

Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli School Textbooks. Changing the Perception of the "Other".

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Intelligence services of countries in conflict devote considerable means to finding out what are the real motives of the enemy regarding the intensification, curbing or settlement of conflicts. They often provide contradictory evaluations, and senior officials have difficulty in making up their minds as to which to adopt.

The Israeli press reported such contradictory evaluations with regard to Arafat's intentions during the Camp David negotiations, before the outbreak of the second Intifada at the end of September 2000.¹ According to one of the evaluations, Arafat aspired to a peace settlement based on the creation of a Palestinian state that would recognize the state of Israel and coexist with it. According to the other he was looking to dismantle the Jewish state by resorting to terrorism and to the "demographic weapon".

This contradiction could have largely been overcome by a thorough investigation of open official Palestinian documents, namely the school textbooks devised and produced by the Palestinian Authority (PA) under the leadership of its chairman, Y. Arafat, who, by way, was at that time also in charge of the Ministry of Education.²

Textbooks give a unique insight into the convictions, aspirations, ideas and perceptions that governments and public authorities look to instil into the younger generation, by virtue of their ability to direct, orientate or simply supervise the content of educational curricula.

This ability is absolute in the case of the Palestinians, since it is the PA that is dictating the content of both the school textbooks and the teacher guides used in all Palestinian schools, be they public, private or run by UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the Palestinian refugees.

In the case of Israel, this ability is far more limited, but remains substantial through the list of textbooks that the Ministry of Education recommends for use each year. In the public sector ³ 80% of the school textbooks used in primary and intermediary education as well as 50% of those used in secondary education come from this list.⁴

1 See Ha'arev, June 15 2004, June 16 2004, June 18, 2004 and Maariv, June 15, 2004 reporting the controversy between General Amos Malka and General Amos Gilad, who in 2000 were respectively the head and the director of research of the Military Intelligence.

2 The textbooks produced by the PA did not express any recognition of Israel or any aspiration to coexist with it. See CMIP's report *Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks 2000-2001 and 2001-2002*, November 2001 and also Y. Manor *Les manuels scolaires palestiniens: une génération sacrifiée*, Paris, Berg International, October 2003. One of these textbooks, *The Palestinian Society-Demographic Education, Grade 11(2000)*, p. 29, called explicitly for resort to demographic weapon to win the Arab-Israeli conflict.

3 The public sector is divided in three sub-sectors: *mamlachti* (state) 54% of the pupils, *mamlachti dati* (religious recognized by the state) 18% of the pupils and Arab, 18% of the pupils. The private or "independent" sector although receiving public funding, is solely responsible for the content of its textbooks and the recruitment of its teachers; it contains mainly the ultra-orthodox 'haredi' networks of the Agudat Yisrael and Shas parties.

4 See Report No 49 of the State Controller, *Mevaker Hamedinah*, April 1999, pp. 209-210.

Many studies have been devoted to the Israeli schoolbooks, some on specific disciplines, others on different time-periods, such as before or after the creation of the State of Israel. All these works provide very useful standpoints from which to view the present situation in perspective.⁵

The present analysis is based on the findings of two surveys carried out by the Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP) on 500 Israeli school textbooks that were in use in the school years 1999-2000 and 2001-2002 for all the twelve grades in the following disciplines: language, literature, communication, history, geography, civics, religious education and interdisciplinary disciplines.⁶

CMIP works as an “observatory”. It pinpoints and presents all the references relating, in one way or another, to the image of the “other”. In the case of the Israeli textbooks, it had noted all the references to Muslims, Arabs and Palestinians.

The results of the CMIP analysis both corroborate and exceed the findings of other researchers, notably those of Daniel Bar-Tal and Elie Podeh. On one hand, they confirm their observation of a radical turning point that occurred in the middle of the 80s, and, on the other, they surpass them in highlighting an active preparation for coexistence with the Arabs and the Palestinians.

5 For instance Binyamin Kalman, “The Image of the Arab in the Eyes of the Young. What has changed in the last 15 years” (Hebrew) in *Iyunim baH'inukh*, No. 27, 1980, pp. 65-74; Ruth Firer, *The Influence of Zionist Values on Schoolbooks in the Hebrew Language Dealing with the History of the People of Israel in the Land of Israel 1900-1980*, (Hebrew), PhD, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Daniel Bar-Tal et al., *The Image of the Arab in Readers: The Development of Political Knowledge*, (Hebrew) Tel-Aviv, H'amoul 1985; Binyamin Herzl, *The Presentation of Arab-Jewish Relationships in History Textbooks With Regard to the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, (Hebrew) Tel-Aviv University, Department of Psychology, 1987; Daniel Bar-Tal & Shmuel Zoltak “Representations of the Image of the Arab and of the Relationships between Jews and Arabs in Readers” (Hebrew) in *Megamot*, vol. 32, (3), 1989, pp. 301-317; Yoram Bar-Gal, “The Image of the Palestinians in Geography Textbooks in Israel”, *Journal of Geography*, 1994, 93, (5), pp.224-232; Polish-Israeli Committee on School Textbooks, *Recommendations for Correcting History and Literature Textbooks in Israel and Poland*, Jerusalem and Warsaw, 1995; Daniel Bar-Tal, “The Rocky Road toward Peace: Beliefs on Conflicts in Israeli Textbooks” in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 35, No. 6, 1998, pp. 723-742; *ibid.*, “Societal Beliefs in Times of Intractable Conflict: The Israeli Case”, *The international Journal of Conflict Management*, 1998, vol. 9, no. 1, (January) p.23; Orit Ichilov, “Citizenship education in a Divided Society: The Case of Israel” in Judith Torney-Putra, John Schwille & Jo-Ann Amadeo (ed), *Civic Education Across Countries: Twenty-four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education project*, Amsterdam, 1999; Orit Ichilov & Idit Livne, *Civics in Israeli Middle schools: Analysis of Curricula, Schoolbooks and Teachers' Guides. Research Report*. (Hebrew), Tel Aviv University, Sociology of Education and Community, March 2002; Orit Ichilov, *Political Learning and Citizenship Education under Conflict*, London & New York Routledge, 2004; Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli School History and Civics Textbooks 1953-1995*, (Hebrew), Truman Institute, Peace Publications, No. 9, Jerusalem, 1997 and “History and Memory in the Israeli Education System”, *History and Memory*, vol. 12, 2000, pp. 65-100, and “The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000”, Westport/Connecticut & London, 2002.

6 CMIP, *Arabs and Palestinians in Israeli Textbooks*, September 2000; CMIP *Arabs, Palestinians, Islam & Peace in Israeli School Textbooks*, July 2002. These reports are hereinafter referred to as CMIP, 2000, and CMIP, 2002, respectively.

A Radical Change

Professor Bar-Tal, of the Department of Education of Tel-Aviv University, has noted that societies involved in intractable conflicts develop appropriate psychological conditions which enable them to cope successfully with this kind of protracted and irreconcilable conflict situation. Bar-Tal mentions several “societal beliefs” which are instilled through the educational system and are conducive to the development of these psychological conditions,⁷ among them: “the justness of one’s goal”, “the opponent’s delegitimation”, “positive self-image” and “victimization”.⁸ His conclusion is that the analysis of the school textbooks for language, history, geography and civics recommended by the Ministry of Education in 1994, “showed that the content of the textbooks used in the 90s differed dramatically from those used in the 50s and the 70s. The emphasis on the societal beliefs whose function was coping with intractable conflict decreased considerably. Only a small part of the school textbooks focused on societal beliefs concerning security, positive self-image and the victimization of Jews. The delegitimation of Arabs almost disappeared, but their negative stereotyping still continued. Some textbooks attempted even to transmit new societal beliefs which promoted the peace process and coexistence with the Arabs”.⁹

Eli Podeh, Professor of Oriental Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has also pointed out that since the middle of the 80s there has been a radical change in the presentation of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Israeli textbooks for history and civics. His diagnosis is even more clear-cut than Bar-Tal’s, since he does not have his reservations regarding the maintaining of negative stereotyping. Podeh distinguishes three periods in the history of the Israeli textbooks: the childhood period (1948-1967), the adolescent (1967-1985) and from 1985 the adult, during which the radical change occurred.¹⁰

During the “childhood period”, the educational system focused upon instilling Zionist values. The historical narrative was “simplistic, one-sided and often blatantly distorted” (p. 76). The textbooks of this period were clearly “filled with bias and stereotypical descriptions”, as well as with errors, misrepresentations and deliberate omissions. “Arab history, culture and language...were almost completely ignored”. (p. 74) “Savage”, “sly”, “cheat”, “thief”, “robbers”, “provocateurs” and “terrorists” were typical adjectives when describing Arabs. Their actions against the Jews were dubbed “riots” and “pogroms” or “the events” and their perpetrators labelled “bandits”. “Any information that might have marred Israel’s image or raised doubts about the Jewish right about the land of Israel was instinctively omitted” (p. 76, *History & Memory*, op. cit.).

The first seeds of change began to appear during the “adolescent period”. The historical narrative was “less biased and contained fewer (stereotyped) expressions”. “Moreover for the first time the Arabs were not treated as a monolithic group but divided into separate peoples, including the Arab Palestinian people”. The school textbooks of the second generation “were not free of prejudice”, but this was now expressed in a “more sophisticated, and therefore perhaps more dangerous, manner than in the past. If previously the text alone was used to convey erroneous facts, slanted

7 Daniel Bar-Tal, “Societal Beliefs...”, op. cit., p. 23.

8 Ibid. pp. 25-29.

9 Ibid. p. 44.

10 Eli Podeh, “History and Memory”, op. cit., pp. 74-85, and Arab-Israeli Conflict, op. cit, pp. 26-74.

accounts and biased opinions, now maps, pictures, caricatures and diagrams reinforced this information. Furthermore sensitive issues such as the refugee problem or the 1967 war, was treated in much the same way as before: Israel was absolved of all responsibility or blame” (pp. 80-81, *History & Memory*, op. cit).

But the watershed in the content of the Israeli school textbooks occurred during the “adult” period, notably as a result of a directive, of February 1, 1984, sent out by the Director General of the Ministry of Education detailing the basic guidelines of an education program oriented towards “Jewish-Arab Coexistence”. There is a clear shift in the historical narrative, from a simplistic, unilateral and biased one to a far more objective and balanced one. “Generally the Arabs are no longer described in stereotypical terms. Indeed, on the whole, these textbooks seem to present a balanced picture of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Even though it is still viewed primarily from a Zionist perspective, an attempt is made to understand the Arab point of view, especially in discussions of some of the sensitive issues in the history of the conflict. While none of the new textbooks is flawless, together they reveal the extent to which Israeli society and the educational system have progressed with respect to the way the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Arabs have been portrayed in Jewish textbooks” (p. 85 *History & Memory*, op. cit).

In addition to the above-mentioned directive, Podeh pointed out two other factors to explain this drastic change in the content of the Israeli school textbooks. “First, the appearance of a new historiography based on newly released archival material, which is more critical of Israel and the Zionist movement than before. ...Second, the improvements resulted from changes in the Israeli society with regard to the perception of the “other”. Clearly, the changes in the history curriculum and in the content of the textbooks reflect a more mature society able to regard self-criticism not as a sign of weakness but rather as a source of strength.” (p. 61 *Arab-Israeli*, op. cit.). However, in his eyes, these improvements are not sufficient. Further progress is needed by strengthening the knowledge about the “other”, through the teaching of Arabic and of Arab history and culture.

In stressing all these factors, Podeh was actually belittling the fundamental importance of the 1984 directive, namely that it reflected a political will to transform the way to relate to the “other”. One can find clear expressions of this political will both in the guidelines of the education program toward coexistence and in their ongoing implementation by all the Israeli governments, be they from the left or from the right.

The preamble to the 1984 guidelines stressed the vital importance for both the Arab and Jewish pupils in Israel of two tightly interrelated issues: “Jewish and Arab relations in Israel as an issue of civil equality ... in a multicultural society and Israel’s relations with its Arab neighbours as an issue of relations between nations”. “There will always be Arab citizens within and among us, and there will always be neighbouring Arab peoples. Ignoring these two issues educationally means educating the young generation toward ignorance and alienation with regard to questions that will always be at the very core of our existence.”¹¹

In addition, the preamble outlined the necessity to differentiate and not to refer anymore to the Arabs as a whole as enemies:

11 For the English translation of this directive, except two technical paragraphs, see Podeh, *Arab-Israeli Conflict*, op. cit., pp. 157-160.

“The polarization between us and the Arabs as enemies no longer constitutes the only pattern of relations. At present, we are witnessing different patterns of relations, and a distinction has to be made:

We have peaceful relations with Egypt since 1979. Although today this is a ‘cold peace’, it still passes two major tests that indicate peaceful relations.

Morocco facilitated the peace treaty and openly hosted Israelis. Countries like Sudan, Tunisia and Oman overtly support the peace process;

According to the Camp David accords, the Arab population of Judea, Samaria and Gaza is supposed to be granted autonomy...

The Arabs of Israel are citizens of the state and constitute an integral part of it. According to the Declaration of Independence, they are entitled to equal rights, and all Israeli governments ever since statehood reiterated this principle in their guidelines;

By contrast, some Arab states still continue cultivating hostility and initiate belligerent activity against us. Syria, Iraq and Libya are the most prominent of these. In addition, the PLO, in all its factions, aspires to perpetuate the conflict and continue fighting against Israel by all means, including the use of terror, until the final destruction of the Israeli state...”

Hence the inescapable conclusion:

“Therefore we can no longer educate students ... to treat the Arabs as a single entity and only in the context of the conflict”.

Moreover, the preamble stressed that “the whole world is multicultural at present; the distances between various cultures, both in time and space, have been narrowed down. The Middle East too is multicultural; the Israeli state too is both a state and a multicultural society. This situation compels us to develop a new ability, the ability to maintain intercultural contact on the basis of equality and respect for the other’s culture. Imparting this ability is one of the aims of the educational system, and our ministry must help teachers find ways of doing so ... Our students must realize that a different and foreign culture is not inferior or superior to our culture, and that all peoples, religions and ethnic groups have a right to cultivate their culture, even within the boundaries of another state. Above all, we must implant in our students the firm awareness that every person is a human being, and that every human being must be respected, even if he belongs to another people, and even if he is a political enemy”.

The directive contained a detailed comprehensive plan of action to achieve these goals:

“The relationship with Arabs and their culture; Jewish-Arab relations and Israeli-Arab relations will be part and parcel of the educational process, from kindergarten and through the twelve years of study in elementary and high schools.

This relationship will be included, where possible, in all aspects of school, primarily in social activities and in the following subjects: civics, social sciences, history, geography, “moledet” [i.e. homeland] and literature.

The existing curricula (for all subjects and levels), and the textbooks authorized for use, will be evaluated with a dual aim. On the one hand to eliminate wording –if found- that connotes hatred or the existence of negative stereotypes and prejudice; and on the other to add and integrate new content that coincides with the aims that we have set for ourselves.”

One has to recall here that this directive was adopted when the Minister in charge of education was Zevulun Hammer, that is, not a member of secular or left party, but of the National Religious Party (NRP) that since 1977 had broken its “historical alliance” with the Labor party and entered in on-going alliance with the nationalist right under the leadership of the Likud. In order to understand the full meaning of this decision to change the perception of the “other”, one has to bear in mind that Hammer was considered a typical product of the generation of the *kipot srugot*, the knitted skullcaps, the head dress of modern religious which replaced hats and black skull-caps. He was instrumental in turning the NRP, from a party whose main concern was religious affairs into a movement with deep involvement in foreign affairs and security issues, while actively assisting *Gush Emunim*, the “Bloc of the faithful” and those in favor of settling Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip¹².

Active Preparation for Coexistence

The new educational and pedagogical policy oriented toward coexistence was carried out by all the successive Israeli governments, in spite of both the changing of coalitions’ composition, and their ensuing policies, and the inexorable deterioration in the Oslo process under the blows dealt to it by its Israeli and Palestinian opponents.

In the textbooks, this new policy was implemented by focusing and giving expression to five main themes: “Considering the “other” first as a human being”, “Overcoming suspicion, hatred and prejudices”, “Knowing and respecting Islam and the Arabs”, “Admitting the legitimacy of the opposing national movement”, “presenting the conflict in a more balanced way”.

Regarding the “Other” First as a Human Being

Several pedagogical devices have been used to further this view among the pupils. One of them consists in introducing in literary anthologies and readers short stories relating to the rescue by Jews of Arab children and adults. For example, a fourth-grade reader for state religious schools tells of Israeli soldiers in Jerusalem during the Six Day War who, on entering one home, found a blood-soaked Arab girl. One of the soldiers “ran under heavy fire with her to an ambulance and thus save her life. The girl has long

12 See Susan Hatis Rolef (ed.), Political Dictionary of the State of Israel, New York & London, Macmillan, 1987, p. 139. Gush Emunim was founded in February 1974 as an extra-parliamentary religious Zionist movement, which advocated the extension of Israeli sovereignty over Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

since left the hospital and returned to her family and parents, but the friend who rescued her is still lying wounded”¹³. A fifth-grade textbook for state schools tells the story of a Jew who saved an Arab even though that same Arab was among rioters who attacked Jews in Baghdad in the 40s¹⁴. Of course there are also stories of Jews rescued by Arabs, such as the story of Abu Hamis, the “most famous seaman in Jaffa” illustrated by a picture¹⁵. [See the picture above]

Another device is to include in anthologies and readers stories written by Arab authors about the daily life of Arabs, mostly without connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict or the relationship between Jews and Arabs. The objective here is to provide the pupils with some knowledge about the customs and the concerns of Arabs in various countries¹⁶.

Legend of Picture: “Jabalya refugees camp in the Gaza strip”. “One of the largest refugees camp where residents live in very crowded and distressing conditions.”

Evoking the suffering of refugees in different places and periods is one way to arouse the empathy of the pupils for the “other”. For instance a textbook of geography and demography provide information about “the three largest groups of refugees ... created as a result of ongoing wars and political conflicts...: the Jewish refugees during WWII, the Arab and Jewish refugees resulting from the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Rwanda refugees who emerged as a result of inter-tribal wars”, with a Palestinian Refugees camp to illustrate it¹⁷.

Another way to arouse the empathy for the “others” is to bring their fears and pain through extracts from stories and tales written by Israeli writers¹⁸.

Overcoming Suspicion, Hatred and Prejudices

Most of the researchers studying Israeli textbooks have noted that since the middle of the 80s there is a steady decrease in the phenomenon of negative stereotypes and de-legitimation of Arabs, and that these disappear almost completely from the middle of the 90s. In addition to this trend, the CMIP reports have observed a notable effort to assuage the pupils’ suspicion of the Arabs, to alert them against nurturing hatred and to help them overcome bias and prejudices.¹⁹ Hence there are stories showing how suspicion can be turned into friendship.

13 Esther Columbus et al., *Open the Gate, Reader for Grade 4*, (Hebrew) 1993, Tal, Ministry of Education, p. 186.

14 Nathan Perski, *The New Israel Readers*, (Hebrew), 1987, Massada, pp. 181-184.

15 Ilana Arieli-Meir, *Journey to the First Settlements, Reader*, (Hebrew), Tal, Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 66. Hamis’ story is taken from Avraham Cohen, *Did I Understand?* (Hebrew), Reches, 1993, p. 222.

16 Rina Tzadka, *Reading Selections for Eight Grade*, 1992 (Hebrew), Horev, pp. 76-84; P. Shirav et al. *Nuances [Migvan], Literary Reader, for Grade 7*, (Hebrew), Neta, Maalot, 1994, pp. 150-151; Mira Levinger & Bracha Abecassis, *Leaves of Literature, Reader for Grade 9*, (Hebrew), Modan, 1998, pp.112-115.

17 A. Rapp & Z. Fein, *People in the Expanse- Studies in the Geography of the World’s Population*, (Hebrew), Matak, Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 154.

18 Miri Baruch & Dalia Stein, *Strings, Reader for Grade Six*, (Hebrew), Massade, 1997, pp. 224-227.

19 See CMIP, 2000, p. 7 and CMIP, 2002, p. 2.

For example, a reader for the seventh grade used in the state school system, quotes a passage from the book *Nadia* by Galina Ron-Feder, about an Arab girl who comes to a Jewish boarding school and describes her fears that the Jewish girls, one of whom lost a brother in a terrorist attack, will not want to share a room with her. Happily for her, she is warmly accepted and one of the girls asks her to share a room with her.²⁰

Or again, there is the story of a friendship that develops between an Israeli boy and an Egyptian boy who meet at an international youth conference in London. It all begins when Amir, the Jewish boy, was invited to join the Egyptian boys' soccer team and scored a goal. Said, one of the Egyptian boys comes to Amir's room:

- "I realized you are surprised by a visit from a boy from an enemy country...

I was looking for a chance to talk to you. My older brother fell in Sinai during the last war between our countries, but it would be stupid for me to be angry at you for that".

- "If so, we're even, ... because my father also died in that war. He was among those who crossed the canal. ..."

"Well, since that accursed war, I have thought, that everything must be done to ensure that it will be the last war. It may sound strange because our radio, television and newspapers, and even our textbooks feed us a diet of stories about the evil Israelis, who stole the Arabs' homes. My teacher at school is a unique individual, who has always cautioned us about blind hatred and in his history classes, told us about the sufferings of the Jews for 2,000 years, even though there is no mention of it in the textbooks. The teacher also told us what the Nazis did to the Jews during WWII. In general, he opened our eyes to many things, which we were used to accepting without thinking about them."²¹

It is not easy for pupils to stand aloof and not to internalise hatred of the adversary or the enemy when this is the dominant feeling at home, at school and in the society at large. One way to take up this challenge is to remind the pupils that the world of the children is not necessarily the reproduction of the adult world. This is the way a Jewish boy describes his friendship with Abed, a Bedouin shepherd: "We did not have a common language, but the hatred of the adults also hadn't yet attached itself to us. Children's games don't need words."²²

It is relatively easier to arouse the awareness of the children against bias and prejudices. One can find an interesting device in this respect in a reader for 13 years old pupils:

"Many people think: the dove is a bird that pursues peace. This belief is incorrect; it is a prejudice: people believe it without checking it. There are lots of prejudices. For example:

The Jews control the world and exploit all those who live in it.

20 Baruch & Stein, Strings, op. cit., pp. 264-267; Dalia Korach-Segev & Varda Weinberg, Literature-Fiction, Reader for Grade Seven, (Hebrew), Modan, n.d., pp. 103-106.

21 Rivka Giladi, Story and Song- Let's Get acquainted, (Hebrew), Grade 6, Zak, 1985, pp. 360-361.

22 Miri Baruch & Dalia Stein, Strings for Grade 5, (Hebrew), Massada, 1994, p. 43.

The blacks are inferior; they are incapable of being scientists.

The Arabs only understand the language of force.

During the year, make a long list of prejudices. Write them down and keep them in a special folder called "That's what they say, but it is not true- prejudices." Try to find a drawing or caricature that fits each prejudice. Be ready to explain orally why these are prejudices²³."

Knowing and Respecting Islam and the Arabs

Knowing means, first, to acknowledge that the homeland, the Promised land, to which the Jews began to return in growing numbers during the nineteenth century, was not empty: its population was not confined to the few Jews dwelling in it, as is suggested in the maps of the early schoolbooks, before the creation of the state, which mentioned only the cities inhabited by the Jews. This approach persisted until the end of the 70s, and one can still find some remnants of it in current Israeli textbooks.²⁴ The present approach is completely different, as is shown by the following excerpt from a textbook of history for the 14-15 year old pupils, which quotes the words of Arthur Ruppin, the head of the Palestinian office of the World Zionist Organization, at its eleventh congress in 1913: "At first, the Zionist movement believed that Eretz Yisrael was empty of people ... In the meantime, we have learned to see the matters in a completely different way. As of now, there are six times as many Arabs in Eretz Yisrael as there are of us..."²⁵.

Knowing means also having a minimum of objective information about the "other", about the Arabs, their customs, their history and culture.

The Israeli textbooks provide the students with some basic knowledge about Islam, its Prophet Mohammed, its five pillars, its main holy sites, the meaning of Jihad and a comparison with Judaism and Christianity. One can observe expressions of respect and even sympathy toward Islam, notably in the textbooks of the state religious sector, which outline the positive aspects of Islam and suggests that Jihad is not directed against Judaism and Christianity²⁶.

Bravery, courage and a deep sense of justice are mentioned several times as characteristic cultural traits of the Arabs. Some textbooks quote the words of Ahad Ha'am, one of the most prominent Zionist thinkers, after his first visit to Palestine in 1891: "Our brothers are correct when they say that the Arab respects only those who show him bravery and courage. When he feels that justice is with his opponent; not so if he justifiably thinks his opponent's actions to be oppressive and stolen justice. Then, even if he also remains silent, he will restrain himself endlessly, but his anger persists in his heart and he plans revenge and bears a grudge."²⁷

23 Avraham Cohen, *Op. cit.*, p. 259.

24 See Chapter 28 "Statistical data" and Chapter 29 "Maps" in CMIP, 2000, pp. 111-123.

25 E. Domka (ed), *The World and the Jews in Recent Generations, Part I, 1870-1920*, (Hebrew), Zalman Shazar Institute, 1998, p. 230.

26 On all these aspects, see CMIP, 2000, pp. 14-25.

27 Tsipi Elder & Lili Yaffe, *From Conservatism to Progress, History for Eighth Grade*, (Hebrew), Maalot, Ministry of Education, 1998, p. 374; E. Domka (ed), *Op cit.*, p. 229.

The Arabs' contribution to the development of human civilization also is mentioned in several school textbooks. For example a history textbook in use in the state run network stresses that the Arabs developed a flourishing culture: "From India to their country, and from their country to the countries of Europe, the Muslims transferred numbers, which replace Roman numerals, which were not convenient for mathematics arithmetic functions. They also translated into Arabic the rich literature of the Greeks, which dealt with philosophy, science and medicine. Afterwards, the peoples of Europe translated these books from Arabic into Latin, and thus the Arabs contributed to restoring the cultural treasures of Greece to the European peoples... However, the Arabs were not simply cultural middlemen, there were also creators of culture. For example, they were the first to discover the existence of infectious diseases. They were also the first to build public hospitals. Because of their considerable contribution to various scientific fields, there are disciplines that to this day are called by their Arabic names, such as Algebra..."²⁸

What is even more noteworthy is the express mention of the Arabs' deep attachment to the Holy land and to Jerusalem.

A geography textbook devotes a whole chapter to the attachment of Christianity and Islam to the Land of Israel, and quotes the late Professor Havah Lazarus-Yaffe, an eminent specialist of Islam:

"The Land of Israel in general, and Jerusalem in particular, have been sanctified more and more in Islamic thought – as Islam has developed and spread both religiously and geographically. As Islam absorbed more and more of the world conquered by it, so it adapted and Islamised the values that it absorbed, including the holiness of the Land of Israel, its flora and its water, living in it, the sanctity of being buried in it and the like. All these became from that time onwards part of orthodox Islam... An expression of the holiness of the Land of Israel and Jerusalem in Islam can be found in the erection of the pair of mosques on the Temple Mount"²⁹.

In addition, after quoting this passage, the authors of this textbook go on to write:

"In the Land of Israel Islam sanctified Jerusalem because of its importance to Judaism and Christianity. According to the Muslim tradition Jerusalem is the city of the forefathers, the place of the binding [of Ishmael, not Isaac], the arena of the activity of the prophets. After the [Arab] conquest the name 'Bait al-Maqdis' – the city of the Temple– was used for the city, from which we learn that the

28 Akiva Doron, Hava Frankel, Kizia Tabibian & Malka Kaz, From Generation to Generation. Lessons in History for the State Religious Schools, Part II, (Hebrew), Maalot, Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 220. See also detailed chapters on these topics in M. Zimmerman et al., Lessons in History for State Schools, Part II: From the Rise of Rome to the End of the Middle Ages, (Hebrew), Maalot, Ministry of Education, 1987, pp. 213-219. Rabbi Dr. Moshe Auerbach, History of Israel, from the Destruction of the First Temple to the Present, Vol. 2, Part II: From the Crusades to the Expulsion from Spain, (Hebrew), Yeshurun, 1993. Dr. S. Shavit (ed), History of Israel and the Nations. Part I: From the Rise of the Roman Empire to the Messianic Movement Led by Shabbetai Zvi, (Hebrew), Maalot, Ministry of Education, 1987, pp. 204-218.

29 G. Zohar, H. Leon & R. Peleg, This is the Land- Introduction to Land of Israel Studies, (Hebrew), Yad Ben Zvi, Ministry of Education, Experimental Edition, 2000, p. 161.

special significance of the city was that it contained the Temple. From the eleventh century the name al-Quds – holiness– became common. Other names for the city are ‘Ursalim’ and ‘Tzehayun’- Zion.”³⁰

Contrary to expectations, the implications of this deep, joint, and one could even say, rival, attachment to the Holy land and to Jerusalem, are not avoided or ignored, but explicitly referred to, as illustrated by the drawing and the picture mentioned below. An anthology for 15 years old pupils contains the well known poem “Jerusalem 1967” written by Yehuda Amichai, one of the most famous contemporary Israeli poets:

“The city plays hide-and-seek among her names:
Yerushalayim, Al-Quds, Salem, Jeru, Yeru, all the while
whispering her first, Jebusite name: Y’vus
Y’vus, Y’vus, in the dark. She weeps
With longing: Ilia Capitolina, Ilis, Ilia.
She comes to any man who calls her
At night, alone. But we know
Who comes to whom”³¹.

Legend of the Drawing: “Jerusalem, the city that is sacred to the three monotheistic religions.”³²

Legend of the Picture: “The ‘Machpelah Cave’ in Hebron. This is the name of the building in the picture. According to the Book of Genesis, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah are buried under the building in the picture”³³.

The text in the frame under the picture reads: “It is interesting to know: The Cave of the Patriarchs is holy not only to the Jews, but also to the Muslims and the Christians. In the building known as the ‘Cave of the Patriarchs’ there are a mosque and a synagogue”³⁴.

Admitting the Legitimacy of the Rival National Movement

For a long time, the Israeli school textbooks painstakingly avoided conferring any legitimacy on the Arab opposition to the Jewish national movement. The Arab actions against the Jews in Palestine were presented as the result of petty motivations, such as the lure of gain, greed, the desire to seize property or the thirst for power.

This approach has been replaced and now the clash between Arabs and Jews in the holy land is presented to the students as a fight between two national movements over the control of the same piece of land.

30 Ibid.

31 Shirav et al., Op. Cit., p. 252. (Translated by Stephen Mitchell, Poems of Jerusalem, a Bilingual Edition, by Yehuda Amichai, Schocken Publishing House, 1987.)

32 Rina Ben Shachar, That Is To Say- Language, Expression and Communication, (Hebrew), Grade 5, 1999, p. 149. This drawing was taken from an exhibition “Children Draw Jerusalem”.

33 A. Tirosh & B. Geller-Talithman, With Joshua – Pupil's Workbook, (Hebrew), Reches & Yavne, 2000, p.72.

34 Ibid.

Excerpts from texts written by Zionist leaders and thinkers, who since the end of the nineteenth century had clearly perceived the nature of the conflict, that were for a long time considered “inappropriate” for school curricula by the people in charge of national education have now been introduced into the textbooks.

An instance of this is the case of the writings of Yitzhak Epstein, a famous teacher and educator, well known for his scathing criticism, who at the beginning of the twentieth century, in Palestine under Ottoman rule, who called on his fellow Zionists to grasp, and be fully aware of, the actual nature of the problem: “In general we are mistaken in regards to a great people... This is the mightiest, most excellent people in physical attainments and in the skill of its understanding. We must not belittle its rights (those of the Arab people). The Hebrew people respects not only the personal rights of each person, but rather the national rights of each nation and tribe.”³⁵

His penetrating and famous article entitled “A Hidden Question”, published in 1907 in the Hebrew review *Hashiloah*, in which he pointed bluntly to the vital problem that the Zionist Jews in Palestine had to grapple with, is now part of the curriculum:

“Among the difficult questions connected with the idea of resurrecting our people on its land is one question that stands clearly against them all: the question of our relations with the Arabs. This question, on whose correct resolution hangs the rebirth of our national hope, has not been forgotten, but rather has vanished entirely from among the Zionists and in its true form is almost never, mentioned in the literature of our movement. The loyal Zionists have so far not touched on the question of how we should act towards the Arabs when we come to buy land in Eretz Yisrael., to establish *Moshavot* [villages], and in general to settle the land... Most of the land we buy from the large estate owners... When we buy such land, we completely remove those who previously worked on it. True, we will not send them away empty-handed, we will pay them nicely for the ruined houses and gardens, and in general we will not be stingy with gold coins during the time of the ‘exemption’. From the standpoint of accepted justice and official honesty we are completely just, entirely lawfully. However, if we do not knowingly want to deceive ourselves, let us admit that we have dispossessed poor people from their meagre property and broken the staff of their bread. Can we really persist on such a path of purchasing land? Is it successful, does it befit our objective? A hundred times no. Members of the people that was the first to say “and the land will not be sold in perpetuity, and limited the rights of the buyer in favour of the worker, should not, cannot, expropriate their lands from the hands of its workers, who settled on it in good faith. But let us leave justice and sentimentality for a moment and look at the question from the standpoint of ability alone. Will they be silent in the face of dispossessions, calmly accepting what we have done to them? Will they not ultimately awaken to restore by force what was stripped from them by gold! ... And this people ...is only a small part of the larger nation, which holds everything surrounding our country: Syria, Aram Naharayim [Iraq], Arabia and Egypt...”³⁶

35 Tsipi Elder & Lili Yaffe, op. cit., p. 374.

36 E. Domka, op. cit., pp. 230-231.

A further turning point was reached when, in addition, the Arabs of Palestine were viewed not only as part of the larger Arab people, but as having a specific national identity and establishing a specific national movement.

Hence a history textbook, observing that the 1936-1939 clashes in Palestine which at the time were considered as “riots” or “disturbances” by the Jews while the Arabs called them “Arab revolt”, pointed to their national character, stresses that “contrary to 1929, this time the Arabs presented clear national demands.”³⁷ Moreover, the exercise at the end of this chapter asks the pupils the following question:

“C. The whole class should discuss whether the contention that in the Arab Revolt there was a clash between two national movements, is correct. You should give reasons for your conclusions.”³⁸

Similarly, another history textbook for grade 9 states that:

“During the 1930s, Arab nationalist movements evolved all over the Middle East. Many of the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael also began formulating a national consciousness – in other words, the perception that they are not just part of the larger Arab nation, but also Palestinians, inhabitants of Palestine. Therefore, there are some who believe that the 1930s saw the start of the fight over the land between nationalist movements: the Jewish-Zionist movement and the Arab-Palestinian movement.”³⁹

A geography textbook even claims that already before WWI this conflict has had a national character.⁴⁰

The most spectacular move to bring the Israeli pupils to admit the legitimacy of the opposing national movement came on the initiative of Yossi Sarid, Minister of Education in Ehud Barak’s government from May 1999 to January 2001. He pressed for the inclusion in the Israeli curriculum of a poem composed by Mahmud Darwish, one of the greatest contemporary Arab poets, the epic minstrel of Palestinian nationalism and the main drafter of the Palestinian declaration of Independence of November 1988. Several years before, an apparently trivial poem by Darwish had already been included in the curriculum, but this time it was a very nationalistic one.

There was a general outcry. Not only did the opposition, from the Likud (Right) to Shinui (Center-Liberal), voice their fierce opposition to Sarid’s initiative, but even PM Barak, expressed his reservations, arguing that the conditions were not yet ripe for such a move. Darwish reacted to this controversy by observing that: “The atmosphere in Israel is not ripe to deepen the understanding of the other. I followed the debate in the Knesset. I think that the extreme right is not ready to recognize the history of the Palestinian people, which is linked to this country that it loves and for which it longs.”⁴¹

37 K. Tabikian, *Journey to the Past- The Twentieth Century*, By Dint of Freedom, (Hebrew), 1999, Matah – The Center for Educational Technology, 1999, p. 137.

38 Ibid. p. 150

39 Eyal Naveh, *The Twentieth Century – On the Threshold of Tomorrow*, History for Ninth Grade, (Hebrew), Sifrei, Tel Aviv, 1999, p. 85.

40 R. Peleg, (ed) *The Northern Land [of Israel] – Galilee, Golan and the Valleys Through the Generations for Upper Grades*, (Hebrew), Yad Ben Zvi & Ministry of Education, Curricula Branch, Experimental Edition, 1999, p. 388.

41 Interview with Mahmud Darwish by Tom Segev, Haaretz, March 10, 2000.

The strong reservations of a large part of Israel's public opinion, motivated by its strong concern that the recognition of the enemy's national legitimacy may affect its own, underline even more the revolutionary character of the changes introduced in the Israeli curriculum.

Presenting the Conflict in a More Balanced Way

A more balanced presentation of the conflict implies, first and foremost, that the school textbooks take into account the most recent scientific literature, and do not distort or omit embarrassing or shocking matters. The first Hebrew school textbooks, both during the Mandate period and the first decades of the State of Israel, mentioned only the existence of a Jewish population, as if there were no Arabs in the country. This is no longer the case today. Several textbooks provide the pupils with data about the Arab population of Palestine both in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.⁴² The two Braver atlases, which are the most used in the Israeli schools, for all the grades, give detailed data about the demographic ratio between the two peoples as well as about their geographic distribution from the 30s to present.⁴³ There is a series of four maps headed "Israel-Population" detailing the ratio between the Jewish and the non Jewish population, in 1931, in 1947, in 2000, and the percentage of the population living in towns and cities in 2000.⁴⁴

Secondly, the purchase of lands by the Zionist movement, and its role in the confrontation between the two populations, were finally brought to the attention of the students. However this improvement is insufficient, since generally specific data are not provided to illustrate this major factor in the confrontation between the two peoples.

The Oslo Accords, which contained the mutual recognition by the State of Israel and the PLO, and set up a Palestinian Authority to rule the Palestinian territories, are presented in detail in one the above-mentioned atlases. These accords are mentioned in several school textbooks, sometimes with their geographic and territorial representation.⁴⁵ As an example of this a geography textbook for the upper grades present the Oslo Accords as follows:

"In May 1994 the areas of the Gaza Strip and Jericho from which the Israel Defense Forces were to withdraw were defined and it was agreed that there should be a transfer of authority in these areas to the Palestinian Authority. Twenty-seven years of Israeli rule came to an end...The purpose of the second Oslo Agreement was to enlarge the Palestinian independent administration in the West Bank by means of an elected ruling authority- 'The Palestinian Council'... This agreement prescribes a timetable for the redeployment of the Israel Defense Forces and the division of the area of Judea, Samaria and Gaza into Different kinds of areas:

42 CMIP, (2000), pp. 111-113.

43 Moshe Braver, Atlas for the Elementary and Middle Schools, (Hebrew), Yavne, 11th edition, 1999; Physical, Political and Economic Atlas, (Hebrew), Yavne, 11th edition, 2000.

44 Reproduced in CMIP, 2002, p. 46.

45 See CMIP, 2000, pp. 101-105 and CMIP, 2002, pp. 7-10.

Area A- including the six large Palestinian towns on the West Bank; in this area the Palestinian Council was to assume full responsibility for internal security, public order and civilian matters.

Area B- including Palestinian townships and villages (in which some 68% of the total Palestinian population lives). In this area the Council was to be responsible for the preservation of public order and Israel was to be the supreme authority in matters of security, so that it should be able to safeguard the well being of its citizens and fight terror.

Area C- including the uninhabited areas, the regions where there were Israeli settlements and locations that were strategically important for Israel. In this area Israel was to retain full responsibility.”⁴⁶

This presentation is not accurate and complete since it does not refer explicitly to Palestinian territories, and does not mention the powers of each of the parties in civilian matters in Area B. The Brawer atlas is more accurate and concise. It provides a map indicating by different colours these areas with a legend entitled “Territories of the Palestinian Authority”, which enables the pupil to grasp the territorial and political meaning of these accords.

It is unfortunate that the textbooks themselves do not include any map of this kind, even in a more simplified form. In the best case one can only find evasive descriptions such as: “The name Palestine serves today, particularly among the Arabs, to denote all the territory of the land of Israel west of the Jordan. Nevertheless the Authority aspires to establish the ‘State of Palestine’ in the major part of Judea and Samaria.”⁴⁷ The lack of maps illustrating the Oslo accords is a serious lacuna that should be amended, as CMIP stressed in 2003 before the Council of Europe.⁴⁸

The issue of the Palestinian refugees is now also dealt with in a more objective way. Till the end of the 80s this issue was referred to indirectly, by mentioning demographic changes in the region without further explanations, or by explaining that this problem was created by the Arabs themselves, since they had fled their towns and villages as a result of the fighting, for fear of having to live under Jewish rule or at their leaders’ instigation. Since the beginning of the 90s, the responsibility of the Israeli forces is also mentioned.

For example, a history textbook used by state-run high schools, which devotes an entire chapter to the creation of this issue, starts by recapitulating the usual reasons for the Arabs’ flight:

“1. The flight of the leadership and wealthy class already at the beginning of the war.

2. The deterioration of security and order in the Arab towns and villages.

46 G. Zohar, H. Leon & R. Peleg, op. cit., p. 8.

47 Ibid. p. 4.

48 “The case of the Israeli textbooks”, a paper presented to the session of the sub-committee of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, devoted to “The Suppression of Provocative Language and Incitement to Hatred and Violence in Israeli and Palestinian Textbooks”, October 24, 2003, Paris.

3. In any civil war there are necessarily unplanned ‘population exchange’ with no guiding force behind them. A civilian population concerned about its fate, justly or not, moves to areas where soldiers of their own people or religion are in control.

4. The organized appeal of the leaders of Arab countries to the Arabs in Eretz Israel.

5. The horror propaganda broadcast by the Arab media about incidents in which the Jewish forces compelled Arab residents to leave and harmed the civilian Arab population.”⁴⁹

Alongside these reasons the author mentions a new historical explanation offered by one of the so-called “new historians”, Benny Morris. According to him “the main catalyst for the flight was the attacks by the Hagana, Ezel, Lehi and Israel Defense Forces and not the calls or instructions of the leaders of Arab countries or of the Supreme Arab Council and the Mufti.”⁵⁰

A more recent geography textbook includes naturally this explanation among the reasons for the Arabs’ flight:

“During the war of Independence, between 500,000 and 900,000 Arab refugees left their homes. They left behind their possessions and planned to return to their homes after the fighting ended. There were a variety of reasons for their departure: some sought to distance themselves from the dangers of war, some listened to the directives of their leaders who called on them to leave their residences and thereby facilitate the Arab armies’ conquest of Israel, and some were expelled during the fighting by various Israeli elements.”⁵¹

This explanation is of course also included in the renowned school textbook by Eyal Naveh, issued in 1999:

“During the fighting, many of the local Arabs were expelled. Some of them fled before the Jews reached a village or Arab neighborhood in a city, and other were expelled by the conquering force. Tens of thousands fled to neighbouring countries – primarily to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – in the hope that, with the help of these countries, they will one day return to their previous places of residence. Many became refugees in camps set up in the Gaza Strip, West banks and neighbouring countries”⁵².

Any objective presentation of a conflict in textbooks requires not only that the pupils be taught correctly, honestly and completely with its basic elements, but that they also be informed of the point of view of the other side on the conflict, preferably in its

49 David Shachar, *From Exile to Independence–The history of the Jewish People in Recent Generation*, vol. 2, (Hebrew), Idan, 1989, pp. 308-312.

50 Ibid. p. 312.

51 A. Rap & Z. Fein, op. cit., p. 153.

52 Eyal Naveh, op. cit., p. 138.

own words, quoting its own documents, as once recommended by UNESCO⁵³. In order to inform the pupils about the point of view of the nascent Arab national movement on Zionism, at a time when the ruler was the Ottoman Empire, one textbook quotes from an article published in those years in an Arab newspaper:

“Palestine is a pure Arab country ... surrounded on all sides by pure Arab countries. The national yearnings started emerging and intensifying among the Arab nation that resides contiguously in its territory. The only people in these Arab countries are Arabs ... there is no possibility of another people, with an independent language, different customs and traditions and a contradictory political ambition living with them”⁵⁴.

A more recent school textbook gives excerpts from an appeal to the Ottoman authorities, published on September 16, 1911, in *Filastin*, a Christian Jaffa-based newspaper calling them “to fulfill their obligation and not to allow Jewish immigrants to remain in the country”⁵⁵.

A history textbook for high school students, used both in state and state religious schools, presents in full another Arab appeal by “The Centres for Justice”, voiced soon after the Balfour Declaration (November 2, 1917) and the Feisal-Weizman agreement (January 3, 1919):

“A voice is Calling to the Arab People in Southern Syria (Palestine)

The Jews are trying to separate Palestine from Syria and the rest of the Arab countries, in order to become the rulers of this country.

Palestine is a natural part of Syria, there is nothing separating them; the residents of Syria are like us, their leaders are like our leaders and their interests are connected with ours. Uniting Palestine with Syria and the rest of the Arab states is the only way to happiness for the Arab nation and the Arab countries...

There are only 60,000 Jews in our country and they have not even the slightest right to our land and have no connection to it. We, the Arabs, number more than a million people here, and therefore the land belongs to us. Therefore, protect your country, your honor, your spirit and your property. Demand that Palestine and Syria be one, free, Arab state; and that foreigners have no influence in this country.”⁵⁶

For a long time, the Israeli school textbooks used to describe as “riots” and “disturbances” perpetrated by “gangs of marauders and outlaws” what the Palestinians consider as a national uprising. A history textbook brings this Arab Palestinian view to the attention of the pupils in quoting verbatim the text of a resolution adopted by the

53 A Handbook for the Improvement of Textbooks and Teaching Materials, as Aids to International Understanding, UNESCO, 1949, Chapter X, pp.123-135.

54 A. Eliezri & M. Geva, Zionism Tested in Action, (Hebrew), Maalot, Ministry of Education, Experimental Edition, 1984, p. 62.

55 Cf. Tsipi Elder & Lili Yaffa, op. cit., p. 370.

56 E. Domka, op. cit., p. 283.

Arab High Committee, a body set up on April 25 1936, to coordinate the activities of the various factions among the Arabs of Palestine: “In April 1936, local national committees were organized in all Arab cities around the Istiklal [independence] Party, and the Arab Higher Committee was established. The committee declared a general strike that would paralyse economic life in the country. Its purpose: to exert pressure on the British government to fulfil the committee's demands: 1. Prohibit Jewish immigration; 2. Prohibit the transfer of lands to Jews; 3. Establish a national government that would be responsible to a representative council. If these demands are not met ...the general strike will continue, until the British government fundamentally changes its current policy, the first step being the halting of Jewish immigration”⁵⁷.

Another device to enable the students to grasp both the views and feelings of the adversary, is to invite them to try and “enter into its mind”, to contemplate events and developments from his point of view and to attempt to imagine his feelings. For this purpose, a history textbook suggests the following exercise:

“4. Divide into groups representing Jewish journalists and Palestinian journalists who have been sent to cover the discussion in the United Nations Organization leading to the Partition resolution. A. Prepare a report that will include details about the discussion in the UN, the position of some of the states participating in it and the results of the discussion, the vote and the reactions to the resolution...C. Discuss with the whole class the differences between the reports of the Jewish journalists and those of the Palestinian ones.”⁵⁸

Similarly, an interdisciplinary textbook, devoted to the socio-demographic, technological, climatic, topographical, political and economical aspects of water, as a vital resource for the whole region of the Middle East, proposes a simulation game, with the explicit purpose of reaching

“the maximum regional cooperation that will ensure by peaceful means a fair division of water, to understand the special needs of each country in the region...The class is to be divided into groups of 9 pupils each. Each pupil in a group will be the representative of one of the countries in the Middle East participating in the peace conference... The parties participating in the discussion must reach a rational arrangement that is in accord with the treaties on water rights. The condition for the approval of the arrangement for the division of water is its acceptability to the representatives of all the countries participating. The arrangement is to be approved by the United Nations... The game continues until arrangements have been reached with all the countries.”⁵⁹

Conclusion

What is perhaps the most striking and impressive trait of the Israeli school programs and textbooks is that they do not seek to build the national identity of the Jews of Israel upon the rejection of identity and national legitimacy of the Palestinians. It

57 Cf. A. Eliezri & M. Geva, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-126.

58 K. Tabikian, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

59 M. Dressler & R. Zuzovski, *Water in the Era of Peace- Learning Unit about the Water Problem in our Region and Ways to solve it*, (Hebrew), Reches, Publishing and Kibbutzim Seminar, 2000, pp.151-152.

seems rather that their objective is to prepare the pupils to accept this concurrent legitimacy.

The Israeli textbooks bear witness to the efforts made for more than twenty years to change the perception by young Israelis of the Arabs and the Palestinians, to perceive them both as individual human beings who should not be labelled – who, like the Jews have among them “nasty people and decent people”⁶⁰- and as a people having a legitimate national movement, despite the illegitimate means to which it resorts against the Jewish state and its citizens. These efforts have not been halted by the steady deterioration in the process set in motion by the 1993 Oslo Accord sealing their mutual recognition and the renunciation of violence and terror as a means to resolve the conflict between the two peoples. As stressed above, these changes were the result of a political decision, and are manifest above all in the state general network and in the state religious network, but not to the same extent in the *haredi* [ultra-orthodox] sector, whose textbooks are still marred by some offending and condescending expressions.⁶¹

Yet, some recriminations have been voiced against Israeli textbooks. What do they assert? A thorough examination of these recriminations shows that they have no serious grounds. For instance Maureen Meehan refers to outdated research or to children's literature, a complete different area which is not under the control or responsibility of the government⁶². Nathan Brown's criticism is based on unofficial texts circulated in some classes and on oral comments supposed to have been voiced by teachers⁶³. The EU Commissioner in charge of External Relations, Chris Patten, was not able to substantiate his insinuation that Israeli textbooks were also marred by intolerance and incitement.⁶⁴

Till now, the radical change monitored in Israeli textbooks regarding the image of Palestinians and the legitimacy of their national movement has not been emulated by the Palestinian schoolbooks. The major flaw of the later is their implicit incitement against the Jews and Israel by denying their nationhood and by building Palestinian national identity on the rejection of the legitimacy of Jewish national movement⁶⁵.

The international community, particularly the European Union, can play a decisive role in convincing the Palestinians that they too have to turn the page.

60 Rivka Motzafi & Michal Shachar, What's the Connection? What's the Interpretation? (Hebrew), n.d., Reches, p. 184.

61 CMIP, 2000, pp. 12 -13, and CMIP, 2002, p. 4, pp.33-35.

62 M. Meehan, “Special Report. Israel Textbooks and Children’s Literature Promote Racism and Hatred towards the Palestinians” in Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, 1999, pp. 19-20.

63 Ibid. p. 20 and Nathan Brown, “Democracy, History and the Contest over the Palestinian Curriculum”, Adam Institute, November 2001, p.6.

64 See Yohanan Manor, Les manuels scolaires palestiniens. Une génération sacrifiée. Berg International, 2003, pp 134-136.

65 On the content of Palestinian schoolbooks, see. Y. Manor, op. cit., and also the six reports issued by CMIP, the first two relating to Egyptian and Jordanian textbooks adopted by the PA and the remainder to the new textbooks authored and produced by the PA to replace the Egyptian and Jordanian books: Palestinian Authority School Textbooks (1998); Palestinian Authority Teacher's Guide (2000); Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 (2001); Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks and High School Examinations 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 (2002); Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks. The New Textbooks for Grade 3 and 8 (2003); Jews, Israel and Peace in Palestinian School Textbooks. The New Textbooks for Grade 4 and 9 (2004).

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