



Zilla Jane Goodman, 2010

The Mount Scopus campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem provided the stunning background for what proved to be an invaluable experience for me as a university teacher of modern Israeli Hebrew in Colorado. I arrived at the University of Colorado in the Fall semester of 2004 with the mandate to create a program in Hebrew studies, and have since built a six-semester Hebrew language cycle here. The Vinnik Scholarship allowed me to attend, for the first time in my academic career, an international workshop dedicated solely to issues relating to Hebrew language teaching. The subject of the workshop related directly to matters that I encounter on a daily basis. The responses and discussions around the presentations, and the language instructors whom I met who teach not only in the US, but in locales as varied as Spain, England, Brazil and Austria among others, and in settings that are quite different from my own, such as the religious Yeshiva University in Manhattan were invaluable. It was also very rewarding to share my experiences at the University of Colorado with colleagues from around the world.

The workshop, called Teaching Israel or Teaching Hebrew, addressed the important issue of the relationship between language teaching and cultural content which in Hebrew is rather complicated by the intertwining of Hebrew/Israel/Diaspora/Jewish/Judaism relationships. Dalit Assouline, who is arguably one of the most important new Hebraists in Israel today, gave an original and eye-opening talk titled "Yiddish, Israeli Hebrew and Loshn-Koydesh in the Haredi Community in Israel," which, although it addressed linguistic attitudes in a specific community, in many ways encapsulated the complexities that face us as teachers of Hebrew in university settings abroad and thus provided participants with new insights as to the issues we face regarding the above-mentioned language/cultural nexus.

"The Importance of Being Goldwasser: Hebrew through Drama," led by Sophie Garside of the University of Manchester, followed Hebrew language students through a semester in which they prepared for and then performed, at a regular theatrical venue, an original Hebrew play written specially for them. The play had some strategically placed English phrases which were interwoven in a way that made the play somewhat intelligible to a general audience. What was so impressive about the production was that it addressed questions of Hebrew and Israel, as well as questions of identity and culture with which the students were able to identify, while not losing its dramatic integrity. The ensemble cast comprised students of varying levels of Hebrew to begin with, but the screened performance showed a group of students who sounded plausible and fluent in Hebrew, and who were able to switch between the languages with great ease.

Osnat Bishko of Yeshiva University spoke of the challenges in teaching Hebrew as a secular language at Stern College where students are well-versed in its religious registers; there were presentations by some of the Hebrew language instructors at the Hebrew University Ulpan who write language instruction books for Hebrew language-learners, and many other excellent talks.

One of the most useful parts of the workshop, however, was meeting people engaged in Hebrew language teaching in a variety of venues, and being able to discuss our common concerns, and open a forum for further communication. But more important than all of this is what I bring back from Hebrew University to my teaching at the University of Colorado. I have learnt new approaches to using technology in my teaching. I am also contemplating following Sophie Garside's example with a Hebrew/English play of my own sometime in the near future, and am thinking of more formal, textual ways in which to integrate culture in my Hebrew language teaching.

I cannot thank the Vinnik Scholarship Committee enough for affording me this wonderful opportunity the benefits of which I hope to share soon with my colleagues in Colorado.