since the intifada started, the only critical academic articles in Israel have appeared in English." He is referring to "Hagar," a post-Zionist English language periodical edited by Prof. Oren Yiftachel and

published by Ben-Gurion University.

However, similar articles are also published consistently by "Theory and Criticism" (edited by Yehouda Shenhav and published by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute), a Hebrew-language journal which is considered the organ of the post-Zionists and was founded with that purpose by Adi Ophir.

In the meantime, Keter has begun to publish a new series of long essays in book format under the general heading of "The Israelis" (general editor: Gideon Samet, a columnist for Ha'aretz), and at least two of the books that have so far appeared are clearly post-Zionist: Segev's book and a work by Prof. Baruch Kimmerling, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, on "The End of Ashkenazi Hegemony." (In Hebrew, Kimmerling has invented the acronym "Ahusalim," for Ashkenazi, secular, veteran, socialist, liberals).

There are a good many post-Zionists in the arts departments of the universities. Some of them have a history of protest and criticism that far antedates the relatively brief life of post-Zionism, but their voices have been mostly inaudible during the past year. In literature, poetry and theater, too, post-Zionism has not made new inroads since the intifada started. However, it was never really an essential part of creative output in Israel, according to the poet, novelist and essayist Yitzhak Laor, much of whose work is saliently post-Zionist. But Laor is, in any case, considered an avowed anti-Zionist.

"Post-Zionism is a kind of convenient bag into which all kinds of people can be stuffed," he says. "On the one hand, it allows anti-Zionists to come out of the closet without calling themselves anti-Zionists, and on the other hand, it allows all the ideological establishment Zionists to throw them all into that bag so they can kick it around."

Not only post-Zionism is difficult to find in Hebrew literature, Laor says; so is any other political view.

"A while ago I was asked, on the occasion of 'the Situation,' to organize an evening of political poets, but to make sure that Meir Wieseltier, Aharon Shabtai and Yitzhak Laor wouldn't be the only ones there. I said fine. Show me one political poem by a young poet. It's the same with young writers. There are no young writers who are publishing political literature. Of the older generation, you can hear the opinion that Joshua Kenaz is a post-Zionist, in the sense that he is a definite Canaanite [a group that advocated a new Hebrew - as opposed to Jewish - nation] and that Orly Kastel-Blum is a post-Zionist because her irony places all the sacrosanct verities in doubt."

To this list, we can add Sami Michael, who has just published a new novel; the new film "Yellow Asphalt" directed by Danny Varte, which depicts the life of the Bedouin in the Negev; the work of the feminist Mizrahi filmmaker Simone Biton;

and a few others.

No new post-Zionist play has been staged since the intifada began, Laor notes, "but that is because in recent years playwrights and the theater in Israel have become a lot more fawning toward the audience's taste."

One sphere that will continue to be post-Zionist always, irrespective of developments on the security front, is feminism. In its essence, feminism is a reappraisal of history and ideologies from women's point of view.

"Feminism in the past 10 years has been talking about a great pain that is due to Zionism," says Hannah Safran, who teaches in the Women's Studies Program at the University of Haifa and is an activist in the Woman to Woman feminist organization.

"The whole debate of the past few years is about identities, and therefore it's connected with the consequences of Zionism, and is thus post-Zionist in its essence. Feminism is a movement that fights for equality and so we are also talking about equality between Ashkenazi women and Mizrahi women, and between Jewish women and Palestinian women."

Some of the leading post-Zionist women in academia are Prof. Tanya Reinhardt (linguistics), Dr. Orly Lubin (literature), Dr. Rachel Giora (linguistics), Dr. Anat Matar (philosophy), Dr. Anat Bieltsky (philosophy), Prof. Ilana Pardes (Bible), and Prof. Galit Hazan Rokem (Hebrew literature).

Schizoid history

"The rumors about the death of post-Zionism were premature and exaggerated," says Prof. Shlomo Zand from the General History Department at Tel Aviv University.

"I don't think that anyone in the academic world who defined himself as a post-Zionist or as a non-Zionist or as an anti-Zionist went back to being a Zionist after last October, but I do think that the tolerance of the media toward post-Zionism declined after that. The first intifada opened the way for the critical researchers, those you call post-Zionists, and the Oslo accord legitimized post-Zionism. But the new intifada brought about a siege of the media elites and that siege led them back to the old Mapai style" - referring to the policies and approach of the party that was the precursor of Labor.

"Unlike my friend Ilan Pappé," Zand adds, "I don't think there is a regression from post-Zionism or from critical research in the universities. I think that Ilan simply deluded himself into thinking that the change of the universities and their liberalization would be a rapid process. I don't think that there are fewer critical researchers or post-Zionists today than there were a year ago. I also think there

is a new generation - perhaps not big enough, but there is such a generation. I have five doctoral students, for example, and I assume that most of them would term themselves non-Zionists."

The origins of academic post-Zionism lie with the historians, and more precisely with the so-called new historians. There are differences of opinion as to when post-Zionism first emerged, but everyone agrees that it happened in the second half of the 1980s. Two things happened at that time: the first intifada, which reminded everyone that there was a second side, too, a side of victims, to the Zionist success story, and the fact that studies of a post-Zionist character began to be published. Under the Archives Law, it was not until the end of the 1970s that the files containing documents and papers relating to the 1948 war were opened to the public, and 10 years is definitely a reasonable time in which to write and publish an academic study.

The first post-Zionist books were published abroad, in English. Simha Flapan's book "The Birth of Israel" appeared in 1987 in New York, and the following year, Benny Morris published "The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem 1947-1949" (Cambridge), Avi Shlaim published "Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine" (Oxford), and Ilan Pappé published "Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-1951" (London).

The beginnings, then, lay with the new historians, who were not a group either ("only Benny Morris, who is a Zionist, took us - there were perhaps three of us - and announced that we were a `group,'" recalls Pappé).

On the other side of the academic fence, Shabtai Tevet was one of the first to discern the danger lurking for the national ethos, and in 1989 wrote a series of three articles in Ha'aretz on the new historians, in which he accused them of intellectual dishonesty and claimed that were deliberately relying on mistaken information. The war was on. Afterward, when critical positions began to be heard and written up in other academic spheres, a new and broader term was needed to reflect them all.

When people began to invoke the two terms concurrently, there was initially an inclination to identify the new historians with the post-Zionists. Thus Benny Morris was classified as a post-Zionist, even though he is in fact a Zionist. But beyond the facts that they discovered in their research, the post-Zionist historians rejected the traditional split of the teaching of history in the Israeli academic world into two: Everything that happened to the Jews was taught in departments of Israel studies or the history of the Jewish people, while all the rest of history, almost without connection to Jews, was taught in general history departments. (The only university that does not make this distinction is Ben-Gurion).

"This is a situation that has no example anywhere in the world," Prof. Zand maintains. "In France, they don't study the history of France divorced from the history of Europe. There might be courses with different emphases in a history department. But here, if I teach in the Department of General History, I am not supposed to refer to Jewish history. So post-Zionism is not actually relevant to research or teaching in the General History Department, irrespective of whether there were always historians in the General History Department who defined themselves as post-Zionists or non-Zionists or anti-Zionists."

On the other hand, in departments where Zand believes a post-Zionist approach is required, it is not present.

"I don't know anyone in the Department of Jewish Thought, or in the Department of the History of the Jewish People, who is not a Zionist or a post-Zionist," he notes. "Why? Because this division of history in effect says that the history of France is supposed to be taught objectively, from an external perspective, but those who teach Jewish history are supposed to be committed to Zionist ideology."

"The process of the liberalization of the universities, which is making Prof. Amnon Rubinstein lose sleep, has not reached the departments that are out to preserve the national memory - meaning Jewish History or History of the Jewish People or Israel Studies or Jewish Thought."

"Therefore, the Israeli historian of the history of the Jewish people whom I most esteem is not an academic historian, and it's not surprising that he holds no academic post. I am talking about Boas Evron, who wrote the first saliently post-Zionist book, 'A National Accounting'" - published in Hebrew by Dvir, in 1988.

Prof. Yisrael Yovel, from the Department of the History of the Jewish People at the Hebrew University: "I myself am not a post-Zionist, but I deny the legitimacy of the argument that a researcher of Jewish history cannot be a post-Zionist. If post-Zionist thought is a possible category, then it is possible ... even in departments of Jewish history. Anyone who thinks it's not possible, thinks that the history of the Jewish people began with Zionism. The only trouble is that started a few years before that. The Jewish History Department can accommodate a pre-Zionist, Zionist or post-Zionist approach. The conceptual categories are legitimate in any context."

Do you know of researchers in Jewish history departments whose studies have a post-Zionist character?

Yovel: "No, but that's because those departments hardly deal with Zionism. Zionism is studied mainly in the Department of Contemporary Jewry."

Ideology and witch hunts

The journal "Theory and Criticism" was founded in 1990 by Prof. Adi Ophir (philosophy), Prof. Hanan Hever (Hebrew literature), Dr. Amnon Raz-Karkutzkin (general history), Prof. Yehouda Shenhav (sociology), Dr. Azmi Bishara (political science), attorney Avigdor Feldman, and Dr. Yoav Peled (political science). Ophir edited the journal until a year ago, and when he took sabbatical leave the editorship was taken over by Prof. Shenhav.

"The idea was to create some sort of local criticism of the national hegemony," Shenhav explains. "To promote post-national, post-Zionist, Marxist and feminist thought."

By the mid-1990s, there were a good number of post-Zionist scholars in the universities (notably in Tel Aviv, Be'er Sheva and Haifa). Still, their numbers remain very small compared to the Zionists.

"For every post-Zionist researcher there are 10 or a hundred who are not post-Zionists," says Dr. Yossi Yonah from the Department of Education at Ben-Gurion University.

As mentioned, BGU is the home of "Hagar," the journal edited by Prof. Yiftachel, head of the Department of Geography. The publisher is Prof. Lev Grinberg, from the Department of Sociology.

"I myself am a Zionist by definition, as I immigrated to Israel, but that doesn't mean I have no critical thought about Zionism and about nationalism, about the Zionist and university establishments, and about the society in Israel," Grinberg says. "Actually, though, very few people are ready to call themselves post-Zionists, apart from Ilan Pappé and Dr. Uri Ram from Ben-Gurion, who defined themselves as such and immediately hoped that everyone would follow suit and that they had invented a movement."

Grinberg describes the journal he publishes as a "critical one that addresses interdisciplinary issues, not only in the Israeli context but everywhere. But we chose 'Hagar' as a common symbol to Judaism and Islam, and a symbol of the Palestinian problem, peripheralism and feminism, all of which we also address."

Why does "Hagar" come out in English?

Grinberg: "Because only the Jews speak Hebrew, while English is the language of the academic world, and we also want to communicate with the Palestinians."

Publication of the journal is financed by the Hubert Humphrey Institute, which is the focal point for the scholars who espouse critical thought and take an anti-establishment approach at BGU. There are about 40 of them, and they originate in a variety of departments: sociology, political science, social work, history, international relations, literature, geography and Middle East studies.

Ben-Gurion University is considered the bastion of post-Zionism, although with the exception of sociologist Uri Ram (who is currently on sabbatical leave abroad), there is not one other researcher there who calls himself a post-Zionist.

"It's clear that you can advance in the university even if you have a post-Zionist approach," Grinberg says. "In Tel Aviv and Be'er Sheva it's the `in' thing, and in other places, it's sometimes possible. Generally, the atmosphere at Ben-Gurion is one of critical thought, which, if you like, can be considered post-Zionism in the broad sense.

"There is no hegemonic establishment core at BGU, which is a relatively young university, so nearly all the approaches here are critical. The picture at Tel Aviv University is more complex because there is an old establishment core, and in Jerusalem, the old establishment is very strong and dominant. In Jerusalem, you might run into promotion problems if you harbor post-Zionist views.

"Here, too, there was a certain panic when we were afraid that people with post-Zionist views would not be promoted, and therefore I am delighted to be able to tell you that the three last people who were promoted are precisely those who are identified with post-Zionism: Uri Ram, Haggai Ram and Yossi Yonah."

Yonah thinks that the academic world, including BGU, hasn't yet fully opened itself to critical scholars: "The fact is that a woman like Dr. Ella Shohat could not find an academic position and that Dr. Shlomo Swirski, a distinguished sociologist, couldn't find work at any university - and Swirski is perhaps to blame for being the first to open the way for critical observation in the social sciences.

"True, I was given tenure, but I have to say that there is a kind of McCarthy-like atmosphere, which is represented by people like Amnon Rubinstein, who conducts witch hunts against people whose integrity is impeccable and who are also excellent and fair-minded scholars. Overall, the atmosphere in this country is that anyone who is critical is a mischief-maker."

Rubinstein clashed with post-Zionism in 1995, when it was at its height and he was minister of education, culture and sport. In an article in Ha'aretz, Rubinstein argued that the people whom he identified as post-Zionists were radically anti-Israeli, Holocaust deniers, and castigators of Zionism whose goal was to bury the Zionist movement.

Two years later, Rubinstein wrote another article denouncing post-Zionism, in which he argued that its goal was not to right wrongs but to launch "a frontal assault on the very essence and right of existence of the national home of the Jewish people ... Thus the post-Zionist assault became anti-Zionist propaganda, and it reflects an ideological worldview, not academic research, however critical it may be."

Prof. Amnon Rubinstein: "I wrote a series of articles in Ha'aretz against post-Zionism, and in my book 'From Herzl to Rabin,' which appeared a year ago, I devoted an entire chapter to post-Zionism and to my objections to it. The post-Zionists, who are ostensibly very enlightened people, take it as a personal affront the moment you argue with them. But my opposition to them is not personal. I am using rational grounds to prove that they are mistaken in their understanding and in their historical analogies, and that they are attacking the very existence of the State of Israel."

The chapter on post-Zionism in Rubinstein's book ignited the debate over post-Zionism anew. A recent supporter of Rubinstein has been Nissim Kalderon, who reviewed his book favorably in the daily Ma'ariv, describing the author's critique as substantive and the post-Zionists as a confrontational group.

Prof. Yiftachel responded: "The attempt by Kalderon and Rubinstein to create an 'enlightened' niche for themselves by means of superficial comparisons and by vilifying the critical researchers is no more than an evasion of a serious discussion on Zionism's deep problems."

Even though Yiftachel has reached the position of head of a department at BGU, he maintains that people who espouse critical attitudes such as his ("post-Zionist" views, for the purposes of this article), are promoted more slowly in the universities.

"The fact is that neither Baruch Kimmerling in Jerusalem, Yehouda Shenhav in Tel Aviv, nor myself in Be'er Sheva is a full professor, although there is greater openness in Be'er Sheva than in other universities," he says. "I wrote my doctoral thesis on the Judaization of Galilee, at the Technion, and as you notice, I did not stay there. Fortunately, Ben-Gurion invited me to teach there."

Yiftachel notes that in other geography departments, "You will hardly find critical approaches, because geography is usually connected to the establishment - members of geography departments serve as consultants to the Interior Ministry and the Environment Ministry, which is why geographers are often shouting mad about things I write and say. After all, there is no more national sphere than geography."

There is a large group of critical scholars at BGU, Yiftachel says, and a large

new generation is also emerging. The major post-Zionist departments are sociology, education, Middle East studies, psychology, geography, history, literature and even economics: "We have created a pretty large group of people and we have a large number of doctoral and post- doctoral students."

So you don't agree with Pappé that post-Zionism is dead?

Yiftachel: "My good friend Ilan and Uri Ram declared post-Zionism to be without content and now they are declaring the death of this thing with no content. The critical researchers have not disappeared - on the contrary - but Ilan may be right in that when there is shooting, the public discourse shuts down. But it will be renewed again when the shooting stops, because we have no other alternative."

Dr. Danny Guttwein, from the Jewish History Department at Haifa University, also thinks post-Zionism has a rosy future, at least for the short term, but for completely different reasons.

"Post-Zionism, he says, "is actually the ideological aspect of the privatization the state is experiencing; the post-Zionists are effectively carrying out a privatization of Zionism. So I think that only a true left-wing, socialist movement can pose a danger to post-Zionism." And no such movement is looming on the horizon these days.

The establishment fights back

"What's important is not how many post-Zionists there are in each university but what impact they have," says Prof. Yosef Grodzinsky, from the Department of Psychology at Tel Aviv University.

"You can check it from a negative perspective, too, by seeing who is admitted and who is promoted and who isn't. So it took Benny Morris about 400 years to get a position at BGU [Morris is now waiting to be tenured], Avi Shlaim will probably remain at Oxford, and it will be interesting to see how long it takes before Ilan Pappé is a full professor. I myself became a professor in the Psychology Department because I am a psycho-linguist."

Grodzinsky published a book in which he examined the attitude of Zionists toward Holocaust survivors.

"I wouldn't have been able to write the book if I had been part of the Department of the History of the Jewish People, because critical work of that kind has never been written in any Jewish history department - and all we are talking about is archival work without any methodological innovation. The only new thing was the very willingness to cope with the wrongs perpetrated by the Zionists."

Prof. Shenhav says that his political opinions "definitely slowed down" his promotion and adds that Tel Aviv University is a "reactionary" institution. The good news, he says, is that "the young generation is far more open than the faculty to critical thought."

In 1996, Shenhav, who is "a post-Zionist only to the degree that post-Zionism deals with the politics of identities," published an article in Ha'aretz in which he claimed that the Israeli left, which is largely Ashkenazi (including the new historians) "is ready to devote itself to exposing the wrongs that were done and are being done to the Palestinians, but is not ready to come forth and denounce the generation of [their] parents for their racism toward the Mizrahi Jews."

Shenhav was then the head of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University, a fact that induced many readers to respond to the article, for and against, including an elaborate response by Amnon Rubinstein.

"The article I published in Ha'aretz was a watershed for me," Shenhav says. "People in the university told me afterward that it was absolutely not worth my while to kick up a fuss and that it absolutely didn't pay to get involved with the Mizrahi issue, and that we must not deteriorate into politics. They hinted that it could be harmful to my status."

Despite the complaints, the post-Zionist scholars have had a major impact at Tel Aviv University. The departments that are considered bastions of post-Zionism there are mainly sociology, political science, philosophy, general history, archaeology and psychology. Among the leading post-Zionist faculty, other than those already mentioned, are Prof. Israel Gershoni (Middle East studies), Prof. Aviad Kleinberg (history), Prof. Ze'ev Herzog (archaeology), Prof. Moshe Zuckerman (head of the Institute of German Studies), Dr. Ronen Shamir (sociology of law), Prof. Haim Genaz (law), Dr. Eyal Gross (law) and, until recently, Prof. Hanan Hever, who this year is moving to the Hebrew University, where he will teach a course called "Post-Zionism and Post-Nationalism in Hebrew Literature." Hever declined to be interviewed for this article.

The number of post-Zionists at the Hebrew University is thus likely to increase substantially. Hever will join Prof. Moshe Zimmermann (general history) and a quartet from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (Kimmerling, Prof. Tamar Rapoport, Dr. Danny Rabinowitz and Dr. Tamar El-Or).

"I remember that when I started to get involved in politics, while I was teaching at Hebrew University, I was told straight out: lower your profile," recalls Prof. Yossi Yonah (now at BGU).

Pappe: "Post-Zionism began at Haifa when Shlomo Swirski coined the term in the 1980s, although the post-Zionism he was referring to was something different. A decade later there were me and Benny Morris, and then came the

peak in the mid-1990s with the great success in Be'er Sheva, where they understood that post-Zionism is not a passing fad but a genuine phenomenon within academia. Then the academic world began to become frightened at the intensity of the phenomenon and said, fine, it's only happening in Be'er Sheva. Then they started to close doors and the assault on post-Zionism began.

"What frightened everyone who attacked us was the fact that the authors of school textbooks began to be influenced by post-Zionism. Then came the new intifada and brought out all the hatred for the post-Zionists. Since it began, the post-Zionists have had to hide in their holes. Nothing meaningful was created in the cultural arena either. The media is against us. Anita Shapira wrote an entire book against post-Zionism and Amnon Rubinstein wrote a [chapter in his] book against post-Zionism."

"Most of us have a considerable number of successors - doctoral and M.A. students - and that is a wave that can be expected to continue," Yiftachel predicts. "But there is also something to what Ilan Pappé says: At the University of Haifa, and maybe in Jerusalem, too, those who hold the establishment views have mounted a powerful struggle against the critical scholars."

The new establishment

Prof. Anita Shapira, from Tel Aviv University, thinks post-Zionism wields too great an influence in the universities: "There is a matter of generations in the university," she says.

"We have to assume that at a certain stage, let's say when my generation retires, post-Zionism will exercise a major influence, because the post-Zionists have a greater impact on the young generation, and when the generations change, they may be the ones to decide who will be promoted at the universities and who will leave them. I ask myself whether they are transplanting their views to their students or not. The answer is that I don't know, but I am also not worried. A year or two ago there was a lot more receptiveness among students to those views, because students always like what they perceive as new and defiant; but their popularity among the students has declined perceptibly in the past year.

"I myself have been teaching a course on Zionism in literature and film for a few years, and three lessons in the course are devoted to our relations with the Arabs. We read 'Hirbet Hizah,' for example [referring to a controversial short story about the Arab-Jewish conflict by S. Yizhar]. When I gave that lesson this year, you could have cut the air with a knife. There is feedback between the reality in which we live and the way the things we say are absorbed by the students. In no small measure, that makes the post-Zionist concepts unacceptable to a growing public in academia."

Shapira also awaits with irony the moment when the post-Zionist rebels will be perceived as a new establishment.

"Just as we, the veterans, were the establishment in the eyes of the post-Zionists who rebelled against us, they will become the establishment in the eyes of those who will rebel against them. I already see the incipient signs of that phenomenon. Young researchers like the intellectual acuity and the innovation, but the moment they become trivial, and they all start speaking the same language - and that is what largely characterizes the post-Zionists - young, rebellious scholars say: Wait a minute, enough of that, we've been through this before."

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