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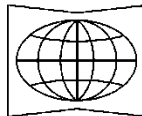


**WOCHEN  
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HISTORY EDUCATION  
AND HISTORY CULTURE (JHEC)  
YEARBOOK  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY  
FOR HISTORY DIDACTICS (ISHD)

Why History Education?



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## PREFACE

*Why History Education?* was the leading question of the conference organized by the Pedagogical University of Luzern, originally planned for 2020, but postponed due to the pandemic of COVID-19 and eventually held on-line in September 2021. The articles in the main section of the current issue of JHEC are based mostly, but not exclusively, on a selection of papers presented during that conference. A corresponding volume based on another set of presentations, edited by Peter Gautschi and Markus Furrer, under the same title *Why History Education?* is currently in press by Wochenschau Verlag.

The Forum section re-visits the topic of colonialism in school textbooks (dealt with extensively in the 2015 issue of the ISHD Yearbook) as well as the interest in the issues of health and disease that had been boosted by the pandemic. It also addresses the challenges of lesson planning and presents a tool under German name *Plannungsmatrix* developed by Alois Ecker. All these are recurring topics of debates not only in the didactics of history, but also within the broader academic community concerned about the perspectives of historiography, academic history and history education facing the challenges of the changing world.

In this way, the Forum may serve as a bridge towards the planned 2023 issue of the International Journal of Research in History Didactics, History Education and Historical Culture (JHEC) which will be focused on *Teaching History in the Anthropocene Era*. Please consult the Call for Papers in the closing section of the volume for details and the website [ishd.co](http://ishd.co) for the submission guidelines. Following the citation guidelines presented in the first footnote on the title page of each article will be also greatly appreciated as it shall increase the visibility and outreach of the publications in the times of their increasing dependence on automated search engines.

As in the past ten years, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Terry Haydn for the English language proofreading of the articles and to Markus Furrer and Dorota Wiśniewska with Teresa Malinowska for the German and French translations, respectively. And since this is my last issue as managing editor of JHEC, I wish to extend this expression of gratitude also to all the Contributors, Peer-Reviewers, Supporters and Readers, from the ISHD Membership and

beyond, for their inputs, suggestions, feedback and support. Last but not least I want to thank the Publisher, Wochenschau Verlag, and in particular to Mr. Jan Truetzschler for his patience and support in the process of typesetting and finetuning the journal's appearance. Thank you!

Joanna Wojdon

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## VORWORT

*Warum Geschichtsunterricht?* war die Leitfrage der von der Pädagogischen Hochschule Luzern organisierten Konferenz, die ursprünglich für 2020 geplant war, aber wegen der Pandemie COVID-19 verschoben wurde und schliesslich im September 2021 online stattfand. Die Artikel im Hauptteil der aktuellen Ausgabe von JHEC basieren grösstenteils, aber nicht ausschliesslich, auf einer Auswahl von Beiträgen, die während dieser Konferenz präsentiert wurden. Ein entsprechender Band, der auf einer weiteren Reihe von Vorträgen basiert und von Peter Gautschi, Markus Furrer und Nadine Fink herausgegeben wird, erscheint unter dem gleichen Titel *Why History Education* im Wochenschau Verlag.

Die Rubrik Forum greift das Thema Kolonialismus in Schulbüchern (das in der Ausgabe 2015 des ISHD-Jahrbuchs ausführlich behandelt wurde) sowie das durch die Pandemie verstärkte Interesse an den Themen Gesundheit und Krankheit wieder auf. Ausserdem werden die Herausforderungen bei der Unterrichtsplanung angesprochen und ein von Alois Ecker entwickeltes Instrument mit dem Namen *Planungsmatrix* vorgestellt. All dies sind wiederkehrende Themen von Debatten nicht nur in der Geschichtsdidaktik, sondern auch in der breiteren akademischen Gemeinschaft, die sich mit den Perspektiven der Geschichtsschreibung, der akademischen Geschichte und der Geschichtsausbildung angesichts der Herausforderungen der sich verändernden Welt befasst.

Auf diese Weise kann das Forum als Brücke zu der für 2023 geplanten Ausgabe des International Journal of Research in History Didactics, History Education and Historical Culture (JHEC) dienen, die sich mit dem Thema *Teaching History in the Anthropocene Era beschäftigen* wird. Einzelheiten entnehmen Sie bitte dem Call for Papers im Schlussteil des Bandes und den Einreichungsrichtlinien auf der Website [ishd.co](http://ishd.co). Die Einhaltung der Zitierrichtlinien in der ersten Fußnote auf der Titelseite jedes Artikels wird ebenfalls sehr geschätzt, da dies die Sichtbarkeit und Reichweite der Publikationen in Zeiten zunehmender Abhängigkeit von automatisierten Suchmaschinen erhöhen wird.

Wie in den vergangenen zehn Jahren möchte ich Terry Haydn für das Korrekturlesen der englischen Artikel und Markus Furrer sowie

Dorota Wiśniewska mit Teresa Malinowska für die deutsche bzw. französische Übersetzung meinen aufrichtigen Dank aussprechen. Da dies meine letzte Ausgabe als geschäftsführende Herausgeberin von JHEC ist, möchte ich mich auch bei allen Autorinnen und Autoren, Gutachterinnen und Gutachtern, wie auch Förderern und Leserinnen und Lesern aus der ISHD-Mitgliedschaft und darüber hinaus für ihre Beiträge, Vorschläge, Rückmeldungen und Unterstützung bedanken. Nicht zuletzt möchte ich dem Wochenschau Verlag und insbesondere Herrn Jan Trützschler für seine Geduld und Unterstützung beim Satz und der Feinabstimmung des Erscheinungsbildes der Zeitschrift danken. Ich danke Ihnen!

Joanna Wojdon

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## PRÉFACE

*Pourquoi enseigner l'histoire ?* Telle était la problématique principale de la conférence organisée par l'Université Pédagogique de Lucerne, initialement prévue pour 2020, mais reportée en raison de la pandémie de COVID-19, et qui s'est finalement tenue en ligne en septembre 2021. Les articles de la section principale du présent numéro de la revue JHEC s'appuient principalement, mais pas exclusivement, sur une sélection de communications présentées lors de cette conférence. Un autre volume, qui rassemble une autre série d'interventions, édité par Peter Gautschi et Markus Furrer, sous le même titre *Pourquoi enseigner l'histoire (Why History Education)*, est actuellement sous presse chez Wochenschau Verlag.

La section Forum revisite le thème du colonialisme dans les manuels scolaires (déjà traité en profondeur dans le numéro 2015 des *Annales de la ISHD*) et évoque l'intérêt des questionnements sur la santé et la maladie, qui ont été stimulés par la pandémie. Elle aborde également les défis liés à la planification des cours et présente un outil développé par Alois Ecker sous le nom allemand de *Plannungs-matrix*. Tous ces sujets sont des thèmes récurrents des débats qui animent non seulement le domaine de la didactique de l'histoire, mais aussi plus largement la communauté universitaire, préoccupée par les perspectives de l'historiographie, de l'histoire académique et de l'enseignement de l'histoire face aux défis d'un monde en mutation.

De cette façon, le Forum peut servir de passerelle vers le numéro 2023 du *Journal international de recherche en didactique de l'histoire, enseignement de l'histoire et culture historique (International Journal of Research in History Didactics, History Education and Historical Culture, JHEC)*. Il sera consacré à *L'Enseignement de l'histoire à l'ère de l'anthropocène*. Pour plus de détails et pour les normes éditoriales de soumission, veuillez consulter l'appel à contributions dans la section qui clôt le volume et le site web [ishd.co](http://ishd.co). Le respect des normes de citation présentées dans la première note de bas de page de la page de titre de chaque article sera également très apprécié, car cela permettra d'accroître la visibilité et la portée des publications, à une époque où elles dépendent de plus en plus des moteurs de recherche automatisés.

Comme ces dix dernières années, je souhaite exprimer ma sincère gratitude à Terry Haydn pour la relecture des articles en anglais et à

Markus Furrer et Dorota Wiśniewska avec Teresa Malinowska pour les traductions en allemand et en français, respectivement. Et comme il s'agit de mon dernier numéro en tant que rédacteur en chef de la revue JHEC, je souhaite également exprimer ma gratitude à tous les contributeurs, évaluateurs, collaborateurs et lecteurs, parmi les membres de la ISHD et au-delà, pour leurs contributions, leurs suggestions, leurs commentaires et leur soutien. Enfin, je tiens à remercier l'éditeur, Wochenschau Verlag, et en particulier M. Jan Truetzschler pour sa patience et son soutien dans le processus de rédaction, de correction et de mise en page du journal. Merci à vous !

Joanna Wojdon

WHY HISTORY EDUCATION?

WARUM GESCHICHTSUNTERRICHT?

PORQUOI L'ENSEIGNEMENT DE L'HISTOIRE?



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## HISTORY EDUCATION IN ISRAEL: BETWEEN THE SILICON VALLEY AND THE THIRD TEMPLE\*

Roy Weintraub, Nimrod Tal and Eyal Naveh

*This article uses the dramatic education reforms that taking place in the Israel to explore the question of 'Why History Education?' in the Israeli context. Using a wide variety of sources – from official curricula through matriculation tests to lesson plans – the article conducts a diachronic analysis spanning eight decades, from the establishment of the State of Israel to the present day. It places the changes in Israeli history education in a broader international context within which the great historical canons and national identity goals were undermined. The analysis shows that in recent decades Israel's history education has undergone a twofold trend. On the one hand, the secular public sought to move away from the narrow national narrative, focusing instead on the development of historical thinking skills and other useful tools in the twenty-first-century economy. Religious Zionist education, on the other hand, wished to take advantage of the ideological space that created by the erosion of the classic Zionist narrative, to establish a new narrative based on the principles of the Torah of Israel and its prophets.*

### 1. Introduction

In the 2021 school year, for the first time since the establishment of The State of Israel, mandatory history studies were excluded from the middle-school curriculum. This decision was part of a broader reform initiated by Minister of Education Dr. Yifat Shasha-Biton. It intends to cancel external matriculation state exams in history and other humanities and grant school principals and local-level educators greater independence (Kadari-Ovadia, 2021). Despite the reform's significance, it has not provoked a public outcry. Professional educators and other education stakeholders have criticized this move, warning that abolishing the external matriculation exams in history would wipe out this subject (The Historical Society of Israel, 2022). Yet, even this criticism did not receive media attention or awaken a

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\* Preferred citation: Roy Weintraub, Nimrod Tal and Eyal Naveh (2022) 'History Education in Israel: Between the Silicon Valley and the Third Temple,' *International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education and History Culture. Yearbook of the International Society for History Didactics*, 43: 13–34.

broad debate outside closed internal circles, and public interest in this matter has been low. This phenomenon is particularly interesting given the high sensitivity of the Israeli public and media to arguments around historical issues (Naveh, 2007; 2010).

The reform and the limited criticism against it thus offer an excellent opportunity to raise the question of ‘Why history education?’ in the Israeli context. In this article, we will explore the status of history education in present-day Israeli society and review the past few decades’ significant changes it has undergone. Our central argument is that the changes planned by the Ministry of Education (MoE) indicate the complex status of history education in Israel, which is the outcome of two almost opposite processes.

On the one hand, Israeli society seems to distance itself from ‘grand narratives’ (Lyotard, 1984), abandoning the teleological historical approach that wishes to define and consolidate a collective identity and harness the public to a national mission. Instead, it turns to career-oriented individualism, which at best encourages critical thinking and pluralistic values, but often creates indifference to the importance of historical studies in the educational process. On the other hand, the religious-Zionist public is undergoing an almost opposite process. It aspires to instill in the students a new, religious, and teleological metanarrative maintaining that redemption is about to come true thanks to the Zionist enterprise. Thus, while a large public has been distancing itself from the canonical national narrative, another large public aspires to create a new faith-based canonical narrative. Due to this situation, Israel’s history education is in a transitional state, accompanied by concern, uncertainty, and often even awkwardness, which may explain somewhat the evolving policy of the MoE and the public reaction to it.

Although this article focuses on Israel, with its unique social, geopolitical, and religious circumstances, we also regard it as a case study and a reflection of other broad processes. We will weave the Israeli trends into international processes that have occurred in the past few decades. They regard the history discipline, the perception of meaningful education, the weakening of the nation-state, and ideological-cultural changes (Taylor and Guyver, 2011; Elmersjö, Clark & Vinterek, 2017; Yearbook of the International Society of History Didactics, 2009). These processes across continents and cultures have significantly changed the goals and characteristics of history education. They will help us analyze the change in the status

of history education within Israeli society, and observe the dynamics between the groups through an international conceptual framework.

To thoroughly substantiate our central argument, we will conduct a historical analysis of the goals of history education in the Israeli Jewish state education – the secular State Education (SE) and the State Religious Education (SRE) systems – from its beginning to the present. Our methodology will be critical contextual analysis. The approved curricula and textbooks will stand at the center of the investigation. In large-scale education systems comprising hundreds of thousand students, such materials represent the learning process reliably and mirror the worldviews and goals of education leaders (Carretero, Berger, and Grever, 2017; Schissler, 2009). In Israel, where the MoE closely supervises the textbooks used, this is particularly apparent (Carretero, Berger & Grever, 2017). To enhance our understanding, we will also analyze various other sources engaging with the MoE activity, the teachers' fieldwork, and the public discourse around this matter.

The article has four parts combining diachronic and synchronic analyses. The first two chapters are chronological, analyzing and presenting the historical context of the last decades' changes. The first chapter describes the formative years of the education system, from the establishment of the State to the early 1970s. The second analyzes the changes that began in the early 1970s and gathered momentum over the following decades. The next two chapters coincide chronologically, analyzing the dual process of the past few decades. The third chapter is dedicated to changes among the general non-religious public. The last chapter investigates the Religious Zionism aspirations in history education, highlighting the dynamics with the state education system.

## **2. Building an Israeli Nation**

Around the time of the State's establishment, the question 'Why history education' had a clear answer. Like history education around the world (Carretero, Asensio & Rodríguez-Moneo, 2012; Wilschut, 2010), the State of Israel also perceived this discipline as a primary means for creating social cohesiveness and instilling a patriotic worldview (Goldberg & Gerwin, 2013; Hofman, 2007). The explicit goal of the first high school curriculum was:

To inculcate in the students the importance of the State of Israel in ensuring the biological and historical existence of the Jewish nation, develop their sense of personal accountability for the State's consolidation and development, and imbue them with a desire to fulfill its needs and a willingness to serve it (MoE, 1957: 35).

The establishment of the State ended the Zionist Movement's voluntarism age, as the State assumed the missions performed by various Jewish organizations during the British Mandate period. The government centralized its state mechanisms, and the State became the focal activity and power center. Alongside the disbanding of various paramilitary organizations replaced by the Israel Defense Forces, another noticeable move in this process was setting up a State Education System.

The centrality of education intensified in the face of the significant challenges the State of Israel had to cope with in its early years, threatening its nature and jeopardizing its existence. Next to the ominous military threats of its neighboring states, the massive immigration waves that doubled its population and resulted in unprecedented diversification were an enormous challenge. Within a few years, Israel's Jewish population featured ethnic groups with different, not necessarily Zionist traditions and other, sometimes contradicting cultural values that destabilized its core nature. The education system's role in integrating the new immigrants became even more vital since about a third of the newcomers were children or teenagers, constituting about a half of the students. Researchers have shown that in these circumstances, the national leadership perceived the education system as crucial to consolidating the young state's society and 'nationalizing' it (Naveh & Yogev, 2002; Kizel, 2008; Mattiash, 2002).

The history discipline's contribution to structuring the Israeli national identity placed it at the center of the MoE consolidation efforts. The appointment of historian Ben-Zion Dinur as minister of education (1951–1955) underscored this point. Dinur was among the most prominent Hebrew University historians. To him, writing the Jewish history was way more than a mere professional task. He perceived it as an ideological mission in support of the Zionist enterprise (Rein, 1999).

With Dinur at its head, the MoE assumed an ethnocentric-recruiting historical stance meant to ingrain a national identity and implant love for the State of Israel. Dinur and his colleagues wished

to create a uniform national historical narrative, rejecting any pluralistic approach. The wording of the history curriculum purposes already revealed its recruiting message. Among other things, it said, 'it is necessary to imbue [in the students] love for the State of Israel and a willingness to act on its behalf and safeguard its existence' (MoE, 1954: 18). Namely, the history curriculum aimed the students to perceive the nation as an organic biological body. It immediately went on to warn against the dangers that threatened its continuous existence. By these principles, the curriculum designers sought to awaken a sense of national belonging and accountability in their students and consequently recruit them to serve the needs of the state.

The curriculum design adhered to the organic-teleological approach of Zionism, which maintained that the exile and the return to Zion were the essences of Jewish history. The curriculum reflected the three-sided structure of the Zionist narrative: The birth and prosperity of the nation in the ancient biblical time, the suffering and anomaly during the exile, and the modern period revival and regained sovereignty in Zion.

The selected content was meant to glorify Jewish history, highlight the attributes that allow constructing a Hebrew patriotic identity, and strengthen the heroic national perspective of myths. The primary purpose of the curriculum designers was to project an image of the nation as an organic entity that, despite the hardships and challenges in exile, 'has preserved its religion, traditions, and opinions' and 'has never ceased to exist as one nation throughout the countries of exile' (MoE, 1954: 17). This is, in fact, the basic feature of the Zionist narrative, aiming to establish homogeneous characteristics of the Jewish people that comprehend all the periods and locations.

Alongside the national-romantic approach, they emphasized that the Jewish people had an extraordinary history. The students were to understand the uniqueness of the nation and be acquainted with its 'great past' that was manifest in its 'spiritual heritage, achievements, and vision' (MoE, 1954: 17). Thus, on the one hand, the Jewish nation was presented as a nation like any other and one of the oldest members of the global family of nations. On the other hand, however, it was said to have a singular importance and influence on humanity. Thus, the aim to show that the nation had a natural place among other nations, while preserving its uniqueness and superior value.

The first-generation textbooks fully corresponded to the principles and purposes of the curriculum. Two central MoE figures, Michael Ziv and Michael Hendel, wrote and designed the books, backing up and strengthening Dinur's ethnocentric-recruiting approach. The textbooks' national perspective followed the development of the Jewish nation and selected world history content accordingly, with an almost exclusive focus on Western culture. Numerous stories of heroism and sacrifice interwove with the Jewish and world history throughout the different historical periods. The writers focused on military and political history that dealt with war and revolutionary heroes, rulers, and political developments (Kizel, 2008). This was the common approach in the 1950s but it also served the recruiting educational purposes of the curriculum. It was a *'favorable tendentious education,'* as Ziv (1957: 13–14) put it, adding: *'History education must nurture the students' social activism. ... We do not intend to bring up historians but rather citizens who participate in creating and shaping history.'*

Given the determination of history education to unite the nation and recruit the young generation, it is no wonder that no attempt was made to introduce other perspectives, such as of another ethnic group, a different faith, and more than anything else – adversary nations. Of course, it was inconceivable to question the rightness of Zionism. Thus, the curricula and learning materials simply ignored the history of Eretz Yisrael's local inhabitants. The Palestinians were only mentioned in the context of their struggle against the Jewish Yishuv. Thus, despite the emphasis placed on the history of Eretz Yisrael, the only mention of the Arab population was as enemies fighting the efforts of the Jewish people. Historical developments, cultural characteristics, social structures, questions of identity – all were ignored.

Moreover, besides being intolerant to external others, history education also ignored 'close others,' such as North African and Middle Eastern Jews (commonly referred to as Mizrahi). Their culture and values, orientally perceived as primitive and non-Zionist, ostensibly were not in line with the educational aspirations of the new state. Thus, despite the emphasis placed on the History of the Jewish People, the curricula conspicuously included little content dealing with North African and Middle Eastern Jewish communities (Weintraub & Tal, 2021; Naveh & Yogev, 2002).

The religious public was another 'close other.' Although the religious Zionist education system was not eliminated, this almost

happened. In the field of history, the SRE system was subjected to the general SE system. At that time, it perceived its position as inferior and had to cope with the massive secularization of the Jewish people in the modern era. That abandonment of religious faith in favor of science, rationalism, and great ideologies – socialism and nationalism, finally gave birth to the Zionist movement and the establishment of the State of Israel. Religious education struggled to exist, and was far from envisioning an independent history education of its own (Weintraub, 2021).

The curriculum assigned several specific goals to the SRE, allowing it to express its religious-oriented historical perception. However, it imposed almost the same learning process on the SRE institutes as on the general nonreligious education system. Beyond the instructions and curriculum makeup, this was evident in other layers of the learning process, such as the annual guidelines of the MoE director, which applied to all the learning institutes, or symposia and teacher training programs held jointly for both systems. Thus, even in the significant matter of textbooks, the religious education administration avoided issuing any instructions or supervising classroom work (Weintraub, 2021).

The project that consolidated and inculcated the narrative described above was highly successful. This narrative became canonical, the backbone of historical awareness in Israel for decades. Yet, as early as the mid-1960s, cracks appeared in it, and changes occurred in answering the question ‘Why history education?’

### **3. Socio-cultural Changes**

In the late 1960s, and even more so in later decades, Israeli society changed and no longer featured the same characteristics it had in the 1950s when the first curriculum was formulated. Economic development and closer contacts with the American culture pushed aside the collective-recruiting nature of the early years and replaced it with the ideals of a Western individualistic society (Gutwein, 2004).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Israel’s education leaders, aware of the students’ different circumstances and needs, adopted a differential approach. At the same time, the system became receptive to pedagogical developments in the United States that advocated professionalization and academization of the learning process design

at the expense of the previous ideological approach (Naveh & Yogev, 2002; Hofman, 2007; Kizel, 2008).

The SE system issued its third-generation history curricula in the wake of the changes it had underwent and the deep disenchantment with the leadership following the Yom Kippur War (1973). The ties of the Israeli education departments with the American academia greatly influenced these curricula. They reflected the new trend of underscoring achievements and reducing the mission-oriented emphasis on the defense of nation and state. The curricula still focused on fostering a sense of national identity. Their primary objective was 'Imparting to the student knowledge and understanding of the history of Israel and other nations, with emphasis on the unique path of the Jewish nation' (MoE, 1977: 3). However, unlike the previous curricula, the national mission was not exclusive, and the new curricula planners attempted to avoid instilling predetermined state-sponsored stands (Naveh, 2017: 39). The curriculum emphasized the importance of active student participation in the learning process towards developing learning skills and critical historical thinking in the students (Kizel, 2008) and contributing to 'fostering a sense of rights and the need to judge historical events and phenomena based on human values' (MoE, 1977: 7). Secular history textbooks issued based on these curricula clearly reflected this approach (Ben Amos, 1994).

Evidence of the scope and depth of the changes the history education leaders wished to institute emerges from the reactions they elicited from numerous teachers (Tal & Hofman, 2021). A few of them saw the new spirit within the MoE as nothing less than a timely revolution. However, more frequent were the objections of history teachers, who saw any breakaway – no matter how initial and mild – from the canonical national narrative as a tangible danger. For example, a middle-school history coordinator wrote the following to then Minister of Education Aharon Yadlin in June 1974:

*In recent years, particularly after the Yom Kippur War, a horrible affliction has been noticed, which might be called a 'self-hatred syndrome.' This disease is widespread among young persons. ... It is terrible that they [the young generation] do not believe in their struggle for survival here, in their country, and question their right for the land on which they live, seeking legal justification and title deeds because they are completely ignorant about their recent past. If we do nothing shortly, we will face serious problems. (Shalev, 1974)*

Given the decline in Zionist ardor and the time that has passed since the establishment of the state, many feared that the proposed changes would impair the new generation's ability to connect collectively to the national identity. One teacher wrote, *'As we drift farther away from the national revival period and from the establishment of the State, we witness manifestations of alienation [in some of our students], ... and we must ask ourselves what should be done to deepen the[ir] Zionist consciousness.'* (Issacharov, 1976). Thus, those years saw first moves (albeit limited) away from the canon, along with concern about this trend.

The ideological and organizational changes within the MoE offered the SRE additional maneuvering space that allowed it greater independence for the first time since the establishment of the state of Israel. This independence first emerged in the early 1960s, when the SRE became more established following ideological changes among the Zionist religious public that pressed to increase its influence on the Israeli population and the nature of the State. It kept strengthening after the Six-Day War (June 1967), which gave rise to a flare-up of messianic approaches. Religious Zionism took the return to biblical sites and the glorious victory as undisputed proof that Jewish redemption was imminent. They saw it as their duty to take Zionism to the next stage, that of faith (Schwartz, 2208; Feige, 2009). Since the 1970s, SRE's history education has had one clear purpose: To convince students that they were living in an extraordinary era, where the biblical prophecy of redemption was about to come true and make them understand that they were responsible for continuing this process. The SRE journal cited the following words of its head, Joseph Goldschmidt, about the mandatory need to learn history after the Six-Day-War:

*And now – we may, we must, open our eyes and recognize with faith the exceptional chain of events of the past hundred years, when we walked or were guided in the right direction slowly and carefully but persistently and without straying ... until this moment, when the whole promised land is in the hands of Israel, and we are also the owners of the site of our Temple, saying 'Indeed, this is the beginning of our redemption?' (Bisdeh Hemed, 1968: 1).*

Having struggled in the 1960s with the secular MoE, the SRE was granted a separate curriculum with added religious goals and content.

By including religious subjects, SRE wished to interpret the Zionist enterprise as the realization of a divine redemption process, thus adding a metaphysical-theological facet to the Zionist narrative (Weintraub, 2021).

Yet, there were limits to the messianic flare-up within SRE's history education. Two internal and external factors restricted it. Internally, some religious educators and historians wished to stick to the disciplinary principles and had reservations about the messianic interpretation of history. One such example was the textbook writer and the prominent historian Jacob Katz. The second factor was external: the status of the classical Zionist narrative, which continued to be the common denominator of Israeli society. Despite the weakening of the recruiting approach, the Zionist ethos was still alive, limiting the span of the religious Zionist's narrative influence. This state of affairs was about to change.

#### **4. The Post-Zionist Attack and the Shift to Neo-liberal Pluralism**

The changes embodied in the 1970s SE history education were the first harbingers of public controversies about the representation of history in the Israeli education system. While the changes of the 1970s could be mainly attributed to developments in the way significant education was perceived, history education became a much more complex matter with time. With the strengthening 1970s trends, Israeli nationality and the status of the Zionist ideology underwent fundamental changes in the following decades (Ram, 2013; Silberstein, 2013). In the past four decades, Israeli history education has consequently turned into an arena of complex and multi-dimensional controversies (Naveh, 2018; 2017).

The first cracks appeared in the previously indisputable Israeli nationalism in the 1980s, with the onset of a stormy battle around the nature of the Israeli identity and collective memory. For the first time, the historical Zionist narrative came under attack by academics, intellectuals, artists, and media figures. This trend, titled 'Post Zionism,' encompassed numerous multifaceted and often conflicting approaches that criticized and deliberated about the history and worldview of the Zionist Enterprise. At its core, the Post Zionist approach attempted to free itself from the aspirations and ideals of the Zionist Enterprise. It wished to reach a sober understanding of

the history and characteristics of the Zionist Enterprise, dispelling fundamental myths and exposing manipulations and deceptions used in structuring the national heritage (Silberstein, 2013).

Among the most influential groups to challenge the official Zionist narrative was 'The New Historians' group. A series of works published by emerging researchers in the early 1980s challenged central premises in the Israeli collective memory. They claimed that the written history of the War of Independence and the establishment of the state was tarnished by a severe ideological bias of the writers. These researchers portrayed a new picture of the war, which undercut the heroic and moral Zionist ethos, and emphasized the disasters that befell the Arabs in Israel (Naveh, 2018).

Amid the various post-Zionist approaches, a meaningful criticism emerged in the late 1980s against another national perception of the past – the Holocaust. This criticism claimed that the Holocaust memory was narrowed down to justify the establishment of a Jewish state, and a direct line connected the Holocaust victims with the Zionist ethos. Israeli policy, they said, has understated the massive weight of the Holocaust and even damaged its memory (Silberstein, 2013).

However, although the state education system has significantly amended the history curricula in the past few decades, they continue to adhere to the Zionist narrative. The MoE is still struggling to block the penetration of post-Zionist approaches into the education system. Yet it could not ignore some post-Zionist criticism, which has also impacted and transformed historical research at Israeli universities.

Moves that had sparked severe public storms and fierce criticism in the late 1990s (Naveh, 2009), currently make an integral part of the learning process. Thus, for example, the curriculum teaches Jewish nationalism in the context of modern European nationalism, all the textbooks take exception to the War of Independence myth of 'few against many' and make an effort to project a more balanced picture, and the learning materials criticize the government's discriminatory policy against the Mizrahi Jews. Moreover, in the past decade, some careful and understated recognition has been voiced of the wrongs the Jewish forces committed against the Arabs in the 1948 war, the Arab Nakba (Domke, Urbach & Goldberg 2009; Avieli-Tavivian, 2009; Naveh, Vered & Shachar, 2009). Trends such as these do not