Haredi Textbooks in Israel
REINFORCING THE BARRICADES

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Preface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Research Corpus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Background of Haredi Education in Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Haredi Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Attitudes toward the “Other” in Haredi Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Nations of the World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Attitude toward Arabs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Secularism and Modern Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Zionism and the State of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Racism and Mizrahi Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Gender and the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Conclusion and Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>List of Textbooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Textbooks used in the Haredi education system promote a unique and separate cultural identity while generally keeping recognition and contact with mainstream Israeli culture to a minimum. The curricula oppose modernity. Acceptance of Others is limited and unequal, depending on perceived threats to the Haredi community’s identity and its goals.

Most study, particularly for boys, is conducted outside the curricula where they learn religious (mostly Torah) studies, the result of a compromise with the State of Israel; that study is generally archaic in style, using expressions and ideas common in the 1950s and 60s; and often features exaggerated, inappropriate language typically absent in newer high-quality textbooks.

Anti-Semitism, Peace and Haredi Identity

Hatred of the Jewish people by the “nations of the world” is understood to be a permanent historical reality. Paradoxically, this understanding, though seemingly pessimistic, is also expressed as hopeful, focusing on the victory of the spiritual over the material and advocating a mission and meaning for each person’s life. The most obvious manifestation relates to the Holocaust, as reflected in stories of the moral and ethical superiority of the Haredi community during that period.

This also helps us to understand the depiction of Palestinians; there is no extensive coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The attitude is similar to this “nations of the world” view as another expression of anti-Semitism. Peace and territorial compromise are not ruled out, but are perceived as the naive attitude of leftist Israelis, who have presumably lost their Jewish roots.

So while Palestinian cities such as Nablus and Jericho are mentioned in the text, maps of Israel include only the outline of Palestinian Authority territories along with bordering Arab countries. Palestinian cities, towns or disputed areas do not appear on maps.

There is no particular interest in the mechanisms for peace, nor recognition of Palestinian (or Israeli) nationalism. The subject remains outside the focus of the curricula, with an emphasis on the preservation of a Haredi perception of Judaism. Commitment to peaceful conduct which forms the foundation of rabbinical Judaism is evident throughout the curricula.

As for the Israeli Arabs, their rights as equal citizens and as a separate national group include special educational and religious-judiciary rights. They are nevertheless identified with Palestinians, who are seen as Israel's enemies. Students are warned about the dangers of an Arab majority in Israel, which once in power would end Israel's democracy, as the Nazis did in Germany. With great attention paid to Holocaust stories and through anecdotes across subjects in all grade levels, the Haredi have attempted to rediscover an identity by reviving a world that was exterminated; this “new” Haredi society perceives itself as the authentic continuation of the traditional Jewish ethos and is reflected in numerous texts dealing with the heritage of great
Jewish scholars and life in the European communities. The textbooks generate a nostalgic consciousness that seeks to preserve and recreate traditional Eastern European Jewry—defining Haredi identity, shaping its goals and boundaries, and distinguishing itself from other forms of Israeli public.

**Mizrahi Stereotypes, Race and Inequality**

Mizrahi community textbooks contain almost no references to Mizrahi Jewry and its history. Despite the existence of many Mizrahi Haredi schools and students, the general Haredi curricula do not contain references to the heritage of Mizrahi rabbis or the cultural experience of their respective countries. Mizrahi pupils absorb their experience from the Ashkenazi Haredi ethos, and they are educated on stories about “great figures” from the Ashkenazi Haredi experience.

Mizrahi characters are depicted with stereotypical characteristics; there is a focus on stories from the period of the Aliyah (literally, ascendance; describes Jews immigrating, based on the Law of Return) to Israel. There is no representation of other elements or figures from the contemporary period that are closer to a world with which the student can identify. An exception is the portrayal of businesswoman and philanthropist Gracia Mendes Nasi, who lived in the sixteenth century during the Ottoman Golden Age.

The focus of stories in the textbooks is on the goals that typify Haredi culture, ignoring trends in general society. There is no education against bigotry; the only reference to the subject is superficial and detached, making it irrelevant to a student’s daily life. While there is the expectation of behaving fairly toward all people, there is no attempt to challenge stereotypes and promote equality. Specific messages against slavery and discrimination against Sephardi Jews exist, but the style of presentation is old-fashioned and contains stereotypes. Thus, stereotypical attitudes persist even when trying to present anti-racist arguments.

**Attitude toward Women**

Women are depicted as needing to undertake the perceived traditional male role of being responsible for a family’s livelihood. This Haredi reversal of roles is to maintain the Torah’s ideal of a learning society and recreate the Haredi Judaism that was destroyed. Despite having the responsibility for wage-earning, Haredi women continue to be portrayed as traditional and modest, assuming the husband’s role but remaining in the background. Thus, women are not empowered. Rather, the stress is on the part they play in the husband’s Torah study and their critical role in raising the next generation of Torah scholars. Stories reflect the ideal of modesty. There are few images of women; the rare exception includes Sarah Schenirer, who played a critical public role in upholding Jewish tradition.
View toward Others
The Other that is most threatening to Haredi society is modern secular society. The textbooks negate it completely, are contemptuous of it, identify it as materialistic and create a counter ethos that revolves around spiritual culture. Our findings reinforce the claim that Haredi society in Israel publicly defines itself as being anti-modernity. There is a clear continuation of the Haredi consciousness in response to the period of (European Jewish) emancipation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and later on, during the establishment of Israel’s independence. This history forms the basis of Haredi society’s insularity.

Reform Jews are demonized and to a lesser degree, so are the Israeli left-wing political parties. Reform Jews, however, are perceived as attempting to create an alternative religion to “compete” with the tradition that Haredi Jews represent. This manifests itself through discussion of the Haskalah, (secular Jewish “enlightenment” movement), Moses Mendelsohn and Herz Homberg who “coerced” Jews into secular education and cavorted with the wives of others. They are seen as the cause of assimilation.

Isolation and independence in the educational sphere is justified through stories about the “Children of Tehran” (who were “secularized” by the Zionists) and other alleged attempts to impose secular education on children from traditional families who had survived the Holocaust.

Despite the expressed desire of the Haredi community to protect its young students from what are labeled as negative external stimuli, democracy and civics are taught in a restricted manner—certainly not as completely as in the Israeli public school system. Students are encouraged to find ways to work within Israeli society as long as it doesn’t oppose the Haredi way. In other words, the curricula educate for a pragmatic coexistence.

While there are examples of respect among Haredim toward the non-Jews of the world, including Arabs and Islam, there is no practical education or guidance to teach respect for Reform Jews, archeologists, missionaries, soldiers, “unacceptably dressed women,” and anyone who drives on Shabbat, among others. Though there are sometimes news reports showing adherents acting aggressively and even violently to any or all of these individuals or groups, it is unclear whether such Haredim are directly connected to the curricula or represented by minority sects, or both. It is beyond the scope of this research to determine the extent to which the curricula are actually applied to learning within the Haredi community. What is clear, however, is that boys over age thirteen in Haredi schools employing the curricula are also NOT being monitored by this study. And there is even less information regarding those Haredi children who have dropped out of the school systems.

This study includes, therefore, two separate arguments. One is that the Haredi curricula in Israel are incomplete in that they do not cover all boys K–12; and many groups among the Haredi community just do not use the secular core curriculum at all. Our other argument is that the
textbooks themselves, treated here as the researched corpus, do not satisfactorily meet all of UNESCO standards and beg for a serious reevaluation (despite a general commitment to peaceful conduct and coexistence). Having said so, and as shown in other reports as well, we are fully aware that the Haredi education as a whole offers some unique characteristics and advantages that may be worthwhile examining, with certain aspects potentially even offering a model for other education systems.

**Main Points**

**Insularity** is expressed in the scope of core subjects since students learn less than those in non-Haredi schools. The textbooks are adapted to the Haredi population with limited images and contents that meet a rabbinical “seal of approval,” so that secular studies are taught in the context of Torah sources.

**The Curricula** form a compromise between the state and the Haredi leadership to allow boys over age thirteen to exclude the curricula and substitute religious (mostly Torah) education.

**Reform Jews** are demonized and perceived as attempting to create an alternative religion. **Leftists and Nationalists (Zionists)** are blamed for the alleged attempt to impose secular education.

**The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict** is deemed to be the result of naive compromises, caused by dissociation of the Israeli left from their Jewish roots; compromises which are not realistic. There is no interest in the nationalist aspirations of the Palestinians. There is respect for the Prophet and nostalgia for the past coexistence between Haredim and Arab neighbors in the Old Yishuv (pre-mandate, non-Zionist Jewish community).

**Democracy, Civics, and Contribution** of Haredim to Israeli society is also pragmatic given ideological differences. The curricula educate for a pragmatic coexistence and tolerance—but not acceptance (of other-than the Haredi worldview).

**Dramatic and Archaic Style.** Textbooks may use offensive language in relation to that which is perceived as a threat.

**Stereotypical and Offensive Attitude toward Race** even when trying to offer anti-racist arguments.

**Attitude to Women.** The role of the mother is portrayed traditionally in lower grades, as being responsible for the home and raising children while the father is represented as the “head of the family.” In the upper grades, greater emphasis is placed on women assuming financial responsibility for the family, while upholding their roles with modesty and devotion in the home as mothers. There is no encouragement of women to strive for career success.
Acknowledgements

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Eldad Pardo and Tehila Gamliel

From: Our Childhood, Grade 1, n.d., p. 31.
A persistent theme in human history is that of unity. The greatest religions and most powerful ideologies aspired to unite all humans under one banner. Proselytization, acculturation, coercion and even genocide were among the tools applied on the way to the desired goal.

The twenty-first century, with its breathtaking shrinking of distances and the collapse of barriers between people, places and things, is the venue for the acceleration of this march toward human unity. Worryingly, these very same processes also lead to serious concerns over the loss of cultural diversity. Languages, for example, are now “rapidly being lost at a rate of extinction exceeding the well-known catastrophic loss of biodiversity.”¹ This phenomenon is not entirely new. The modern language of Hebrew, for example, is all that remains of the Canaanite languages, formerly spoken by the Israelites, Phoenicians, Amorites, Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites. Tightly connected to Jewish religious and secular culture, it managed to survive.

Since its inception, Judaism displayed heightened awareness of the close connection between survival and religious heritage. A degree of isolationism has always been a part of this. Beginning with the patriarchs and continuing through the long exilic periods, existence as a small, sometimes wandering minority was a hallmark of the faith. Both voluntary religious rules and imposed anti-Jewish sentiment mostly preserved the distance from the populations where Jews found themselves.

This phenomenon began to change with the dawn of modernity in eighteenth century Europe, followed by the gradual emancipation of Jews in the Western world.

The modern era presented a double threat to Jews. One, as argued by the Haredi movement, was that emancipation seemed to prescribe assimilation—what has sometimes been called a “poisonous kiss.”² The other danger, identified by Theodor Herzl, was that equal rights were often a thin veneer, insufficient to protect Jews from ultra-nationalism. Pre-WWII emancipation proved to be an ephemeral respite between discrimination and extermination.

Then how did non-Haredi Jews tackle the challenges of modernity? Two strategies were employed: one to deal with the issue of Jewish solidarity; and another to reform the world. Solidarity, based on the principle: Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze Bazeh [All of Israel is Responsible for One Another] argues for self-reliance in confronting evil. Reforming the world derives from the concept: Tikkun Olam [literally, repairing the world], which holds, more optimistically, that evil can be diminished and tiny vulnerable minorities, such as the Jews, will not need to worry anymore.

But what about the modern cultural “poisonous kiss” that comes with freedom and equality? Building virtual walls around the community, the Haredi movement defies modernity head on. It rejects the digital world, nationalism and military service. It adheres to pacifistic, isolationist, rabbinical Judaism. Tragically, the Haredi movement, first to warn against modernity, became its main victim. Not only their population, but institutions, leadership and influence were almost completely lost in one moment of history. All the faith in the world could not save Haredi Jews from near complete annihilation in WWII Europe.3

The Haredi movement's pro-modern rivals—Zionists and Reform Jews—were now in control. Yet, leftist Israeli governments allowed the Haredi community to keep its educational non-nationalist independence and avoid military service, hoisting the Israeli flag, singing the anthem, respecting the fallen and other trappings of sovereignty. Within a few decades, the Haredi community catapulted itself into the center of the Israeli power structure. Their secret was the innovative pacifistic “community of scholars” [hevrat halomdim] in which most men devote their entire lives to religious studies. Working within Israel’s political and legal systems, Haredi education became part of the pluralistic rainbow of curricula that include secular, national-religious, Arab, Druze, anti-Israeli Palestinian and a great variety of private institutes. The Haredi movement itself is comprised of many streams and groups, each committed to its specific style of curriculum-less learning.

But this kind of pluralism is not problem-free. The Haredi leadership remains worried about assimilation. The majority of Israelis want Haredim to fully integrate into society, study Israel’s core curriculum, participate in economic life, serve in the army and adopt the values of modern citizenship. As Haredi numbers and political power grows, isolationism is less of an option.

The secular curricula examined here were largely enforced on the Haredi community. Beyond age thirteen, more girls than boys are taught this curricula. The textbooks used tend to be outdated and include warnings against the old enemies—Reform Jews and the Israeli Left. As for non-Jewish Others, it is clear that Germans, as perpetrators of the Holocaust, serve as a negative

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3 Aviezer Ravitzky argues in his seminal work: *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism in Israel* Translated by Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, chap. 4.), that they must realize they had been wrong in relying solely on religious faith; however, the curricula do not support that assumption.
juxtaposition to the spiritual greatness of the martyrs. Non-Jews, overall, remain a source of
danger to the Haredi mind, with Palestinian terrorism looming large in this context. Peace, for
Haredim, is a central value, while engaging in the political sphere is of marginal interest at best.
So, the topic of peace in the curricula taught to a variety of schools is pragmatic: If peace and
compromise is possible, that is good. As regards the Arab or Palestinian Other, there are both
positive and negative messages. Prophet Muhammad's message is seen as genuine and relevant,
in contrast to his bloody conflict with the Jews. Harmonious relationships and peaceful
coexistence are central values. But there is no interest in Palestinian national aspirations.
Nationalism, including the Israeli version, is outside the Haredi frame of reference.

The resistance by Haredim to the monochromatic hegemony of language and culture imposed by
modernity remains a dilemma. The Haredi community is part of an ancient religious tradition,
forming one of the pillars of Western civilization. They reject nationalism, sovereignty and
military power, in exchange for peacefully worshipping God and practicing their one-of-a-kind
culture. In the eyes of the Haredim, the Western civilization that almost destroyed them
continues to culturally threaten their existence. What we have examined in this study—including
some entirely inappropriate expressions—is marginal to the actual education of many groups and
subgroups within the Haredi community. While authorized by the rabbis, it was largely imposed
on Haredim by a state populated with ideological rivals. Those selfsame opponents who insist on
creating a melting pot of loyal citizens, are supported by American Jews who opted to live in
Western democracies in a “free” culture which now aspires to have one international system, one
set of unified standards and one virtual world. Where that leaves the Haredi in this equation is an
unanswered question.

Nevertheless, it still remains for us to analyze these curricula against the background of
IMPACT-se’s UNESCO-derived standards. According to this measure, the Haredi curricula do
not meet all the standards. Changes must indeed be introduced. It is time for a frank and
respectful conversation. We hope this report, which is based on international standards, will
contribute to this discourse.

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Introduction

Haredi society comprises an array of communities and currents within ultra-Orthodox Judaism that are characterized by meticulous observance of religious commandments and cultural conservatism. The Haredi community is generally divided into three main groups: Hassidim and Misnagdim (both Ashkenazi), and Sephardim (Mizrahim). There are no precise data on the number of people belonging to each group but they are thought to be more or less equal in size. In addition to these major groups, there are a number of smaller factions. Moreover, the main groups themselves contain discernible sub-streams. These seemingly countless groups are distinguished from each other by outward appearance, leadership, schools and, at times, by hashkafa (worldview).

Despite the differences between them, the groups share traits that characterize all Haredim. These include: meticulousness of Jewish observance and a preference for the more stringent rulings published in the halakhic (religious legal) literature; Torah study and serving God (avodat Hashem) as supreme values; complete subjection to rabbinical authority; strong emphasis on family and on raising and educating children; an all-encompassing control of social customs and practices; cultural separatism as reflected in dress, language and attitudes toward Others; geographically separate areas of residence; and the overall Haredi interpretation of reality.

The present report covers ninety-three textbooks (most of them recognized by the Ministry of Education) which are the result of negotiations between the state and Haredi communities. The curricula form only a portion of the actual studying by Haredi students. For most boys from the eighth grade, no textbooks are used whatsoever. So while these "modern" textbooks taught to middle school boys and high school girls have only limited influence, they do allow a partial glimpse into the Haredi community's worldview. It should be noted, however, that the actual teaching—beyond the core secular curriculum from the state—is diversified to a point that presents a daunting, perhaps insurmountable, methodological task.

Our findings show that the contents of textbooks used throughout the Haredi education system promote a unique and separate cultural identity but simultaneously negate Other cultures, keeping recognition and contact at a minimum. While denying the Other is not expressed uniformly toward everyone, its intensity is influenced by a perception of the threat from other lifestyles to the Haredi identity and its goals.

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4 The split between Hassidim and Misnagdim originated in the second half of the eighteenth century. Hassidism tends to stress happiness, Kabbalistic esoteric knowledge and mirrors Sephardi rituals. Misnagdim, (literally: opponents [of Hassidism]), tend to stress legalistic matters, learning and classic Ashkenazi tradition. Sephardi Judaism tends to accommodate the legalistic with the esoteric, the strict with the joyful and the modern with the Orthodox.
The greatest challenge to the Haredi society is modern secularism, particularly within the context of Jewish culture. The textbooks negate it completely, are contemptuous of it and perceive it as a materialistic culture that creates a counter ethos. Our findings reinforce the claim that the Haredi society in Israel officially defines itself as being anti-modernity. In reality, things are more nuanced. The Haredi textbooks often present extreme, sometimes unreliable examples to prove a point while blurring their own lack of modernism. Examples are the attacks on Herz Homberg, as a supposed central figure in Reform Judaism, and the misrepresentation of the “Children of Tehran” affair.

Perhaps because some aspects of the curricula are considered irrelevant by Haredim, the texts can be somewhat anachronistic, in that they often reflect a 1950s mentality, with little awareness of the proprieties of modern society. At least in one case, the text itself is the very same one written in the early 1940s. The Haredi authors seem engrossed with avoiding innovation. Thus even the most moderate and reasonable messages are at times expressed in unacceptable terms.

Examples: African Americans are dubbed kushim, a Biblical word that was common and non-pejorative in the 1950s and 60s, but is no longer acceptable since it is now translated as Negro, after the English. So, an anti-slavery, anti-discrimination message is in textbooks, but not in the way we would expect it to be. It should also be noted that there are teachers who consider the textbook which includes this and many other embarrassing expressions and mistakes (e.g., “a ‘black’ Rudy Giuliani is the ‘head’ of New York State”), as an aberration. Education to respect Yemenite Jews portrays a Yemenite woman who is cleaning laundry, and is shown to be diligent and chaste, again representing the reality of the 1940s and 50s when many Yemenite women worked in Ashkenazi households. Nazis are always described as “Germans,” though in mainstream Israeli discourse, this is no longer the case.

In keeping with the general tendency in Haredi circles (and Judaism at large) to fiercely argue and debate almost everything, the textbooks often take an equally dramatic approach, using pejorative, flowery terminology in stories about those perceived as a threat.

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7 Mosheh Auerbach, Jewish History: From the First Temple Period to the Present; Book One: From the Babylonian Exile to the Destruction of the Second Temple (Hebrew; Yeshurun Publishing, 2008, first published 1941).


9 The use of dramatic and even bombastic style, depicting reality in black and white, is a hallmark of the Haredi media and even more so the flamboyant pashkevilim (broadsides or posters) that cover the walls in Haredi
There is a clear continuation of the Haredi consciousness in response to the period of (European Jewish) emancipation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and later on during the challenges and establishment of Israel’s independence. This history formed the basis for Haredi society’s insularity, which is reflected in subjects that are perceived as threatening to the Haredi character.

Reform Judaism and Leftist Zionists

Reform Jews and Leftist Zionists are the main antagonist Others depicted in Haredi textbooks. Reform Jews are blamed for orchestrating the destruction of Judaism while adopting gentile ways. They are ostracized by the Haredi community and accused of trying to create an alternative religion to “compete” with the traditions that Haredi Jews represent. Zionists are berated for their ruthless efforts to secularize Orthodox Jewish children, particularly Mizrahim, while running the Jewish state in an utterly incompetent manner, especially when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The alleged attempt by “leftist Zionists” to impose secular education on the “Children of Tehran” (who, as asserted by Haredi circles, originated from traditional families and had survived the Holocaust), was a key factor in crystallizing the Haredi consciousness to uphold their way of life.

The textbooks are not shy about exposing individuals and groups opposed to the Haredi way of life. They point to the “despicable” eighteenth century reformist leader Herz Homberg (student of Moses Mendelssohn), and the “nastiness” of the Maskilim [social group literally meaning: secularly educated class] which “reached a new low.” They resorted to “the power of informers and other . . . means trying to make Jews send their children to public schools.” They spent time in women's salons “with frivolous, empty Christians.” Secular education in Israel is considered to be “hollow,” along with the emptiness and shallowness of the “treacherous Reform movement,” which encourages Jews to commit sins. The hated Zionists “crowned Ben Yehuda (reviver of the Hebrew language) as their ‘rabbi.’”

The problem, one can agree, is not that Haredi education rejects other forms of education in Israel nor even that they fiercely criticize others. What is missing is education about tolerance and respect for the right to choose, if not respect for those who choose. While many in the Haredi population are tolerant, pragmatic and peaceful, extremist groups have reportedly heckled other religious (even Orthodox) Jews and Others. And the textbooks do not emphatically criticize this behavior. Such radical sects ignore messages of tolerance as do the young males who simply avoid school, because they are not suited for the demanding lifestyle of the religious schools.

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neighborhoods. Our thanks to Shmuel Singer for providing numerous examples of this phenomenon. See also: Kimmy Caplan, Internal Popular Discourse in Israeli Haredi Society (Hebrew; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center), 2007.

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Moreover, the system as a whole exempts great segments of the Haredi population—including all boys age thirteen and up from using any of the curricula textbooks whatsoever.

The overall Haredi attitude is neither anti-Israel nor anti-state. The textbooks teach to respect the law and the civic system of Israel. Despite being unhappy that Israel is not fully halakhic, Haredi schools teach respect for the rule of law and encourage using the court system when necessary. Violence in schools is unheard of. Change should be attempted via the Knesset but accomplished with a pragmatic attitude. Agudat Yisrael (the Hasidic political party) champions the ideals of the Old Yishuv and its stress on achieving real peace in (Eretz) Israel. The violence by minority groups among the Haredi community is often rationalized as emanating from a combination of zealotry and influence from the pre-state violent struggle of the Zionists—as an example that should never be followed.

**Arab-Israeli Conflict and the Gentiles**

The examined texts portray the world’s hatred toward Jews as a permanent historical certainty that cannot be changed. Though such a view is gloomy, we can also find a prominent optimism that focuses on the victory of the spiritual over the material and nurturing a sense of the “chosen people.” The most obvious manifestation of this relates to the Holocaust, as reflected in Haredi-authored stories of the moral and ethical superiority of their community during that period. This approach also helps us to understand the relationship to Israel's enemies in the region, which is at times similar to the general Haredi approach toward many Others outside of the Haredi community; all is seen as just another expression of anti-Semitism.

Here again, the examined texts commonly tend to use emotional, dramatic and biased expressions.\(^{12}\) Regarding the 1948 War of Independence: “Egypt, Syria and Jordan, whose population hate the Jews and always seek an opportunity to harm them . . . but God in His many mercies thwarted their plan; and in a truly miraculous way, a very few number of Jews managed to win the war.” *Intifada* is presented not as an uprising, but “riots cynically manipulated by people longing for power and rule.” With respect to Palestinians in Oslo, the Haredi curricula present only one perspective regarding the question of origin and rights of Palestinians: “They have never been a people. We crowned them as a people, and gave them a land, but this only leads to more violence and killings.”

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\(^{12}\) Until the late 1960s, mainstream Israeli textbooks also included similar dramatic language: “… uncertainty and perplexity were signs of weakness.” Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948–2000* (Westport, CT and London: Bergin and Garvey), 2002, p. 39.

According to Sami Adwan, Daniel Bartal and Bruce Wexler, “positive bias in presentation of the self and the absence of images and information about the other are all statistically more pronounced in the Israeli Ultra-Orthodox and Palestinian books than in the Israeli State books,” in “Victims of Our Own Narratives? Portrayal of the ‘Other’ in Israeli and Palestinian School Books,” February 4, 2013, p. 2.

https://d7hj1xx5r7f3h.cloudfront.net/Israeli-Palestinian_School_Book_Study_Report-English.pdf.
The curricula are not overly concerned about Palestinian self-determination. They appear to be deeply worried about violence but are more concerned about dangers to Israel’s democracy, which Haredim see as the only barrier between their community and annihilation. The curricula are decidedly anti-Oslo, but not because of religious reasons or because they are against territorial compromise but rather because of the legacy of Arafat and the “Israeli leftists” who ignored his “monstrous terrorists.”

All in all though, the curricula are emphatically anti-violence or against any use of force. There are warnings against taking revenge. While textbooks admit that Haredim are at times permitted to help the army—such as during the War of Independence—generally one should focus on learning, praying and doing good deeds.

One of our main concerns regarding the Haredi community was that if the curricula do not adequately teach respect for the Other, Haredi individuals serving in the military may prove dangerous. Violence against Palestinians might ensue, we imagined, without proper civic education predicated on UNESCO standards of tolerance (see Methodology, p. 85). Our preliminary research suggests however, that Haredi conscripts, having been educated in peace, moral conduct and prayer, tend to be more considerate, sensitive, and peaceful than average soldiers. The curricula do not encourage violence and there is no particular animosity toward Muslims; rather they include a positive description of the Muslim Prophet, even hinting that he was genuine. The textbooks do exhibit concerns of potential harm from non-Jews, though, including Palestinians, but generally do not treat them as a block of Jew-haters.

For example, the Haredi texts recognize the city of Nablus “inhabited by extremely religious Muslims . . . famous for its superb olive oil soap exported to neighboring countries.” There is a description of Jews, after buying palms for Sukkot in Jericho and then going to a cafe to drink coffee, where they are very well received. But then a war erupts, everything changes and they cannot return. There are descriptions of Haredi community leaders conversing with Arabs before the establishment of Israel, to improve neighborly relations, although efforts to reach peace were unsuccessful.

Since peace and the sanctity of life constitute a central value of the faith, education toward peace is not an issue but is taught in the texts pragmatically: Peace is better than no peace. But here as well, the attitude is one of having spiritual superiority, rather than finding solutions through violence.

The Holocaust and Mizrahi Jews

From the tremendous attention paid to Holocaust stories in all grade levels and through the various other subjects covered throughout the curricula, the importance of reviving the Haredi world that was nearly destroyed during the Holocaust looms large. The Haredi community in

13 According to independent Haredi scholar Dr. Neri Horowitz.
Israel perceives itself as the authentic continuation of the traditional Jewish ethos. This point is also reflected in numerous textbooks crafted to disseminate the heritage of great Jewish scholars and life in the European communities. These textbooks generate a nostalgic consciousness that seeks to preserve and recreate an imagined traditional Eastern European Jewry. This approach further defines Haredi identity, shapes its goals and highlights its boundaries, while distinguishing itself from other segments of the Israeli public.

The focus of this perception impacts the Haredi relationship with certain groups of Others and includes the emphasis given to specific educational subjects.

“Reading” textbooks include considerable content with nostalgic stories from earlier Haredi society in European communities. Even the newer readers are designed the same way. Cultural heroes within Haredi textbooks refer to great Jewish scholars from Ashkenazi Haredi society. The stories contain almost no references to Mizrahi Jewry and its history. Additionally, despite the existence of Mizrahi schools, their textbooks do not contain references to the heritage of Mizrahi rabbis or the cultural experience from their respective countries. Mizrahi students absorb their experience from the Ashkenazi Haredi ethos, and they learn exemplary stories about “great figures” from the Ashkenazi Haredi experience.

Furthermore, Mizrahi characters are depicted stereotypically and the emphasis is on stories from the period of the Aliyah (literally, ascendance; describes Jews immigrating, based on the Law of Return) to Israel. Other elements or figures from the contemporary period that would be closer to the Mizrahi student’s culture are not represented.

The attention given to stories in the textbooks is on the goals that typify Haredi society, without dealing with general social trends. For example, there is no education against bigotry; the only reference to the subject is superficial and detached, making it irrelevant to a student’s daily life. While there is the expectation of behaving fairly toward all people, there is no attempt to uproot stereotypes and promote equality.

It is hard to determine whether this problematic finding emanates from a sense of Ashkenazi supremacy per se. Rather, it may derive from the rigid preservation of a Haredi worldview that perceives pre-modern European rabbinical heritage to be the genuine religious standard and therefore more desirable for all, including the Mizrahi Jews. One explanation for this may be the Haredi reluctance to stay up-to-date with universal trends, as evident throughout the curricula. One should not forget that modern Mizrahi rabbinical tradition takes an entirely different view toward modernity.14 This may in some ways also echo enduring disputes between Misnagdim

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and Hassidism, the latter displaying some commonalities with Sephardic esoteric and liturgical traditions.\(^\text{15}\)

All things considered, it is not difficult to understand that to the Haredim, the curricula are seen as a means to save and recreate the annihilated European Ashkenazi Judaism destroyed by the Nazis.

**Status of Women**

In order to maintain the Torah’s ideal of a learning society and recreate the Haredi Judaism that was destroyed, women must undertake the traditional role of men to be responsible for a family’s livelihood. And while earning a living is now squarely in the hands of Haredi women,\(^\text{16}\) the curricula teach the traditional roles between a woman and her husband; women must be modest in manner and appearance, assuming the husband’s role to earn a living—but remaining invisible. The messages do not revolve around a woman’s empowerment but rather on intensifying the part she plays in her husband’s Torah study and her critical role in raising the next generation of Torah scholars. Stories reflect the ideal of modesty and typically do not include images of women. Despite this, there is recognition of a few women, such as educator Sarah Schenirer from Krakow, Poland and the Sephardi (Mizrahi) businesswoman and philanthropist, Gracia Mendes Nasi from the sixteenth century’s Ottoman Golden Age, who played a critical public role in upholding Jewish tradition.

**External Others**

Despite the expressed desire of the Haredi community to protect its young students from negative external stimuli, democracy and civics are taught, though not as completely as in public schools. Students are encouraged to find ways to work within Israeli society as long as it doesn’t oppose the Haredi way. In other words, the curricula educates for pragmatic coexistence, if not tolerance. The Israeli democracy, considered a barrier against lethal enemies, takes precedence over the territorial integrity of Judaism's Holy Land.

There is some recognition of other cultures such as ancient Greece. At times there is also a respectful attitude toward other peoples, including Arabs. The Prophet Muhammad is understood to have had a clear and genuine worldview and message, though he is also mildly criticized as being overly creative in his final years; his conflict with the Jews is also included. Jesus is considered to be a Jewish renegade and religious threat and is openly rejected. The textbooks

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16 According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, only 56 percent of Haredi men (age 25–64) were employed in 2013 as compared with 90 percent among non-Hared Jews. The numbers for 2010–11 were 40–50 percent. “CBS: 56 Percent of Haredi Men Employed” (Hebrew), *Ynet*, January 14, 2015. 
http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-4615101,00.html.
teach that Christians were initially either Christian Jews or Christian gentiles. Gradually, the Christian Jews disappeared; some remained completely Jewish and others became gentiles.

**Upper and Lower Grades**

It is noteworthy that the lower grades appear to be focused on unilateral messages, while the upper grades present messages that are somewhat more complex. For example, textbooks for lower grades blame the Arabs for starting the 1948 War of Independence and violating the peace. Upper-grade textbooks present views of both sides related to the Arab-initiated attacks against the Jews (although the descriptions are usually not objective).

In lower-grade textbooks which teach the history of Israel’s founding, the focus is on Haredi leaders and rabbis from that period and those who uphold Torah and Jewish law. In the upper grades, students are fully aware of the history of the Zionist movement and the establishment of the state. For the most part, here, the descriptions are presented objectively and factually.

In grades 1–2, the role of the mother is portrayed according to traditional roles, as being responsible for the home and raising children while the father is represented as the “head of the family,” simultaneously seeing to the family’s livelihood and the study of Torah. In the later grades, a more realistic explanation of women’s roles in providing a family’s livelihood is given; at the same time women are shown to uphold their roles with modesty and devotion in the home as dutiful wives and mothers. There is no encouragement or special appreciation toward women for building a professional career or professional success.

In sum, the Haredi curricula form a unique compendium of subjects for a multitude of schools, which somehow form a collective whole. While it is not accurate to call the Haredi education a single curriculum, it nevertheless comes across as a single pathway that leads to the Haredi worldview. This education covers only a small portion of what is being taught. And though there is a commitment to peace and learning, the curricula as currently presented, do not fully meet the IMPACT-se UNESCO-derived standards applied to this study. (see Conclusion, p. 81)

**Research Corpus**

The present study looked at ninety-three textbooks for grades 1–12 in the Haredi school curricula during the 2016–17 school term.

**Sample Selection Method**

The report sought to reflect the curricula actually studied in classrooms; therefore, only books that are currently used were researched. More specifically, samples were taken from the curricula of nine Haredi schools representing the various types of institutions, grade levels and major groups.
1. Exempt Institution, Boys: Sephardi (Mizrahi).
2. Exempt Institution, Boys: Ashkenazi Hassidic.
4. Recognized (Unofficial), Boys’ Primary: Independent Education System–Ashkenazi.
5. Recognized (Unofficial), Boys’ Primary: Ma’ayan Torah Education Network\textsuperscript{17}–Sephardi.
6. Recognized (Unofficial), Girls’ Primary: Independent Education System–Ashkenazi.
7. Recognized (Unofficial), Girls’ Primary: Ma’ayan Torah Education Network–Sephardi.

This study focuses on the major segments of Haredi society, comprising the majority of the population; it does not include other smaller and closed Haredi groups. The research covers textbooks for Hebrew language and literature, history, geography, civics, science and the Bible.

Two types of textbooks were used.

1. Books published by governmental bodies, such as the Center for Educational Technology and approved by the Ministry of Education. A relatively small number of textbooks were sampled in this group; the remaining textbooks are being monitored by other IMPACT-se reports on the Israeli curriculum.

2. Books produced by private publishers that are not approved by the Ministry of Education. Our research focused primarily on these textbooks because there is no external supervision of authorship or presentation.

**Breakdown of Textbooks in the Study, by Subject:**

![Pie chart showing breakdown of textbooks](chart.png)

- Language and literature
- Geography
- Bible
- History
- Science

This study was conducted by IMPACT-se and based upon UNESCO criteria on Peace and Tolerance toward the Other in school education. (see Methodology, p. 85)

\textsuperscript{17} Ma’ayan HaHinukh HaTorani (Literally: [The Spring of Torah Education.])
Background of Haredi Education in Israel

Haredi Judaism is thought to have emerged as a response by European Jewish communities to the modernity of the last two centuries: Jewish emancipation, the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah), nationalism, secularization and, in particular, the Reform movement in Western Europe. The social and economic developments that led to these phenomena challenged the religious way of life that had prevailed within Jewish society, causing many young people to abandon both their communities and religious observance. To offset the potential loss, spiritual leaders erected social and cultural barriers in an atmosphere of reinforced religious practice—all aimed at encouraging rejection of modern secular behavior. The most notable proponent of this approach, considered one of the founding fathers of Haredi Judaism was Rabbi Moshe Sofer (the Chatam Sofer, 1762–1839), who coined the slogan Hadash assur min haTorah, (Anything new [any innovation in Jewish life] is forbidden by the Torah).

The Haredi movement emerged in Western Europe, in Germany, France, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where traditional Judaism was deeply threatened by the freedoms associated with (European Jewish) emancipation. From there it spread gradually to Eastern Europe, Russia and the Yishuv (body of Jewish residents prior to Israel’s founding). Today, Haredi Judaism also encompasses many Jews of Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) descent; some feel that a distinct Mizrahi Haredi Judaism exists. It should be noted that in the Sephardi communities within Islamic countries, the problems of modernization seen in the Jewish communities of Europe generally did not occur, presumably because the Ashkenazi and Sephardi traditions developed differently. While the Ashkenazi tradition was, in the words of sociologist Daniel Elazar, “romantic,” that is, tending toward halakhic extremism in the aspiration to realize the absolute, Mizrahi Jewry preferred a “classical” approach, which Elazar defines as balanced and rational, combining religious activity with general education and involvement in the wider world. This classical approach had major implications for halakha, as noted by Zvi Zohar.

Very different was the image of the whole Jewish person among the Jews of the Islamic lands, including Sephardi Jewry. These Jews also excelled in the study of the Bible, the Talmud, Midrash and halakha, but in their view this was not enough; an intelligent Jew who aspires to wholeness should engage in all areas of human cultural wisdom: grammar and poetry, mathematics and astronomy, medicine, the natural sciences and philosophy. A whole and fit person is one who has a hand in all of these things and manages to integrate them well; it is this sort of person whom God wants.

It is important to understand, however, that the Ashkenazi Haredi tradition is not necessarily the direct continuation of an age-old Ashkenazi tradition. In fact, some view Haredi Judaism as an integral part of modernism. Jacob Katz and his protégé, Moshe Samet, regard Haredi Judaism as

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18 Elazar, Other Jews, 30–39.
a response to the Reform process that began in the late eighteenth century and as a post-traditional phenomenon that emerged in reaction to crises sparked by modernity.\(^\text{20}\)

For Haredi society in Europe, the period between the two world wars of the last century was one of recovery from the major cultural crisis that it had suffered. Empty seats in the Hassidic and Lithuanian *yeshivot* (institutes for Talmudic study) began to fill up again. On the eve of World War II, thousands of girls studied in the schools and seminaries of the Haredi Bait Yaakov educational network that had been founded in Krakow in 1917 and there was a burgeoning Haredi literature and journalism.

The catastrophe of the Holocaust halted this process, destroying Haredi centers and decimating the rabbinical and scholarly leadership. Haredi Judaism's center of gravity moved to Israel and the United States. The Haredim who survived felt an obligation to revive the “world of Torah” that had been obliterated and to perpetuate the traditions of the communities from which they had come. This was a particularly fraught process in Israel, after the State of Israel's establishment, with the phenomenon of secular Zionism and the large-scale abandonment of Jewish observance by the younger generation.

As Menachem Friedman has noted, the Haredi society that was all but obliterated by the Nazis and their allies in Europe was resurrected “like a phoenix rising from the ashes.” According to Friedman, present-day Haredi society “is not a traditional society in the conventional sense of having an unconditional commitment to a living tradition that passes directly from father to son in a community that exacts individual and family obedience to local custom and punishes any deviation from it.”\(^\text{21}\) Rather, it is a society on the verge of annihilation, a surviving remnant striving, through joint effort, to preserve an endangered cultural heritage as remembered by its leaders, and to carry on the struggle, waged now for over two centuries, against the modernity that seeped into Judaism and nearly succeeded in wiping it out.

Indeed, since the 1950s, the Haredi population has gradually grown in size, gained in strength, and transformed from a marginal social group into a powerful and influential sector within the State of Israel.

Since Israel's founding as a state, the Haredi community has erected a high wall of separatism that keeps it apart from the rest of Israeli society, creating a distinct and zealously guarded living space.


In recent decades the Haredi community has faced a number of changes, including technological innovation, the emergence of a Haredi recreational culture and the weakening of rabbinical authority. Haredim struggle between insularity, openness and modernity which often, and in various ways, enter the community unnoticed. This struggle has sometimes, in certain groups within the Haredi camp, led to greater extremism and the erection of new barriers aimed at preserving innocence and purity within the communal space.

**Haredi Schools**

The Independent Education System, Israel's main Haredi school system, was established in 1953, heralding a trend toward Haredi educational autonomy and separatism. The Independent Education System was an initiative of the Council of Torah Sages of Agudat Yisrael in Israel and was incorporated in the State Education Law of 1953. The purpose of the law was to institutionalize the educational curricula that had been taught prior to Israel’s founding.

It will be recalled that the pre-state Yishuv had been characterized by a faction-based education system featuring three main curricula: the largest, the General Curriculum, offered liberal education; the Workers’ Curriculum was administered by HaHistadrut HaClalit (the Histadrut, organization of trade unions) and was associated with the Mapai and Mapam parties; while the Mizrahi Curriculum was identified with the religious Zionist parties—the Mizrahi and HaPoel HaMizrahi movement. In addition, there was a “fourth curriculum,” which was recognized only when Israel attained independence in 1948: the non-Zionist Haredi Curriculum of Agudat Yisrael and Poalei Agudat Yisrael. This curriculum eventually developed into the Independent Education System as part of the State Education Law of 1953. Until the 1980s all education curricula were under the control of Israel’s Ashkenazim—Jews from communities who had lived for centuries in Christian lands, and who constituted the Yishuv majority.

Until the 1980s, the Independent Education System had uncontested control of Haredi education. However, a number of processes led to a certain decline in the system’s status. One factor was the withdrawal of Hassidic involvement in the system's schools and a trend toward seclusion during the 1970s. Another was a widespread preference within the Haredi community, from the 1980s on, for schools of “exempt” status. Yet a third influence was the meteoric rise, during the 1980s, of the Worldwide Sephardi Association of Torah Guardians, better known as the political party: “Shas.” In 1984, Shas established the Ma’ayan Torah Education Network, to provide appropriate education for Mizrahi students who had suffered discrimination in the Haredi schools operated under United Torah Judaism auspices. Another reason for the decline was the

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proliferation of recognized schools that, out of a desire to maintain a distinctive identity had no educational network affiliation at all. Also noteworthy, was the creation, in recent years, of the State Haredi Curriculum.

The primary schools of the various curricula differ in ethos, legal status, attitudes toward Ministry of Education supervision and budget. Independent Education System schools still constitute the largest segment within Haredi education, due to its dominance in the Bait Yaakov network for girls. The largest group of boys’ schools belongs to the “exempt institution” category.

Classification of Israeli Haredi Schools

**Recognized but Unofficial:** Schools in this category receive 75 percent of their budget and are subject to partial supervision by the Ministry of Education's Haredi Department.

**Comprised of Two Large Organizations:** Agudat Israel's Independent Education System and the Shas Ma'ayan Torah Education Network (Bnei Yosef Network) operate schools for girls and boys, respectively, as Bait Yaakov and Talmudei Torah.

**Exempt Institutions:** Budgeted per capita, these schools are not subject to supervision by the Ministry of Education's Haredi Department. Most schools in this category are private cheders (elementary schools teaching the basics of Judaism and Hebrew education) owned by private associations that eschew state intervention.

**State Haredi:** These schools receive 100 percent of their budget and are subject to full supervision by the Ministry of Education's Haredi Department. This is a relatively new category created by Haredi parents under Education Minister Shai Piron; it currently includes a small number of schools belonging to the Haredi mainstream.

Classification of Schools by Community

**Primary:**

2. Girls (Bait Yaakov): Sephardi (Ma'ayan Torah Education Network [Shas]).
3. Boys (Talmudei Torah): Popular Ashkenazi (Independent Education System [United Torah Judaism]).
4. Boys (Talmudei Torah): Popular Sephardi (Shas).
5. Boys (Cheder): Lithuanian/Sephardi (Exempt Schools [small number are “Recognized but Unofficial”]).
Secondary:

1. Girls (Seminary): Ashkenazi.
2. Girls (Seminary): Liberal Ashkenazi.
4. Boys (All Communities, Lower Yeshivot [yeshivot ketanot] Upper Yeshivot [yeshivot gedolot]): No Core Studies.23

Overview of Boys’ Institutions

Talmud Torah schools serve as primary frameworks (preschool to eighth-grade) for boys in the Haredi sector. They can be viewed as the heart of the Haredi education system—places where students spend the better part of their day, starting in early childhood (age three) and for a decade thereafter. Some of these frameworks are similar in size to the fabled small cheder in Jewish communities in the Diaspora, while others are huge schools with over a thousand pupils. In Jerusalem, there are more than one hundred Talmudei Torah schools, attended by over nineteen thousand students, comprising at least sixteen hundred classes.24

There are basic structural, administrative and curricular similarities between all Talmudei Torah. Most Talmud Torah classrooms have between fifteen to thirty students, with a homeroom teacher referred to as a melamed who teaches all religious subjects throughout the day. In some institutions each class also has an assistant melamed. Religious subjects are studied in hour-long sessions in the morning and afternoon. During the course of the afternoon (or at the end of the school day), an hour or two will be devoted to secular studies, such as Hebrew and arithmetic. Sometimes there are special teachers for these subjects. In the younger grades the school day ends in the afternoon, while for older students, learning continues through the afternoon and into the evening. In grades 7–8 there is increased pressure on pupils to excel in religious studies, in preparation for the transition to yeshivot ketanot (for high school ages) with a corresponding reduction in the time devoted to secular studies. The administrative system in which most Talmudei Torah operate is private and independent, even for institutions belonging to education networks such as Ma’ayan Torah Education Network and the Independent Education System. The curricula of these institutions are also quite similar. Studies focus first on mastering the siddur (prayer book), then on Chumash (the first five books of the Bible); around grades 5–6, pupils begin studying Gemara (Talmud). Secular studies are focused on reading, writing, grammar and mathematics, but may also include enrichment in subjects such as geography or nature studies. In addition to regular studies, all of the schools have social activities, some of which have strong an emphasis on scholasticism (e.g., competitions demonstrating knowledge of

23 Very few pupils study at Haredi yeshiva high schools or at boys’ institutes that prepare students for matriculation.

24 The data were taken from the Haredi Education Yearbook 2007 (Hebrew). This excludes schools that are not recognized or those institutes under the Jerusalem Education Administration.
Gemara, or pre-holiday activities), while others offer other activities such as field trips or teaching road safety.

**What Distinguishes the Talmudei Torah?**

Schools belong to one of the main Haredi groups: Sephardi, Lithuanian or Hassidic. They may also fit into more specific subgroups, such as particular Hassidic sects. An institution's affiliation is affected by its director or another key individual who sets the school’s tone (although the educational director of a Sephardi school may be Ashkenazi, or a Hassid may be in charge of a Lithuanian institution). The affiliation dictates, first and foremost, the identity of the peer group attending the school, the school's educational philosophy as well as the prevailing social norms that exist. For example, the curricula may include the study of Hassidut (Hassidic customs such as celebrations). In such environments the chances are high that Yiddish will be the instructional language.

The institutions have different legal and administrative classifications. As noted, these classifications affect institutional budgeting and to a large degree curricula, but they also reflect gaps between conservatism and modernity. A conservative school will usually insist on being “exempt” (or unregistered), while a modern institution will generally aspire to be recognized and receive the appropriate budgets and resources. Beyond this, one finds a number of peculiar arrangements: an Ashkenazi school that belongs to Ma'ayan Torah Education Network; a Sephardi school affiliated with the Independent Education System; and a single school reporting some classes as exempt while others as recognized but unofficial. Ultimately, the character of a given institution, and sometimes of a given classroom, is determined by a combination of that school’s budgetary considerations, educational philosophy and image, as well as historical developments.

For example, schools affiliated with the Ger Hassidism, Israel's largest Hassidic court and a community that originated in Warsaw in the early nineteenth century have historically belonged to the Independent Education System. These schools benefit from the system's resources and are therefore obligated to teach the system’s core curriculum; at the same time, however, they zealously teach the more conservative Hassidic educational approach. By contrast, in the learning centers of the Belz Hassidic community, another large sect that originated in the Lvov area of eastern Galicia (now the Ukraine), kindergarten classes belong to the recognized education system while the other grades belong to exempt schools.²⁵

It is important to remember that from an organizational point of view this is a system whose schools have an especially high degree of autonomy, independence and decentralization (in the sense of private ownership). Funding comes from private donations, parental contributions and state budgets (see below). The system is made up of hundreds of independent schools that

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²⁵ This can be seen in the Haredi Education Administration yearbooks (Hebrew), with breakdown by categories.
generally have relatively small enrollments (100–200 students); only some are organized in educational networks. In many cases such a network is only an “umbrella framework” through which funds are transferred to the various schools; the actual ownership remains in the hands of private individuals or associations. This system works largely on a free market model, in accordance with supply and demand on the part of service providers and consumers and also depends on available business opportunities.

**School Budgets**

Due to frequent policy changes in these areas, the funding of Haredi schools will be presented here only generally. Budgeting involves several major components.

**Teacher Wages**

- **Equipment and Maintenance** (Secretarial services, utilities, etc.).
- **Construction** (Financing the construction of schools or granting public land on which to build).

**Student Transportation to Schools.**

**Additional Budgets** (Used to fund staff or educational/cultural activities. The items are funded with Ministry of Education and Jerusalem Municipality money, private donations and parents’ contributions, depending on the category).

1. Schools that are entirely unrecognized, belonging to various branches of the Haredi sector, are funded via independent sources (donations) and students’ families.

2. “Exempt” schools receive basic funding for equipment and maintenance from the Jerusalem Municipality, and partial tuition funding (55 percent from the Ministry of Education from the basic funding commonly provided in the state system). Funding is delivered via the Independent Education System and the Ma'ayan Torah Education Networks. The Ministry also helps finance students’ transportation, depending on the distance between homes and schools. The schools get the rest of their budgeting from donations or parental fees.

3. Recognized but unofficial schools that are part of the Independent Education System or the Ma'ayan Torah Education Network receive funding for operational services from the municipality, and 100 percent tuition funding from the Ministry of Education. This funding is lower than the overall funding paid to state schools, since it does not include additional funding (such as that provided by the Karev

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26 Funding is per student.
27 Also dependent on a student’s age. This funding is provided for 55 percent of the core curriculum.
Foundation). Here, too, while the Ministry helps fund student transportation, contributions are sought from donors as well as from parents.\(^{28}\)

4. Recognized but unofficial schools that do not belong to the aforementioned networks fall into a unique category. They are required to teach 75 percent of the core curriculum, and receive a 75 percent tuition grant from the Ministry of Education. In all other ways they are similar to the network schools.

**Secular Studies**

In the lower grades, secular studies (to the ultra-Orthodox, the Hebrew word for “secular” is not neutral but has connotations of “desecration”) focus on Hebrew/language arts and arithmetic, while in grades 7–8 other secular subjects are sometimes added (e.g., the wonders of creation in science classes). These subjects are taught with great caution, concentrating on topics that do not pose a threat to the student's faith. Hebrew/language arts studies include reading, writing and grammar. In many schools these studies serve as a platform to learn other subjects such as geography, nature and history, for which actual study hours are not allocated. Arithmetic studies generally include the four operations, fractions and decimals, but they can be expanded, depending on the teacher’s abilities.

Because **there is no standard curriculum, different schools augment their studies in different ways**. Secular studies are sometimes taught via the traditional methods used in religious studies. For example, students may take dictation or simply repeat together what the teacher has said. In other instances, there is the opportunity for more independent learning, such as through class discussion. More prevalent is the use of notebooks and teaching aids of various kinds, such as worksheets. Teachers with limited knowledge of a subject may use reference books; some are unique Haredi editions of works created for the state or state religious sectors or less often, written specifically for the Haredi community. These books are vetted and undergo censorship for “inappropriate” topics, such as male-female relationships, and illustrations and photographs that challenge Haredi orthodoxy.

**Core Curriculum**

The number of hours given to secular studies is influenced by the school’s government funding in line with the “core curriculum” requirements.\(^{29}\) The core curriculum (also referred to in Hebrew as LIBA, an acronym meaning “basic studies in the state education system”) is the shared basic curriculum required by all those enrolled in the Israeli state curriculum. The core

\(^{28}\) Funding is provided for 100 percent of the core curriculum.

\(^{29}\) Curricula implemented in accordance with Section 11 of the State Education Law per Ministry of Education Director-General memoranda. This was mentioned in the “Status Quo Letter of 1947” (Hebrew), and was addressed more recently in the “Report of the Committee to Examine the Budgetary Allocation Mechanisms” (Hebrew, The Shoshani Committee, 2002), and in the “Report of the Dovrat Committee” (Hebrew; 2005). It also came up during the enactment of the “Unique Cultural Educational Institutions Law” (Hebrew; 5768, 2008), which exempts the yeshivot ketanot from teaching secular subjects.
curriculum specifies the subjects that students learn in each grade and includes mandatory studies that reflect the values, content and learning skills they are expected to acquire. The percentage of core studies that schools are required to teach depends on the type of supervision required for each location. Official schools are required to teach 100 percent of the core curriculum but those classified as unofficial are only required to teach 57 percent. While Ma'ayan Torah Education Network and Independent Education System schools are required to teach 100 percent of the core curriculum, other exempt institutions are only required to teach 77 percent; and secondary Haredi boys’ schools are completely exempt from teaching it at all.\textsuperscript{30}

The basic curriculum is intended to connect all students in the State of Israel: recognized but unofficial schools are required to devote study hours to the entire core curriculum or to most of it (75–100 percent), while exempt schools are required to teach only 50 percent. There are also differences in the level of secular studies between recognized and exempt schools. For example, in exempt schools students typically do not study English. The topic of secular studies in Haredi education has even become more of an issue in discussions related to funding and the state curriculum. This has also led to a direct link between overall school budgeting and implementing the curriculum (with an emphasis on secular studies) in primary schools (Talmudei Torah).

While the state’s requirements include clusters of subject areas, such as heritage, culture and society, or languages and literature, which the school must teach on a weekly basis (e.g., four hours from the languages and literature cluster for first-grade),\textsuperscript{31} there appears to be no clear standards to implement this curriculum—at least regarding those textbooks researched for this project. A study produced by the Van Leer Institute in 2004 estimates that, on the whole, a curriculum indeed exists and is being used.\textsuperscript{32} Implementation of core studies in recognized but unofficial educational institutions of the Independent Education System and Ma'ayan Torah Education Network was assessed. It was found that schools in both networks met the full range of requirements for core subject instruction at the primary level; in girls’ schools the core subjects were being taught at a level surpassing ministry requirements. However, a survey done for the Ministry of Education (by the Bureau of Statistics) reveals a different result. The survey’s findings suggest that a large proportion of Haredi primary schools did not teach the core


\textsuperscript{31} Ehud Spiegel, \textit{And Talmud Torah is Equivalent to All: Haredi Boys’ Education in Jerusalem} (Hebrew; Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2011), pp. 153–56.

curriculum in full and that only Biblical studies were taught in all Haredi primary schools. Other subjects were studied in 30–80 percent of the schools.\(^\text{33}\)

**Girls’ Education**

In contrast to boys’ schools, which are mainly exempt, most schools for girls are recognized but unofficial and belong to the Bait Yaakov movement. These schools are not bound by the Education Ministry's official curriculum, but are required to offer extensive core studies and to administer the GEMS (Meitzav—Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools) exams. Also, teachers in these schools are not Ministry of Education employees.

Girls’ schools differ from those of the boys. In Haredi tradition, boys alone are obligated to study Torah. For them, extensive secular study, at the expense of religious study, is regarded as *bitul Torah*.\(^\text{34}\) However, at Haredi girls’ schools, a variety of secular subjects are studied at a high level, as in the official education system, though care is taken to teach in a manner consistent with the Haredi worldview.

When Haredi girls finish primary school they move to eighth grade in “lower” secondary schools. Starting in ninth-grade, the framework for girls to study is called a “seminary.” In high school, girls study both religious and secular subjects. Religious subjects include Bible, taught with traditional commentaries; Jewish studies, Jewish law and halakha. Such religious studies are to prepare girls to lead proper lives from a Haredi viewpoint—whether personal, familial or social. Despite the great emphasis given to religious studies in these schools, secular studies still comprise a major portion of the curricula. Secular subjects are taught from grades 8–12 and include mathematics, English, Hebrew/language arts, verbal expression and grammar, history, literature, nature and geography. Haredi girls take specialized matriculation exams to prepare them for higher education (“Szold Tests” administered by the Henrietta Szold Institute in cooperation with the Ministry of Education).\(^\text{35}\)

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\(^{34}\) *Bitul Torah* is a religious term used to denote time not spent studying Torah, in the absence of a good reason for not doing so. It is considered a violation of the commandment to study Torah: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night” (Joshua 1:8).


27
Attitudes toward the “Other” in Haredi Education

Human rights and social justice are regarded as commandments rooted in the Torah—imperatives that long predated the modern world’s delineation of human and civil rights. The Haredim argue that the Jewish people historically have safeguarded these values even under regimes with rigid social classes and oppression of the weak.\(^36\)

Our holy Torah is the origin of justice and integrity at the loftiest level, as its source is divine, the source of truth and therefore naturally also the source of justice and integrity.

In a world whose economy was based on the use of eternal slaves, the Torah commanded: ‘Six years he shall serve and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing.’ The Torah goes even farther, commanding that the slave be ‘well with you,’ about which Hazal [term describing the Sages of the Oral Law], said, ‘With you’ indicates that he shall be equal to you with respect to food and to drink. Do not consume fine bread while giving him coarse bread to eat; do not drink old wine while giving him new wine to have . . . Even a Canaanite slave, hailing from peoples that considered slavery legitimate, is entitled to humane treatment. In an ancient world characterized by tyranny and oppression of the weak, our holy Torah, the Divine Law, championed equality before the law.


A large and significant proportion of the textbooks are devoted to the ideal of showing respect for all people. Great emphasis is placed on positive practices and character traits that form the basis for a Torah way of life, as expressed in the saying: “Derekh eretz kadma laTorah” [proper behavior precedes the Torah]. This value is present in the books in a very meaningful way; it is conveyed as a message in all subject areas and across all grade levels and is illustrated through numerous stories, poems and questions for thought, reinforcing the impression that it is a topic of central importance.

When the European countries instituted the emancipation, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch said: “Here before us is respect for the law, the law of human rights: to be a person who is equal to his neighbor, and the view that ‘The earth is the Lord’s,’ and all those who are made in the image of the Lord and who are children of the living God, all must be shown respect from the heart, as brothers.”

‘I hereby joyfully welcome and view as the sun rising out of the human race—a corridor leading to the portal of awareness that God is the sole Lord of all, that all people are His children . . . and are therefore brothers.’


\(^36\) It is interesting to compare this argument with that of Micheline Ishay, who holds that human rights indeed originated with the ancient religions. Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights, from Ancient Times to the Globalization Era.* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004, 2008).
Yet, Haredi society resolutely seeks to create a distinct and insular cultural and social identity as a barrier to secular culture. Haredi leaders fear the modern way of life, seeing it as a pathway to doubting or abandoning religion. Thus, Haredi education invests considerable effort in erecting those barriers, creating an absolute polarization between interior and exterior: what is inside is good/white, and what is outside is bad/black. If Haredi society has a primary distinguishing feature it is an irreconcilable: “us vs them” dichotomy; thus, the Haredi attitude toward the Other is dictated by a perception of a continuous threat to Haredi identity.

An example of this attitude toward others can be found in the following image:

![Haredi “Sheep” Besieged by Others (more aggressive sheep and wolves [Clockwise from top left]):](image)

Wolves: Anti-Semites, Amalek, Turkey, Syria, China, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, The Palestinian Authority, Al-Qaida.


Let's Read Along Our Way: Reading Comprehension, Language and Verbal Expression for Middle Schools, 2013, p. 245.

At the center of the picture, a Haredi man appears as a “sheep among seventy wolves”: a small and innocent sheep threatened by rapacious wolves pouncing on it from all sides, as well as by stronger sheep. The wolves represent the threat to the Jewish people as a whole, reflected in anti-Semitism and the perceived Arab menace. The stronger sheep represent the threat to Haredi Jewish values posed by such hazards as: secular state institutions, anti-religious political parties, Reform Judaism and even “New Haredim.” This provides an insight into the Haredi mind: The threat to the Jewish people as a whole is perceived as a clear and present danger in the form of a voracious wolf, while the menace to Jewish values is presented as a strong sheep—an internal

37 “New Haredim” is a term used to denote modern Haredim who do not regard separatism as a prerequisite for Haredi life. Though they share Haredi internal and cultural traits, they don’t fear involvement in the Israeli public realm.
peril from within the Jewish people—one that employs other means of attack and therefore requires a different mode of response.

In general, one may say that the attitude toward the Other, as manifested in these textbooks, reflects both the ideal of respect for others and a defensive attitude which changes, based on how the Other is perceived to threaten Haredi values. We will explore the various perceptions and messages that Haredi textbooks convey regarding different kinds of Others, with emphasis on relationships with Others, how they are acknowledged, and the potential ways that may be employed to resolve conflicts.

**Nations of the World**

Overall, relations between Jews and non-Jews as depicted in the textbooks reflect an experience of “Israel as a sheep among wolves”; constantly threatened throughout the course of history, due to anti-Semitism and a desire to annihilate the Jewish people. In some of the books, instances of hatred and anti-Semitism are portrayed with extreme pathos and convey great pain, yet despite such expressions of pain and persecution, they nevertheless present objective historical descriptions and even stories that illustrate the importance of helping people, being fair to them and respecting them, regardless of their religious or national affiliation.

**The Holocaust of Russian Jewry**

For everything that happened to our people until Germany entered Russia, a similar situation could still be found in the annals of our people's anguished and bloody history. But for what happened now, no precedent existed in the history of humankind. It is almost unbelievable that for many months, thousands of people were murdered daily, with their own hands and in cold blood, deliberately and determinedly, masses of human beings . . . until it reached a million Jews. It is hard to accept the idea that such heinous beasts stalked the earth.


**“Israel: Like a Sheep among Wolves” (A. Feinstein)**

The Jewish people are likened by Hazal to a sheep among wolves: the non-Jewish nations. There are seventy nations in the world, and each of them is likened to a wolf. And this simile used by Hazal is a true description; the nations are indeed a pack of sharp-toothed wolves hungry for fresh meat, thirsty for human blood, and noted for their cruelty. WOLF—a word that sends chills down one's spine, seventy of them against one tiny lamb, the personification of gentleness, goodness, wholeness, innocence, purity, and honesty: the Jewish people. Among seventy vicious wolves stands one meager, scrawny lamb; the wolves lunge at it periodically, thirsty for blood; but a boundary has been placed . . . And sometimes it changes its place, when it is oppressed here it goes there, when it is mistreated in one location it finds another.

Jewish Emancipation in France

When, in December 1789, the conditions for granting civil rights to the country’s inhabitants were under discussion, the Jewish question arose as well. . . . A fierce debate was conducted on this issue between those who were in favor and those who were opposed. This debate, which revolved around the question of whether the Jews are a people or merely a religion, recurred in subsequent years in most of the European countries. The majority view was summarized by Stanislas Marie Adélaïde, Comte de Clermont Tonnerre, as follows: ‘The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals.’ At a time when most Catholic clerics were fighting any improvement in the status of French Jewry, leaders of the Revolution such as Marivaux, the Abbé Sieyès, Talleyrand and Robespierre supported granting Jews equality before the law. Among those who fought for Jewish legal equality was the priest Henri Grégoire, who proclaimed, in the pamphlets he distributed: ‘Fifty thousand Frenchmen arose this morning as slaves; it depends on you whether they shall go to bed as free people!’


“Seventh Day of Passover Delayed” (M. Pnina)

[It is] a cold and gloomy winter. The gaon Rabbi Yehezkel, as is his custom, goes to the Beit Midrash of Prague to deliver his regular lesson. On the way he sees a Christian youth sobbing.

The Rabbi asks him: ‘Why are you crying, what happened to you?’

The boy answers: ‘My mother has died, my father is marrying another woman, from the day my father's wife entered the house my life has been hard and bitter. My father has a small bakery; he and his wife bake the bread, and they send me to sell it door to door, in this terrible cold. If I don't manage to sell the bread, my stepmother beats me cruelly. Often I go to sleep hungry because they don't let me eat. But today was a disaster: I sold all the bread but the money I earned was lost! I'm afraid to go home.’

The Rabbi asked: ‘How much money did you make today?’

‘Twenty gold coins,’ the youth answered.

The Rabbi immediately took twenty-one gold coins out of his pocket and told him: ‘Here are twenty-one gold coins! Use one gold coin to buy yourself something to eat and calm your hunger. Give the other twenty to your father.’

In Good Time, Grade 4 Reader, n.d., pp. 84–87.

Non-Jews are also obligated to behave with integrity. The attitude to the Arab Other should be entirely equitable at the everyday level. Interaction between ethnic and religious groups for shared purposes is a common and accepted thing.

“Negotiating in Faith” (A. Ofek)

The sheikh took a stack of bills out of his pocket and gave it to Rabbi Salman. ‘Here, now I don't owe Menachem Daniel even one pruta!’ The sheikh left the office and headed
home. Rabbi Salman picked up the bills to put them in the money box and suddenly, instead of thirty-five dinars, the stack contained sixty-five dinars.

‘Oy,’ cried Rabbi Salman, shocked. ‘What have I done?’

‘What's the matter?’ the clerk wondered. ‘The sheikh certainly didn't notice his mistake, and if he gave too much, that's his loss. He wouldn't give us back the extra in a case like this, either.’ So what?’ said Rabbi Salman in astonishment, ‘The money has to be returned immediately!’

*Our Childhood, Grade 4* Reader, n.d., pp. 218–220.

**Resolution of Conflicts**

Despite numerous descriptions of hardship, the textbooks seem to view the spiritual war as the main battle and emphasize the victory of the spiritual world over the material world. The primary educational message transmitted by the history texts and the many illustrative stories is the power of Jewish spiritual might.

A major example of this can be found in the way that the European Holocaust is taught.

A significant portion of the history, verbal expression and literature textbooks is devoted to the Holocaust. Most of the focus is on the spiritual war waged both by those who perished and by the survivors. The topic of Jewish opposition to the Nazis is mentioned briefly. The difficulty of such defiance is emphasized, and the halakhic perspective is discussed, conveying the message that vengeful acts are problematic and should not be undertaken without consulting with a rabbi.

**The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**

The Jews loyal to their people displayed a strong will to live, a mighty will to remain alive in spite of everything, and when there was no longer any danger that open revolt would put the lives of other Jews at risk, they fought valiantly and even successfully.

Among those who urged uprising was Rabbi Menachem Ziemba HY”D [Hashem yinkom damo: Honorific for dead meaning, Only God will enact revenge], Warsaw’s chief rabbi and one of the most illustrious Torah scholars of his generation. He said: ‘According to halakha, it is a mitzvah to rebel using the most effective war tactics; it is a kiddush Hashem [sanctification of God's name]! It is a milchemet mitzvah [a holy war] and in such a war it is a mitzvah to be realized by means of nekamah [vengeance], mesirut nefesh [conscientiousness] and the sanctification of the mind and will.’


**War of the Spirit**

Haredi Jews showed how the name of God should be sanctified and how to serve God in the hell of the German ghettos, and how, during times of hunger, disease and epidemic, one continued to study Torah, to live a life of Hassidut, and to fulfill the commandments, until the very last moment. They did not succumb to the German terror or to moments of despair, but rather clung to life with all their might. Every hour and every moment was
sacred and precious and lived to the limit, so that another mitzvah could be fulfilled or another page of Gemara studied. Only when all possibilities had been exhausted for Jewish life in these vales of violence were they ready and willing to return their souls to their Redeemer, in holiness and purity.


The murderers shot with their pistols and ordered the scholars to come with them. Then Rabbi Elchanan addressed those present in his quiet, calm voice: ‘It would seem that in Heaven we are regarded as tzadikim [righteous ones], since they want us to atone with our bodies for the entire Jewish people. We have to repent now, right here, as time is short. We must remember that we will truly be sanctifiers of God's name. Let us go with our heads held high. We are now fulfilling the greatest commandment of all: sanctifying God's name. The fire that will burn in our bones is the fire that will reestablish the Jewish people.’


The following story describes a Nazi commander's abuse of a group of Polish Jews. The commander orders the Jews to sing him a happy song but the frightened Jews remain silent and do not sing. The commander and his soldiers beat them and threaten them with death until one of them starts to sing:

**“Dance of Torment” (M. Prager)**

And at that moment of horror, one member of the terrified group loosened the knot of stubborn silence, and, alone, started to sing. What was the song? A Hassidic folk song—an outpouring of the soul.

This time the song roused all those present. Feet stirred by themselves, the song rose like a wave, and all those tortured and desperate people began to dance, as though summoned by a magic wand.

And the enemy? He began to applaud in satisfaction at having humiliated the Jews. Ha ha ha, the Jews are singing and dancing! But soon he was baffled, and regretted what he had done. What's going on? Isn't this a song of capitulation? The Jews dancing this Hassidic dance are aflame, as though they've forgotten everything—their pain, their torment, their despair, they've even forgotten his [the oppressor’s] presence . . .

Stop it, Jews! Stop it now! cried the enemy in a thunderous voice and, perhaps for the first time ever, he was plunged into confusion and appeared powerless in the eyes of his soldiers.

Make it stop! Put an end to it now! the commander pleaded with his soldiers, in a broken, strangled voice.

And the Jews sang and danced, swept up in the current of their song and the intoxication of their joy; their dance went on. They paid a heavy price, suffered beatings, yet the echo of their song lingered.

Recognition of the Other

A chronology of history is presented in textbooks which recognize the existence of other peoples and faiths through brief discussions that are generally presented factually, objectively and respectfully. However, some passages try to convey the message that, though there is beauty in other cultures, one should not be overly impressed and abandon the Jewish way.

Greek Culture: The Beauty of Japheth

The Greeks inhabited the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula, western Anatolia, and the islands of the Aegean Sea. Like the Persians, they are descendants of Japheth. Their land is called Greece or Hellas; the origin of another name for them is ‘Hellenes.’ They were a people of many gods. Their chief god had a large family of male and female gods—his wives, sons and daughters. The Greeks viewed their gods as Greek heroes, and ascribed to them the strengths, urges and other traits that characterize the Greek people.

Greek mythology relates that, in the distant past, the Greeks fought the city of Troy or Ilium for a decade until they conquered it. The Greek poet Homer wrote about this war in his great epic, the Iliad. He related the exploits of the Greek hero Achilles, and the Trojan hero Hector. Achilles killed Hector, but was himself killed later on. The Greeks began to despair of conquering the city, but at the last moment Odysseus devised a cunning scheme for capturing Troy: a large wooden horse was built, with some warriors hiding inside, the rest pretending to sail back to their homeland. The Trojans thought the horse was a kind of sacrifice, and brought it into the city. At night the Greek warriors emerged from the belly of the horse and opened the city gates, enabling Troy to be taken. While trying to return to his home on the island of Ithaca, Odysseus is delayed by storms and other unusual events; only after many years have passed does he reach his home. His memorable journey is recounted by Homer in another epic poem, the Odyssey.

In addition to poetry, the Greeks excelled at sculpture. Many figures representing their gods and heroes have been found, especially in the ancient citadel of Athens, the Acropolis. There were many Greek philosophers as well, including Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. But the Greeks valued aesthetics above all, favoring it over investigative knowledge-seeking and in-depth scholarship.

Jewish History: From the First Temple Period to the Present; Book One: From the Babylonian Exile to the Destruction of the Second Temple, Grade 6, n.d., p. 28.
A view that comes across clearly in these texts is that civilizations thought to be of the highest order are not necessarily moral ones. Morality is the task of Judaism.

In the sphere of religion, morality and justice the Greeks, along with other nations remained at the primitive level. They certainly heard about the people of Israel to whom God chose to give His Torah, and they were aware of that people's ethical and legal system and of their way of worshiping God. The best of the Greeks, such as Solon, who reformed the Athenian legal system, and the philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, were also influenced by the spirit of Israel. But the rest of the people continued to bow down to false gods. In private life the Greeks behaved contrary to human morality; in their social life they did not uphold the principles of justice and law.

Athenian artists made buildings of exceptional beauty, and decorated them with statues. Poets wrote plays. Men of science discovered facts that had not been known before. The philosophers conducted theoretical investigations.


Class Assignment:

‘See here my friend, see here and understand. Beware of pitfalls, snares and traps, and don't be fooled by the wisdom of the Greeks, which bears flowers but no fruit.’ (from a poem by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi).

Read the lines of Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi’s poem and explain why he compares Greek culture to a flower that does not bear fruit (remember the role of the flower and of the fruit in the life of a plant in order to understand what is being compared to a flower and what to a fruit).


Early Christianity

One cannot help forming the impression that, as far as Haredi Judaism is concerned, the birth of Christianity is an unhealed wound.

One of those who appeared in messianic guise was Jesus of Nazareth: he began prophesying in the Galilee, his place of birth. In the year 3795 (35 C.E.) he went up to Jerusalem for the Passover holiday, accompanied by a large number of his followers. He called himself ‘Messiah’ and ‘King of the Jews.’ He and his disciples expressed themselves in a manner contrary to Judaism and turned the masses away from their faith. A court sentenced him to death. As the Jews had no power at that time to impose punishment in capital cases, the Roman prefect, Pontius Pilate, summoned Christ and asked him whether he was king of the Jews. When Jesus answered yes, Pilate sentenced him to death for subverting Roman rule. In accordance with the brutal Roman custom, Jesus was crucified.

After many had been killed, his disciples fled Jerusalem. Gradually the idea became rooted in their minds that the man whom they had regarded as the Messiah could not have died. They dreamed dreams in which he came back to life and came to believe that he had indeed risen from the grave. Their stories influenced many people, and the community of believers in Jesus Christ continued to grow after his death. At first all the ‘Nazarenes’—named for Nazareth, the city of Jesus’ birth—considered themselves to be Jews and observed the commandments. They simply believed that their rabbi was the Messiah. But afterward their faith spread among non-Jews as well, and the latter did not accept the commandments of the Torah. For a long time there were two types of Christians—Jewish Christians and non-Jewish Christians—until the Jewish Christians ceased to exist. Some returned to Judaism, while the others assimilated among the non-Jewish Christians.

Jewish History: From the First Temple Period to the Present; Book One: From the Babylonian Exile to the Destruction of the Second Temple, Grade 6, n.d., p. 74.

The Founder of Islam

As expressed within the various Haredi curricula, attitudes toward the prophet of Islam tend to be surprisingly positive, bordering on support, compared with Greek culture and Christianity.

The most distinguished tribe of Mecca was that of Quraysh. Muhammad was a son of that tribe. He was born around the year 4330 (570 C.E.). He was orphaned as a young child
and cared for by his uncle. For a long time he lived in poverty, until he married Khadijah, the widow of a wealthy merchant. As part of his commercial activity Muhammad traveled far and wide, and heard Jews, Christians and Persians talk about their faiths. Over time he came to understand that his forefathers had worshiped false gods, and that only the One God is the Creator and Master of the Universe. This recognition reinforced his belief that he was the messenger sent to eradicate the belief in false gods from his people and his land. He dreamed dreams in which the angel Gabriel showed him how to spread the belief in God's oneness. Most of the people of Mecca mocked him and his visions; it was only thanks to the influence of his distinguished family that he escaped harm. His followers, however, suffered greatly. In the year 4382/622 Muhammad fled with his Meccan followers to Yathrib, known later as Medina. This historic flight (the Hijra) marked the start of a new calendar for the followers of Muhammad, used by Muslims to this day. The Arab year is a lunar year with no intercalation (insertion of leap days or months). This means that thirty-three solar years are counted as thirty-four lunar years.

Muhammad broke the idols at the Kaaba, and declared the black stone to be the central point for Muslims—the qibla or direction to be faced in prayer. All Muslims are expected to make the pilgrimage to the Kaaba at least once in their lives. Those who do are granted the title Haj [pilgrim].

Muhammad himself believed in his mission as messenger, though it appears that, over the years, he deliberately invented stories and visions to justify his actions, or to attain various objectives. His sayings and visions were recorded by his followers. Ultimately they were assembled into the Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam.

The textbook mentions Muhammad’s hatred for Jews because they rejected and ridiculed his mission; subsequently he killed the men of the (Jewish) Qurayza tribe and enslaved the women and children.

*Jewish History: From the First Temple Period to the Present; Book One: From the Babylonian Exile to the Destruction of the Second Temple, Grade 6*, n.d., pp. 55–58.

**Attitude toward Arabs**

**The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**

Civics texts examined in the framework of this study provide information on Haredi society's outlook on ownership of Israel, without explicitly discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to this outlook, the Haredim do not regard the “occupation” as unjust, but do believe that non-Jewish inhabitants of the land must be treated fairly and with caution. It is also noteworthy that the Palestinian-Arab position is not presented.

The Creator and Master of the Universe predestined this land for His chosen people. The Holy One, blessed be He, promised Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation, that ‘To your descendants I will give this land’ and He reiterated His promise to Isaac and to
Jacob. Therefore, those inhabiting a land that already legally belongs to someone else have no rationale for claiming ownership rights to it.

Without this justification, our forefathers would have had no right to eject the ancient inhabitants of the land. This was a right that stemmed only from the fact that the Israelites did not come to Eretz Yisrael as alien conquerors.

The liberation of the homeland is promised by the Creator of the Universe; it is not considered to be an ‘occupation.’ The only issue about which care must be taken is that of allowing the inhabitants to choose whether to remain in the land as foreign subjects, accepting the behavioral restrictions that would be imposed upon them, or to leave the land.


The way historical facts of the conflict are presented varies by grade. In the textbooks intended for the lower grades, the facts are set forth in a unilateral manner that represents Arabs as warmongers and disturbers of the peace. The discussions focus on the wars surrounding the State of Israel's establishment; the ongoing conflict is not addressed. By contrast, the textbooks intended for the higher grades discuss both sides of the conflict and describe the circumstances that motivated Arabs to attack Jews, though the presentation is usually not objective. The discussion covering Arab attacks on Jews is similar to the tone presented in other textbook examples of anti-Semitism and hatred of Jews. Also discussed is the long-standing relationship between the Jewish Yishuv and Arabs, but the consequences of the wars and Israeli responsibility for Palestinian suffering are not addressed.

**Examples:**

Shalom was a Jewish child living in Holy Land several decades ago. He was born in the Mea Shearim neighborhood; he and his friends grew up among its stone buildings and ran across its timeworn pavements. But Shalom's life did not go on this way for long; the winds of war gradually gathered force . . . Tensions increased. The Arabs threatened to throw all the Jews into the sea, and cast fear and anxiety on all inhabitants of the land. War broke out and Shalom's life changed. The countries surrounding Israel—Egypt, Syria and Jordan, whose Arab inhabitants hate the Jews and constantly seek opportunities to harm them, now joined as one. But God in His mercy foiled their plans and, through great miracles, the tiny Jewish community defeated the Arab masses.


**The 1936–39 Events**

Arab leaders monitored the development of the Yishuv. They made various efforts to obstruct Jewish land purchases, but their main goal was to limit Jewish immigration to Israel or prevent it entirely. For this purpose they demanded that the British authorities grant autonomy to the local residents. When the Arabs saw that they would not achieve their objective through peaceful negotiation, they decided to take the law into their own
hands and disrupt everyday life in the land by attacks, strikes, acts of sabotage and bloodshed.

The Peel Commission and the Partition Plan

But it turned out that the Arab inhabitants of the land were not prepared for the Jews to be the majority while they [became] the minority. The larger the Jewish Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael grew, the more the Arabs feared such an eventuality. (There were then four hundred thousand Jews in Eretz Yisrael and one million Arabs!)

In light of this, the Commission concluded that the land should be divided and an independent state established within each part. The Jews opposed the partition plan; nevertheless the Zionist Organization appointed a committee and empowered it to negotiate with the British, based on the partition proposal.

The Arabs were vehemently opposed to the plan, and renewed their war on the Jewish Yishuv and on the British governing authority.

Arab Terrorism in Israel until the 1982 Lebanon War

The perpetrators of Arab terrorism came primarily from the refugee camps. These camps were created in The Land of Israel [Holy Land] and in neighboring countries following the war between Israel and the Arab states. These refugees could have been allowed entry to the vast territories of the Arab countries, but their leaders wished them to remain refugees, so that they could be used to exert pressure in the quest to attain their political objectives.

The Intifada of 1987–93 (5747–53)

These disturbances, which started in Kislev 5758 (December 1987) were referred to as an intifada—an “Arab awakening.” The Arabs wanted to create the impression of a popular uprising rather than what the events actually were—disturbances cynically organized by people seeking power.
Despite the judgmental quality of these passages, the Haredi literature textbooks contain stories reflecting the good relations that once existed between Arabs and Jews. These stories portray the Arabs as humane and friendly, even expressing sorrow over the current situation which precludes the kinds of neighborly relations that prevailed in the past.

“*In the City of Dates*” (R. Ben Menachem)

This story shows positive interaction between Jews coming to buy * lulavim * (palm fronds) and reeds from Arabs in Jericho. The encounter is related from the perspective of a little girl, who describes it as a pleasant event and as something recollected with longing.

We, the children, stand around outside. We gaze with curiosity at the peddlers walking to and fro, and at the children hawking their wares. We do not understand the merchants' cries, but the ambience, the sights and smells interest us greatly. Ahmad's elderly father brings us tiny stools, also made of reeds, and offers to fix us something to drink.

The father and daughter want to buy the reeds from the Arabs, they go to Jericho to order the reeds with the intention of coming back for them after Yom Kippur; but in the meantime war erupts.

‘What will be with the schach?’ [the sukkah covering] we kept asking father. ‘Do you think he’s cut it already? Could it be that it's all ready for us and we're not coming?’ Father shrugged. He had no idea. Everything had changed overnight! Those close, friendly relations no longer prevailed. That was the end of our neighborly interactions.

The author goes on to relate the ongoing discussion about whether to go to Jericho or not, and the decision not to take the risk. The story ends on a sad note, with yearning for the past situation.

‘Once in a while, when I see a plot of tall reeds waving to and fro in the wind, I remember those wonderful trips to the city that, to me, was once so close and familiar but is no longer.’

*Our Childhood, Grade 3*, n.d., pp. 34–37.

“*Because of the Merit of Young Jewish Children*” (Y. Glis)

This story relates how the Arabs of the villages surrounding Jerusalem helped the Jews and Arabs who had to flee their homes due to an epidemic that broke out in the city.

The Jewish Yishuv in Jerusalem was small and sparse in the year 5579 (1818-19). A day came when a terrible epidemic broke out and the Arab elders came and called for the people to be taken outside the city walls, so that lives could be saved, as the disease raged only in the city. And the people did not hesitate even briefly. Everyone, as one people, went out to the village of Nebi Samwil, west of Jerusalem, far from the city boundary. There they were housed in tents and found refuge among the Arabs of these villages.

Recognition of the Palestinian Other

As noted above, Haredi textbooks demonstrate awareness of the Arab presence and of the fact that there was an Arab majority in (Eretz) Israel before the large waves of Jewish immigration. Geography textbooks show major Palestinian localities, and the newer books present the 1948 Green Line (ceasefire line) in maps.

But there is no recognition of a Palestinian national identity; indeed, Israeli Arabs who aspire to such an identity are subjected to criticism.

Attitude toward the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael

The Arabs of Eretz Yisrael are divided into two groups.

1) Israeli Arabs: The Arabs of the State of Israel are citizens with equal rights. Knesset members are elected from among them via Israeli political parties or independent lists of their own. As individuals they receive all of the privileges that the state accords to its citizens. They have also been accorded rights as a separate national group within the education and religious-judicial realms. But they have not been content with this, and have insisted that they also have the right to identify with the Arabs of the Territories, those who call themselves ‘Palestinians’—though the latter are enemies of the state.

The danger that this state of affairs poses to the Jewish population of Eretz Yisrael can be illustrated by what happened in Germany when the Nazis came to power. The Nazis used democratic means, including general elections, to take control of Germany. But as soon as they took over they abolished the democratic system and instituted a totalitarian order.

2) Palestinian Arabs of the ‘Territories’: Palestinians were not citizens of Israel. The government therefore allowed them to maintain the arrangements that existed in Judea, Samaria and Gaza during the period of Jordanian rule. But these Arabs live under Israeli governmental administration, and the State of Israel constitutes their economic base. The Palestinians' total dependence on the Israeli economy has made it difficult to effect separation between Israel and the Territories, despite the agreement at Oslo to grant autonomy to the Arabs of the Territories.


In the Wake of the Oslo Accords

They were given almost everything. They (the Palestinians) never were a distinct people and they never had a country of their own. We declared them a people and gave them a land. But the more we gave them, the more intensely hostile they became, and the more acts of murder they committed (Haredi newspaper Hamodia, Erev Sukkot, 5761).


Regarding the Arab city of Nablus, a ninth-grade history textbook reports the following:

Today Nablus is an entirely Arab city. The city's residents are extremely religious Muslims who work mainly in agriculture, and as laborers in fields and plantations . . . as
well as in commerce and industry. There is a particularly well-developed soap industry. Nablus soap is known for its high quality and is sent to other countries. While Palestinian cities such as Nablus and Jericho are mentioned in the text, some maps of Israel only show the outline of Palestinian Authority territories along with bordering Arab countries while others maps do not have any reference to PA territories at all. Palestinian cities or disputed areas are also not mentioned.


What information can be found on the map (25–above) of Israel’s large cities?

- You can find out what Israel's largest cities are and where they are located.
- You can find out in what part of Israel most of the country's largest cities are and what areas have few large cities.
- You can find out which cities are near the sea, which are in hilly areas, which are in valleys and the like.

Look at the map (25) of Israel's large cities and answer:

A. Where are most of Israel's large cities: in the north, the center or the south?
B. Where are there the fewest large cities?
C. Which of the cities that appear on the map have you visited?
D. Which city would you like to visit but haven't been to yet? What about that city interests you?
E. Find the locality where you live (ask your teacher to help you). What city is nearest to it?

*Geography: Maps, the Mediterranean Region, Grade 5*, n.d., p. 95.

In the following map of “The Land of Israel,” the PA’s borders and cities are not marked. Haredi cities, such as Bnei Brak (near Tel Aviv) are given special attention in the textbooks and appear to be of equal importance (e.g., in size) with other much larger cities.
Resolution of the Conflict

Beyond presenting the theoretical Haredi outlook on ownership of the land and the fairness that must be shown to its non-Jewish inhabitants, as previously described, there is no discussion related to any prospective resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the civics books; there is no mention of the various positions within Israeli society that exist regarding the peace agreements; even the Haredi view on this issue is not presented.

Nevertheless, we can glimpse Haredi Judaism’s outlook on a pragmatic resolution of the conflict by examining the history and literature textbooks used in the community.

Based on the historical discussions and the stories presented to Haredi pupils, we see that the use of power vis-à-vis the Arabs is understood in the context of self-defense. There are no discussions within the curricula that glorify bravery or the fighting spirit of combatants.

As presented in history textbooks, the Haredi’s role, in efforts made before the founding of the state, was to foster peace and good relations between Jews and Arabs. Within these textbooks, there is discussion of the peace agreements that were reached from the 1950s through the Oslo Accords. The peace treaties between Israel and Arab countries are described in a factual and objective way but the Oslo Accords are discussed more critically. The criticism does not appear to be directed at the peace process as a whole, or at the principle of “territories for peace.” Rather, it conveys specific reservations about negotiating with the legacy of Arafat and about the behavior of (specific) leftist Israeli political parties.

As may be seen in the examples that follow, the history textbooks also refrain from presenting an unequivocal stand on the peace process as a whole. While Haredi society generally does not rule out concessions, it does not view the peace process as necessary at any price. Each instance is considered on its own merits.

Before the Founding of the State

When the Zionist Commission for Palestine came to Eretz Yisrael in 5678/1918, Dr. Weizmann made a first attempt to gain Arab consent for the establishment of the national home. He met with Emir Feisal, and the two signed an agreement in which Feisal promised to support the national home should the Western powers also give the Arabs what they had promised them. In 5682/1922 a Haredi Jewish delegation headed by Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld met with King Hussein, father of Feisal and Abdullah, when he crossed the Jordan to visit his son. But despite these efforts, no understanding was reached on the Arab side regarding the Jewish issue. From the early years of the British Mandate they did everything they could to hinder Jewish settlement in the land.

The Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty

Although the parties did not reach an agreement on the status of the Palestinians in Eretz Yisrael, a peace treaty was signed in Adar 5739 (March 26, 1979) between Israel and Egypt. The treaty-signing ceremony was held on the White House lawn. The entire world watched the ceremony, which symbolized the end of a protracted war between Israel and Egypt.


The Second Intifada

When there was a calm in the terrorist activity, Israel once again withdrew from a portion of the Territories. As on previous occasions, this reduction of IDF deployment in Judea and Samaria caused terrorism to increase.


The Oslo Accords

Talks were held at Oslo with PLO negotiators, and Arafat and his team were recognized as the official representatives of Arabs in Eretz Yisrael. The Israeli government based this recognition on the fact that the Arab League recognized Arafat as the representative of all Palestinian Arabs. The Oslo talks gave the PLO general governmental status and access to the world of international diplomatic relations. Even the gates of the United States opened to the PLO when the Israeli Knesset abolished the law that prohibited negotiations with PLO terrorists.

The Israeli government gave them authority and political, economic and military power without concern for the destructive consequences that might result from placing such might in the hands of the monstrous PLO terrorists and the PLO's military arm, Fatah.

The principle behind the UN resolutions was ‘territories for peace.’ That is, Israel would withdraw from territories and the Arabs would agree to peace. The problem was, of course, that withdrawal from territories is a defined and tangible thing, while the peace that the Arabs promised the Jews is undefined and intangible.
Arafat was in the worst possible situation, from every perspective. But at that very point the Israeli leftist political parties came to his aid. They assumed that the head of the PLO terrorist organization would prove to be a peace partner. Arafat, for his part, agreed to negotiate with Israeli emissaries and even signed an agreement with them, all the while intending to turn his back on them as soon as it was convenient.


At the Camp David Summit, Israel's then Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, acceded to nearly all of Arafat's demands. He agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, and to the relinquishment of 88 percent of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, as well as the Jordan Valley; he even consented to a re-division of Jerusalem, despite repeated assurances that Jerusalem would forever remain the State of Israel's undivided capital.

Many of the leftist negotiators were far from identifying with the Jewish heritage or with the Jewish homeland promised by the Creator of the Universe to the Jewish people. They attached little importance to the fact that in this land the Jews lived independently from the period of Joshua until the destruction of the Second Temple, and that they yearned for it with all their might through the long years of exile. This wretched detachment weakened the stance of the Israeli negotiators vis-à-vis the Arabs who, in the most brazen and impudent manner, denied the Jewish people's ties to the Land of Israel, and claimed exclusive dominion over the entire land.


**Secularism and Modern Culture**

**Presentation of the Other**

The main goals of Haredi society are to study the Torah and to fulfill the commandments. The community's overarching fear is that modern secular culture will exert an influence and cause members of the community to abandon religious observance. The community employs walls of separatism to mitigate these influences. This “filtering” works not merely by blocking elements that directly contradict Judaism’s tenets, but also by creating spiritual content with an ethos that counters, delegitimizes and even mocks modern materialist culture, facilitating its rejection.

Discussion of secularization appears mainly in history textbooks, covering the period from the (European Jewish) emancipation onward, particularly from the spread of the Enlightenment. Historical facts are presented along with descriptions of how Haredi Judaism coped with the younger generation's abandonment of religion, and with active efforts to undermine it. The Haredi response greatly influenced the community’s attitude generally toward the Other and in particular toward secularism; it also contributed to the development of a Haredi consciousness rooted in separatism.
The Haredi viewpoint toward modern culture, as depicted in the textbooks, is one of thorough delegitimization. However, the attitude toward secular people themselves varies. Some are regarded as “outrageous apostates,” secular ideologues who deny God and should be ostracized. In contrast, there are those secular individuals who are tinokot shenishbu (infants captured by non-Jews): Jews who do not observe the commandments from a lack of knowledge or familiarity with Judaism. The attitude toward these Jews is one of love and outreach. It is important to note as well that non-Orthodox segments of Judaism—notably the Reform and Conservative movements—are vilified entirely.

NB: most secular-Haredi interactions presented in the textbooks are in connection with the struggle against secular Zionism and the battles over the State of Israel's religious character (or lack thereof). A separate chapter will be devoted to these relations.

**On the Maskilim (Haskalah Activists)**

Mendelssohn's other pupil, Herz Homberg, did not content himself with calling upon Austrian Jews to send their children to ‘German normal’ schools; rather, he himself traveled to Vienna and proposed to the authorities that he be employed as an emissary to carry out the educational directives in the Galician communities. Through ‘informing’ and other base means, he tried to force the Jews to send their children to normal schools. He himself opened such schools in Galicia and manned them with teachers who shared his boastful style. The degeneracy of the Maskilim [social group literally meaning: secularly educated class] reached its peak in this contemptible pupil of Mendelssohn's! Other disciples of Mendelssohn discarded the Torah and the commandments, morality and proper behavior, and frittered away their time in the parlors of the wives of Maskilim, in the society of irresponsible and shallow Christians.


**On American Education**

In the US, the cheder [traditional religious primary school] was an institution of limited scope, where children received incomplete Jewish education during the afternoon hours only. In the mornings nearly all of the Jewish children attended American public schools. When a child went to cheder in the afternoon, he was struck with the external contrast between the modern ‘goyish’ school and the small, dark, Jewish cheder. The youngsters could not distinguish between the spiritual emptiness of secular culture and the great light that shined forth out of the dimness of the cheder, where the melamed taught them Torah.


**On Israeli Secular Education**

During this period of fierce struggle over the Jewish character of every sphere of activity and every institution in Israel, the hollowness of secular education became obvious. The Ministry of Education director frankly admitted the failure of secular education, whose outcomes could be seen clearly in our generation, stripped bare of ideals and sunk in the depths of materialism. To remedy this generational disease, the Knesset decided to institute ‘Jewish consciousness’ studies in the secular schools, covering laws, customs,
and basic knowledge of the festivals and prayers. On some secular kibbutzim residents began asking whether they had not gone too far in disregarding the nation's values; in the year 5723 (1962-3), for the first time, they asked the Ministry of Religious Services to send them a hazzan [cantor] and other religious necessities for the High Holidays. The academically educated also demonstrated the failure of secular education; many who did not manage to attain the ‘affluent society’ lifestyle, left the country.


**Reform Judaism**

The Haskalah as instituted by Moshe Mendelssohn branched out in two ways: conversion from Judaism, and Reform Judaism. Those who took the first path were cut off from the Jewish nation's Tree of Life: they converted. Those who followed the second route tried to damage the tree itself, to corrupt and deform it through changes aimed at turning Judaism into a version of Christianity. These were the Reform Jews.

*History of Recent Generations, Middle School*, Vol 1, 2008, p. 82.

**“These Candles” (G. Miriam)**

This is the story of Boris, a new immigrant from the Soviet Union who knows nothing about Judaism. During Hanukkah he wonders why menorahs are being lit on the religious people's street; he asks his Haredi neighbor, who gives him a pleasant account of the Hanukkah miracle and introduces him to Jewish observance.

Boris and Lydia stood near the home of the Zalmanov family. Boris knocked gently and hesitantly. Now there could be no doubt in their minds that this was a holiday. Singing could be heard from the Zalmanov home. Another knock and the door opened. Mrs. Zalmanov waved them inside. ‘Come in, come in.’ The two entered, embarrassed. Mr. Zalmanov was still singing with his children. ‘Do you know the songs?’ he asked Boris. Boris bashfully answered no, adding, ‘Actually . . . we came to ask . . . er . . . to find out why you light candles, what for. Why? It wasn't in the newspaper or the news program.’ Mr. Zalmanov smiled, listened to all of the questions, and promised Boris that he would answer him. He finished singing, sat down next to Boris, and started explaining and telling the story.

*In Good Time, Grade 5* Reader, 2016, pp. 39–41.

**Haredi Culture vs Modern Culture**

The Haredi curricula offer two methods of avoiding the influence of modern culture. One is to separate from society at large and strive to maintain the autonomy of the Haredi community. The other is an uncompromising effort to counteract alien influences to Haredi Judaism by enhancing Jewish-consciousness.

**View of Emancipation**

This chapter concludes with the question: should we take a favorable view of the emancipation, or should we regret it? We have seen that the emancipation put an end to decrees and discrimination and gave the Jews access to an easier and more comfortable
way of life. But it also put an end to autonomous Jewish life in the community framework with its wonderful institutions. Additionally, it disrupted the Jewish social framework. The Jews ceased to be a closed society; they became involved with non-Jews, and from there the way to abandoning the Torah and the mitzvot was short.

History of Recent Generations, Middle School, Vol 1, 2008, pp. 79–80.

Struggle for Autonomy in The Haskalah Era

In the following years . . . the Hungarian Haredi communities fought for their right to organize as autonomous Haredi communities. It was not an easy decision to create a separate and independent framework for themselves. But this was the only way to ensure the wholeness of Jewish life in that country, and to keep the secular world from exerting a negative influence on the religious public.

History of Recent Generations, Middle School, Vol 1, 2008, p. 272.

The Hamburg Temple disputes

The great scholars of that generation had sought to rein in the activities of the ‘reformers’ and to distance others from transgression. When the war recommenced twenty-five years later, Rabbi Hirsch arose and publicly denounced all of the hollowness and shallowness of the Reform way . . . and he did not desist until he had defeated the leaders and pronouncements of this treacherous movement. In the end it no longer dared to conduct activity in the public realm, limiting itself to relatively narrow confines.

History of Recent Generations, Middle School, Vol 1, 2008, p. 88.

Establishment of Agudat Israel

Late nineteenth century anti-Semitism led to cohesion within the ranks of the assimilators, who created their own organizations. These organizations gave great power to assimilated Jewry, which no one could withstand.

Assimilation of individuals cannot harm the Jewish people as a whole. It can reduce the number of Jews belonging to the people, but it cannot distort or diminish it. But when assimilation is a guiding principle of an entire public or organization that discards the people's values, it warps the image of the people in its entirety. That is what happened, for example, when the Zionist Organization was founded. This organization jettisoned most of the people's values and claimed to represent the people . . . while at the same time the true Jewish people, the people of the Torah, were dispersed and scattered. And despite the large number of those belonging to it, the people's voice was not being heard among the voices of the organizations, and it seemed to have no place among the nations. Until the founding of Agudat Israel, which declared: ‘The People of the Torah Live!’ Not as another movement, not as a new political party did Agudat Israel come into being, but as the expression and symbol of the entire Jewish people, and in protest against other movements’ falsifications.

History of Recent Generations, Middle School, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 79.
Recognition of the Other

The Haredi approach dictates that the community’s textbooks filter out subject matter in conflict with its worldview. Most textbooks used by the community today are written by Haredi education professionals; the images of those who appear in the textbooks are of obviously Haredi appearance; and the books are approved by rabbis who have examined them. However certain other texts may be used as long as they don’t contradict the essential Haredi values.

Generally, in subjects that have a major cultural and worldview element, such as Hebrew language, literature and verbal expression, the study content will be based on texts from Haredi or religious sources only. In-depth discussion and extensive study concentrates on rabbinical figures or other “cultural heroes” who exemplify the Haredi worldview. Also, there is no presentation of viewpoints considered out of sync with Haredi identity. For instance, the father of a family will be highlighted in the context of Torah study, a religious-occupation or, alternatively, engaged in a simple, undistinguished trade that does not pose a threat to the prestige of Torah study—always extolled as the supreme value.38

38 A more extensive explanation of this issue can be found in the section on Gender and the Status of Women, p. 70.
**Shimon**: My father is a *kollel avrech* [student]. He goes to *kollel* [school for married men] in the morning, comes home in the afternoon, eats with us, rests a little, and returns to the kollel to study.

In the evening he usually studies Gemara with my oldest brother, Mordechai. Sometimes I see Dad put his head on his arm and wrinkles cover his forehead; then I know he’s trying to figure out a problem in the Gemara.

**Michael**: My father is a *melamed*. In the morning he teaches in a Talmud Torah: Torah, Mishna and even Gemara. In the afternoon Dad learns with us and also prepares the next day’s lessons. At night, when we’re asleep, Dad goes out to a *daf yomi* [daily page of Talmud] lesson at our neighborhood shul [synagogue].

**David**: I want to talk about my favorite time of the week, from four to five o’clock on Shabbat, when Dad and I study together at a father-son study-group. I wait all week long for that hour, and wouldn’t give it up for anything.

*Our Home*, Grade 2 Reader, n.d., p. 78.

In Haredi curricula nature and science books, no mention was found of material that contradicts the Orthodox Jewish philosophy, such as Darwin’s Theory of Evolution. However, there are brief discussions of major scientific discoveries and of the scientists responsible for them. Yet here as well, study topics are presented only within a context that proves such spheres of knowledge also exist in the Torah.

**Following in the Footsteps of Geologists**

To understand what a geologist is and what he does, read the following:

One of the greatest experts in the study of the earth and its strata was a celebrated Christian geologist from California. This geologist came to Eretz Yisrael to search for oil in the Negev. Many other geologists had already tried to find oil, but after exploring and digging deeply for a while with no results, they had given up and halted their search. But this geologist was stubborn and continued searching.

His colleagues were surprised and asked him, ‘Why are you so certain that oil can be found in the Negev?’ In answer, the geologist took out his English translation of the Bible, and excitedly read to them what is written in the Torah: ‘“. . . a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass . . . thou shalt not lack anything in it’ I'm relying on this verse!”


**Phosphate: Fertilizer from the Mines**

Two hundred years ago an English scientist named Robert Malthus published a book called *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, in which he concluded that, within a number of years, millions of people might die due to a food shortage, since the amount of food then available would not be enough to sustain the world’s population. Indeed! And what about the promise: ‘Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing?’ That non-Jewish scientist did not acknowledge God’s ways, which were
beyond his comprehension. Over the years, important substances have been discovered, such as phosphorus and potassium, making it possible to grow crops quickly and to obtain abundant and high-quality produce. And indeed . . . in His goodness, provides sustenance for the entire world. We do not lack [food] and may we never lack food. *Wonders of the Universe, Grade 5, Science, 2001, p. 4.*

*Let's Read Along Our Way*, Reading Comprehension, Language and Verbal Expression for Middle School, 2013, p. 51.
Zionism and the State of Israel

During the establishment of the State of Israel, Haredi Judaism was faced with the question of how to relate to a Jewish state that would not be governed according to the Torah. Should the Haredi community be a part of the new nation and participate in its public life as citizens with duties and rights, influencing the government where it might, or should it ignore the state and remain isolated.

Civics textbooks examined in the context of this study present a number of Haredi positions regarding the appropriate attitude toward the State of Israel:

1. The Orthodox Council of Jerusalem (HaEdah HaHaredit): Rabbis of the Orthodox Council of Jerusalem do not recognize the State of Israel's right to exist. In their view, a Jewish state may not be established before the redemption, and one must not immigrate to Eretz Yisrael in a spirit of revolt against non-Jewish nations or out of a desire to hasten the redemption. This outlook is based on the verse: ‘I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field, that ye awaken not up, nor stir up love, until it please.’ [Song of Songs: 2:7; 3:5; 8:4] Hazal [Wise sages] interpreted the verse as referring to oaths commanded by God upon Israel ‘not to storm the wall . . . and not to rebel against the nations of the world.’ The Orthodox Council views the Israeli state as a violation of this oath, regardless of the state’s religious character.

Moreover, Israel’s establishment along the lines of the secular Zionist vision further deepened the council's opposition. The Admor [master teacher] of Satmar [large Hassidic sect] the leading proponent of this idea, affirms that there is no possibility of cooperation with those who have thrown off the yoke of Torah. He underscores the importance of settling Eretz Yisrael in holiness, to engage in Torah and its commandments, and to fulfill the mitzvot [religious, moral commandments] that are dependent on the Land; he even says that those inhabitants of the Land who fear God's word should be supported. [Given the council’s adherence to the Biblical and Midrashic interpretations], there was fierce opposition to the founding of the state and the mass immigration that has followed.

2. Agudat Israel: the Haredi mainstream, whose philosophy prevails within Israeli Haredi society. This group recognizes, in practical terms, the State of Israel's independent sovereignty and does not oppose the idea of a Zionist state. Rather, it objects to the secular Zionist ideology and to any governance in a manner inconsistent with the Torah. Agudat Israel’s adherents are reconciled to Israel’s existence as a state and cooperate fully with its institutions, with the aim of advancing Haredi interests. However, there is also a desire to contribute to the state in those areas that do not conflict with the Haredi outlook.

Textbooks voice considerable criticism of the measures taken by Israeli leaders to secularize the country, and the books discuss the struggles that took place in the early years of Israeli statehood, including the debate over the wording of the (Israeli) Declaration of Independence, efforts to keep religion out of the lives of immigrant children and such questions of how to determine who is Jewish. These discussions are written in a tone of anger and harshness. In line with the tendency to negate modern culture, here as well, there is complete invalidation of the secular Zionist ideology as being detached from the values of traditional Judaism.

Nevertheless, along with the negation of secular ideology and disapproval of the state's establishment in a manner inconsistent with Jewish values, we can also find positive attitudes toward Israel—attitudes that have spiritual and historical sources.

Reb Chaim Brisker on the Zionist Movement

Not only was my revered father (the Netziv) an enthusiastic supporter of establishing settlements in Eretz Yisrael, but I myself favored this idea for a long time; however, the acts of the students of Kharkiv caused me to abandon this view. They came to Eretz Yisrael and did not better their ways even to a small degree, but rather made Ben Yehuda their rabbi, and disseminated heresy and lawlessness in our Holy Land. We certainly must oppose Zionism so long as it is headed by such leaders.

Rabbi Moshe Blau, Leader of Agudat Israel: Testimony to the Peel Commission

I am Jerusalem-born. I was raised between the walls of the Old City, in a building whose residents were both Jews and Arabs. I am a son of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael that is commonly referred to as the ‘Old Yishuv’ This Yishuv developed in the land gradually, and thanks to this Old Yishuv there is in Eretz Yisrael . . . an important Jewish community whose existence was taken into account when the Balfour Declaration was created; and it provides a foundation for the immigration and settlement movement of recent years.

The Haredi community in Eretz Yisrael cannot recognize the secular system of Zionism . . . to return to Zion and build up Eretz Yisrael on a secular national basis. However, we must declare . . . that this difference in method, whatever sorrow it causes Haredi Judaism, does not affect Agudat Israel's participation in the aspiration to return to Zion and to build up the Land.
Separating New Immigrants from their Faith

When olim [Jewish immigrants] from Middle Eastern countries came to Israel, something happened that the Haredi community had feared when the state was founded. Political activists, Histadrut [National Workers' Union] and Jewish Agency emissaries, and other functionaries abused their power and [effectively] distanced the immigrants, especially their children, from their [Jewish] faith.

Middle Eastern olim were, in the main, God-fearing Jews who meticulously fulfilled all of the commandments. They hoped to reach the Holy Land and to find peace there, and were certain that here in the land of their fathers they would be able to live as Jews loyal to the way of Torah. During their first months in Israel, the olim were under the near-exclusive influence of secular public officials. These officials took advantage of the difficult circumstances facing immigrants, as newcomers to the country, unable to manage without help from the authorities and tried to persuade them to abandon the way of their fathers and to adopt the degenerate lifestyle of modern European culture. But Mizrahi Jews were firm in their faith and continued to follow the religion of their forefathers.

Then the secular emissaries began to use stronger means of persuasion: they cut off the payot [side locks] of Yemenite children, claiming that they harbored lice; they withheld work arrangements from parents if they refused to send their children to secular schools; and deprived them of all other necessities, such as food, housing, and sanitary conditions. Secular counselors had complete control in the immigrant camps and forcibly kept representatives of Haredi Judaism away. At the center of every immigrant settlement they built a new and handsome building for secular cultural activity, while synagogues were set up in wretched sheds at the outskirts of the camps, so that only the old and sick would go there.

In this way the children were cut off from their parents and from their parents’ faith: the results were not long in coming. The younger generation, which no longer received its education at home, very quickly absorbed all of the abominations of modern culture. Many descended the slippery slope of corruption and crime, at which point even some members of the secular public realized the emotional damage that had been done to these innocent and precious children by tearing them from the arms of their parents and from the roots of their parents’ religion.


On the Satmar Rebbe

From the time of the Holocaust, the revered Admor of holy blessed memory was one of the only Hassidic Torah figures who had influence and left a mark on loyal Jewish sectors, to counter those who were wreaking havoc in the vineyard of true Judaism and undermining the anti-Zionist struggle. In this effort he took an uncompromisingly combative approach of his own. Despite the differences in mode of opposition between him and the religiously loyal group organized via Agudat Israel, and despite the disagreements regarding the modes, methods and tactics to be used, there was no
difference in the ultimate goal of returning God’s people to the heritage of our holy Torah from Sinai.


Resolution of the Haredi-Zionist Conflict

Given its ambivalent stance toward the State of Israel, Agudat Israel was nevertheless involved in Israel’s creation, cooperating with Zionist leaders and reaching understandings that were detailed in the well-known “status quo” letter of 1947. However, since the founding, the organization has engaged in disputes and conflicts over issues of critical importance to Haredi Judaism regarding the nation’s Jewish character. The textbooks emphasize that, despite the importance of these issues, the struggle has to be waged according to the way of Torah, which condemns violence.

The civics textbooks also convey the message that, despite the lack of agreement, an effort must be made to find the things that unify the various segments of society and to abide by the rules of good civic conduct, so that we all can live in Israel together, and contribute our share for the sake of positive cooperation on things that do not contradict the principles of Haredi Judaism.

Haredi Protests

Orthodox Jewry's status as a minority among a majority of secular parties gave rise to a sense of powerlessness, despair and disappointment within a portion of the religious public. They saw that secular influence was increasing. There were more and more violations of Shabbat; children were being forcibly removed from religious environments; non-kosher meat and other foods were being sold in the country's markets; and more . . .

One group within Haredi Judaism, the Neturei Karta [a Satmar sect], was unable to effect change with the secular public, and stopped participating in Knesset and municipal elections. Another group tried to stem the tide of secularism in Israel through violent acts. Young people, whose early years had been spent in revolutionary movements—the Haganah, the Irgun, and the Lehi, viewed the fighting modes of these movements as appropriate for the holy war of the Torah. They set fire to cars that drove on Shabbat, and to a butcher shop that sold pork. They prepared to attack the Knesset building where laws were being passed against the Torah.

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The Haredi public clearly opposed these acts and explicitly declared: ‘This is not the way of Torah Judaism!’ But secular [opponents] used these acts to attack to defame Haredi Judaism as a whole.


**Compromising on Religious Legislation**

Haredi Judaism should use its political influence to effect the passing of laws that address the Jewish character of the state, but in some cases it is better to forego the passing of such laws and, for lack of a better option, to make do with a situation that is alien to our ideology, when the price is one of compromise on matters of principle.

*As a New Citizen, Secondary Civics*, 2009, p. 133.

**The Struggle for the Children of Tehran**

The struggle for the soul of the Jewish child began as early as the Second World War, during the Holocaust. After Poland was occupied by Germany, many Jews fled from there to Russia. When their parents died along the way, those children who were strong enough, continued alone. After long wanderings and much hardship hundreds of children reached Tehran, the capital of Iran. The Polish government in exile that had established itself in London cared for all of the refugees and created a special camp for the ‘children of Tehran.’ It left educational matters to the Jewish Agency, which employed a madrich [counselor] from the youth movement: Hashomer Hatzair. Along with his cohorts he tried to distance these children from their faith. They did not take into account the background of the children, whose parents were God-fearing Jews; they disregarded the fact that these children were their parents’ last hope, before they perished in the cold steppes of Siberia, in flight from the Germans, or in the horrible death camps.

Shamelessly they disregarded the fact that these children had remained loyal to Judaism over a perilous three-year journey. As orphans alone in the world, with no father or mother and so close to the land of their hopes, their brothers forced them to abandon the religion of their fathers.

When the children of Tehran reached Eretz Yisrael, they were placed by the Jewish Agency in secular institutions. Agudat Israel then mounted a fierce struggle to rescue these children. But the heads of the Jewish Agency were unwilling to make concessions and insisted on their ‘right’ to educate these children in a secular manner—even though their parents clearly would have wanted them to continue in their footsteps, along the path of Jews loyal to God and to His Torah. Only a few children were placed in religious institutions.

The ‘Children of Tehran’ became a symbol of Haredi Judaism's struggle to safeguard the souls of Jewish children—a struggle that continues to this day.


**The Judiciary**

Jews loyal to God and to His Torah seek solutions to all problems that arise in their lives based on what is written in the holy Written and Oral Torah . . .
Despite everything, as citizens of the state, we need to recognize the legal system, the state's judicial branch; we must know what its place is among the governmental authorities, distinguish between the various types of court and be familiar with the powers and functions of each of them. And in certain circumstances, even Shabbat- and mitzvah-observing Jews have need of the courts’ services, as when they are involved in legal cases or in issues that require, by law, court authorization.

As a New Citizen, Secondary Civics, 2009, pp. 101–03.

The War of Independence
It was a great achievement for the entire Jewish Yishuv that students in the holy yeshivot continued during this time to engage in Torah study. The yeshiva heads took care to ensure that, precisely at this fateful juncture, the voice of Torah would not be silenced in the land. Torah scholars were recognized as soldiers—defending their homeland with a spiritual weapon: Torah study. Because of this, yeshiva students in Jerusalem were drafted only for special operations, such as repelling Arab Legion tanks and digging trenches.


Recognition of Secular Zionism
Despite the complete rejection of Zionism's secular philosophy, textbooks used in the higher grades do convey full recognition of the history of the Zionist movement and the founding of the state. The discussions are, for the most part, objective and straightforward, except where they touch on Haredi Judaism's struggle for the Jewish character of the state, as previously noted.

However, the aforementioned ambivalence is reflected in the fact that there is no admiration or special focus on Zionist leaders. For example, the figure of Herzl, his vision and activities are discussed at length, but the fact that he was chosen as Zionism's “prophet of the state” is criticized. Absent from the textbooks, moreover, are prominent national symbols such as the Israeli flag and Independence Day.

In the textbooks intended for younger children, the historical discussion of Israel's establishment features Haredi figures only. The discussion focuses on Haredi leaders and rabbis of the period and on religiously observant settlers.

Who was Herzl?
Theodor Herzl was born in 5620/1860 to an assimilated Jewish family in Hungary. The problem of anti-Semitism concerned him, and in 1893 he voiced his opinion that the Jewish question should be conclusively resolved by a large and organized conversion movement. The Dreyfus affair 41 taught Herzl that assimilation was not a practicable solution. He sought other options, finally turning to that of political Zionism. Herzl developed this idea in a book entitled The Jewish State. Herzl first approached Baron de

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41 Injustice done in the late nineteenth century to Jewish-French army officer Alfred Dreyfus, fueled Theodore Herzl’s commitment to establish a Jewish state.
Hirsch and others for assistance in realizing his idea. To this purpose Herzl devoted the final eight years of his life.

Herzl was a victim of his environment and of the period in which he lived. He was born to assimilated parents and could be considered a tinok shenishba [a Jew who grew up among non-Jews], with no knowledge of Jewish observance. At the end of his life he returned to his people and dedicated himself to the idea of a Jewish state. There were many like him. But the Zionists made a false god of Herzl. They wanted to provide the younger generation—Jews who were becoming distant from their people—with an idealized figure. The aim was for these young Jews to identify with Herzl and his cause: secular nationalism.


**Paramilitary Organizations**

In Eretz Yisrael, before the founding of the state, there were three paramilitary organizations: Haganah, Irgun, and Lehi. The Haganah was meant to be a general organization of the Yishuv but it was actually controlled by the worker parties that founded it. The Haganah’s socialist character kept the Yishuv’s right-wing circles from participating in this paramilitary organization.

In 5691/1931, there was a split in the Haganah and civilian and revisionist groups established an offshoot called Haganah Bet or ‘Defense B’. In 5697/1937, the two groups reunited. However, the revisionists and their leader, Jabotinsky, did not agree to the terms of unification and founded a paramilitary organization of their own, the Irgun (also known by its Hebrew acronym, Etzel).


**Early settlers**

Who were the first settlers and founders of settlements in Eretz Yisrael (about whom we shall learn) a century ago? They were Jews who feared God, people of profound faith and trust in their Creator, who knew that this is the land promised to our forefathers. Most of them were new immigrants who came in difficult conditions and clung to the land with great devotion. They settled desolate areas, built dwellings, paved roads, founded synagogues, yeshivot and factories, and planted orchards.

They drew strength and courage for the difficult task of settling and building the Land from the Torah and from a deep trust in Torah sages. The call to settle the Land was made by the rabbis who led the Haredi community in Eretz Yisrael-Jerusalem; thus, even Jews living within Jerusalem’s Old City walls went out to build new neighborhoods. Over the years new settlements such as Petah Tikva, Bnei Brak and Rehovot were founded and eventually became large, well-developed cities.

*A View to the Region, Grade 3*, Homeland Studies, n.d., p. 120.
Racism and Mizrahi Jews

The subject of racism in textbooks was examined from several perspectives:

1. Is there any education against racism?
2. Do the textbooks contain expressions of racism or materials that reinforce prejudice?
3. Is there recognition of Mizrahi Jewry?

Education against Racism

Despite the existence of racism in Israel, the textbooks do not seriously try to understand this phenomenon. Although the history and geography textbooks refer to anti-Semitism toward Jews and inequality exhibited against Afro-Americans in the United States, this is not expanded upon or expressed in the different subjects across the various grade levels.

There is only one topic that deals directly with the subject of racism toward Others; this is in the context of teaching about slavery and the status of African Americans:

In connection with slavery, the textbooks describe how injustice is caused when we deny people their rights; but the teachable moment seems lost when the topic is examined from a more detached perspective, sending the message that cruel behavior and denying people rights because of their ethnic background does not exist among the Jewish people.

On Slavery in America

The trade in blacks flourished: Special fairs were held in the cities and towns where blacks were bought and sold openly. A common sight in those days at the slave market was a white master opening up a black’s mouth to see if his teeth were strong and healthy, feeling his muscles and deciding whether or not to buy . . . The black slaves lived in extreme poverty. Plantation owners treated them cruelly, as if they had no ‘humanity’ and considered them their private property, with no obligation to ever set them free.

It should be noted that the description of slavery in this book is taken from the lives of non-Jews, as quoted by Rambam (at the end of ‘Laws of Slaves’): ‘Cruelty and brutality are found only among the idol worshippers, but the descendants of Abraham, the Jewish people, who are influenced by the goodness of God’s Torah commanding them with just laws and practices, are merciful towards all.’

America: Geography, Grade 8, n.d., pp. 81–82.

Summary Question:

A sheet of paper falls to the ground next to you, where a black slave describes his suffering. Report on what you read.

Geography of the United States, Grade 8, n.d., p. 27.
Condemnation of Slavery in America

A comic strip that describes an imagined conversation between Henry from the North and Sam, the slave owner from the South. Sam unconvincingly tries to explain why he must use Negro slaves who are primitive and need discipline. He argues that slavery is good for them and much better than their conditions in Africa. He also blames Henry for the failure of Northerners to treat their workers fairly. Henry concludes the conversation by expressing the importance of freedom and equality for all people and points out that an average slave lives no more than five years due to the harsh conditions in the South.

With regard to the status of African Americans today, there is a clear effort to promote awareness of their suffering and feelings of discrimination. The textbooks employ a variety of descriptive methods, including literary works and questions that encourage students to see from the Other’s perspective and thus understand the negative outcomes of such racism.
What Color Am I?
You are the white person
When you’re born, you’re pink.
When you’re sick, you’re yellow.
In the sun you are brown.
When you’re cold you’re blue.
When you’re angry, you’re red.
When you’re afraid, you’re white.
When you’re dead, you’re grey.
And I’m colored.
When I’m born, I’m black.
When I’m sick, I’m black.
In the sun I’m black.
When I’m cold, I’m black.
When I’m angry, I’m black.
When I’m afraid, I’m black.
When I’m dead, I’m black.
I am dead, I’m black.
Now tell me my friend,
Which of us is colored?

Geography of the United States, Grade 8, n.d., p. 39.

Nevertheless, the textbooks also present African Americans unfavorably with respect to their perceived actions in urban communities. Here, they do not mince words or shy away from stereotypical perceptions.

On Affirmative Action

Does giving assistance to blacks improve their situation? Statistics show that a significant portion of young blacks in America are immersed in a life of violence and crime. While there are blacks who have achieved senior positions, the streets of America’s major cities are filled with black criminals. The economic status of blacks prevent them from getting into college, therefore their wages are low; they raise families but are not able to give their children a higher education due to the high cost of these institutions, so they and their children remain immersed in the cycle of poverty.


Summary questions:

What are the factors that lead to violence among blacks?
What is affirmative action? What is the current policy in the United States, and why?

Geography of the United States, Grade 8, n.d., p. 40.
There is an attempt to reject prejudice, but this does not preclude the textbooks from presenting stereotypical characteristics, except for a select group of black people who are considered to be “not like that”; but the stereotype remains.

What do the following names mean to you? UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan? Secretary of State Collin Powell? These are the names of blacks who have risen to senior positions. In hospitals in the United States, in universities, there are blacks who have reached senior positions. Not all blacks are primitive; not all of them are violent.

*Geography of the United States, Grade 8*, n.d., p. 38.

The perspective on racism is detached, as though from afar. Though the words are there: “Did you know that the terms ‘black’ or ‘Negro’ are considered racist? It is better to say ‘African American,’” there is a little substance offered in the curricula toward developing empathy for the Other.

**Stereotypes in Textbooks**

Beyond the negative reference toward certain groups as outlined in the previous chapters, we did not find offensive statements based on ethnic background. The textbooks contain a great deal of content emphasizing that **people were created “in the image of God” and they are all worthy of being treated with respect.** However, a deeper glimpse into attitudes toward the Mizrahi in society is tainted with prejudice. Teaching students how to treat Others and those who are different focuses on finding positive traits and on behaving fairly toward them, but does not help with uprooting stereotypes. The lesson here should be that while preventing inappropriate behavior should be lauded, it does not necessarily promote seeing the Other as an equal.

Below are several examples to illustrate this issue:

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42 Provided they do not belong to one of the groups that are strictly forbidden. See previous sections.
“Bracha with Bracha” (S. Kisner)

This story describes the memories of a young girl from the time Israel was established, whose parents employed a Yemenite laundress named Bracha [Blessing]. While acknowledging Bracha’s quickness and the tremendous benefit she brings the girl is annoyed at her chattiness, noisiness, and lack of manners and tact.

‘We Yemenites are very quick and we aren’t afraid of any work,’ explains Bracha to the gaping eyes of my sister who simply cannot disengage herself from her stories. ‘Yes, yes, you will see for yourself that all of this work will soon be finished. So, what was I saying? Ah, yes, we Yemenites are not afraid of work and we are not ashamed of any type of work . . . And besides that, be very careful not to get near the boiling water. Oh, what do I see, who dirtied this beautiful blouse’?

Naturally, I was very angry. ‘It isn’t any business of the laundress,’ I thought to myself, ‘to make comments about the stains on the clothes!’ And besides, all of that noise made me deaf; and in the house there was such chaos—it was so lively and noisy, so restless—I couldn’t stand the atmosphere there! Therefore, I decided to leave the house and go to Pessy’s nice house to play, with her beautiful playroom that she got from her relatives in America.

After she hears the stories of Bracha’s hardships coping with life in the refugee camp, she is more able to see some of her admirable qualities.

Suddenly my [inner] arguments stopped. I sat and stared at Bracha, at the kerosene stove . . . and I saw before me a proper and innocent Jewish woman, who is still going through many experiences but isn’t discouraged. . . I should be envious! ‘Ahem, thank you, Bracha, for the tremendous help you extend to us.’


We can see that this story tries to convey a positive message, but numerous stereotypical ideas are communicated indirectly. The text shows the little girl trying to have an unprejudiced viewpoint, but she nevertheless retains an air of superiority toward the Yemeni woman.

“Classes” (N. Rosenstein)

Toby’s father owns a successful events hall and she feels proud of her economic status. On one of her visits to the hall she notices five simple women seated together in the corner of the hall, who come every time there is a brit (circumcision ceremony).43

When she exited the cloakroom she again noticed five simple women . . . wearing colorful headscarves . . .

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43 This story describes the phenomenon of beggars who come to ceremonial events held in the halls found in Haredi areas, and who sit down to eat even though they were not invited.
This refers to a dress code that disdains clothing that is colorful or too loud, which is more connected with Mizrahi culture. Later they are referred to with distinctly Mizrahi names, and are described as being innocent and poor women who come to participate in the *brit*.

Margalit Salim, wearing her headscarf, sat in a corner of the hall and read Psalms from her tattered book . . .

Toby is angered by their presence, turns to her father and calls them ‘beggars.’ Her father tries to explain to her that perhaps on the outside she feels she is better than they are, but there might be something about them that is better than her.

‘You feel you are worth more, because you are looking at the externalities and status . . . Perhaps among the guests there is someone who is smarter, or just or more sensitive than we are’?

The message being presented here attempts to develop sensitivity toward those who are at the bottom of the social ladder. But the ladder of social status presented here is clear: ‘Toby’ is an Ashkenazi name of high status, while Margalit Salim and Massouda—the Mizrahi women—are depicted as poor, simple and innocent, wearing colorful headscarves. *Our Childhood*, Grade 5 Reader, n.d., pp. 221–24.

These stories reflect a stereotypical attitude towards Mizrahi Jews as being innocent, simple and of a lower social class. Except for characters who are rabbis we found no stories with a clearly Mizrahi character that represents other elements. In yet another example of stereotypical attitudes, the texts attribute violence in America to African Americans.

*“Night Ride” (B. Ehrenreich)*

This is a tale about a conversation overheard between two people during a long bus ride at night. The people exchange opinions on a subject that appears strange to the other passengers. (In fact, the two are discussing the process of trampling on grapes to make wine.)

‘I’m telling you, the best thing is to trample them.’
‘With shoes?’
‘No, with boots.’
‘To actually jump?’
‘Yes, yes, just like I said, to jump on them hard . . .’

Since they are sitting at the front of the bus, the other passengers cannot see their faces and are trying to ascertain their identity and character.

‘Tell me, isn’t it strange?’ An elderly woman turned to her fellow passenger seated alongside her. ‘Strange? It’s terrible! You just can’t tell anymore who you’re travelling with . . . Some people . . . It reminds me of something like maybe the Negro slaves in America, no?’ ‘That’s it, exactly! I’ve always said that the two of us think exactly alike . . . how odd . . .’

*Our Childhood, Grade 5 Reader*, n.d., pp. 226–28
Offensive Attitude toward Africans

The Rambam taught us that one must not cause physical injury to a black slave . . . but Jewish halakha also considers the black as a person with unusual features, and therefore: ‘Upon seeing a black in the land of Israel one recites the blessing of Meshaneh HaBriyot’ [thanks for Creation’s differences].

The blessing: Baruch Meshaneh HaBriyot is recited to demonstrate that everything in creation is part of God’s handiwork. In the past, when there was no contact between different peoples, seeing a dark-skinned person was very rare and generated great amazement and so the blessing was relevant. Currently, this blessing is no longer recited since seeing other races is no longer unusual.

The simplistic use of this halakhic quotation, without explaining its significance and lack of relevance today, fosters an offensive attitude toward blacks among Haredim and encourages a lingering stereotypical approach toward them.

Recognizing Mizrahi Jews

Spanish Jewry up until the period of the Golden Age is given widespread recognition in the history books; the sacred poems of Jewish liturgists of Spain, including those of Rabbis Shlomo Ibn Gevirol, Ibn Ezra and Yehuda HaLevy are studied in literature books. From the Golden Age to the modern era, Haredi history texts emphasize the history of European communities and the changes that took place there, while Jewish communities in Muslim countries are given a short, abbreviated chapter. Similarly, on the subject of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, the part played by Mizrahi Haredi Jews is not mentioned, other than their arrival and absorption in Israel and efforts by secular parties to influence them to abandon religious practices. And except for a brief comment on absorption difficulties, there is no extensive coverage of the ethnic schism or the economic and social status of Mizrahi Jews in the years following the nation’s establishment. Neither the history nor the civics textbooks contain any discussion of such events as the Wadi Salib riots or demonstrations by the “Black Panthers” (Israeli) or other similar incidents.

History books do not mention the development of Mizrahi Haredi Judaism. Despite extensive references to the spiritual situation in Israel and the establishment of yeshivot and Chassidic centers, there is no reference to the establishment of the Sephardi Porat Yosef Yeshiva and its rabbis, or to the Shas Party and its extensive Torah activities.

A similar trend can also be seen in texts that are studied in language and literature classes. Compared to the broad range of stories and history about Ashkenazi rabbis and experiences in European towns and communities, these textbooks contain only isolated stories about life in Muslim countries and do not reflect the culture of Mizrahi Jews.
There have been very small attempts to give more representation to Mizrahi Jewry and their rabbis, but for the most part the texts teach about the characteristics of the Ashkenazi Haredi culture and its worldview.

Despite the shared religious common denominator, there are pointed differences between the two Haredi groups. Particularly, Mizrahi Jewry tends to have a more moderate character; this contrasts with the extremism and secrecy adopted by Ashkenazis to offset the various crises created by European modernity. In the early decades of the state, Mizrahi children were given a Lithuanian-style education, and thus some of the characteristics found in Israel’s Mizrahi Haredi community derive from assimilating the Ashkenazi Haredi lifestyle. The creation of the Shas political party and the Ma’ayan Torah Education Network led to an independent Mizrahi Haredi community that did not rely on Ashkenazi institutions; most importantly, it facilitated the assertion of Mizrahi tradition. Yet, despite the numerous schools in the Ma’ayan Torah Education System, the teachers—primarily former students from the Mizrahi community—use textbooks that still represent Ashkenazi culture. Furthermore, Rav Ovadiah Yosef, who was the (most) revered rabbi of the Mizrahi Haredi community, is missing from these textbooks, including history books; he is not mentioned in the stories of great Jews portrayed within the literature texts. Only one book had a photo of him, in a story featuring another rabbi.

Nor, for the most part, are obvious Mizrahi family names found in the Ashkenazi-based textbooks. A clear example of this can be seen in the second-grade reader In Our Home, which describes various families living in a building; they all have neutral family names, and no family has a noticeably Mizrahi name.

**Different Families**

We have met Michael’s family, now let’s meet other families . . . Michael tells us about his neighbors:

‘This is the first door in the building, where the Ne’eman Family lives.

Now let’s knock on the door of the Aderet Family.

We go up to the second floor and if we knock on the door of the Levy Family we can immediately notice the happy atmosphere.

The door across the hall is quite the opposite. It is always quiet there. Only Mr. Yirmiyahu, an older gentleman, lives there.

And here is our family, the Shachar Family.

On the third floor we find Moshe and Leah Or-Lev.

And opposite them is a small family, the Yaakobi Family.

Last in the building is the Zehavi Family, an older couple who love children.’

Ethiopian Jews Only Briefly Mentioned

There is almost no recognition of Ethiopian Jews. They do not appear in the textbooks on history, civics and literature and there is neither any reference of their aliyah to Israel nor of their culture and customs.

The notable exception is a fourth-grade textbook on Israel studies, which relates the story of a boy’s aliyah from Ethiopia.

Stories about Olim

How I Made Aliyah from Ethiopia

Derekh Eretz: Israel Studies, Grade 4, 2015, p. 122.
Gender and the Status of Women

The Role of Women in the Textbooks

Until the twentieth century the role of Haredi women corresponded with roles of other women in traditional society. With changes to the status of women in the Western world, and with the establishment of Haredi society in Israel as a “society of learners,” Haredi women underwent a sea-change from their traditional role. In order to maintain this Torah ideal and enable men to learn after their marriage, Haredi women undertook the traditional role previously held by men as a family’s primary wage-earner.

Despite the reality brought on by this reversal in traditional family roles, textbooks for grades 1–2, continue to present the mothers in the traditional role of being responsible for the home and raising the children, while the father is portrayed as the “head of the family,” attending to the family’s livelihood and studying Torah.

Mother

She leads the home with wisdom and insight,
She invests her efforts in educating the children.
In the early morning hours she awakens
While the family continues to sleep,
Quickly to the kitchen she goes to prepare breakfast,
In her pleasant voice she sings out:
‘Good morning, children, wake up sleepyheads.’
Mother has great patience
To listen to the crying of the little ones,
To help the older children prepare their lessons,
To wash the dishes and listen to stories,
To hang the laundry and sing us songs.
Dearest mother you worry about everyone:
You respect Father and serve his plate first.

*In Good Time, Grade 1* Reader, 2011, pp. 243–44.

Just Like Father

Everyone says that I am just like father
And then I identify with that, and I get a fatherly feeling.
I wish I could be like father,
Good and special,
Who takes care of mother
And each one of us.
Father, who understands many things,
And many people consult with him.
In the morning he is up early for prayers,
And goes to bed late at night.
Father, who enters the house with a broad smile,
And is received like a guest worth his weight in gold.
He studies a great deal of Torah,
And worries about our livelihood,
And takes care of so many things,
That we children do not understand.


**What Do We Do in the Morning?**
In the morning the family gets ready for the new day. Father usually goes out in the morning as well, either to the kollel or to work. There are some families where the mother also goes to work, and then everyone leaves the house in the morning.

*In Our Home, Grade 2* Reader, n.d., p. 92.

In the pictures the mother is usually depicted as a housewife in the midst of her family, or while fulfilling traditional roles. However, in the chapter on dividing family roles at home men also participate in some of these tasks.

Textbooks in the later grades emphasize the importance of a woman who earns the family’s livelihood or who sacrifices her convenience so as to enable her husband to study Torah, without concerns. The husband’s study of Torah and the children’s education about the foundations of
Torah are considered to be the apex of spiritual aspirations that are synonymous with learning itself.

In these books also the woman is not depicted as a strong woman with a career, but rather as a traditional and modest woman who assumes the role of the husband while remaining behind the scenes.

**Short Story about a Great Woman: Puah**
The story describes a woman who lives in great poverty and tries to find a way to feed her starving children so that her husband can continue to study without the worrying about earning a living. Finally, her many efforts are rewarded and the pinnacle of her aspirations is achieved: her husband becomes a renowned scholar.

My husband is a learned scholar, she thought. He is often hidden in the tents of Torah so I must deliver him food so that he can persevere in his studies.

The righteous women continued to bear the burden. With difficulty, in poverty, without stopping, until Rabbi Menachem Mendel became a great scholar of the generation and relief came to them as well.

A small story about a great woman, far from the bouquets of glory, who stood beside her husband her entire life; this is her reward for all of her toil.


**“Mine and Yours is Hers” (S. Tzel)**
This story glorifies the love of Torah exhibited by the wife of Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer. When they were engaged it was discovered that he had a serious illness and his wife’s parents tried to convince her to break the engagement. But she admired his Torah wisdom and wanted to marry him in spite of it.

He may be disabled in his body, but not his spirit . . .

They begged her, coaxed, explained, but the young woman insisted, with maturity, on uncompromising sacrifice and boundless love of Torah, with a willingness to do anything just to marry this young prodigy, Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer.

Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer lived to be over 80 years old, and his wife lived a long life as well. During all those years she stood by his side and served him faithfully. Because of his illness, which continued to plague him, it was hard for him to hold a pen in his hand and his handwriting was illegible. His wife would sit for hours with his Torah insights, decoding his handwriting and copying them, then bringing them to print.

*In Good Time, Grade 5* Reader, 2016, pp. 115–16.

In addition to their roles as aiding in the study of Torah, other dominant traditional messages can be found that promote the performance of acts of kindness (*chessed*) and upholding modesty.
“For You, the Young Jewish Woman” (M. Pnina)

Mitzvot are a light unto your feet
Kindness shall illuminate your way,
Your manner shall be one of modesty
Open the gates with the key of your prayers.

_In Good Time, Grade 6_ Reader, 2009, p. 52.

Although earning a living is now the purviews of Haredi women, the curricula maintain the traditional model of family roles for a woman and her husband. Indeed, there is no reference at all to what has essentially become a reversal of responsibilities in the traditional Haredi family. As such, the message does not center on empowering the working wife, but rather intensifies her part in her husband’s Torah study and her critical role in raising the next generation of scholars.

Gender roles are reflected in the textbooks not only in the presentation of the Haredi woman’s responsibility, but also in stereotypical reflections concerning “masculine” traits vis-à-vis “feminine” traits.

In the following example students are asked to prepare a list of boys’ characteristics using the list of girls’ characteristics:

What can you tell us about yourself?
(What it doesn’t say on your Identity Card)

First, we want to know what you look like:

1. **Complete:**
This is what I look like:

2. **My characteristics:**
Prepare a list of boys’ characteristics (Use the list of girls’ characteristics below).

**Boys’ characteristics:** ______ ______ ______ ______

____ ______ ______ ______

____ ______ ______ ______

**Good to Know**
This nation is distinguished by three characteristics: **Merciful, Bashful** and **Benevolent.** (From Talmud: [“Yevamot”])

**Girls’ Characteristics:**
Kindhearted, sociable, shy, acquiescent, smiling, polite, forgetful, diligent, absentminded, organized, serious, timid.

3. **A. Circle the characteristics that describe you in the appropriate space.**

   **B. Complete:** This year I will try to be: __________

Similarly, in the following examples the behavioral expectations match gender stereotypes:

**Preparations for Shabbat**

Good and righteous girls
Happily want to help out
In honor of the Shabbat they work:
Tovah sweeps the floors,
Devori bakes Challah.
Naomi watches the baby,
Tziporah organizes the clothes in the closet.
Yossi and Yaakov are brothers
They prepare a Dvar Torah [Torah-based speech].
And little Ruchi, what did she do?
She slept and dreamed sweet dreams.

**Read and Answer:**

Who am I? What is my name?
1. I watched the baby.____
2. I baked Challah.____
3. I slept and dreamed sweet dreams.____
4. Preparing Dvar Torah.____

My good daughter read this twice.
Signature:_____________

*Amazing Letters, Grade 1, Part 3, p. 30.*
“I had a dream”

I had a dream . . . that I was already big:
A kerchief was tied to my head,
There was an apron around my waist,
High heels on my shoes—I am a mother.
And I had a sweet little girl,
A pupil in first grade.
In the morning, I woke up first,
At night, I was the last to go to bed,
And all day long
I toiled and worked.
And so,
I worked for an hour or two,
Preparing lunch for my little girl,
A nutritious meal,
A delicious meal.

_Our Childhood, Grade 1_, n.d., p. 37.
Recognition of Women in Textbooks

Another aspect of the status of Haredi women is their exclusion from the public eye. Haredi Judaism’s attitude toward women is “All glorious is the King’s daughter within”; in other words, the woman is a princess and therefore she must safeguard her modesty and avoid showing herself outside. Additionally, there are halakhic rules. One strident example is the prohibition against married men looking at other women (other than relatives). In sum, the rationale for excluding women from all kinds of activities and subject to stringent codes of modesty is so that men won’t be tempted.

Indeed, most of the textbooks reflect this paradigm of modesty; there are no photographs of women although books have illustrations of women and girls. Some new textbooks are even more extreme and only include pictures of men.

Below are some examples:

**A Photo from my Family Album: Members of my Family**

Hi. My name is David. I want to show you a photograph from the wedding of Shmuel, my older brother.

-Were you able to identify me and my brothers in the picture? Circle them in red.

-I am not allowed to say my father’s name. Can you find his name?

-In the photo you see my grandfather, Rabbi Zecharia Hefetz.

**Complete:**

-Rabbi Zecharia Hefetz is the son of ____ the father of ____

-and the grandfather of ________.
- How many generations can you see in the photo? _______________________
- My sister’s husband is also in the picture. He is called: __________________
- Dassi, the bride, was also photographed with the women of the family.
  In each circle fill in the family member who was photographed.
  For example: Instead of “great grandfather,” fill in, “great grandmother.”

I love to look through the family album. Here is a picture from my birthday. Here’s one from another family celebration, and more.
- What family celebrations do you know?
  ________________________________________________
  ________________________________________________
Examples of Books without Pictures of Women:

*Geography: The Map, Area of the Mediterranean Sea, Grade 5, 2014.*


Given the emphasis on modesty, there are only a small number of stories about women who were given broad recognition in the textbooks, and usually these were women who were the symbol
and example for the fight to preserve Jewish tradition at any price, or those who devoted their lives to their husbands’ Torah study.

Among those, Sarah Schenirer, founder of the first Bait Yaakov school in Poland, is noteworthy in history textbooks for saving Jewish girls from the influence of the Enlightenment that spread across Europe; instead, she taught them a love of Torah and to fear God. Her legacy was developed and expanded by the Agudat Yisrael movement and is seen as the model for women in the development of Israel’s Haredi Jewry.

As the spirit of assimilation and heresy grew during the modern age . . . only Jewish girls had no movement or framework that could protect them from the foreign winds blowing through the streets; Sarah Schenirer rose up and laid the foundation of the glorious Bait Yaakov movement. This movement saved Jewish girls from the foreign culture of the Polish schools and from the poisonous heresy of Jewish schools founded by various types of assimilated Jews. What Chassidism, the Mussar Movement and the teachings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch did for the boys of Jewish families, the Bait Yaakov movement did for girls of these Jewish families; and thus she saved the integrity and sanctity of the family and the entire Jewish people.

Sarah Schenirer—A Matriarch in Israel


Sarah Schenirer is the only women given such wide recognition, but other figures are also acknowledged. Donna Grazia, another woman who fought to preserve the tradition during the period of the Marranos, is presented in the reader for eighth-grade girls. A poem written about

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44 Bait Yaakov is a large network of Haredi preschools, daycare centers and schools for girls.
her indicates the great importance attributed to the role this woman played in safeguarding Jewish tradition and passing it on to the next generation.

In sum, women in Haredi textbooks essentially have dual aspects: One may be understood by the phrase: “All glorious is the King’s daughter within”—women must be modest and minimize their presence. At the same time, the Haredi woman plays a key role in preserving the Haredi ideology by passing it on to the next generation.

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**Conclusion and Recommendations**

Haredi society is self-absorbed and transmits educational messages in accordance with the unique Haredi identity it wishes to convey. In a modern and changing world, it has a strong and well-defined identity that it seeks to preserve, where the primary emphasis is on spirituality and moral strength.

But there is a price to isolationism.

Most evident is the moral issue of negating the Other and failing to respect those who are different.

Students receive an education that prepares them to fulfill the Haredi ideals and lifestyle within a closed Haredi system. This makes it more difficult for Haredim to integrate into a world not governed by their worldview. When applied to tasks like finding employment or learning professional skills, it becomes even more difficult in terms of the essential values they need to cope with the secular world.

Despite the uniqueness of the Haredi education and its focus on traditional values and morality, and the importance placed on maintaining that uniqueness across time and cultural barriers, it is also worthwhile to examine the curricula according to universal, measurable standards.

The research of Haredi textbooks for this study was measured against IMPACT-se's UNESCO-derived standards. Starting with **Respect**, the thrust of the curricula is to culturally isolate the members of this ultra-religious community and keep them from being influenced. Thus, giving respect to Other cultures is not a priority.

Mizrahi Jews are innocent and good, but no real respect is shown for Mizrahi scholarship and rabbis. The least respect is reserved for Reform Jews—described as nasty, despicable and treacherous—and, to a lesser extent, Israeli leftists. There is no similar animosity to non-Jews, but it is assumed that they have the potential to harm the vulnerable and demographically tiny Jewish collective, seen as a sheep among a pack of wolves. Nazi German actions during the Holocaust present a background for moral dilemmas facing the Haredi Jew, with no distinction between Germans and Nazis. There is some respect given to the Prophet Muhammad for his authenticity and to Greek civilization for its contribution to culture.

Fostering attachment toward the **Individual Other** is an important IMPACT-se standard, mostly met by the Haredi textbooks. Various kinds of non-Jews are represented in personal contexts, including friendly Palestinian villagers providing shelter to Jews, a positive description of the people of Nablus, or the friendly people of Jericho selling palms for the Jewish holiday directly

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46 See Methodology, p. 85.
to Haredi families. Mizrahi Jews are painted as particularly friendly and honest, though stereotypes linger.

The curricula should be “free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, religious bigotry, racial and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples.” In short, No Hate should be permitted. As we have seen, much rage toward Reform Jews is evident in the textbooks. The treatment of black people and slaves (in America only) is devoid of hate and includes much empathy. Discrimination is rejected amid calls for equality. But the educational environment is guilty of stereotyping. The generally archaic and hyper-conservative nature of the textbooks may be partly responsible. For example, the word kushi—formerly translated as “negro”—is still widely used in that context, even though its use is condemned in the very same textbooks.

The Haredi textbooks reflect a culture committed to a pacifistic lifestyle for millennia. According to our monitoring standards for Peacemaking, “curricula should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace.” The Haredi curricula easily pass this test. Examples of negotiations and choices made for peaceful and pragmatic solutions abound, including efforts by the Old Yishuv (pre-Israel non-Zionist Jewish population) to negotiate with Arab leaders. The attitude toward the State of Israel and the Palestinians is pragmatic: rejection of nationalism but willingness to find workable solutions and compromises with peace and Torah study being the strategic goal of the community. The textbooks take a hardline, when perceived naive policies based on “delusionary ideologies” cause what they consider to be more harm than good.

Preservation of life—as the ultimate manifestation of God's command—is central among Haredi beliefs. This sentiment is so strong that even among those resisting, while facing death in the final days of the Warsaw Ghetto, there is an extremely apologetic attitude toward the taking of life; the same holds true for the participation of some Haredi youth in the 1948 War of Independence, though it was aimed at the total annihilation of the Jewish Yishuv. A complete adherence to non-violence and pacifism is followed to a lesser degree post-Holocaust, but still the curricula continue to maintain that the best security lies in Torah study; and students are encouraged to do just that, leaving real-life security issues to others.

As to the need for curricula to use Unbiased Information, the Haredi textbooks clearly fail. Educational materials are not “up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced,” and do not “use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.”

In relation to Gender roles, the entire sociology of the Haredi culture defies the principles of equality between the sexes. LGBT issues are simply ignored. Monitoring standards require that
“curricula should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men” and should "refrain from stereotyped gender roles." While mutual respect of gender is a pillar of this education, equality and gender roles are not. Women are not required to study Torah and they must remain humble. They are burdened by economic responsibility for families but denied the normal power that comes with economic control.

While the textbooks encourage mutual help within the Haredi community, **Prosperity and Cooperation**, in terms of preparing a new generation for economically productive work in the information age is famously lacking. The dilemma is whether or not this system is tenable. The creation of an enclave that develops a different set of skills (i.e., learning Torah) was not thought to be economically useful to either the community or the greater society. However, one should not disregard that in some cases students from Haredi learning environments arguably have been found to be more sophisticated computer programmers than students from other backgrounds.47

In short, these textbooks leave us with more questions than answers. While acknowledging this is a unique educational system, there remains a need to make changes to secular aspects (general studies) of the Haredi curricula. It seems well past time to address the question of whether all Haredi youth—boys and girls—receive proper education as understood in the democratic world. Likewise, it is clear that the removal of hate speech and a more balanced understanding of Reform Jews, Leftist Zionists, the Mizrahi rabbinical tradition and Palestinian nationalism must be part of the curricula. The Haredi community is far from being the secluded tiny minority it was after the Holocaust. It appears to be thriving and growing in power, numbers and happiness in Israel (and elsewhere).48 While the educational system is closed, Haredi are seen everywhere,
from markets to positions in the government. This community can preserve its unique tradition while using more reasonable language toward its ideological foes. The educational system does not need to be a zero sum equation. To criticize nationalism and consumer society is a democratic right but ignoring the Other and ranting are perhaps not the best strategy. Change should be embraced.
Methodology

IMPACT-se's research utilizes a content analysis research method to examine the textbooks according to the following criteria which is a condensed version of UNESCO’s standards for peace and tolerance in school education. 49

1. **RESPECT**: The curriculum should promote tolerance, understanding and respect toward the “Other,” his or her culture, achievements, values and way of life. 50

2. **INDIVIDUAL OTHER**: The curriculum should foster personal attachment toward the “Other” as an individual, his or her desire to be familiar, loved and appreciated. 51

3. **NO HATE**: The curriculum should be free of wording, imagery and ideologies likely to create prejudices, misconceptions, stereotypes, misunderstandings, mistrust, racial hatred, religious bigotry and national hatred, as well as any other form of hatred or contempt for other groups or peoples. 52

4. **PEACEMAKING**: The curriculum should develop capabilities for non-violent conflict resolution and promote peace. 53

5. **UNBIASED INFORMATION**: Educational materials (textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ guides, maps, illustrations, aids) should be up-to-date, accurate, complete, balanced and unprejudiced, and use equal standards to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples. 54

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49 The methodology was initiated by Yohanan Manor. This is an updated version of the standards prepared by Eldad J. Pardo, Jean-Claude Nidam and Shimon Shetreet (May 2014). http://www.impact-se.org/methodology/
50 As defined in the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance Proclaimed and signed by Member States of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Articles 1, 4.2. See also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding Between Peoples (1965), Principles I, III. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948): Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
51 The goal of education for peace is the development of universally recognized values in an individual, regardless of different socio-cultural contexts. See Ibid., Article 6. See also, on exchanges between youth, the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principles IV, V.
54 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.
6. **GENDER**: The curriculum should foster equality and mutual respect between women and men. It should refrain from stereotyped gender roles.  

7. **SOUND PROSPERITY and COOPERATION**: The curriculum should educate for sound and sustainable economic conduct and preservation of the environment for future generations. It should encourage regional and local cooperation to that effect.  

55 The preamble to the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, notes the Convention on the Elimination of Any Form of Discrimination against Women and emphasizes respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to gender.

56 Based on UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Articles III.6, and IV.7. On the imperative for developing “systematic and rational tolerance teaching methods that will address the cultural, social, economic, political and religious sources of intolerance,” see the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance proclaimed and signed by member states of UNESCO on November 16, 1995, Article 4.2. On education for international cooperation, see also the UN Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples (1965), Principle II.
List of Textbooks

The following Hebrew language textbooks monitored for the research in this study may be found at the IMPACT-se library in Jerusalem. The titles both here and referenced in the text have been translated into English to aid the reader.

A Broad Perspective, Homeland Studies for Grade 3 [R. Friedman], n.d.

Acts of Creation: Science and Technology for the Haredi Sector, Grade 2, Ramot Publications, Tel Aviv University, 2015.

Amazing Letters (Part 1 for Girls), Grade 1 [H. Rosenfeld], 2010.

Amazing Letters (Part 2 for Girls), Grade 1 [H. Rosenfeld], 2010.

Amazing Letters (Part 3 for Girls), Grade 1 [H. Rosenfeld], 2010.

Amazing Letters (Part 4 for Girls), Grade 1 [H. Rosenfeld], 2010.

Amazing Letters (Part 5 for Girls), Grade 1 [H. Rosenfeld], 2010.

As a New Citizen, Civics Textbook for Haredi Secondary Schools [M. Hacohen Ostery], Ohr Meir, 2009.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Grade 2 [E. Bach], 2016.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Grade 3 [E. Bach], 2012.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Grade 4 [E. Bach], 2016.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Grade 5 [E. Bach], 2016.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Part 1 [E. Bach], 2016.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Part 7 [E. Bach], 2016.

Between the Lines, Hebrew for Part 8 [E. Bach], 2016.


Composition and Style, Workbook 4 [Y. Markowitz and A. Samet], n.d.

Composition and Style, Workbook 5 [Y. Markowitz and A. Samet], n.d.

Composition and Style, Workbook 6 [Y. Markowitz and A. Samet], n.d.

Derekh Eretz: Israel Studies, Grade 2 [G. Shadar], 2014.

Derekh Eretz: Israel Studies, Grade 4 [R. Friedman], 2015.

Discovering the World, Geography for Grade 5 [D. Barnea], 2005.
Discovering the World, Geography for Grade 5 Workbook [D. Barnea], 2005


Geography in America, Grade 8 [B. Ordentlich], Yeshurun Publishing, n.d.

Geography in Europe [B. Ordentlich], Grade 7, Yeshurun Publishing, n.d.

Geography of the United States, Grade 8 [Z. Klein], n.d.


Geography: The Map, Area of the Mediterranean Sea, Grade 5, CET, 2014.

History of Recent Generations (Vol. 1), Middle School [Y. Fridner], Yeshurun Publishing, 2008.


In Good Time, Reader for Grade 1 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2011.

In Good Time, Reader for Grade 2 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2016.

In Good Time, Reader for Grade 3 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2016.

In Good Time, Reader for Grade 4 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2003.

In Good Time, Reader for Grade 5 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2016.
In Good Time, Reader for Grade 6 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2009.

In Good Time, Worksheets for the Grade 4 Reader [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2003.

In Good Time, Worksheets for the Grade 5 Reader [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2016.

In Good Time, Worksheets for the Grade 6 Reader [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2009.

In Our Home, Reader for Grade 2 on the Subject of Home and Family [S. Cohen], n.d.

In the Eye of the Reader, Reader for Grade 8 [S. Cohen], n.d.

Jewish History: From the First Temple Period to the Present; Book One: From the Babylonian Exile to the Destruction of the Second Temple [M. Auerbach], Yeshurun Publishing, 2008.


Jewish History: From the First Temple Period to the Present; Book Two (Part 2): From the Crusades to the Expulsion from Spain [M. Auerbach], Yeshurun Publishing, 2008.


Let’s Read Along Our Way, Reading Comprehension, Language and Expression, Middle School [D. Ofek], Ofek Books, 2013.

Nations of the Mediterranean Sea: Italy [Z. Klein], n.d.

Northern Israel [Z. Klein], 2004.

Our Childhood, Textbook and Reader for Grade 1 [N. Katz, P. Neugershal, B. Himmelfarb], Yeshurun Publishing, n.d.


Our Childhood, Textbook and Reader for Grade 5 [Z. Domev], Yeshurun Publishing, n.d.

Reading Comprehension 7 [M. Avitan, M. Hausdorf], Hativ Institute, n.d.

Reading Fluency 2: Developing Reading Comprehension at the Verbal Level [M. Berlin], At-Bash, 2012.

Reading Fluency 3: Developing Reading Comprehension at the Verbal Level [M. Berlin], At-Bash, 2012.


The High Places of the Land, The Coastal Plain: The Sharon and Judean Plain [Z. Klein], n.d.


The Kingdom of Torah [Y. Fridner], Yeshurun Publishing, n.d.
The Secret of Expression, Strategies for Written Expression and Reading Comprehension for the Middle School [A. Brach], Flamingo, 2016.
The Simple Meaning of the Torah, Workbook for Deuteronomy [A. Shriki], n.d.
The Simple Meaning of the Torah, Workbook for Exodus [A. Shriki], n.d.
The Simple Meaning of the Torah, Workbook for Leviticus [A. Shriki], n.d.
The Simple Meaning of the Torah, Workbook for Numbers [A. Shriki], n.d.
Treasures of Language, Language Book for Grade 2 [M. Pnina], TLT Institute, 2016.
Understanding the Bible (Part 1), Chumash Workbook for Lower Grades (Genesis, Noah) [A. Chen], RMI Rubinstein, n.d.
Understanding the Bible (Part 2), Chumash Workbook for Lower Grades (Lekh Lekha, VaYerah, Chayei Sarah) [A. Chen], RMI Rubinstein, n.d.
Understanding the Text, Comprehension, Expression and Language for Grade 7 (adapted for the Haredi sector) [G. Berkowitz], Sefer Lakol, 2015.
Walking with Words [R. Friedman, S. Brand], n.d.
We Enjoy Writing, Language Expression Textbook for Grade 3 [R. Cohen], n.d.
We Enjoy Writing, Language Expression Textbook for Grade 4 [R. Cohen], n.d.
We Enjoy Writing, Language Expression Textbook for Grade 5 [R. Cohen], n.d.
You Followed Me in the Wilderness, Workbook for Studying the Book of Numbers, Grade 8 [H. Levkivker, D. Wilhelm, Hish], Maayanot Distributors, 2012.