

## **CJN 301: Documentary Film and the Image of Conflict in the Middle East**

### **Viewing Guide: Israel's Great Divide - Al Jazeera World (July 13, 2016)**

This TV documentary tells the story of the origins of Israel's social divisions; the documentary explores the deep-rooted divide between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim and the failure of Ben Gurion's declared mission to create what he called "the great Jewish melting pot." Interviewees include scholars, activists, politicians, and everyday citizens. They claim that discrimination against Mizrahim existed before the establishment of the country, and was later incorporated into the Zionist state.

### **Discussion questions:**

1. What mode of representation does the director use, and why?
2. Yehuda Shenhav, an Israeli professor of Iraqi origin, believes that the situation of the third-generation Mizrahi Jews compared with Ashkenazis is worse today than it was 30 years ago. Why does Professor Yehuda Shenhav say "the gap between Mizrahim and Ashkenazi actually widens"?
3. What were some of the ways in which the oppression of Mizrahim was manifested through educational and cultural practices?
4. Few of the current Jewish population in Israel (only 2%) can speak and read Arabic. How is this trend connected to the Mizrahim's right wing and conservative political views?
5. Why do you think Shenhav says he needed to reinvent himself as an Israeli while distancing himself from his Arab culture? Why was this process connected to what he calls a "Zionist political awakening"?

6. What do you think about the interview with professor Amir Hetzroni, who bluntly says “This state was established for me [the European Jews] not for you [the Mizrahi]”?
7. Why do you think the divide remains great even in the absence of official discriminatory laws?
8. Describe some of the statements that made the most impact on you. Did you see anything similar to social divisions in the US?
9. Why do you think the Army is perceived as a great unifying force? How do you think this is going to affect the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv\\_0JUBk3fI&t=1676s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xv_0JUBk3fI&t=1676s)

<http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-1.704258>