



iEngage

SHALOM HARTMAN מכון  
INSTITUTE שלום הרטמן

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## Images of Israel

NEW PATHS:  
CHRISTIANS ENGAGING ISRAEL



*Images of Israel* is a six-part adult study program that empowers groups of Christians to have a robust experience in learning about Israel in its complexity, while bringing Christian theology and values into the conversation.

As part of the **New Paths: Christians Engaging Israel** project, the heart of *Images of Israel* is engagement. Participants work with texts, ideas, images, fellow learners, and leaders to explore Israel—as a state, as a people, as a nation, and as a land—and to clarify the commitment of Christians to work for justice and peace among Palestinians and Jews.

**New Paths: Christians Engaging Israel** sets forth a fresh basis on which Christians can engage with the Jewish community and the State of Israel. Building on values that Christians share with Jews by virtue of being God’s people, the project offers new language and approaches for issues that have been contentious within churches and between Christians and Jews. Foundational courses, beginning with *Images of Israel*, introduce these innovative ideas and perspectives as New Paths also provides an ongoing interactive community for continuing engagement with the ever-changing reality in Israel.

*“I need every part of this study because it is requiring me to rethink my positions.”*

*“I am finding this course very useful. Glad I signed up.”*

*“I leave this experience with a sense of hope and a desire to be part of this new path.”*

*“This is a discussion that could and should engage all thoughtful persons.”*





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## Images of Israel: The Need

Despite progress in Christian-Jewish relations in recent decades, crisis continues to focus our thinking about Israel. The crisis may be the vulnerability of the Jewish people targeted in the Holocaust, scattered as minorities around the world, or living in a besieged state. It may be the suffering of Palestinians under the administration of territories occupied by Israel since 1967. It may be the expectation of an end-times scenario in which Jewish return to the homeland plays a crucial role in Christian hope.

Important as these topics are, when we place any of them at the center of our engagement with Israel they too frequently set up a stark choice: support or opposition, friend or foe, endorsement or delegitimization. The pressures of the crisis limit the space for nuance, for the exploration of complexity, for mature mutual critique, and for the discovery of shared values. Crisis is rarely the basis for an enduring and constructive relationship.

In *Images of Israel* we envision a different basis on which Christians can engage with fellow Christians, the Jewish community, and Israel. In place of crisis, this course identifies and articulates principles of national and communal identity that are applicable to all peoples, as well as values drawn from the wellsprings of our respective religious traditions. On that basis, participants can build a clearer and more thorough image with which to engage with Israel and its complexity.

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## New Paths Research Team

- The Rev. Dr. **Peter A. Pettit**, Director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding & Associate Professor of Religion Studies, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA
- Dr. **Marcie Lenk**, Research Fellow, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem
- The Rev. Dr. **R. Alan Culpepper**, Dean, McAfee School of Theology, Atlanta, GA
- The Very Rev. **Peter Eaton**, Dean of Saint John's Episcopal Cathedral, Denver, CO
- Dr. **Ellen F. Davis**, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology, Duke Divinity School, Durham, NC
- Father **Gabriel Rochelle**, *Ph.D.*, Pastor of St. Anthony of the Desert Orthodox Mission, Las Cruces, NM
- The Rev. Dr. **Judy Yates Siker**, Research Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Francisco, CA
- **Noam Zion**, Research Fellow, Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem



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## Course Outline

### 1 Holiness

Many Christians call Israel “the Holy Land.” What does this mean? We find a gateway to understanding Israel with a walk through Jerusalem, a place holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims in different ways. From there we move on to see that Israel is a vibrant, modern country in a land that is home to both the Palestinian and the Jewish peoples.

### 2 Covenant

The biblical story of God’s call to Abraham and Sarah forged the collective identity of the Jewish people, who continue today to share a common bond whether they are religious or secular. As we continue our journey, we explore the present-day implications of the covenant for Jewish identity, Christian self-understanding, and the State of Israel.

### 3 Rejection

By tracing Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism from the New Testament through modern church statements, we walk through the long, pervasive Church tradition that God rejected the Jews. While that tradition challenges the very idea of a Jewish state, recent Christian thinking represents a turn toward a more promising future.

### 4 Conflict

Two peoples call the same geographical territory home. Neither Jews nor Palestinians had been sovereign there for centuries when both sought to create a national identity in the twentieth century. Some form of sharing the land has been the most consistent approach to addressing the conflict. We walk with Palestinians into their experience as a people with hope for independence, justice, and peace.

### 5 Hope

Here we approach the State of Israel through its Proclamation of Independence, which expresses the enduring aspirations that still shape its life. We explore what Israel hopes to be, its values and ideals, recognizing that they are both challenges to be met and standards to which Israel holds itself accountable.

### 6 Encounter

In beginning to engage Israel, we will have explored five images with our Christian values in mind. Delving more fully into the shared values of peoplehood and homeland, we develop the constructive foundation on which to continue our encounters with fellow Christians, with the Jewish community, and with Israel.

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## Course Materials

*Images of Israel* includes:

- 105-page Participant Book in PDF file
- 124-page Leader Guide in PDF file
- 4 full-color maps
- 14 video interviews and presentations including:
  - A Walk on the Via Dolorosa
  - Intersecting Holiness at the Temple Mount
  - Interviews with Israeli and Palestinian; Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders
- Promotional materials for use in your community



The New Paths team provides support for the series. Contact [newpaths@shi.org.il](mailto:newpaths@shi.org.il)

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## How to Use These Course Materials

The videos and accompanying text materials are designed to be used by a pastor, priest, or educator in an adult study program. They are designed to be adapted to local circumstances, with study texts and supplementary readings that can help prepare participants for course sessions. Leaders are encouraged to use the Leader Guide to prepare in advance for group viewing of video lectures and interviews and in-class text study. The Leader Guide provides different models for teaching the six-unit course: six one hour segments, or with more time, over twelve weeks.



## About the Shalom Hartman Institute

The Shalom Hartman Institute is a center of transformative thinking and teaching that addresses the major challenges facing the Jewish people and elevates the quality of Jewish life in Israel and around the world. A leader in sophisticated, idea-based Jewish education for community leaders and change agents, the Institute is committed to the significance of Jewish ideas, the power of applied scholarship, and the conviction that great teaching contributes to the growth and continual revitalization of the Jewish people.

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INSTITUTE FOR  
JEWISH-CHRISTIAN  
UNDERSTANDING  
MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

Produced by the Shalom Hartman Institute in cooperation with Muhlenberg College