

16. Defining the Arab-Jewish Conflict as a National One

Most history and geography textbooks used in the state-run religious and secular schools present the development of Arab opposition to Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael as a conflict that began as local, unorganized clashes that gradually took on the character of a national conflict. All the books explain that the two main issues that prompted Arab opposition were the purchase of land by Jews and the immigration of Jews, whose numbers increased steadily. Except for one book, all present the Arabs as the recalcitrant side, which prevented compromise and conciliation with the national movement of the Jews, e.g. Zionism. One book presents the various positions among the Jews, including an uncompromising position that sought to obtain control over the entire territory.

A history book used in the general stream presents students with two approaches to the question of when the conflict began to be a national conflict. However, in principle, the conflict is presented in this book as a conflict with a nationalist Arab movement.

“As to the nature of relations between Jews and Arabs during the First Aliyah, there are two main approaches: the first – because the Arab national movement was in its infancy (there is still no concept of national consciousness among the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael), the relations had hardly any nationalist slant. There were, however, more than a few clashes, which involved Arab attacks against the moshavot (the new small towns which were founded by the new immigrants) but these were motivated not by national causes, but broke out over blood feuds, guards, borders, flocks and an inability to understand the language and customs. The purchase of land by Jews distanced Arab fellahin (Arab farmers) from their land. There were also many cases in which fraternal relations prevailed between Jews and Arabs.

First Opposition in 1891

The second approach: it is possible to discern nationalist signs in the relationship between the Yishuv [The Jews in Palestine before the establishment of the state of Israel] and the Arabs. Already then, the Arabs began to fear the Jews would take over their lands. In 1891, a delegation of Arabs from Eretz Yisrael traveled to Constantinople to complain to the sultan that the Jews were “stealing” Arab lands. Many fellahin lacked a national consciousness, but there was a limited circle of urban intellectuals that carried within it the seeds of Arab nationalism”.

From that point on, this book uniformly adopts the term “the Palestinian National Movement.” The Second Aliyah, according to this same book, marked the beginning of the “crystallization of Palestinian ideology. This followed the publication of the works of Najib Azuri, one of the most important intellectuals who wrote about Arab national positions in the early twentieth century. His work combined anti-Semitism for its own sake with fears of a Jewish takeover of the entire world... The anti-Zionist Arab press advocated seeing Zionism as the main danger confronting the Arabs. In other words, the conflict now focused on the national level.

After the First World War, there were two prominent trends in the Palestinian national movement of Arabs of Eretz Yisrael (Palestine): the first – an attempt to establish a dialogue between the leaders of the Arab national movement and of the Zionist movement. The second – nurturing the dream of ‘Greater Syria’ under the leadership of an independent Arab king.

The first trend was evident in the meeting between Weizman and Feisal, except that the Arab movement was quick to distance itself from the agreement ... Between 1922-1928 the Palestinian national movement was to a large extent paralyzed for two reasons: ‘the tough rule of the British High Commissioner, Lord Fromer, and the internal competition between the Husseini and Nashashibi families... the 1929 riots created a broader and more populist base for the Palestinian national movement, as many Arabs joined then... they radicalized its position.’

(75, **Zionism, The Jewish People in Recent Generations**, Part A: 1882-1939, 1993, p.56, 92, 121, 122, 132 134).

Another textbook covering the history of the Middle East (and not the history of Zionism or of the conflict) reinforces the view that up until the First World War no separate nationalism developed in Eretz Yisrael: the Ottoman Empire was a Muslim empire and its ruler – the sultan – also served as the caliph (i.e. the head of Muslim believers). Therefore, the Ottoman Empire was for a long time considered the natural framework for the coexistence of Arab nations, whose connection to the Muslim religion was strong, whereas secular Arab nationalist consciousness had not yet stirred within them. Under the influence of European nationalist movements, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in some Arab countries a kind of cultural-spiritual awakening was sensed that could serve as a focal point for the development of an Arab national consciousness. However until the First World War no notable Arab nationalist movement formed anywhere. The overwhelming majority of the Arab public remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire and to the idea of an Arab-Ottoman partnership which was based on foundations of Muslim solidarity’.

(314, **Basic Features in the History of the Middle East**, 1986, p.195).

Another book describes the Arabs’ attitude to Zionism as “political opposition” and it cites several examples of such opposition starting from 1891.

“Already at the outset of the Zionist enterprise, there arose political opposition to it on the part of Arab residents. It seems that the first public expression of it came in 1891. In the spring of that year, several Arab dignitaries from Jerusalem sent a petition to the central government in Constantinople demanding an end to the immigration of Jews to the land and to their land purchases ... In 1900, the Tiberias District Governor, Emir Amin Arslan, objected to the purchase of land in Lower Galilee by the Jewish Colonization Association because, in his opinion, they were likely in the future ‘to change the national character of the district.’

“Arab opposition to Zionists who settled in Israel began appearing more forcefully in 1905-1906. In 1905, Najib Azuri published his book, *The Awakening of the Arab Nation in Turkish Asia*, in Paris. This book is considered one of the harbingers of Arab nationalism. In the introduction to his book, Azuri predicted: ...two important phenomena, identical in nature, yet nevertheless contradictory, which until now have

not attracted much attention, are now being revealed in Turkish Asia: they are the revival of the Arab nation and the concealed effort of the Jews to reestablish the ancient kingdom of Israel. These two movements are destined to struggle in perpetuity until one of them overcomes the other...

"Genuine anti-Zionist public activity started with the Young Turks revolt. The leaders of this revolt, who declared an open regime and announced elections to the first Turkish parliament, allowed, among other things, freedom to associate and freedom of the press. This opened the era of the Arab press in Eretz Yisrael, and it moved to the forefront of the fight against Zionism. The papers most notable for their prominent anti-Zionist line were two Christian papers: the Haifa-based *Al-Carmel* and the Jaffa-based *Filastin*. *Filastin* (on 16.9.1911) called on the Ottoman authorities to 'fulfill their obligation and not allow Jewish immigrants to remain in the country.' Articles in *Al-Carmel* demanded an end to all Zionist activity. The anti-Zionist propaganda which increased following the Young Turks revolt, peaked between 1911-1913. Another source of anti-Zionist activity was the Arab nationalist organizations which were set up at that time and were aimed at preventing the fulfillment of Zionist aspirations. Nevertheless, these positions were accepted only by a small number of urban intellectuals and even in urban centers no consistent hostility toward Zionism had evolved. Occasionally, anti-Zionist papers such as *Filastin* printed appreciative comments about the accomplishments of the Zionist enterprise in Eretz Yisrael, but as a whole, during that period were planted the seeds of hostility which yielded their fruits in the coming years."

(299, **The World and the Jews in Recent Generations**, Part a: 1870–1920, 1998 p.228).

From Local Clashes to a National Conflict

Many books stress that the background to the start of the Israeli-Arab conflict is land acquisitions. Some of the books describe the transition from a dispute over land to a dispute that took on a national character.

"Many problems emerged over the purchases of land by Jews. The Jews purchased the lands from the owners, the effendis, who lived in the large cities in Syria and Lebanon. But the ones who actually lived on the lands were the Arab fellahin. As a result of the Jews' purchasing of the land, the tenants had to leave and this prompted clashes between Jews and Arabs. Over time, the Arabs' fear of the Zionist movement increased and the expressions of opposition took on a nationalist character. At this time, two companies formed in the country, one belonging to Arabs, most of whom lived in villages in a tribal structure and the other belonging to Jews, who came from Europe and wanted to integrate into life in the land. The Arabs in Eretz Yisrael saw how the Jews were establishing for themselves an independent organization in the new settlements. They set up an independent life and looked after all their needs, with the help of Baron Rothschild, the Jewish Colonization Association and the Zionist Organization. They set up courts that discussed civil matters and did not need the Ottoman courts. They also set up their own bank – The Anglo-Palestine Bank – and developed an independent education network for their children. The Jewish Yishuv played a significant role in developing the economy of Eretz Yisrael. The new settlers used new agricultural methods and substantially increased the yields of the fields and

vineyards beyond what the Arabs obtained. The improved methods showed that the renewed Jewish Yishuv had economic and technological abilities. The Jews were seen by their Arab neighbors as having high economic and political status. They thought that the Jews could, with their wealth, buy up all of Eretz Yisrael and dispossess them of their land. In light of all this, the Arabs' fear of the Zionist movement increased. The more established the new Jewish Yishuv became, the more expressions of opposition there were, which had previously been only local in nature, i.e., the conflict with Jews over land acquired a nationalist character. The fight was not between an Arab village and a Jewish settlement, rather it was a comprehensive conflict between all Jews in Eretz Yisrael and all Arabs there."

(160, **From Conservatism to Progress**, history for eighth grade, 1998, pp.368, 370).

Most books stress the Arabs' vehement opposition to Zionism from its outset and cite various quotes. Najib Azuri's remarks are repeated in an eighth grade history textbook used in the state-run schools and it also contains other quotes from him:

"The expressions of Arab nationalism and along with that the opposition to the renewed Jewish settlement efforts intensified in 1908 after the Young Turks revolt in Turkey deposed Sultan Abd el-Hamid II. The first to express objections to Zionism and to Jewish immigration were the Arab papers *Al-Carmel*, which was printed in Haifa, and *Filastin*, which was printed in Jaffa. The following passage containing a call to the Ottoman authorities appeared in *Filastin* on September 16, 1911 to the Ottoman authorities:

'To fulfill their obligation and not allow Jewish immigrants to remain in the land.' In sharply worded articles, these papers attacked the Zionists infiltration into Eretz Yisrael. The candidate to the Ottoman parliament, Raam al-Nashashibi, said in his campaign propaganda: 'If I am elected as a delegate, I will devote all of my efforts, day and night, to eliminating the damage and danger facing us from the Zionists and Zionism.'

"In 1914, al-Nashashibi was elected to the parliament by the largest majority. In Haifa, an Arab nationalist organization was set up to organize an economic boycott of the Jews. In Jaffa, the Ottoman Patriotic Party called for an end to the Zionist movement. It should be noted that the opponents of Zionism were a small group of intellectuals. There were, however, other intellectuals who praised the achievements of the Zionist enterprise."

(160, **From Conservatism to Progress**, history for eighth grade, 1998, pp. 370, 372).

Nationalist Arabic Newspapers

Another book directly quotes Arab reactions from an Arabic newspaper. There is a clear indication of Arab recalcitrance toward the establishment of a Jewish political entity in Eretz Yisrael in this quote.

"Newspapers with a nationalist slant were established in Eretz Yisrael and they called for an end to Jewish immigration to it and a ban on the sale of land to Jews. It is easy to imagine the reaction of these circles to the idea of establishing a Jewish Home in Eretz Yisrael.

"An Arab paper wrote: 'Palestine is a pure Arab country... surrounded on all sides by pure Arab countries. The national yearnings started emerging and intensifying among

the Arab nation that resides contiguously in its territory. The only people in these Arab countries are Arabs... there is no possibility of another people, with an independent language, different customs and traditions and a contradictory political ambition living with them'.”

(227, **Zionism in Practice**, 1984, p.62).

Another history book used in the state-run schools states:

"The first clashes that erupted between the Arabs and the Jews resembled those that occurred among the villagers themselves: they were against a background of land purchases, grazing rights, water use and the like. At the same time, in several instances, there were good neighborly relations between residents of Arab villages and Jewish settlers: Arabs found work among the Jews and trade relations developed between the two groups.

“However, once the Jews starting purchasing land the situation changed: most of the land was acquired not from the fellahin who had worked them for generations, but from the owners registered in the Tabu land registry, traders and money lenders who charged interest, who usually lived in the big cities or even in other countries. The dispossessed fellahin blamed the Jews for their situation. In June 1891, Arab dignitaries from Jerusalem sent a telegram to the Grand Vazir (equal to Prime Minister) in Constantinople in which they demanded that the entry of Jews from Russia into Israel be blocked and that they be prohibited from buying land.

Over the years, the Arabs in the land started to understand that the national aspirations of the Zionist movement in Eretz Yisrael might clash with their own ambitions. The opposition then took on a political and ideological veneer”.

(7, **The Nineteenth Century**, history for eighth grade, 1998, p.144).

“During the years of the British Mandate, the Palestinian Arab community was an absolute majority in Eretz Yisrael. The Arabs of Eretz Yisrael, like the entire Arab world, were still a traditional society. The concept of nationalism did not usually reach them and therefore no leadership bodies, modern political infrastructure and education system which would have molded national consciousness developed among them. Most of the community was controlled by powerful, wealthy families, and the feeling of cooperation among them was religious (Muslim) and ethnic (Arab), without the modern nationalist component.”

(36, **The Twentieth Century – the Century that Overturned World Orders**, 1994, p.199).

A Struggle Over the Same Piece of Land

The same author writes as follows in a book published in 1999:

“The Jews and the Arabs were two national communities struggling over the same piece of land and the British could not establish peace between them. The Jews continued to work to increase Jewish immigration and settlement and the Arabs opposed that...”

During the 1930s, Arab nationalist movements evolved all over the Middle East. Many of the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael also began formulating a national consciousness – in other words, the perception that they are not just part of the larger Arab nation, but are also Palestinians, residents of Palestine. Therefore, there are some who believe

that the 1930s saw the start of the fight over the land between nationalist movements: the Jewish-Zionist movement and the Arab-Palestinian movement. The Palestinian Arabs were still not organized into political movements and institutions as the Zionist movement was. A majority of them, who were uneducated fellahin, were influenced by religious and traditional preachers, who saw the Zionist settlement in Eretz Yisrael as a desecration and defilement of Muslim holy sites and contradictory to Arab tradition. The Zionist settlement effort was perceived by many Arabs as undermining their very existence in the country. This view of Zionism prevented from the outset any chance of cooperation between Jews and Arabs – despite the efforts of the British to promote cooperation between the two communities. As the flow of Jewish immigrants increased in the 1920s and 1930s, so too did the hostility to Zionism and hostile acts perpetrated against Jews increase. Leaders of the Yishuv understood already then that they were not settling in an empty land, and that they must deal with the Arabs' opposition to the Zionist movement. Some considered establishing a bi-national state, others sought to reach a compromise and divide the land between the two peoples. And there were still others who clung to an unflinching battle for the entire land and the creation of a Jewish majority.”

(6, **The Twentieth Century – On the Threshold of Tomorrow**, history for ninth grade, 1999, pp. 44, 85).

17. Arab Positions on the Arab-Israeli Conflict

This chapter will examine how Arab motives over the course of the conflict, from its beginning until today, are presented to Israeli students, including the Arabs' objectives in each phase of their struggle against the Jews. In examining the textbooks, it is quite noticeable that there is a wide range of explanations and approaches in analyzing Arab strategy and the interests of the Arabs in Eretz Yisrael and the Arab countries. The conflict is explained in religious, national or cultural terms. Some of the explanations relate to the question of land ownership. There are also those which present the Arab leadership as being motivated by an eternal hatred which is independent of historical circumstances and cannot be altered.

It should be stressed that, without exception, all of the textbooks start with the fundamental assumption that the Jews have a right to settle in Eretz Yisrael and they examine the Arabs' behavior from a Zionist perspective. The differences between the various explanations do not stem from different fundamental assumptions. The various assumptions differ from each other in the extent of the detail, accuracy and readiness to present the Arab positions to the student as fairly as possible, even without identifying with them.

The following descriptions are given with a certain degree of detail, in order to show that Arab national desires are not ignored and that the development of Arab nationalism emerged not only in response to the development of the Jewish Yishuv but also against the backdrop of the growth of nationalist movements in the Arab countries and opposition to the British.

Some books present the verbatim text of decisions by Arab political institutions, such as the Arab Higher Committee, thereby giving the student the Arab position using primary sources. In contrast, other books simply write that the Arabs "opposed" a move or certain plan, "were angered," "became angry," etc.

The 1920-1921 Disturbances

The prevailing explanation in the books is that the disturbances were a reaction to the Balfour Declaration and an attempt to prevent their fulfillment. "The verbal violence on the part of the Arabs crossed over to other avenues as it became clear that the British and the Zionists indeed had serious intentions of fulfilling the Balfour Declaration. In early 1920, demonstrations of frenzied mobs took place in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa and other cities. Within a short time, the countries of the Entente were about to convene to decide the fate of the Middle East areas. Arab pressure was meant to derail any Zionist attempt to win international approval for the Balfour Declaration."

(299, **The World and the Jews in Recent Generations**, part a: 1870-1920, p.285).

"During the four years following publication of the Balfour Declaration, the Arabs attacked the Jews and their settlements several times, and caused them great losses. It

became clear that the Arabs would not accept the establishment of a Jewish 'national home.' The Arabs even began to organize themselves and to establish institutions of their own that would lead the struggle against the Jews."

(77, **Homeland** – Chapters in the History of the Jewish Yishuv in the Eretz Yisrael in the New Era, part b, p.22).

Another explanation adds the struggle for control of Syria:

"On the eve of the decision over the fate of Eretz Yisrael at the San Remo Conference (1920), bloody riots organized by the Arabs broke out in the country. These riots were linked both to the Arab-French struggle for control of Syria and to the struggle against the Jewish Yishuv. In the context of the Arab-French struggle, attacks on Jews occurred in the month of Adar in the Upper Galilee, which was supposed to be within the sphere of the French Mandate. These attacks ended with the fall of Tel Hai. In the month of Nisan, various demonstrations took place in the country, in which the Arabs protested against the 'plan to turn Palestine into a Jewish National Home.' The demonstrations turned into bloody riots."

(227, **Zionism Tested in Action, 1914-1939**, 5744, 1984, pp.65-66).

The Arabs' demands are presented in a quote from the Arab Action Committee's decisions. The quote has great importance because it gives the student the Arab position as it was formulated by them, and not through interpretation by the book's author.

"Churchill refused to accede to the Arabs' demands and announced that the Balfour Declaration and Jewish immigration should be viewed as one of the facts established with the end of the war. The Arabs responded with anti-British demonstrations and bloody rioting against the Jews the Arabs said: We demand –

- a. The revocation of the Jewish National Home;
- b. The creation in Palestine of a national government responsible to a legislature that will be elected by the population of Palestine that resided in it before the war;
- c. A halt to Jewish immigration;
- d. That Palestine not be separated from other Arab lands;

(from the demands of the Arab Action Committee)

(227, **Zionism Tested in Action, 1914-1939**, 5744, 1984, p.72).

The 1929 Riots

Most of the books present the riots of 1929 as the beginning of the national conflict, despite the fact that it began in an incident related to a religious matter surrounding the Western Wall. The following explanation reflects the explanation presented in most of the history books:

"In the 1920s the national confrontation between the country's Jews and Arabs worsened. For the purpose of this confrontation, the Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, exploited the issue of the Western Wall. The dispute over the rights of the Jews at the Wall was used in order to ignite the fire of political, chauvinistic nationalism... the Mufti's journal published the following: 'The Muslims of Palestine are determined to sacrifice everyone and everything in order to preserve their religious rights. It was enough for them that their national rights were stripped from them.' The Mufti exploited Jerusalem's holiness to mobilize the Muslim world in support of the national

struggle of the country's Arabs. He gave the struggle against Zionism an all-Muslim, religious hue."

(355, **This is Jerusalem, Part Two: From the Crusader Period to Our Time**, for high school students, 1993, pp.196-197).

Another explanation adds an additional element to this version: the Mufti's desire to bolster his standing vis-a-vis other forces in Arab society.

"The Mufti of Jerusalem was the living spirit of the Supreme Muslim Council. This body ... together with the other institution – the Arab Higher Committee, came out openly against Zionism in the context of religious preaching. Verses from the Koran accompanied the anti-Zionist explanations and warned of Zionism's danger to Islam. Thus, it was possible for the council, headed by the Mufti, to enflame the passions not only of the Arabs in Palestine but also the Muslim world, with the claim that Zionism threatened to take over Islam's holy places. Why was the Mufti so assiduous in spreading anti-Zionist vitriol? The Mufti's standing was in decline due to strong opposition from the Nashashibis, and he had to arouse the apathetic Arab nationalism and bolster his standing. Thus, he believed that the Palestinian national movement had to be extracted from the mud. By turning Islam's holy places and Jerusalem into the heart of the conflict, he succeeded in convincing the Arab world of the truth of his claims, thereby strengthening his standing."

(75, **Zionism, The Jewish People in Recent Generations, 1882-1939**, 1989, p.134).

A ninth grade history book states that the Mufti was "one of the leaders of the Arab opposition to the Zionist enterprise. This opposition was a combination of modern nationalism and religious and community arguments."

(6, **The Twentieth Century – On the Verge of Tomorrow**, history for ninth grade, 1999, p.85).

Another book describes the background to the 1929 riots in general terms:

"General Incitement and Murder

“At the end of the 1920s, the Arabs' opposition to the Jewish Yishuv and building of the country grew. Arab leaders, headed by the Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini, supported this opposition. They spread rumors to the effect that the Jews wanted to 'take over' the mosques on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which are holy to Muslims around the world, and worked to undermine the Jews' generations-old rights to pray next to the Western Wall. British administration officials stood by”.

"On Tisha B'Av 5689 (August 1929), Jewish prayers were held, as usual, next to the Western Wall. At the same time, youths demonstrated near the Wall, in order to mark the Jews' right to the Wall. The next day, the Arabs set out on a violent demonstration. Tension mounted daily." (77, **Homeland – Chapters in the History of the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael in the New Era**, part b, p.47).

A more simplistic explanation focuses only on the conflict over the Wall:

"In the summer of 1929, in the wake of a conflict over the Jews' rights next to the Western Wall, the Arabs began a series of attacks on the Jewish Yishuv."

(227, **Zionism Tested in Action, 1914-1939**, 5744, 1984, p.144).

According to another explanation, the reason for the disturbances was the Arab leadership's fear of losing its influence.

"The Arabs viewed the building up of the country and the expansion of the Yishuv as a thorn. True, the great majority of Arabs benefited from this development, and many of them came to Eretz Yisrael from neighboring countries because of the good economic conditions of the country. Only the Arab leaders, sheikhs and effendis, the landowners who became rich at the expense of the Arab peasant, who worked much and earned little, feared that their wealth and influence would be lost if the Yishuv continued to develop in this fashion.

"As a result, Arab leaders began to incite the masses against the Jews. They spread false accusations about the Jews' plan to take over the Mosque of Omar, on the site where the Holy of Holies once stood, about Jews who, supposedly, attack Arabs and kill them, etc. After they fanned hatred toward Jews in this manner, they waited for an opportunity to embark on a pogrom against them."

(20, **History of Recent Generations**, vol. b: From the First World War to the Six Day War, 1997, p.134).

Extremist and Moderate Arabs

One book makes a distinction between extremist Arabs and moderate Arabs who protected Jews in the Hebron Massacre. This explanation deviates from the accepted explanations in most of the books, in which Arabs are always referred to in inclusive language. In addition, the book highlights the behavior of the Jews' "nationalistic circles" (as it calls them) during the riots.

"The Muslims who feared Jewish 'ownership' of the Western Wall, had elicited an assurance from the Ottoman government that, although the Jews are indeed permitted to visit the Western Wall and pray to their heart's desire, they are prevented from bringing benches and dividers there, especially on Yom Kippur, when the Jews insisted on bringing benches and a divider (to separate men and women). Jewish nationalistic circles saw this ban as a national humiliation, while the Wall symbolized national rebirth for them. In practice, the status quo in the Western Wall plaza was maintained, Muslim homes came to within a few meters of the Western Wall, and occasionally the Jews would bring benches. The British did not care, the Arabs sufficed with protests and that was all.

"On the eve of Yom Kippur 1928 (5688), passions flared. The British removed the dividers that the Jews had brought, an action that greatly angered the Jews, primarily among the nationalistic (Revisionist) circles. While the Jewish public protested, the Arabs raised a loud cry that the Jews were about to take over the Haram al-Sherif and incited to a 'holy war' to save the Islamic holy places. The Muslims did not suffice with incitement, but rather even began taking provocative actions, such as constructing buildings next to the Wall, enabling animals to cross next to the Wall, as long as it disturbed the Jews' prayers.

"In the summer of 1929 Jewish nationalistic circles responded by establishing 'Committees for the Wall' in order to protest not only against the Muslims and the British, but also against the Yishuv's institutions, which took a moderate position.

"In August 1929 (the month of Av, 5689), the tension reached its climax, both by Muslim propaganda, which cried out to save Islamic holy places, and by members of Betar in Jerusalem, who waved a flag in the Western Wall plaza and opposite the Zionist Executive offices, and on their way back shouted nationalistic slogans and calls against the government.

"On Friday, 23 August, the riots broke out. A frenzied Arab mob, incited by sermons at the mosques, erupted from the Old City toward the Damascus Gate and the Jaffa Gate, looting everything that came to hand without hindrance from the British ... The British sent reinforcements only after three days and halted the rioting in Jerusalem, but riots had already spread to the entire country. First was Hebron. Six hundred Jews, mostly Sephardic, lived in Hebron, and they were proud of the good relations that prevailed between them and Hebron's extremist Arabs, and they did not heed the warning from the Haganah in Jerusalem that riots were liable to harm them. The Hebron Jews rejected any offer of help, claiming that this could anger Hebron's Arabs. Warnings from moderate Arabs also had no effect. On 24 August, the rioters from Jerusalem began to arrive. They were joined by many Hebron Arabs, who began going from house to house and killing Jews. Sixty Jews were murdered in Hebron, dozens of homes were burned and looted. Without the brave act of a British officer and the courage of moderate Arabs, who protected Jews in their homes, the number of those murdered would have been much higher. The Jewish community of Hebron ceased to exist." (75, **Zionism – The People of Israel in Recent Generations, 1882-1939**, 1989, pp.133-134).

The 1936-1939 Disturbances or: The Arab Revolt

In April 1936, rioting erupted in Jaffa that began a three-year period of violent clashes. The Jews call this period "disturbances," while the Arabs called it the "Arab Revolt." Most of the books note this period as being extremely important in the formation of the Palestinian national movement, and emphasize that "the disturbances deviated from the context of a spontaneous outbreak of incited Arabs and assumed the form of an organized war". (20, **The History of Recent Generations**, vol. b, 1997, p.139).

Another book adopts the terms "revolt" and "rebels" in describing the events. "The revolt began with a general strike, which was supposed to harm the entire economy and pressure the British to halt Jewish immigration, to prohibit the purchase of land and to establish a national representative government of Palestinian Arabs ... the Arab national struggle became an armed insurrection led by military men. The revolt reached its height in 1937. Military governors were murdered, Jewish settlements were attacked, roads turned into a battlefield and travel by road became dangerous. The entire country was paralyzed and many areas fell into rebel hands. Ultimately, the revolt was suppressed by joint forces of the British and the Jews. In early 1939, the country was quiet once more. However, the disturbances emphasized the depth of hatred and hostility between two movements that existed in the country, and showed that there was no easy and simple way to reconcile them – at least not in the short term." (6, **The Twentieth Century – On the Verge of Tomorrow**, history for ninth grade, 1999, p.86).

“The Arabs began to organize. The Arab parties, whose leaders quarreled frequently, reached reconciliation among themselves and a joint leadership was established – the Arab Higher Committee, headed by the Mufti, Haj Amin al-Husseini. The Arabs decided to begin a general strike – halting all economic activity, stopping transportation, closing businesses, offices and stores, until the British government accepted their demands: prohibiting Jewish immigration, prohibiting the sale of land to Jews and the establishment of Arab rule in the country. They announced that if their demands were not met, they would declare a civil revolt: they would stop paying taxes, stop working in the government and police, and would begin acts of terrorism against the British government and against the Jews. This time, unlike the previous disturbances, these were not outbreaks of murder and robbery that ceased after a few days. This time an Arab revolt was declared against the British, and action was planned for a long time. And indeed, the Arab community halted its economic activity.” (77, **Homeland**, b, 1998, p. 65).

One book presents the Arab Higher Committee's decisions verbatim. Quoting directly enables the student to place himself on the other side and allows him to judge its behavior for himself. This quote also strengthens the fact that, this time, what is being discussed is an organized revolt and not incited "gangs" acting in sporadic fashion.

"In April 1936, local national committees were organized in all the Arab cities around the Isthiklal (Independence) Party, and the Arab Higher Committee was established. The committee declared a general strike that would paralyze economic life in the country. Its purpose: to exert pressure on the British government to fulfill the committee's demands:

1. Prohibit Jewish immigration;
2. Prohibit the transfer of land to Jews;
3. Establish a national government that would be responsible to a representative council.

'If these demands are not met' – the Arab Higher Committee announced – 'the general strike will continue, until the British government fundamentally changes its current policy, the first step of this being the halting of Jewish immigration'." (227, **Zionism Tested in Action, 1914-1939**, 5744, 1984, pp.125-126).

The Assistance of Italy and Germany

Several history books add a new element in describing the disturbances: the assistance given to the Arab revolt by the fascist regimes in Italy and Germany.

The following explanation repeats the connection with the fascist regimes and adds the context of the development of the nationalist movements in the Arab countries: "The growth and increasing strength of the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael created fear among the Arabs; they feared that if this process continued, it would not be long before the Jews were the majority in the country and, with the help of their economic cultural strength, take over all of Eretz Yisrael.

'Awaken and redeem yourselves' – called a Palestinian newspaper.
'The Egyptian leaders have awoken. Where are our leaders hiding?'

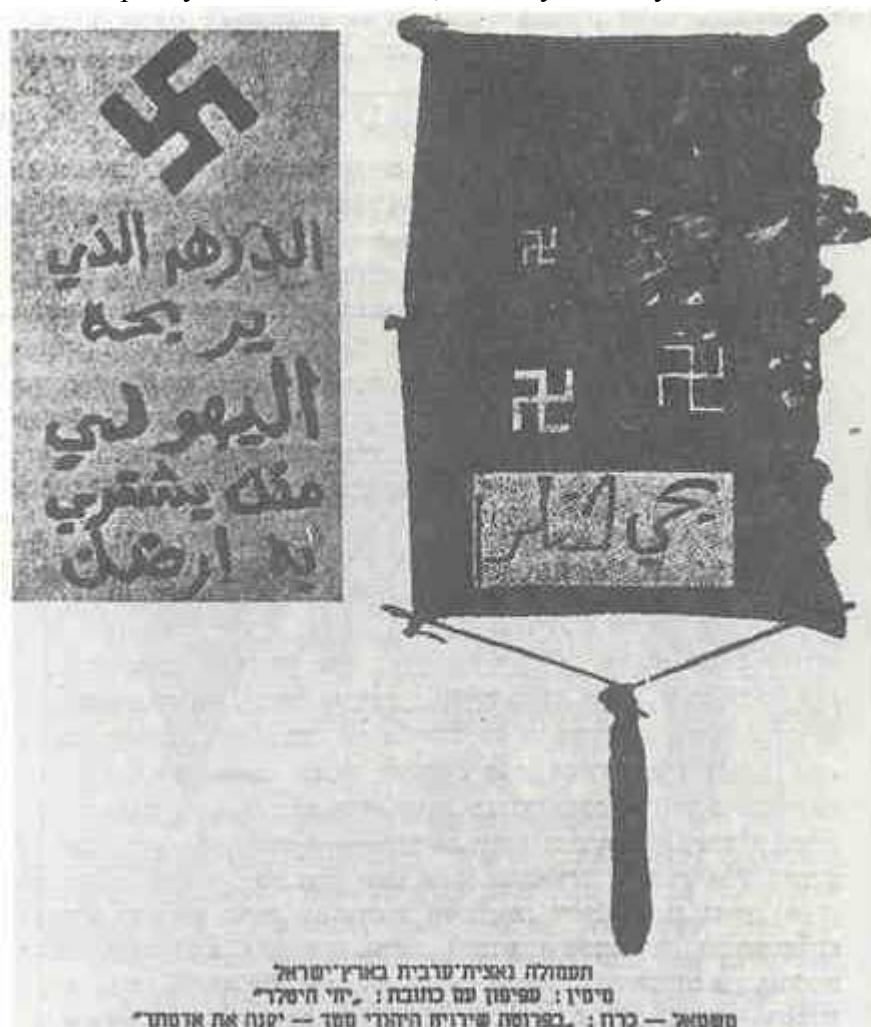
"In the neighboring countries – Egypt and Syria – the nationalist movement, helped by strikes and demonstrations, succeeded in forcing England and France to sign treaties that granted Egypt and Syria a considerable expansion of their independence. The Arab nationalist movement grew stronger and coalesced in every region of the eastern Mediterranean. This movement, which sought allies, was courted by Italy, which was interested in expanding its influence in the region after completing the conquest of Ethiopia in the autumn of 1935, and by Germany, which wanted a foothold in the region. The fear, the hopes and the chances for international support led to an expansion of the Arab nationalist movement and its taking root in the country, and the many members of the intelligentsia who joined it contributed to raising its level and prestige."

(227, **Zionism Tested in Action, 1914-1939**, 1984, pp.124, 125).

In this book one can find two examples of Nazi- Arabic propaganda in Palestine.

On right: "Long lives Hitler"

On Left: "The penny that the Jew earns, will buy with it your land"



(227, **Zionism Tested in Action, 1914 -1939**, 1984, p.171).

18. All or Nothing

The Arabs' Opposition to Partition of the Land of Israel to Two States

The Arabs' position regarding the partitioning of the country is presented in all of the books as a rejectionist position from the recommendations of the Peel Commission in 1937 to the UN resolution of November 1947. All of the historians and the authors of the textbooks are united in their opinion that the Arabs did not agree to having the country divided into an Arab state and a Jewish state, and they did not come to terms with the establishment of a Jewish state until the War of Independence. Since they demanded all of Eretz Yisrael for themselves and refused to give the Jews even part of it, they lost everything and did not even get the Arab state that was offered to them in the UN resolution.

One book also presents the various positions in the Jewish Yishuv (the Jewish population in Palestine before the establishment of the state) which was divided on the issue of consenting to partition. Following are a number of typical examples:

The Peel Commission, 1937

In the summer of 1937, the report of the Peel Commission, (the British commission established to investigate the situation in the country and named after its head, Lord William Peel), was published. The commission recommended that Eretz Yisrael be partitioned into two states, one Jewish the other Arab, and that a third section remain under British aegis. This was the first time that an official commission had proposed establishing, among other things, a Jewish state. Following is an examination of how the textbooks present the Arabs' position on this issue.

One explanation emphasizes the Arabs' opposition to the establishment of a Jewish state: "The Arabs expressed total opposition to the partition plan. Agreeing to a division of the country was, in their eyes, acceptance of the establishment of a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael. In late September 1937, the Arab gangs resumed their activity. Their war lasted about two years". (77, **Homeland – History of the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael in the New Era**, 1998, p.72).

Another explanation states, without going into any detail, that "the Arabs opposed this plan completely, and their war against the Jewish Yishuv and English rule was resumed". (20, **The History of Recent Generations**, vol.b, 1997, p.141).

Jews Against Partition of the Land of Israel

Alongside the Arabs' opposition, a ninth grade history book also presents the opposition of some Jews to the partition plan. Unlike other books, which place the blame for the rejection of the partition plan exclusively on the Arabs, this book presents a different version:

"The area of the Jewish state according to the report included about 20% of the area of Eretz Yisrael, since the number of Jews during that period was about a quarter of the

number of Arabs. The report also recommended limiting Jewish immigration to Eretz Yisrael ... the Arabs rejected the idea out of hand. From their standpoint, there was no room for recognizing the Jews' right to a part of the country.

The Jews were divided in their view of partition. The Right saw it as conceding Eretz Yisrael. Members of the Labor movement also rejected it, arguing that future borders should not be accepted before there is a Jewish majority in Eretz Yisrael. Others, who still believed in Arab-Jewish coexistence in the framework of a binational state, opposed a separation of the peoples. Many Zionists believed that the proposal should be rejected for practical reasons: the proposed Jewish state would not be able to absorb Jewish immigration and it would not be possible to defend its borders. The central personalities in the Zionist movement – Weizmann and Ben-Gurion – believed that the partition plan should in any case be accepted ... the Twentieth Zionist Congress accepted the principle of partition, but rejected the Peel Commission's partition proposal."

(6, **The Twentieth Century – On the Verge of Tomorrow**, history for ninth grade, 1999, pp.89-90).

The United Nations Resolution, 29 November 1947

All the books in all educational networks are unanimous in that the Arabs rejected the United Nations' decision of 29 November 1947 to partition Palestine, and that the Arabs prevented its implementation, while the Jews accepted it.

A book from the ultra-orthodox network for fourth and fifth grades states:

“When the United Nations declared the termination of the British Mandate and the independence of the inhabitants of the country [the Jews], the Arabs initiated murderous attacks on the Jewish Yishuv.”

(365. **The Good Land** – a textbook on the geography of Israel, for grades four-five, 1999, p.138)

A history book in the state-run network uses the term “a violent struggle” instead of “murderous attacks”:

“The Jewish Yishuv celebrated that night in the streets, but the Arabs saw the decision as a catastrophe and started a violent struggle for Eretz Yisrael.”

(6, **The Twentieth Century – on the verge of Tomorrow**, History for ninth grade, 1999, p.138)

The same author writes in another book:

“The Zionist movement and the Yishuv, with the exception of marginal groups accepted the partition plan gladly, but the Arab world and the leadership of the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael were against it. Immediately after the approval of the partition plan, the “State to be” was forced to struggle for its very existence. The British, who were still formally the rulers of Palestine could not (or did not want to) prevent attacks by the Arabs. The War of Independence of the Yishuv began before the official

Declaration of Independence as a bloody war between the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael and the Hebrew Yishuv”.

(36, **The Twentieth Century – The Century that Overturned World Order**, 1994, pp. 202-203)

Another history book in the state run network gives a similar explanation:

“The declared objective of the Arabs in the first period of the war [the War of Independence] was to sabotage the United Nations partition decision, and to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in any part of the territory of Eretz Yisrael; and in the second period to bring about the collapse of the State which had already been established.”

(14, **From Exile to Independence**, the History of Israel in the Recent Generations, vol.b, 1990, p.252)

A language book in the state run network states:

“We were all happy about the U.N. Resolution that a Jewish State will be established after the Jews had not had a state of their own for almost two thousand years. After that it became clear to us that it is not so simple. The Arabs announced that they do not agree to this resolution and war broke out.

“The Arabs in Palestine, and with them the Arabs of the neighboring countries, declared that they will fight against us until the Resolution will be cancelled. At that time, there were few Jews in the country. The Arabs attacked us everywhere – in Jerusalem, in Tel-Aviv, in Haifa, in the kibbutzim, and mainly on the roads. Every day they shot at vehicles and killed people.”

(283, **Inter-relations – from Sentence to Conversation, from Word to Poem**, 1993, p 383)

19. Redemption vs. Dispossession

All the textbooks used in the state-run secular and religious education systems stress the issue of land purchases by Jews as the key issue in the Israeli-Arab conflict starting from the early days of Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisrael. The issue of immigration became a prominent one at a later stage, from the 1930s onward (on this subject, see the chapter on the conflict as a national conflict).

One of the books summarizes the subject of land by saying that what the Jews saw as "redeeming the land," the Arabs, from their point of view, saw as "land theft." The student is made conscious of the intensity of the problem and to its being one of the central roots of the conflict.

Landowners and Tenants

All of the books explain that the landowners were wealthy people who leased the land to tenants, who worked the land and paid the owners with a share of their crop yields.

A geography book that includes historical analysis explains that "the low level at which the land was tilled yielded small harvests and low incomes for the landowners, and they were inclined to sell the land to whoever made the highest offer... the sale of land to Jews created a class of peasant farmers who lost the right to work the lands on which they dwelt. In practice, it was the Ottoman land law of 1858 which led to the loss of their rights to the land, because as a result of that law, the wealthy people in the country became the landowners and this occurred well before the beginning of Jewish settlement efforts. Without any connection to the true size of this class, a consciousness of 'the dispossessed' emerged and concern arose that this fate awaited many... even efforts to compensate the tenants and resolve their problem did not prevent the sense of loss and dispossession."

Menachem Ussishkin, the chairman of the Jewish National Fund, is quoted as saying that "the Fund must ensure that these lands are not settled by more than a small number, so that their redemption from the Arabs who reside on them and their being dwelt on by Jews will not cause great difficulty and unnecessary conflicts." (298, **The Coastal Plain – Man and Environment Through the Generations**, 1997, p.302).

Fear Leads to Radicalism

In terms of economics, "the sale of land led the Arabs to search for an economic alternative to earn their livelihood. Many Arabs were integrated into the Jewish economy as agricultural laborers, but their status as hired hands imbued them with a feeling of impermanence and a lack of economic security." Later on, the same passage quotes from Yehoshua Porat's book, *The Growth of the Palestinian National Movement, 1918-1929*: "The mere purchase of land by Jews for settlement purposes and their ability to pay very high prices for it stirred fear of their supposedly unlimited

economic capabilities.... the Jewish buyers' willingness to use all kinds of means to bypass the obstacles that had been placed in their way reinforced this fear. This development nurtured itself and created a solid basis for a radical anti-Zionist position, the land disputes had anti-Zionist political echoes among the educated, urban elite... they began to organize the villagers to oppose and sabotage land purchases by Jews."

(298, **The Coastal Plain – Man and Environment Through the Generations**, 1997, p.303).

A similar analysis appears in a history book used in the general education stream:

"Earlier chapters have already noted that most of the lands that were purchased belonged to effendis – wealthy absentee landlords who lived luxuriously in Syria and Lebanon. They sold the lands to increase their wealth. The lands that were sold were inhabited by Arab fellahin, who were poor tenant farmers. They were forced to leave the lands after they were sold to Jews. Although the fellahin were monetarily compensated, they frequently refused to leave the land, and against this backdrop, the conflict between them and the Jews intensified. The fellahin felt dispossessed of their land, while the Jews, in order to exercise their right to the land and protect it from trespassing shepherds, were compelled to enlist the aid of the authorities or fight on their own to remove the fellahin. Such tension affected settlers in the early moshavot such as Petah Tikva, Zichron Yaakov, Gedera, Rehovot, Metula and others. Occasionally, there were even violent clashes between local villagers and residents of the moshavot."

(160, **From Conservatism to Progress**, 1998, pp.369-370).

20. Who is Responsible for Wars?

All the wars in which Israel was involved appear - in all the books, of all the school systems, for all ages - as justified wars of defense. The Arabs are responsible not only for the wars they started, but also for wars in which Israel was the first to shoot.

The Anger of the Arabs

A grammar book for lower grades in State-run elementary schools provides the pupil with sentences, and asks the pupil to identify the predicate and the subject. The following sentence appears, among others: “David Ben-Gurion, Head of the National Council, declared an independent state. The angered Arabs were enraged over the declaration of independence.”

(113, **Eshkolit – Collection VIII: Predicate and Subject**, p.31).

Another example for the simplistic explanation regarding “the Arab’s anger” appears in a fourth grade reader: “On the fifteenth day of the month of Iyar, 5708 (14.5.1948), we declared a Jewish State in the Land of Israel - the State of Israel. The Arabs were quite angered by this declaration.”

(196, **Reading, Understanding and Writing Well**, for fourth grade, 1993, p.22).

A fourth grade book for Ultra-Orthodox schools describes the wars as miraculous stories: “Wars in our Land: Our land has known many wars and hardships. Many tell of the miracles and wonders that have blessed our People in our land over all the generations, but in our generation, we stood against enemies. The Arab enemy rose up against us in the year 5708 (1948). The seven neighboring Arab countries wanted to destroy us and rose up to battle against us. They are many, very many, and we are few and weak, but trusting and believing in our great God. Indeed, we trusted and triumphed. Our triumph did not silence our enemy, the Arabs. They bullied us throughout the years and did not let the peaceful inhabitants of our land rest. Twenty years later, they again rose up against us in war in the year 5728 (1967), and this time, in an even larger number and well armed with the one proclaimed goal of destroying the inhabitants of our land. We stood before them as David stood before Goliath. We called upon God, armed forces in prayers and in pleas, he answered us with miracles and wonders, and again we arouse victorious. That war lasted six days. Indeed, it is called the Six-Day War.”

(377, **Our Childhood**, 2, second grade workbook and reader, 1996, p.245)

Israel and Egypt

A second and third grade language book for the state-run schools describes the wars between Israel and Egypt:

“In 1956, the Egyptians gathered an army in the Sinai Desert. A war broke out between them and us. The IDF (Israel Defense Forces), the army of the State of Israel, triumphed and conquered the Sinai Desert (they called this war the Kadesh Campaign, or the Sinai Campaign). Afterwards, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt.”

“In 1967, in Egypt they gathered a strong army against Israel in the Sinai Desert. The Israel Defense Forces fought Egypt, captured the Sinai Desert, and triumphed over them (they called this war the Six-Day War). The Sinai Desert remained in our hands.”

“In 1973, The Egyptian army attacked our army. The Egyptians wanted to conquer the Sinai Desert from the hands of our soldiers. They did not succeed (they called that war the Yom Kippur War). The Sinai Desert remained in our hands.”

“In 1979, the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat, and the Prime Minister of Israel, Menachem Begin, signed a peace treaty. Israel returned the Sinai Desert to Egypt. The Sinai Desert now belongs to Egypt, but there is no Egyptian army, nor Israeli army in the Sinai Desert. Since then, there has been peace between Israel and Egypt.
(42, **I Understand?! – Understanding Readings, Thinking, Expression and Communication**, Part 2, for 2-3 grades, 1995, p.183).

A third grade reader for the state-run religious schools states: “The War of Liberation [Independence]: The War of Liberation is called that because in that war we liberated part of the Land of Israel. The War of Liberation is also called the War of Independence. In the year 5708 (1948), we fought against our enemies, who wanted to take control of our land.”

(142, **Open the Gate**, A third grade reader, 1991, p.133).

“When the Arab League (the organization of the Arab countries) was established, the question of Palestine became a permanent subject. Palestine belongs to the Arab People, which will not agree to any political solution that will include the establishment of an Arab state in Palestine... The United Nations Resolution to establish a Jewish State in Palestine served as a signal for a great riot throughout the Arab bloc: A wave of strikes and demonstrations broke out in various places. In some Arab countries there were pogroms against Jews. In the city of Halab in Syria, about 70 people were murdered, and hundreds of houses were set afire in the Jewish Quarter. In Cairo, Egypt, the leaders of Arab countries gathered to discuss the new situation. The following resolutions were passed at the conference: Action should be taken to cause the partition plan to fail, to prevent the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and to make sure that this country will be a united, independent, Arab state...”

(353, **Not on a Silver Platter - From a National Home to a Sovereign State: 1939 – 1949**, 1984, pp.103-105).

21. The Refugee Problem

The refugee problem is one of the most politically and emotionally charged issues in relations between the State of Israel and the Arab countries.

Most of the textbooks in all the educational streams state that the refugee problem was created in 1947-1948 by the Arabs because they fled from their homes. Only a few textbooks mention the claim that some refugees were expelled by Israel during battles. Some textbooks bypass the issue altogether by stating that demographic changes took place without elaborating on how they came about.

Another aspect reviewed is the extent to which textbooks touch on the suffering caused to the refugees. Indeed, several history books and stories relate to the suffering of the refugees.

Regarding the 1967 Six Day War, only a few textbooks note that Arabs were uprooted from their villages in the wake of the war and even they do not cite any numbers.

One book presents, alongside the problem of Arab refugees, the problem of Jewish refugees who were uprooted from Islamic countries.

“Only a few of the Arab, Muslim and Christian residents whose families lived in Jaffa in the past, currently live there. They number 9,000 people.”

(318, **Cities of Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Today, Yesterday, Tomorrow – Lessons and Activities for Fourth Grade**, 1985, p.109)

“During the War of Independence, most residents of Galilee towns and villages with minority populations remained where they were, as did minority residents of Jerusalem, Ramle, Lod, Jaffa, Haifa and Akko.”

(220, **Geography of Yisrael – Physical, Economic, Local, Regional**, 1996, p. 403).

“The Gaza Strip is populated mostly by refugees who arrived there from their homes, primarily near Jaffa and in the coastal plain, during the War of Independence in 1948.” The text is accompanied by a photo of a refugee camp.

(302, **Man and Environment – Studies in the Geography of Yisrael**, 1999, p.60).

“On the eve of the War of Independence the population of the Gaza Strip was approximately 70,000 residents. At the end of the War of Independence, the population expanded with the arrival of 164,000 – 190,000 refugees (according to the findings of two different committees) and another 11,000-22,000 Beduin.”

(220, **Geography of Yisrael – Physical, Economic, Local, Regional**, 1996, p.296).

“After Israel’s War of Independence, the Muslim population of Lebanon increased due to the arrival of thousands of Arabs from Eretz Yisrael (most of whom were Muslims). They not only altered Lebanon’s demographic map, but became an independent political force which eventually led to a civil war during the 1970s, the partial destruction of Lebanon and Israeli intervention in that country.”

(16, **Changes in the Geography of the Middle East**, 1992, p.267).

A high school geography textbook states:

“The first immigrants (olim) arriving in Israel from May 1948 to early 1949 moved into abandoned Arab towns and villages.” This sentence follows a brief, two-page description of the War of Independence which makes no mention at all of the refugee issue. At the end of the above-mentioned description the student is asked, among other things, to pick a front from the war and write about “the fate of the Arab communities and their residents.”

(298, **The Coastal Plain – Man and Environment Through the Generations**, for high school students, pp. 359-360, 363).

Flight

“With the departure of the British from the country in Spring 1948, a decision was made to undertake forceful action against the Arabs in Jaffa. Our forces encircled the city and began opening fire. Most of the Arab residents were stricken with panic and began fleeing the city en masse.”

(31, **Journey to Israeli Democracy**, 5754, 1994 p. 113)

“After the War of Independence the map of settlements in the northern part of the country changed dramatically. Of the 190 Arab villages there, only 66 remained, most of them in the center of the Upper and Lower Galilee. Approximately 120,000 Arab residents (mostly Muslims) fled to Syria and Lebanon.”

(352, p.38)

“... the British announced that they were departing from Haifa and that whoever is able to take the city – either the Jews or the Arabs – should do so. A brief battle ensued at the end of which the entire city of Haifa was in our hands. The Arabs lost and almost all of them fled from the city.”

(263, **Connections – From the Sentence to Dialogue**, 1993, p.387)

“When the course of events changed during the War of Independence and the Yishuv overcame the Arab armies and local Arab fighters, Arabs started fleeing from the mixed cities. Entire Arab neighborhoods were emptied of their residents. This happened in Haifa, Tiberias, Akko and Safed. The Arab cities of Ramle, Lod and Jaffa were abandoned. Arab villages were deserted.”

(77, **Homeland – Chapters in the History of the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael in the New Era**, part 2, 1998, p.163)

Many books describe how the Arabs abandoned various towns and villages in Israel. For example, a high school textbook (298, **The Coastal Plain – Man and Environment Through the Generations**, pp.381, 382, 383) says:

“Of the 350,000 residents of the Gaza Strip, some 280,000 (80%) are Arab refugees who fled from their homes during the war that raged in our country in 5708. These refugees, who did not want to live under Jewish rule, settled in the Gaza Strip and were absorbed in refugee camps.”

(372, p. 103)

“When the War of Independence ended, the Gaza Strip remained under Egyptian control. The local population resided there and they were joined by Arab refugees who until the war had mainly been residents of towns and villages in the coastal plain. The UN built refugee camps for these refugees.”

(298, **The Coastal Plain – Man and Environment Through the Generations**, for junior high school, p.400)

“On the morning of the first day of the month of Iyar, the decisive assault began. The three key points in Safed were taken one after another and the following morning the flight of the city’s Arab residents began. As a result of the fall of Arab Safed, most Arabs residing in the Hula region fled.”

(20, **The History of Recent Generations**, vol. 2, 1997, p.234)

“On 19.4, Tiberias was in our hands. The Arabs there refused to accept the authority of Jewish rule and preferred to be evacuated with the help of the British army and leave the city.”

(353, **Not on a Silver Platter**, p.145)

“With the surrender of Jaffa, a mass flight of Arabs from the city began.”

(77, **Homeland**, part 2, 1998, p. 132)

“With the capture of the large Arab population centers in the Ramle-Lod area, the phenomenon of Arab residents fleeing recurred. The terrible stories about the ‘Zionist cruelty’ circulating among the Arab population and the anticipated liberation of the captured territories by the Arab armies prompted a mass flight of Arabs. Thus the cities of Ramle and Lod, among others, emptied out and the refugee problem was created.”

(353, **Not on a Silver Platter**, p. 176)

“Here solid stone houses are scattered on both sides of the road and each house is surrounded by a jagged green belt – a blooming array of olive, fig, almond and pomegranate groves. And beside such a walled house sits the pool itself, that is wells. All of this was left behind by the Arab residents who fled panic-stricken as the Children of Israel fought for the liberation of the besieged holy city of Jerusalem.”

(331, **Our Childhood** 5, p. 233)

A fifth grade reader features a story about a boy evacuated from a kibbutz being shelled and taken to Haifa: “They took us to an abandoned house in the heart of Haifa’s lower city. The Arab residents who had fled had left all their belongings there. In the home that became ours, we found elegant furniture the likes of which we’d never seen before.”

(24, **Selections** – A reader for fifth grade in the general school, 5752,1992, p.94)

“During the month of Adar, 25,000 of Haifa’s Arab residents left the city. After Kawkji’s failure, the Arabs started a rumor that they had to leave Haifa in order to allow for the bombing of the city. Then another 20,000 Arabs left. After the fighting, the Arabs refused to accept the Jews’ invitation to remain in the city and the remaining 20,000 Arabs left the city by land and by sea for Syria and Lebanon. Their leaders, who encouraged and even ordered them to leave the city in order not to be under

Jewish rule, promised them they would return to the city with the Arab armies that were preparing to invade Eretz Yisrael on May 15.

(20, **The History of Recent Generations**, vol.2, 1997, p.233)

(A similar version with minor variations also appears in the book, **Not on a Silver Platter**, p.146)

A geography text book used in the ultra-orthodox educational stream for the fourth and fifth grades, surveys all regions of the country. In many places it notes that a given Jewish city or town was built on the ruins of an Arab village “abandoned by its Arab residents.”

(365, **The Good Land**, pp.76, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 122, 126, 141, 185, 219, 220, 221)

History textbooks used by the state-run high schools also repeat the story of the flight from various towns and villages. (14, **From Exile to Independence – The History of the Jewish People in Recent Generations**, vol. 2, 1990, pp.267-270)

Flight and Expulsion

Two history textbooks and one geography textbook state that some of the refugees were expelled.

“During the fighting, many of the local Arabs were expelled. Some of them fled before the Jews reached a village or Arab neighborhood in a city, and others were expelled by the conquering force. Tens of thousands fled to neighboring countries – primarily to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – in the hope that with the help of these countries, they would one day return to their previous places of residence. Many became refugees in camps set up in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and neighboring countries.”

(6, **The Twentieth Century – History for ninth grade**, 1999, p.138)

A history textbook used by state-run high schools devotes an entire chapter to a “summary of the flight of Arabs from Eretz Yisrael during the War of Independence.”

The author cites five reasons for the Arabs’ flight:

1. “The flight of the leadership and wealthy class already at the beginning of the war.”
2. “The deterioration of security and order in the Arab towns and villages.”
3. “In any civil war there are necessarily unplanned ‘population exchanges’ with no guiding force behind them. A civilian population concerned about its fate, justly or not, moves to areas where soldiers of their own people or religion are in control.”
4. “The organized appeal of the leaders of Arab countries to the Arabs in Eretz Israel.”
5. “The horror propaganda broadcast by the Arab media about incidents in which the Jewish forces compelled Arab residents to leave and harmed the civilian Arab population.”

Alongside these reasons, the author cites another position: “A new historical explanation has been offered by historian Benny Morris, who refers to the stages in

the Arabs' flight from the country and the reasons behind it. According to him, the main catalyst for the flight was the attacks by the Hagana, Etzel, Lehi and Israel Defense Forces and not the calls or instructions of the leaders of Arab countries or of the Supreme Arab Council and the Mufti." The author quotes at length from four pages of an article by Benny Morris.

(14, **From Exile to Independence – The History of the Jewish People in Recent Generations**, vol.2, 1990, pp.308-312)

In the same book, when the author analyses the results of the War of Independence, he writes: "Regarding the return of Arab residents who fled from Israel's territory, there was a consensus among the leadership that the Arabs' flight solves a serious problem that will arise in the future concerning the demographic composition of the State of Israel."

(14, **From Exile to Independence**, p.293)

Elsewhere in the same book, the following appears: "In essence, the primary problem of the emerging Jewish state was resolved – the existence of a large and threatening Arab minority in its midst."

(14, **From Exile to Independence**, p.313)

A geography textbook used in state-run high schools states: "Most Arab refugees fled Israel during the War of Independence (in the years 1947-1949) and during the Six Day War (1967) – two wars initiated by Arab countries. Following these two wars, hundreds of thousands of Arabs became refugees and scattered to various countries around the world, primarily in the Middle East. These refugees are known as "Palestinian refugees" and their exact number is in dispute. During the War of Independence, between 500,000 and 900,000 Arab refugees left their homes. They left behind their possessions and planned to return to their homes after the fighting ended. There were a variety of reasons for their departure: some sought to distance themselves from the dangers of the war, some listened to the directives of their leaders who called on them to leave their residences and thereby facilitate the Arab armies' conquest of Israel, and some were expelled during the fighting by various Israeli elements."

(8, **People in the Expanse – Studies in the Geography of the World's Population**, 1997, p.153)

Reference to the Refugees' Suffering

Few books covering the refugee problem mention the suffering of the refugees. A book of geography and demography states the following: "Below are some sections with information on the three largest groups of refugees. All three were created as a result of ongoing wars and political conflicts and, in each one, the great suffering caused to the refugees stands out:

- the Jewish refugees during World War II
- the Arab refugees and Jewish refugees resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict
- the Rwandan refugees who emerged as a result of inter-tribal wars.

... the refugee problem is a complex political problem and a painful humanitarian problem, and it is one of the most difficult and complicated aspects of the long Arab-Israeli conflict.”

(8, **People in the Expanse – Studies in the Geography of the World's Population**, 1997, pp.151, 153)

The same text features a picture of the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, “where residents live in very crowded and distressed conditions.”



(8, **People in the Expanse – Studies in the Geography of the World's Population**, 1997, p.154)

Several state-run elementary school readers contain stories in which regret is expressed over the refugees' departure. Usually the narrator is a child or an adult recalling his childhood.

Thus, for example, a fifth-grade reader used in state-run elementary schools tells about a family that immigrated from Poland and lived in Jerusalem's Makor Baruch neighborhood. The family rented a home from Muhammad, who lived in Lifta. A friendship developed between the two families and each attended some of the other's family celebrations.

“When the War of Independence started, Muhammed stopped coming to our home. And we refrained from going to Lifta for fear of being attacked on the way there.” One day, the father of the family saw a convoy of wagons loaded with furniture. On one wagon sat Muhammad. “Where're you going to?”, I asked him. ‘To Jordan,’ he answered. ‘Why?’ – ‘We're afraid of what the Jews will do to us...’ ‘Go back home, Muhammad,’ I told him. ‘After all, you and your family won't harm the Jews and therefore ‘they won't harm you.’ ‘I'm afraid,’ Muhammad answered and spurred the horse to head out. We had a bad feeling. ‘I'll look after his apartment,’ father said. ‘The land will quiet down’... We never again saw Muhammad, our landlord, and his family.”

(187, **Through Words**, book 5, 1995, pp.128-129)

Refugees in the Six Day War

“During the Six Day War, Israel captured the areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza and between 200,000-400,000 of their Arab residents left those places as refugees. Most moved to Jordan and a minority moved to other Arab countries. Most of the refugees from the Six Day War were those same refugees who had moved to Judea, Samaria and Gaza during the War of Independence.

Some of the Arab refugees settled and were integrated into the places they went to, some returned to their homes with the permission of the State of Israel, and many of them have lived since then in refugee camps and poor neighborhoods.”

(8, **People in the Expanse – Studies in the Geography of the World's Population**, 1997, p.153)

“During the Six Day War (1967) the Golan Heights were captured. In 1981, the State of Israel announced the application of Israeli law on the Golan Heights. The Beduin and Circassians who lived on the Heights fled during the war and the Druze villages near the foot of Mount Hermon (Majdal Shams, Mas’ada and others) remained.”

(352, **The North of the Country – the Face of the Country**, p.43)

Elsewhere, things are stated indirectly:

“After the Six Day War the Golan and the Hermon were in Israeli hands and the border line moved eastward, far from the valleys of the north. Today most villages in the Golan Heights are Jewish communities and a minority are Druze.”

(164, **The Mediterranean and Southern Coastal Plain and Northern Israel**, 1992, p.50)

A seventh grade reader used in state-run schools features a story about soldiers in the Six Day War who distribute food to refugees fleeing Jenin and Nablus... “We let them cross the Jordan. We are thereby endangering our own soldiers... Who can guarantee that the voices we hear nearby indeed are the voices of refugees and not of commandos?... We didn’t start the war, we didn’t hate them, we didn’t expel them. We didn’t know why they were leaving and perhaps they didn’t know either... Woe unto the defeated, the Romans used to say. But believe me it’s also hard to be a ‘Jewish victor’.”

(218, **Literature Anthology – seventh grade reader**, pp.352-353)

Jewish Refugees from Arab Countries

One book portrays the refugee problem in symmetrical fashion. According to this version, the Arab-Israeli conflict prompted a flow of refugees in two directions and it notes that Israel made efforts to absorb Jewish refugees whereas the Arab refugee problem remained unsolved.

“The Arab-Israeli conflict and the wars between Israel and the Arabs caused the migration of large groups of refugees – both Arabs and Jews. The Arab refugees were

uprooted from their homes which were in the area of the fighting. The Jewish refugees were uprooted from their homes in Arab countries due to the hostility that emerged as a result of the establishment of the State of Israel and as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

“The Jewish Refugees

“The establishment of the State of Israel, and the battles between it and the Arab countries, led to a worsening of the situation of Jews living in Muslim countries: those events sparked hostility and aggression against their Jewish citizens. And in some of them, including Iraq, Syria and Egypt, laws were even enacted to revoke their citizenship, leaving many of these Jews without a source of income. Tens of thousands of Jews left their homes and took nothing with them, most of them in the first years after the establishment of the State of Israel. Often they left via secret routes and risked their lives because some of the Arab countries forbade them to leave.

“In contrast to the Arab refugees, many of whom still live in refugee camps and whose problem remains unsolved – the problem of Jewish refugees from Arab countries was long ago solved. Some of the Jewish refugees from Muslim countries immigrated to Israel and some immigrated to other countries. Those who immigrated to Israel did so out of a sense that they were coming to their homeland, and the State of Israel, one of whose primary goals is to absorb immigration, invested great efforts in absorbing these immigrants. After a difficult adjustment period, they were absorbed in Israel and were integrated into the life of the country.”

In this text there are pictures of “Jewish Refugees on their way to Israel” and a picture of the refugee camp of Jabalya. (as shown on page 83).

Foreigners Without Roots

One textbook used in the ultra-orthodox sector presents the argument that the Arabs’ flight from Israel indicates that the Arabs did not strike roots in Eretz Yisrael and they are like “foreigners to it, wayfarers who rest along the way,” whereas the Jews made its deserts bloom.

“After all, despite the accepted explanations, there is no convincing logical explanation for the strange vision of the flight of the Arab fellaheen. Have you ever seen a dense forest with deep roots dating back hundreds of years, suddenly uproot itself from its land, and flee? And farmers are compared to a dense forest, with deep roots and a strong connection to Mother Earth. And there is no wind strong enough to completely uproot farmers from their land and carry them off as if they were the dust of the earth. On the contrary. Despite the horrors of modern wars and sudden invasions-conquests, the class of farmers in each and every country has proved their fearless determination. And here masses of fellaheen got up, abandoned all in a flash and fled in a panic, exactly like the ‘chaff which the wind drives away.’

“It seems that they did not strike any roots in this land, did not connect to it in any way. They dwelled in it, for hundreds of years, but did not settle in it. They were like foreigners to it, like wayfarers who rest along the way. The contact between them and this land was superficial, random and temporary. It was a sterile contact, the land was not fertilized by them and maintained its desolation and they did not strike roots in it.

And the proof is – that at the moment when the desolate land awakened to the voices heralding the rebuilding of the land and the return of its sons, it shook off its stagnation, threw off the veneer of destruction it had been covered in and emerged in all its charm and enchantment. Its streams flowed outward and it revealed the best of its treasures well-hidden in its depths. It, the desolate land, proved its loyalty to that ancient marriage contract that appears in the Torah received from Moses: ‘That the Lord your God is bringing you to a good land’.” (Deuteronomy 8:7-9) (329, **Our Childhood** 8, p. 350)

Stories About Arab Refugees Written by Israeli Authors

Several readers feature stories in which an Israeli narrator tells of an Arab friend of his who had to leave the country and became a refugee who fled to another country. These stories express much regret over the separation from the Arab friend and they awaken in the reader empathy for the Arab refugees. There are very few stories like this and they appear only in textbooks used in the state-run schools.

In the story, “Night of Separation,” which appears in a sixth-grade reader, the narrator is a Jewish man sitting in his room on the eve of Independence Day watching the fireworks and remembering the Arab village that used to be adjacent to his neighborhood and the good relations that prevailed between the village’s residents and the Jews. When the war broke out, the village residents stopped coming to the neighborhood. “Gloom settled over the neighborhood, and we, the children, were sad. We spent many hours standing at the edge of the neighborhood, looking at the village opposite in the hope of again seeing the village children, but they didn’t come.” One day, the children saw that the village residents were leaving with all their possessions. At night, the children went to the village and the narrator meets his friend, Hamid. ‘Hamid, why did you all leave the village?’ He stared with his shining black eyes and whispered: ‘We wanted to stay, all the villagers wanted to stay, but they were afraid. I’m also afraid... a few days ago, strangers came to our village. They told us that you, the Jews, want to kill all the villagers.’ ‘And you believed it?’ ‘I didn’t believe it, my father also didn’t believe it, but there were some who believed it’... ‘But why didn’t you come to ask us? After all, we were friends!’ ‘We were,’ Hamid whispered. ‘Those people scared us with their stories.’ ‘Hamid, stay with us,’ I told him. ‘I want to stay, but I can’t.’ ‘Are you afraid?’ ‘No, I’m not afraid anymore. I know that those people were lying, but I can’t. My whole family left and I too must go... I’ll never forget you, never.’ (146, **Strings**, sixth grade reader, 1997, pp.224-227).

In another story, the narrator is a member of a kibbutz near Beit She’an. After Beit She’an was captured by the Jews during the War of Independence, a convoy of refugees fleeing from Beit She’an to Jordan passed near the kibbutz.

“In this long convoy, I saw Abdallah as well. He was mounted on his noble horse. For a moment, I wanted to shout after him: ‘Abdallah, wait! Why are you running away? After all, we’re neighbors and really we could’ve been friends. Stay here! No one will do you any harm. Don’t run away, Abdallah! Don’t go away from this valley. It is the threshold of paradise!’ But I didn’t say a word. I was quiet as usual. I didn’t turn to

him. I saw him going down to the Jordan River. All the members of the tribe followed after him. 'We weren't the ones who wanted this war,' Gadi said. 'They started.' And I was silent and when the end of the war finally came, the war that seemed like it would never end, there was a strange sensation in the heart. The price of victory was very steep. Our kibbutz also paid its share. Beyond the flower-covered hill where Gadi and I would frequently walk, we saw Abdallah's tribe. They pitched their tents on the other side of the Jordan River. Plowing the earth and threshing their wheat, they continued living their lives as they had lived them here, when they lived on this bank of the Jordan, beside us. We were still neighbors now, but if before we were separated by our differences, now we were separated by a physical border, that of Jordan and the water. Essentially it was a quiet border. Now conflicts did not erupt between us, but no connections were formed either. Now, not only did differences separate between the two peoples, but an actual border separated them. We worked the land that was just a few meters away from theirs, but the distance remained: a distance consisting of years of hostility and alienation to which the insults of war were now added." (28, **New Israel Readers**, for sixth grade, pp.69-70).