More than six decades after its establishment, the State of Israel still poses considerable challenges for scholars who try to study and decipher it. There are numerous unanswered questions regarding Israel’s origins, history and current trends; about the meanings of Israel as a “Jewish State” and as a modern democratic state; about relations between Israeli and Jewish diasporic cultures; between Israel and contemporary Jewry around the globe, between Israelis and Palestinians, and between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim.

The Frankel Institute’s year-long scholarly endeavor aims to chart new ways to study and understand Israel comparatively. It will be devoted to inquiry about the multiple histories, cultures and societies of Israel and the Yishuv from the 18th century to the 21st century. It will bring scholars from a range of disciplines, contextualizing the study of Israel within new developments in Jewish Studies and Middle Eastern Studies. As such, it will create a greater integration of the study of Israel with the study of modern Jewish experience. Examining Israel through the lens of comparative Jewish studies will also enable a better incorporation into study of the modern Middle East by considering recent debates on Mizrahi Jews as “Arab Jews”; social interactions and cultural similarities between Mizrahi Jews and Arabs in Ottoman and Mandate Palestine and throughout the Levant; the Zionist project’s complicated relationship with European colonialism; relations between Jews and Arabs within the state of Israel; and the occupation of territories conquered in 1967.

Thinking about Israel in multiple Jewish Studies and Middle Eastern contexts (literary, historical, religious, political and cultural) and through the lens of different geographies will change the character of scholarship and complicate established narratives about Israel. The Frankel Institute invites applications from diverse scholars, artists, writers and filmmakers.