

Back to school in Israel - Month One

This is a dream. We get up in the morning, we go to school. Sometimes together some times separately. We met at school, we fell in love in school. Back then we used to fool around in school. Now we are as much in love but we don't fool around in school any more. We leave this to the younger students. This time we love school. What's not to love? We get to campus early (Canadians), we read the daily paper, have a second cup of coffee, breath the fresh air of this gorgeous campus and pinch ourselves before we go to our respective lectures.





Milling around with the young, energetic enthusiastic students in itself is a breath of fresh air. Take any 3 of them aggregate their ages and they are still younger than us. Israel must have the highest concentration of beautiful young women and many of them are on the Campus of Tel-Aviv University or on the side walk café next to our apartment. We (I) look, we like, we forget exactly why, but we are excited.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9ZF2QA2XB8>



Oh, school – Yes. The lectures and the lecturers are first rate in my humble inexperienced opinion. The lecturers come in different shades and styles. Professor Arnon (yes, not Amnon) is just a few years older than me which makes me feel great as this is the only course where I am not the oldest one present. He is Israeli (you can tell by his accent - look who is talking) but was educated in the U.S from early childhood, studied at Berkley in the 60's (protested the Vietnam War and inhaled). He is an expert in U.S. constitutional law and a guest Professor in many reputable and I mean reputable universities, e.g. McGill where he teaches every summer (his son lives there so it's perfect), University of Manitoba, Florida, Gainesville, Harvard (requires checking into) and of course his beloved Berkley. He's been a "middle management" platoon commander in the IDF, a sworn social democrat

(surprise?!) and a red blooded Zionist. He teaches U.S Foreign Policy with special emphasis on the Middle East from late Roosevelt administration and Truman through Bush 1, 2 all the way to Obama (like all Israelis he is leery of his policies and politics – few like him in Israel although as a Constitutional Law expert, Arnon respects Obama greatly)

Arnon is also a historian who lived through the period he is lecturing on which is good and bad. Bad because like all “old cackers” like me he tells anecdotal stories and strays from the lecture plan all over the place, but in an enchanting and sometime relevant way.

He loves to talk (Israelis just do!) and he delivers the material in a story telling mode which I find effective and amusing but I am not sure about the other “kids”. He is blunt, opinionated (another Israeli DNA syndrome) and reflective. By contrast to Prof. Rahnema of York University (you heard the story) he tends to side with the Israeli point of view (surprise!) but in a sufficiently objective way unlike the propagandist style of Prof. Rahnema (Israel and America are the devil. What else do you need to know?) Arnon loves to patronize the kids and pays particular attention to the development of young attractive female students – totally platonic I might add definitely during lectures. He is a colorful chap and I like him a lot. I forgot to mention that I am also learning a lot from him which is a good thing.

Dr. Benedetta teaches Fundamental Islamism or in long form: Politics, Religion and Violence in the Middle East: The Ideological Roots of Violent Islamic Extremism. She is a strange bird. Italian as you guessed, Catholic speaks Hebrew in an Italian accent (just an observation not a critique) I am sure Arabic and many other languages. Delivers in English, meticulously I might add. She knows this stuff like the back of her hand. She mentioned that she researched in Syria, Lebanon Gaza and the West Bank (interviewed many leaders of Hezbollah and Hamas) She Teaches with a capital T. Uses Powerpoint, presents, explains, repeats , summarizes and starts every lecture with a summary of the last one. I don't mind. In this course I am probably truly learning things that York University syllabus would rather ignore. Totally objective, factual, apolitical which makes the understanding of the topic (see long title above) that much more scary. There are some really bad people out there.

While on the theme of violence and terror Dr. Or's course is on : Terror and combating Terror – from the **Lechi** (the pre-Israel, reasonably labeled terror organization campaigning to end the British Mandate over Palestine – details to be supplied on demand) to **Al Qaida**. Or taught at the University of Calgary and he and I are going to have coffee next Thursday after the lecture as he is very intrigued and genuinely interested in the going-on at York University. He was shocked to hear that I intend to do all the readings, assignments, “raparat” (who knows what this is? I did one (see my Power Point and learn Hebrew), but I don't know the origins of the word – anybody?), mid-term and final exam. I told him that I was not just a pretty face and I am here for the hunting (heard the joke? If not e-mail me and I'll send it to you). He is excellent. His lectures are highly interactive, stimulating and energetic (terror will do it to you). His only problem is that he does not speak Hebrew very well (look who is talking). Like me he spent many years in the Diaspora of Canada and the U.S. and like me he misses a lot of words in Hebrew and has to revert to English terms. I don't have this luxury.

מהם שורשי הטרור - האם זה עוני? העוון חינוך וכו' או שמא רמת האמונה הדתית?

המשימה קלה מדי. מירב החוקרים מסכימים - נדיר!
little to do with economics; Krueger "rooted-in-poverty hypothesis." The findings are that, contrary to popular opinion, no significant relationship, Piazza; "poverty as the root cause" ... does not fit their model; Radu

התשובה הקצרה היא - לא! במדה מסוימת אך לא בלעדית
absence of a correlation does not prove the absence of a causal relationship. Krueger & Malec'kova

פוליטיקאים רוצים שנאמין כי זה פופולרי - נשמע טוב ולא מחייב פעולה
The statistical models above demonstrate that there is no empirical evidence to support the crux of the "rooted-in-poverty" thesis—popularized by world leaders.

השמאל נכשל כתנועה פופוליסטית במדינות האיסלם
"The failure of secular left and liberal nationalists movements to attract mass based support has also contributed to the strengthening of radical islamists" Prof. S. Rahnema

השאלה נשאלת עקב אי הבחנה בין פשע וטרור
Economic model of crime to transnational terrorism yields few concrete predictions, Krueger
U.S attempt to cast twenty-first-century terrorism into familiar strategic terms avoids and often undermines effective responses to this non state phenomenon; Cronin

הפירמידה ההפוכה - תאורית זהר



לקחים – מסקנות - השארות

משטרים מעורערים בשלבי מהפכה - "אביב" ערבי
אין לשאת משא ומתן עם טרוריסטים

**Even if grievances are satisfied...terrorism may
endure until it is physically destroyed; Crenshaw**

חבור דת ולאומנות קוקטיל מסוכן – איסלם
טרור מתחיל עם אידיאולוגיה – חפס שרשיו במדרשות
למד להבדיל בין טרור ללחמת חפש – הם מתחפשים
לחימה בטרור מתחילה מהראש לא מהזנב
טרור איננו פשע הוא מלחמה
טרור אינו נתן לשחוד או להרתעה
אין מודל צפי לטרור – מחייב אלתור ומודעות
לטרור אין חוקים – אל תחוקק נגד טרור

Most Israelis including the media and public officials have incorporated English words and phrases into their day-to-day language for totally different reasons (show off if you ask me), his is a genuine dilemma. Incorporating English into the spoken Hebrew is a pain in the neck for me. Not that I care but when I read the daily paper the English terms or phrases are written in Hebrew phonetically which makes me run to the dictionary or call my sister for translation only to discover that it is an English substitute for a Hebrew word or phrase for no apparent reason. There are words in Hebrew for such words as Loser, Celebrity and many others even I know them, so why not use them? I guess it's attributed to pop culture, reality TV shows (Hebrew versions of every (I think) American reality show and some original Hebrew ones.) Is that why the Islamists don't like Western culture?

I am taking 2 Hebrew courses and 3 English courses. I think I have two more to cover in this blog entry. Hey, I am only going to do this once, so if you're bored to death by now – watch the video and eat your heart out.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tt_ji22ewPg

Dr. Avi teaches Deterrence Strategies from the Cold War to the War on Terror (I thought we did away with this term) We are still at the Cold War and you all know the story (Mutual Assured Destruction, The Cuban Missile Crisis, you know the rest.) Avi is a Harvard graduate an expert in International Relations and a (young) scholar. As you already figured out the competence of the Professors here, most or all having been educated and taught in the U.S and Canada is second to none.

It is clear by now that Political "Science" (quotation marks are to denote that there is no science to it whatsoever. It's all "on-the-one-hand-and-on-the other hand" just like pundits or consultants.) and International Relationship are the main focus of my studies here at Tel-Aviv University as it was at York. So what does "Israeli Cinema and its effects on Israeli Culture" have to do with it?

Nothing but it is by far my favorite course. First of all it is a 4 hours "lecture" of which the last 2 are a screening of a feature length Israeli film. Alis joins me on Mondays at 2 PM and we both watch at least one Israeli film every week. The ticket price is included in the

exorbitant tuition fee. But seriously speaking this is not only fun, educational but it uniquely allows us to narrow the 40 years gap of living abroad and being disconnected from genuine Israeli culture (no capital C). More importantly and we are only up to the 70's in our third lecture, it allows us to use the time, distance and age perspective to re-watch popular Israeli films and understand some of the cultural, sometime propagandist undertones we took at face value forty years ago. We watched classics like (only Israelis now) "Saleh Shabati" with Chaim Topol of Fiddler On The Roof Fame, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy6HN03S88M&feature=related>

"He Walked In The Fields" with Assi Dayan (Moshe Dayan's son),

<http://bit.ly/uF2jWS>

"Hill 24 Does Not Answer",

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XN12dFL1B0s> "Sabra Pioneers" and today "Charlie And A Half" considered one of the first and most successful comedy in the Cinema genre known as "Bourekas" (yes, exactly what you think) films.

Seriously though, we are gaining a unique insight into the makings of original Israeli films of different periods. The first one being early 50's known as "Sochnut" (Jewish Agency for Israel) films. They helped shape the Israeli and ethos in the transition from the Holocaust survivor exilic Jewish identity (weak, meager, feminine, frail) to the Israeli Sabra (I am one) the heroic, masculine, blunt, rough, fighter image. The "Bourekas" films are so called after the pastry dish of the oriental (Mizrachi) Jews from the Balkans, North Africa, the Arab countries like Iraq, Yemen etc. They portray the ethnic diversity and at times the ethnic tensions, the attempts to integrate the Israeli society into a more cohesive entity and to close or bridge the social gaps in the Israeli society. Issues like inter marriage between Ashkenazis and Mizrachis (natural for the young ones, hilarious as far as the parents are concerned) Something along the lines of "My Greek Wedding".

Wow, that's a long one. I wanted to capture the first month and the first impressions while they are fresh in our minds. I hope you like hearing from us. As we said this is a dream and we are living it. Oh by the way, we truly appreciate how good we have it in Canada and so should you.

In one of my future blog entries I will write about my "giving back to the country I love" volunteering work that I have just started to get involved with, so stay tuned. If you like the blogs – you'll get them. If you don't you better tell me or you are still going to get them. Winter has just begun in Tel-Aviv I am signing off to the sounds of an almost tropical downpour with thunder and lightning to replace the street noise, but still with the window open, shorts and shirtless (not a pretty picture) and 16 degrees after midnight – eat your heart out.



1. [ReblogDeleteEdit](#)
[amnonzohar](#)



The absolute best present ever received by us. From the little and not so little grandchildren of ours. You gave us the courage and the inspiration to do what we are doing now: Living and studying in Israel after being away for 40 years. We know that you are proud of us that we have the guts to do such a wonderful thing that is probably once in a life time experience. But let's face it if it was not for Skype and the opportunity to see you and talk to you almost everyday - we would have probably been home by now. Shabat dinners are the thing we miss the most but we trust that you will keep the tradition alive and will think about us if not talk to us every Friday night and in between.

You kids and your parents are the sum total of our life accomplishments the rest of it is a bonus.

Love ya,

Safti and Sabbi