

**Hope on the Campus:**  
**Palestinian and Israeli Students in Jerusalem**  
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Introduction	2
Chapter One- The Mount Scopus Campus	7
Chapter Two- Issawiyye: Students who are Palestinian citizens of Israel encounter Palestinian youth living under the occupation	30
Chapter Three- Sheikh Jarrah; Queer Theory and the Nature of the Law	56
Chapter Four- Lifta: Site for Reconciliation	71
Chapter Five- Students Working for Change: Campus-Community Partnerships	95
Chapter Six- This is not “Co-Hummus”	112

## Introduction

In the second class of the year, a student named Tal asked me: “Why doesn’t anybody talk about the war that’s going on out there?” I redirected her question to the other students. We were sitting at a round table in a classroom on the Hebrew University of Jerusalem’s Mount Scopus campus. The lesson hadn’t begun yet and I was chopping cucumbers and helping set up the meal that one of the students had brought to share with the class. My students take turns preparing these suppers, which are always interesting and meaningful and, in most cases, delicious. “Why is nobody talking about the war that’s going on out there?” I repeated. “Is there a war? Who isn’t talking about it?”

The Minerva Human Rights Fellowship program in the Hebrew University’s Faculty of Law admits outstanding students from across the university’s departments. It was November 2000 and the second Intifada was beginning. The 16 students in the class reported that not one of their lecturers had ever mentioned, even in passing, “the war going on out there”. The students were final year undergraduates or graduate students in international relations, law, Jewish thought, and computer science. None had ever heard a lecturer speak of the disturbing events taking place off campus.

I asked the students if *they* wanted to talk about it.

Six of the students in the group were Palestinian citizens of Israel. Just a few weeks earlier, 13 Palestinian citizens of Israel had been killed at a rally in support of the Palestinian popular uprising in the Occupied Territories. The conversation was slow to begin and palpably cautious. Given that the students in this diverse group did not know one another, the round table dictated the order of discussion, with each student speaking in turn. On that day, the Palestinian students asked if they could skip their turns.

The Jewish students expressed fear and frustration. They had come to Jerusalem from various parts of the country and they felt foreign in the cold, labyrinthine halls of this hilltop campus in the heart of east Jerusalem, far from the center of town. They spoke of feeling confused and of not having a space on campus in which to process this confusion. They all expressed a desire to hear from the Palestinians (all but three or four of the students in the class were women). When the Palestinian students were eventually persuaded to speak, theirs was a story of twofold fear: the fear of bus bombings, which they shared with everyone, and the fear of being recognized as Arabs by other bus passengers terrified of bombings.

The question of why nobody is discussing the war has arisen in every class since. Almost all the students, in every cohort, report that not one of their lecturers has ever held a discussion about the “war going on out there”. This failure to acknowledge reality is not unique to the Mount Scopus campus. This book will demonstrate the prevalence of political denial on all Israeli campuses. Nevertheless, the physical location of the Mount Scopus campus in the heart of east Jerusalem makes this instance of denial particularly absurd. How on earth can reality be ignored when a student explains apologetically that she is late for class because the bus just ahead of the bus she was traveling on “blew up, so they closed the road and I had to walk”? How, when the smell of tear gas wafts into the classroom from in the nearby village of Issawiyye, can we carry on as if nothing is happening?

The campuses are political spaces and the decision not to address the “war out there” is as much a political statement as addressing it would be.

In spring 2017, at the request of Minister of Education Naphtali Bennet, Professor Assa Kasher published what he called an “ethical code for academia”, which prohibits political discourse in campus classrooms. University officials and academics condemned this violation of freedom of speech, flooding academic platforms with objections, explaining the problematic nature of each and every item

in the code. In an op-ed published in *Haaretz*,<sup>1</sup> I suggested that Professor Kasher should actually be thanked for instigating the stormy debate about freedom of expression currently taking place in Israeli academia.

Ironically, Kasher's code also reinforces the BDS movement's call for a boycott of Israeli academia because of its role in perpetuating the occupation. It envisions the self-censorship that already prevails on Israeli campuses being turned into an official ban. For years, Israeli academics have remained silent, for fear of saying something deemed inappropriate, and in doing so they have colluded with the disingenuous claim that the campuses are apolitical. Ministers and politicians regard the universities as leftist strongholds and endeavor to impose restraints on campus politics. As a result, the only political expressions permitted on campus at the moment are those in support of the government. In this absurd reality, inviting the minister of justice to speak at a graduation ceremony is not deemed a political act but mentioning the word "occupation" in the classroom most certainly is.

Every year, I am subjected to personal attacks by rightwing organizations like Im Tirzu who claim that the integrated theory and practice human rights course I have been teaching for many years is politically biased. In December 2016, the Knesset Education Committee convened an emergency session entitled "Academic courses against the State of Israel" to discuss charges leveled at the course by the Association of Terror Victims. The intended outcome was to prohibit the universities from allowing students to intern with organizations that "support terrorism", like the Association for Civil Rights in Israel.

This book is about the students in the Minerva Fellows for Human Rights class, a different group each year, who shook me to the core. The program requires students to commit to interning in human rights organizations once or twice a week in addition to theoretical study of human rights and Israeli society in the Faculty of Law. This is a bona fide academic full year course, with credits, readings and a final paper; it is not a "Jewish-Arab dialogue" group. I participated in dozens of such



dialogue forums in the 1980s and moderated many of them in the 1990s. Those experiences prompted me to address the asymmetry that inheres in these dialogues in the context of the occupation by attempting to explain why Israeli and Palestinian women never shared meals in the years we operated the Jerusalem Link.<sup>2</sup> Given this perspective, I was determined to design a course that was as far removed from a dialogue group as possible.

The students that make up every cohort are selected from a variety of backgrounds and academic disciplines, including medicine, law, social work and international relations. The majority of them are women, about a third of them Palestinian women. The aim of this book is to share what I have learned from my students in this course, each and every one of whom has expressed gratitude for this unique and unprecedented opportunity to interact and learn from one another.

The first chapter will orient the reader on the Mount Scopus campus, situated in the heart of east Jerusalem, and explore the silencing that pervades it. Chapters two, three and four take the form of a tour of the Palestinian communities surrounding the campus: Issawiyye, Sheikh Jarrah and Lifta. The tour begins in the enchanting botanical gardens on the Mount Scopus campus, moving on past the sacred carob tree that stands in the neighboring village of Issawiyye, ten minutes walk from the university. The chapter describes how Minerva students established a youth club in Issawiyye. This was the first time that these students, who were Palestinian citizens of Israel, members of the Palestinian elite, had encountered Palestinian villagers living under occupation. Working with Palestinian children who had never seen the sea, or even a swimming pool, caused them to consider their own Palestinian identity in new ways.

Chapter three takes us to Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood bordering the campus. Here, after four decades of legal procedures, the Israeli courts gave the police mandate to evict four Palestinian families from their homes so that Jewish settlers

could occupy them. The students who were involved in the struggle for Palestinian rights in Sheikh Jarrah were forced to examine the nature of “justice”.<sup>3</sup>

Chapter four sets out from the Lifta falafel stand, tucked between the student dorms and a cluster of houses that had belonged to refugees who fled Lifta in 1948. Along with the students, we’ll walk down to the abandoned village of Lifta, at the outskirts of Jerusalem. For me, Lifta embodies the hope for reconciliation.

The fifth chapter takes us back to the classroom on Mount Scopus, where we try to understand what it was that facilitated dialogue and sharing among the students in this program. We will linger on the effective combination of learning and action that facilitated this dialogue among young people willing to commit to changing the status quo.

The sixth and final chapter deals with the meals the students shared and the modicum of comfort that food can offer, if the growing challenges and obstacles that keep Israelis and Palestinians from interacting are acknowledged.

## Chapter One- The Mount Scopus Campus

*Individuals who tended to respond only to what was created to be useful to man were astonished by what they saw from Mount Scopus: the city, the Temple Mount, the wilderness inhabited by infinite colors, the Dead Sea, whose quiet blue flows up from the bottom of the deep, capped by hills and valleys that soar and dip and wrinkle, with every wind etching shapes above like those below, from which a breeze ripples upward and flutters overhead.*

S.Y. Agnon Shira<sup>4</sup>

*“Everything that makes up a normal university was in place at Mount Scopus – students, courses, reading lists, libraries, departments, faculties -- but every so often I had the vaguely paranoid feeling that things were not quite right. I was relieved to find out that this was not my own autistic fantasies. Visitors and newcomers would also sometimes get the feeling that these were virtual universities; that they were on a Hollywood set and would wake up the next morning to find everything removed, the whole place empty. It felt like an elaborately crafted movie in which there was no occupation, no intifada, and the university was set in New Zealand.”*

Stanley Cohen, *The Virtual Reality of Universities in Israel*<sup>5</sup>

The Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University is perched atop Jerusalem's highest mountain. Every day, hundreds of tourists walk around the campus, stopping to take in views of the Old City, the Judean desert and, on especially clear days, the Dead Sea. The breathtaking vistas, however, cannot be seen from inside the fortress-like campus. There are very few places, such as the veranda of the faculty club and the window of the synagogue, that afford (spectacular) overviews of the Old City. The campus, which turns its back on the surrounding world, is often referred to disparagingly as the fortress, the labyrinth, or the bunker.

The notion of establishing a university in Jerusalem first appeared on the agenda of the World Zionist Organization in 1913. The cornerstone was laid in July 1918 and the Mount Scopus campus was inaugurated in 1925. The founders of the Hebrew University envisioned a center of learning for the entire Jewish people. Chaim Weizmann, the progenitor of the institution said at the cornerstone ceremony that it would be a center for the revival of Jewish thought, a focal point for Jews of the diaspora, a magnet for the best of Jewish youth and a tool for preparing and promoting settlement.<sup>6</sup> Judah Leon Magnes, a well-known Reform rabbi from the U.S., an influential pacifist and a supporter of the idea of a bi-national Arab-Jewish state, was the founding president of the Hebrew University. Other renowned intellectuals like Gershom Scholem, Ernest Akiva Simon and Martin Buber were among the faculty.

The campus was built on Mount Scopus -- at a remove from the city's Jewish neighborhoods. The only way to reach it was through the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. In 1945 the Hadassah Medical Center, affiliated with the Hebrew University, was opened near the campus. Strategically, the mount dominates its surroundings. Members of the Haganah trained there and the central weapons armories of the Jerusalem district were located there. The Haganah's science corps developed weaponry in the university's laboratories and there was a communications post atop one of the buildings that transmitted light signals to the Dead Sea area.<sup>7</sup>

At the beginning of January 1948, the Haganah blew up the building of the Muslim Council in Sheikh Jarrah. Studies were suspended at the Mount Scopus campus and the Jewish families who lived in the neighborhood were evacuated to west Jerusalem. In April 1948 Arab forces attacked a convoy headed for the besieged Mount Scopus. Seventy-seven people were killed, 24 of them medical professionals from Hadassah hospital and 17 of them associated with the university. In July of that year, a demilitarization agreement was signed, which designated the campus an enclave under Israeli sovereignty and United Nations protection. The Jordanians, who controlled east Jerusalem, made the university's continued operation contingent on the return of Palestinian refugees. This demand was not met<sup>8</sup> and the campus remained closed after the war. Studies were relocated to Terra Sancta and other locations in Jerusalem and the Mount Scopus campus became a military command post. From 1948 to 1967 the campus was an Israeli military stronghold within an Israeli enclave (that included the village of Issawiyye) inside Jordanian territory. In 1958 a new campus was inaugurated at the west Jerusalem site of Givat Ram, which houses the natural science faculties to this day.

Immediately after the 1967 war and the conquest of Jerusalem, the Standing Committee of the Hebrew University Senate decided that reviving the Mount Scopus campus and reinstating activities there was a matter of great importance and urgency.<sup>9</sup> The university appointed a committee to undertake relocation of part of the university to Mount Scopus, with the understanding that "the transition was to be genuine and not merely symbolic, requiring relocation of large units such as entire faculties".<sup>10</sup> It was decided that massive land appropriation would be necessary as the campus was restored and expanded. In order to ensure that the trauma of losing Mount Scopus in 1948 never recur, it was deemed necessary to create a territorial continuum of Jewish neighborhoods all the way to west Jerusalem.

And indeed, on January 11, 1968, the ministry of justice issued the first post-war land appropriation order: 3,830 dunams<sup>11</sup> [some 950 acres] in north eastern Jerusalem were appropriated for the purpose of expanding the Mount Scopus campus and building the neighborhoods of Givat Shapira (French Hill), Givat Hamivtar (Ammunition Hill), Maalot Dafna and Ramat Eshkol. These neighborhoods came to be referred to as the “gateway neighborhoods” because they constituted Jewish Israeli territorial continuity all the way from Sanhedria in west Jerusalem to Mount Scopus.

The university’s leadership was actively involved in the campus expansion and the demand for land appropriation, as attested to by minutes of Standing Committee meetings from that time. Haim Yacobi emphasizes that the university regarded the area as *terra nullius*<sup>12</sup> -- a colonialist term for territory not subject to any sovereignty. The residents of Lifta and Issawiyye whose lands were seized received no mention at the Standing Committee’s meetings.

The president of the university expressed pride in the institution’s role as the primary settlement in east Jerusalem: “The development of our compound is the principal project in the settlement and population of east Jerusalem. Tens, hundreds of millions of lira [pounds] will be invested in this endeavor which will draw thousands of students to east Jerusalem, many of whom will live on and around Mount Scopus. Is there a greater project anywhere?”<sup>13</sup> The construction of the Jewish neighborhoods isolated Issawiyye from the neighboring Palestinian neighborhoods and from the Old City, and significantly reduced the area of the village. Issawiyye became an impoverished neighborhood of east Jerusalem, with almost no land zoned for building development.

The university leadership’s enthusiasm for returning to Mount Scopus was aligned with the government’s perception of students and lecturers who would teach and study on Mount Scopus as “the population of a small city, part of the ribbon of new

neighborhoods in east Jerusalem". The prevailing view was that a large number of students living on campus would constitute a kind of "garrison" that could, if necessary, prevent a repeat of the 1947/8 situation.<sup>14</sup>

Construction of the gateway neighborhoods of French Hill, and Ramat Eshkol began as early as 1969. Their purpose was not only to create a territorial continuum between west Jerusalem and Mount Scopus, but also to separate the Old City from the Palestinian neighborhoods to its north. Nir Hasson explains that this was the beginning of a "pattern that Israel has yet to shake off: the goal of building in Jerusalem is not to meet the needs of the city and its inhabitants, but part of a political struggle -- punishment for the other side, declaration of ownership, acts of protest, or part of a strategic view based primarily on land acquisition and Judaisation of the area."<sup>15</sup>

In 1981, the rebuilt campus was inaugurated. At its center is a tower, concrete representation of Israeli control over Jerusalem. A wall surrounds the entire campus.<sup>16</sup> The design aligns with the central concept of the campus' architects, namely that it is "in dialogue with the Old City, resonating with its walls".<sup>17</sup> Diana Dolev has described the architecture of the new campus as a "megastructure that communicates aggression toward the surroundings it dominates, policing those within as well".<sup>18</sup> Students often joke about the labyrinthine campus and the legends of people lost in its bowels for years. In her novel *I am Leona*, Gail Hareven describes the thoughts of a girl arriving at the Mount Scopus campus for the first time.

It was not a beautiful place; it barely had any windows. The air from outside was not allowed in, and walls obscured the view of Jerusalem. My incredulity increased by the moment, but I told myself that perhaps there was a secret to this, that there must be a hidden reason for the way the fortress was constructed. Those who devote themselves to the intellect, I thought, probably need to distance themselves from the chaos of the city, forswear even its beauty lest they be distracted from their studies.<sup>19</sup>

Today, most of the students access the campus via the Jewish neighborhoods of French Hill and Ramat Eshkol. The vast majority of them are unaware that these neighborhoods were constructed after 1967 in what had previously been east Jerusalem. Neither they, nor the university's faculty, encounter Palestinians as they make their way to the campus. The green Israeli buses stop in a tunnel inside the campus. The white buses that transport Palestinian students drive around the back of the campus, dropping their passengers outside the walls of this -- the best university in Israel and one of the leading academic institutions in the world.

### **The Rules of Campus Discourse: What Not to Say**

Professor Michal Frenkel, a sociologist who teaches at the Hebrew University, writes about taboos in the classroom. She describes her attempt to "find out what cannot be spoken of in the classroom if everyone wants to make it home safely. An attempt, as a sociologist, to understand why I myself conform to the mechanisms of control and censorship, even though they constitute a profound violation of my professional identity."<sup>20</sup> Frenkel describes how she silences and censors herself as a result of student responses: "'Politics aside' is the most frequently used phrase in recordings that could serve as damning evidence," she writes, referring obliquely to the recordings of lectures by Im Tirzu activists to provide supporting evidence for their accusations of inappropriate political content. "As sociologists we are well aware that de-politicization is itself a type of politics," Frenkel clarifies. Nevertheless, in the classroom Frenkel "avoids conflict, qualifies every provocative statement, or apologizes in advance for any potential offense to any of the students," all the while feeling as if she is "seriously violating her commitment to the discipline of sociology and to her students." She asks, "What is it that checks the lecturer from expressing every idea she has, be it the most provocative?" and answers:

... there is a clear price to pay for disturbing the students' complacency. The department, faculty and university's increasing dependence on enrollment numbers, and competition with less demanding alternative institutions,



necessitates increasing concern with student satisfaction at the expense of challenging the obvious and fostering subversive and innovative thinking.... So she [the lecturer] walks on eggs, thinks twice about every sentence, represses evidence and holds two heartfelt hopes: the first is that something of her own disturbed complacency will nevertheless be communicated to the students and disturb theirs, and the second is that years of self-censorship, internalization of mechanisms of control and fear of provocativeness, will not make her too complacent as well.

It is telling that Frenkel manages to recount, with admirable candor, the self-silencing and censorship that prevails on Mount Scopus without once mentioning the occupation -- the most significant subject that is rarely mentioned and never taught on Israeli campuses.

The discussion of what can and cannot be spoken of on the Hebrew University campus is exemplified by three different encounters I had during the 2013/2014 academic year. They are described below, in illustration of what happens on campus when one dares utter the word "occupation".

### **"States of Denial" in the School of Social Work**

In the fall of 2013 I was invited to deliver a guest lecture to a group of graduate students in the department of social work. The students were asked to read the introduction to Stanley Cohen's book *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocities and Suffering* in advance.<sup>21</sup> Cohen recounts his first political memory as a boy growing up in South Africa in the 1950s. He recalls how, on a particularly cold night, before he went to bed, he looked out of the window and saw the night guard trying to warm his hands by a fire he had lit in the yard. "Why did this old man have to sit out in the cold all night?" was one of the questions Cohen recalls asking. "Why has our family (and everyone like us) been allocated black men and women (who were called

‘boys’ and ‘girls’ or just ‘natives’) as domestic servants? Why do they live in tiny rooms in the backyard?” A few years later Cohen began asking a different question:

Why did others, even those raised in similar families, schools and neighborhoods, who read the same papers, walked the same streets, apparently not ‘see’ what we saw? Could they be living in another perceptual universe--where the horrors of apartheid were invisible and the physical presence of black people often slipped from awareness? Or perhaps they saw *exactly* what we saw, but just didn’t care or didn’t see anything wrong.<sup>22</sup>

For years, Cohen collected studies, news articles and brochures dealing with people’s responses to the knowledge that people were causing others suffering. He examined the questions: What do we do with the knowledge of the suffering of others? What does this knowledge do to us? During the years he spent in Jerusalem teaching in the faculty of law’s criminology institute, Cohen began writing about the “sociology of denial”. This was in response to reactions to the report he and I had co-authored for B’Tselem: “The Interrogation of Palestinians During the Intifada: Ill-treatment, ‘Moderate Physical Pressure’ or Torture?”<sup>23</sup> The report, which was published in 1991, presented the standard forms of torture used by Israel on a daily basis in military and police interrogations. It showed that most Palestinians who were detained were severely tortured. The report got enormous media coverage and two commissions of inquiry were convened to study the findings: one by the military and one by the ministry of justice and the security services. It was the first time a discussion of this taboo subject was tabled and the responses led Cohen to discern that there were different types of denial.

Cohen was particularly perturbed by how liberal Israelis, particularly academics, failed to take action. He wrote about their strategies of avoidance and denial: “I wanted to say ‘Don’t you know what’s happening?’ the entire time. But of course they knew. This was another example of denial, not crude and cynical lies but the complex conundrum of people trying not to notice what was happening so that they could seem innocent.”

, There were about 40 students in the classroom when we were discussing Cohen's book in the fall of 2013. I asked them to share instances of denial they knew of or had experienced. One student suggested that every time we eat chicken we are in denial about it being a dead bird. Another noted that that we continue to drive even though we know there is a possibility we will be in an accident.

We discussed Cohen's theory that there are different stages of denial: **literal denial** in which the fact, or the knowledge of the fact, are denied (it didn't happen; they're all liars; my partner could not do that to our child; there was no massacre); **interpretive denial**, in which it is acknowledged that something happened, but it is given a different interpretation (Bill Clinton did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky; it wasn't ethnic cleansing but population transition; this is not torture, it's moderate physical pressure; what happened is not what you say it is); **implicatory denial**, in which the facts and their standard interpretation are acknowledged, but the psychological, political and moral ramifications are denied (what can we do?; somebody will take care of it; it's not my problem; things are worse in other places). These are all ways we use to justify and rationalize, cope (or not cope) with the knowledge of suffering.

I asked the students what else we deny. One student asked if I was referring to what we are doing to the Palestinians. I asked her to elaborate but she refused. "Do you mean the occupation?" I asked. "What occupation?" asked another student. "How can you say occupation?" said another. "That's taking a political stance," complained another. All the students concurred that they had never heard the word occupation spoken on campus. Not on the Mount Scopus campus in the heart of occupied east Jerusalem, nor on other campuses where they had been undergraduates. They were adamant that the word had no place on campus.

I explained that what Israeli law refers to as "administered" territories, conquered from Jordan and never deemed a sovereign entity, are considered Palestinian

Occupied Territories according to international law. But before I could finish explaining, a student who had not yet spoken asked for the floor. "When you say occupied, you mean that there are occupiers and occupied? Who is who in this case?" he asked. At this point the lesson had run into overtime and I suggested that we continue the discussion one-on-one. But he and other students insisted: "How can you talk about occupation? Who is occupied and who is the occupier here?"

### **Opening Event of the Academic Year: The Social Involvement Unit at the Hebrew University**

On the last day of the festival of Hanukkah in 2013, I dragged my feverish self out of bed despite the freezing cold and torrential rain to attend the Social Involvement Unit's opening event of the academic year where I was to speak alongside Professor Yossi Yona from Ben Gurion University. Knesset member Itzik Shmueli, who had been elected to office after the 2011 wave of social protests, and who had once been chair of the student union, was supposed to participate but did not attend. Yona, (who has since been elected to parliament on the Zionist Camp ticket), spoke at length about his role as one of the expert advisors to the 2011 social protesters. He remarked that he feared the discussion would be dull as he was sure that he and I were in agreement on everything. I began by saying that I was not at all sure that was the case. I didn't linger on my own role in that same struggle, the weeks I spent at the homeless tent camp in Jerusalem, or my ongoing support for public housing for single mothers in Jerusalem. I didn't ask where the experts and protesting students disappeared to when dozens of homeless families were left in tents with winter approaching. Instead, I suggested that a protest movement that claims to be apolitical and ignores the occupation is problematic.

The minute I said the word "occupation" there was a commotion. Three students called out that they would not let me continue because that word was forbidden on campus. One student accused me of racism, because I said the word "occupation". Another yelled that he would not allow the gathering to proceed, and one declared

that he would not sit down until I stopped speaking. There were about 300 students in the hall and the symposium proceeded haltingly. As the event ended, I was approached by dozens of students, most of them Arabs. "Do you teach here?" they asked. "How do you dare to say what you did? We've never ever heard anyone say the word 'occupation' on campus."

As the year progressed, I heard from many students that the incident continued to cause waves. They reiterated how shocked they had been to hear the word occupation on campus and reported that the question of whether the word "occupation" was permissible on campus preoccupied the Social Involvement Unit for months.

### **Lesson One: Lafer Center Course on Feminism, Human Rights and Social Change**

I began the lesson with the introduction to Judith Louise Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery*:

"It is very tempting to take the side of the perpetrator. All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing. He appeals to the universal desire to see, hear and speak no evil. The victim, on the contrary, asks the bystander to share the burden of pain. The victim demands action, engagement, and remembering... In spite of the vast literature documenting the phenomena of psychological trauma, debate still centers on the basic question of whether these phenomena are credible and real."<sup>24</sup>

Herman, a leading expert on trauma, writes about the solitude experienced by victims of sexual assault, who feel ashamed and silenced. She suggests that it was when trauma victims began organizing into groups that the first cracks appeared in the wall of social denial and victim blaming, making acknowledgement of their trauma possible. She describes how PTSD (shellshock) was discounted after World War I, how it was blamed on the victims' weak character and treated with

electroshock therapy. But perceptions changed when Vietnam veterans asserted that it was the war, rather than the soldiers, who were to blame. Herman compares the veteran-led mission to have PTSD recognized as a condition with the feminist movement's struggle. Both aimed to break through social denial and victim blaming. In the feminist case, this involved declaring that "the personal is political" and that every instance of rape was distinct, even though disregard of the phenomenon was communal. Both of these movements raised public awareness of the broad social significance of the phenomena they were addressing and were thus instrumental in the American Psychological Association's recognition of PTSD. One of the students in my class suggested that we are in denial about other things too, for example the occupation. I asked her if she wanted to elaborate. There were 29 students in the room. Three doctoral students, ten graduate students and several undergraduates. This was the first meeting of these students from different departments, of different ages, who were studying together at the Lafer Center for Women's and Gender Studies.

A law student sitting across from me raised his hand and blurted out, "You're not allowed to say 'occupation' in class!" I asked him why. "Because it's a political term; you are taking a stance and that's against university policy." If the course had been geared only toward law students, I might have proceeded by asking exactly which laws govern the Occupied Territories, which do not fall under the jurisdiction of Israeli law. However, given that this was the first meeting of a very heterogeneous class, I suggested that we refer to the occupation as the "giraffe" and then directed the conversation toward a subject that is common to the feminist, human rights, and social change movements: naming and framing. I spoke about verbal definitions: words with constructed meanings and how the names we give to phenomena enable us to understand them. We discussed how naming/framing both reflects and constructs reality for example the connotative distinction between "family honor killing" and "romantic partner killing". Whole worlds of implicit assumptions are contained in these two appellations that, in the Israeli context, refer respectively to the murder of Arab women and the murder of Jewish women. I went on to speak

about sexual harassment, which is a legal term that features regularly in the media and public discourse.

Student feedback after the lesson was plentiful. That evening, I received an email from Amira:

I've been a student at the Hebrew University for four years, but I've never been addressed as, or identified as, Palestinian. I'm thinking about the importance of naming. I recognize that there's fear, hesitation, maybe even denial and opposition to acknowledging that we, Palestinian students at Hebrew University, are really Palestinians.

Another Palestinian student named Rawan wrote that not only was this the first time she had heard the word "occupation" on campus, but it was also the first time she had heard a Jew, a lecturer yet, say the word "Palestinian" on campus. She described how a Jewish student who approached her for Arabic lessons reacted to learning that she taught Palestinian Arabic. Horrified, she had asked, "But why Palestinian Arabic?" Rawan continued, "After I explained that I teach Palestinian Arabic because I am Palestinian, she insisted 'you are not Palestinian, you live in Israel; you are Arab'". Rawan's story illustrates the distinction that Jewish Israelis make between Palestinians in Jerusalem and in the Occupied Territories -- Palestinians versus "our Arabs", "Arab Israelis" or "Arab citizens of Israel" -- an ideological one that most of the Palestinians on campus reject.

Israeli law does indeed distinguish between various groups of Palestinians, each of which has different rights: those who live in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel respectively. But it is particularly interesting that on a campus where Palestinian students define themselves as Palestinians, the Jewish students do not acknowledge this definition.

In their class feedback, several Jewish students explained at length why the word occupation should not be permitted on campus. One of these, a lawyer working on his PhD, wrote:

My claim is not just that the terminology question (occupation or liberation) is irrelevant to human rights discourse, but that it is actually detrimental to it in the following way: When used in relation to people living in the Territories, the word “occupation” diverts the discussion from the main point, which is their human rights. The word, as we saw in the first meeting, instantaneously loads the discussion politically, religiously, and emotionally and effectively prevents authentic and vital discussion of the rights of residents of the Territories.

He went on in this vein, but without elucidating what that “authentic and vital discussion” would be. He did not mention the word Palestinian, nor offer an alternative to the word “occupation”. He also made no suggestions regarding how to change the reality that he refused to call an occupation.

In light of the volume of feedback I received after this lesson, I began the next session by asking the students to express the feelings they had brought to class that day. The discussion was heated and I struggled to moderate between student seeking to express their confusion, report arguments they had had with friends and family, and raise questions that emerged from the previous lesson. The student who had written me at length about why use of the word “occupation” was illegitimate, explained his view that the word was divisive and alienating -- an obstacle to discussion. Some of his classmates responded with annoyance. It was suggested sardonically “Perhaps we shouldn’t talk about rape because the word is divisive and alienating. Perhaps we should just say that something bad happened, or focus on the human rights of the victim.” Some of the female students spoke about the cost of silencing and remaining silent. They described their experiences of being silenced in terms of violence, noting that the Hebrew words for violence and muteness come from the same root.



I had not intended to devote the entire lesson to the occupation but, as I am becoming increasingly aware, the word itself evokes strong feelings for all students: those who have never heard it in the classroom and do not acknowledge its existence; those who have never heard the word in class but know that some people use it; those who are active against the occupation but have nevertheless never heard it spoken in class; and the Palestinian students who don't understand how there can be Jews who don't know about the occupation -- how anyone who had spent their military service in the Territories could conceivably deny it.

Everybody wanted to discuss whether or not, and how, and when, and where, we should talk about the occupation.

I did not say much during the lesson. I was trying to memorize the students' names, make sure everyone had a turn to speak, and limit those who went on too long. I didn't say a word about the human rights situation in the Occupied Territories, but after the lesson I got a lot of feedback from students who claimed that we had not spent enough time discussing the Jewish people's existential fear, the "fear that we are the persecuted nation who face eradication in every generation." One graduate student wrote: "Being open to using the word 'occupation', in our society, opens up an array of connotations: leftism, naiveté, Arab-loving, defilement of Israel. Open use of the word 'occupation' puts every individual's existence at risk." She did not explain why she found the term so threatening, but assumed that she shared her fear with everyone. And what was it she was afraid of? Open use of the word "occupation". This student expressed fear, shared with many of her peers, not of the occupation itself — or of the implications of 50 years of military rule over another people— but of talking about it.

The voices of all these students -- the graduate student of social work who asked me, "If the occupation does exist, who is the occupier and who the occupied?" and the student who regarded use of the term as a threat to all Israelis and an endangering

of their existence, along with the PhD student of law who insisted that we should not use the word to avoid being divisive and alienating, were begging to be heard. In addition to their criticism, shock, and fear at the very mention of the word, all the students admitted to never having discussed “it” on campus. The vast majority of them wanted to. “If there is an occupation,” they asked, “why has no one ever spoken to us about it? Not at school, not in the army, not at home, and not at university. Nobody talks about the occupation. If there’s an occupation, then are we, the only democracy in the Middle East, the democratic Jewish country, really occupiers?”

Yehuda Shenhav has shown that a negligible number of Israeli sociologists have publically expressed opposition to the occupation and that “most Israeli sociologists almost completely ignore the occupation as a relevant working paradigm.”<sup>25</sup> He argues that “neutrality” or “scientific objectivity” positions intellectuals and scientists outside discussion of the most important questions of the day.

Writing this book on the 50th anniversary of the occupation, I suggest extrapolating Shenhav’s position to characterizing the silence and failure to mention the occupation on campus as not only a betrayal of the intellectual’s role, but an active perpetuation of the situation. The academic community’s failure to acknowledge the occupation and express opposition to it is one of the main reasons we are still discussing whether or not it exists rather than seeking ways to end it. By not speaking of the occupation, by not facilitating discussion and action directed at ending it, we have unwittingly strengthened the growing camp that denies its existence. This is the camp that governs Israel today. It claims that the entire land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people and that Israel is not an occupier because it was promised the land by God.

As academics choose to remain silent, they enable the regime to erase the Green Line from maps and consciousness, appropriate Palestinian lands, build Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, oppress the Palestinian population by

military rule, and pretend that it is all temporary, “not that bad”, and definitely not an appropriate subject for discussion in the classroom.

Ignoring the occupation as if it does not exist teaches students that there are issues - even ones central to our lives and our future -- that are best not discussed on campus since we are helpless to do anything about them. This is a defeatist message: surrender to the power of the regime, surrender to the increasingly pervasive Israeli narrative of dominance and control. Failure to discuss the occupation creates huge disparities between the perceptions of young Israelis, international law, and the prevailing position worldwide that the occupation must end.

According to international law, all of the territories conquered in 1967, referred to by Israel as the “administered areas”, are occupied Palestinian territories. In all of them, including east Jerusalem, Palestinians live under occupation, a situation that should have been temporary and ended after the war.

In 1949, after the horrors of the Second World War and the murder of millions of citizens, the four Geneva Conventions were adopted. These international treaties dictate two basic wartime principles: differentiation between combatants and civilians, and proportional use of weapons. The first three treaties deal with combatants who are no longer active: the wounded, sick, or shipwrecked. Such people are still due basic rights: medical care, food and return home after the conflict has ended. The Fourth Geneva Convention is meant to ensure that civilian genocide of the kind that happened in World War II never recurs. The treaty defines the population in occupied territories as “protected persons” whose rights and laws must be respected by the occupier. Occupation is meant to be a temporary state and any changes made in occupied territories must be in the interests of the protected population.

According to international humanitarian law, all the settlements, including the Jewish neighborhoods in east Jerusalem, are illegal; the roads and railway line that

Israel is building in the territories are not legal; holding Palestinians prisoner in Israeli prisons is illegal; the widespread use of administrative detention is illegal, and it is imperative that the occupation end.

But let me return to the campus in an attempt to understand the students who were terrified by the very mention of the word “occupation”. No wonder they struggle to accept the reality of the occupation: the government of Israel denies it; a state commission of inquiry headed by Justice (emeritus) Edmond Levi declared it non-existent; the Supreme Court, the bastion of Israeli liberalism, will not use the phrase Occupied Territories (as determined by international law and used worldwide), instead, referring nebulously to “the area”; the minister of culture demands that the arts community stop talking about the occupation; teachers and parents never, ever, mention it. No wonder.

Some of the students that I met in the scenarios described above not only object vehemently to the word “occupation” being uttered on campus, but are convinced that the occupation does not exist. Unfortunately, as I will proceed to demonstrate, this is also the position adopted by most lecturers, who just want to “make it home safely”, and the implicit position of the leaders of higher education who continue to insist that their institutions are apolitical.

Im Tirzu’s emphatic urging of students to record lectures and thus ensure that no challenges to the consensus are voiced in the classroom is, sadly, the prevailing norm on campus. Minister of Education Naphtali Benet deems any political expression that is not pro-government unacceptable. This aligns with the ethical code developed by “court philosopher” Assa Kasher. Those who deny the occupation defend their right -- vociferously and threateningly -- to not hear other positions. Two principal misapprehensions inhere in this approach: The first is that the military occupation of the territories is an invention, or political opinion, when it is in fact a reality that Palestinians and Israelis, for that matter the whole world, have been dealing with for over 50 years. The Palestinian territories are governed by the

Israeli military. Military orders, military courts, and IDF soldiers are, for the most part, in charge of Palestinians entering and exiting the occupied areas and they effectively control the lives of millions of Palestinians. I will not elaborate on the factual inaccuracy inherent in this misapprehension.

The second misapprehension is that the university is not political and that mentioning the occupation is a violation of this apolitical condition.

The Hebrew University's first communiqué with faculty and students during the Israeli bombardment of Gaza, (Operation Protective Edge) in the summer of 2014, began by announcing that a fundraising drive for students called up to serve was doing well and gaining momentum. A letter from the chair of the student union, Major (reserves) Eldad Postan, was included. Postan described being called up on the very first day of Operation Protective Edge and hurrying to the army base because "we must do what we are called upon to do". In a video message that the university president sent to faculty and students some days later, he again stressed the importance of the university's support for the troops, mentioning a campaign to send food and supply packages to soldiers on the front.

The university's unequivocal support for the pointless and destructive war in Gaza was especially astounding given its righteous claims to apolitical status and freedom of thought and expression. It reflected the prevailing view that while support for the military and for government policy is not political, opposition to them most certainly is. The majority of lecturers and students accept this distinction between "apolitical" support for the regime and "unacceptable political" opposition to said regime. How ironic that dissemination of a letter signed by an army general about reporting for reserve duty, or indeed war itself, are "without doubt" not political activities, but mentioning the word occupation on campus is!

Of course, the Hebrew University was not alone in its unequivocal support for this futile war.

At the end of June 2014, Prof. Hanoach Sheinman who teaches in the Faculty of Law at Bar Ilan University sent his students a letter to inform them of a change in the exam schedule necessitated by the “security situation”, i.e. the war in Gaza. He included his hope that all were “in a safe place, and that you, your families and those dear to you are not among the hundreds of people that have been killed, the thousands wounded, or the tens of thousands whose homes have been destroyed or who have been forced to leave their homes during, or as a direct result of, the violent confrontation in the Gaza Strip and its environs”. Students issued a complaint to the dean of the faculty Professor Shahar Lifshitz, claiming that the letter was offensive.<sup>26</sup> In response to such complaints, Lifshitz issued the following statement:

Both the content and the style of the letter contravene the values of the university and the faculty of law. The faculty champions the values of pluralism, tolerance, and freedom of expression, but the inclusion of positions such as those included in the administrative message sent by Prof. Sheinman to the students on a matter relating to exams does not fit the framework of academic freedom or freedom of personal expression in any acceptable sense. This constitutes inappropriate use of the power given to a lecturer. He exploited the platform given to him as a law teacher to convey messages reflecting his positions in a way that, as noted, seriously offended the students and their families.

The students’ furious and offended responses to their teacher including the Palestinian wounded, dead, and displaced, in his message, even if only by intimation, were very disturbing. Even more disturbing, however, was the university’s unequivocal support for the complainants and public condemnation of the lecturer, who was accused of betraying the university’s values.

It is taken for granted that Israeli institutions of higher education support the military. The campuses house military, strategic and security-related institutes, programs and study centers that facilitate classified research undertakings in coordination with the security services. In many academic institutions there are abbreviated academic degree programs designed exclusively for military personnel. Many scholarships and other benefits are available for student veterans and reserves. The Hebrew University has a separate tenure track for researchers working with the security forces. Some of the research is classified and the tenure and promotion committees are precluded from reviewing it. These are all important issues that do not get enough academic and public attention. University support for the army is so obvious to university officials as well as most employees and students that they do not regard it as a political statement at all.

Professor Zeev Sternhell, an international expert on fascism, made the following statements about the Gaza war in an interview for *Haaretz*:

What we've seen here in the past few weeks is absolute conformism on the part of most of Israel's intellectuals. They've just followed the herd. By intellectuals I mean professors and journalists. The intellectual bankruptcy of the mass media in this war is total. It's not easy to go against the herd, you can easily be trampled. But the role of the intellectual and the journalist is not to applaud the government. Democracy crumbles when the intellectuals, the educated classes, toe the line of the thugs or look at them with a smile.<sup>27</sup>

But even Sternhell qualifies this criticism by noting that he "does not have enough military knowledge". The recent war, he says, "was absolutely an optional one, disorganized and fly by night...something had to be done the moment they started firing. ...The rockets had to be countered. Could it have been stopped without the massive intervention of the airforce? I don't know. I do not have enough military knowledge. I no longer have friends in the military."<sup>28</sup>

Academics are meant to challenge and critique ties between the academy and the military. In Israel, however, the reciprocity between the academy and the army or security services is perceived as an ineluctable fact.

To ignore the military occupation and support military and government policy are perceived in Israeli discourse -- and in the academic arena -- as apolitical. To criticize government policy, or even mention the military occupation, is considered political and illegitimate. Self-censorship along with frequent threats from Im Tirzu and government representatives demanding that lecturers who do not comply be dismissed, are part of the general atmosphere on campus, where critical politics is unwelcome.

In December 2010 the Council for Higher Education published a directive according to which "All attempts to politicize the academy should be rejected. The council asserts that academic freedom is complete freedom to research and consider and with regard to the students, the institution's responsibility is to strive to expose them to as comprehensive a view as possible of the information and arguments that are relevant to the field of study they are pursuing."<sup>29</sup>

After this statement was issued, I received a copy of a complaint against me submitted to the minister of education, the president of the university, and other officials, by members of Im Tirzu. In it they claimed that I was in violation of the Council's decision because my syllabus was biased. Such letters are not infrequent, and many of my colleagues have also been subjected to complaints from members of this group, self-appointed caretakers of the existing order.

It may be possible for some people to focus on studying mathematics as rockets fall twenty kilometers from the campus, and say nothing. But in my classes both Jews and Arabs sought a place to talk about their fear. During my time teaching the Minerva Human Rights Fellowship program, the second Intifada erupted and we



could hear the gunfire from Issawiyye. Buses were blowing up on the way to the campus; people were being killed. Nine students and faculty members died in the cafeteria bombing on the Mount Scopus campus, and dozens more were injured. The terrorist who planted the bomb had painted my office a week earlier. During the second Lebanon war, some students were called up for reserve duty, while Palestinian students feared for their relatives in Lebanon. The wars in Gaza shook the students. There have been hundreds more episodes of violence in Jerusalem over the years, some very near the campus.

In order to better understand the location of the Mount Scopus campus, I ask you to join me on a tour of the surroundings. We will begin with a walk through the magical botanical gardens towards neighboring Issawiyye – less than ten-minutes away.