

On the Quiet Revolution In Citizenship Education

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Almost unnoticed, a sea change has taken place in recent years in the way that Israel's public school system approaches the idea of citizenship. Over the last decade, but particularly in the last year, the Education Ministry has overhauled its program for the teaching of civics to Jewish students, in the process all but abandoning what was once one of the central missions of Israeli education, and a pillar of the Zionist enterprise: Inculcating an appreciation for, and loyalty to, the idea of Israel as the state of the Jewish people.

The idea of a "Jewish state"—that is, one that acts to advance the interests of the Jewish people—was the common denominator uniting Theodor Herzl and his partners in founding the Zionist movement in 1897. This idea gained virtually universal currency after World War I, as Woodrow Wilson won acceptance for the ideal of "self-determination of peoples." After the Holocaust, the necessity and legitimacy of securing Jewish self-determination seemed evident to almost everyone; and it was also widely accepted among Jews and non-Jews alike that Israel's, political institutions should be modeled on those of Britain, Western Europe, and

Scandinavia, whose national states were steeped in the history and symbolism of the national groups that founded them. Thus the United Nations voted to support the establishment of a “Jewish State” in its November 1947 partition resolution, and the founders of Israel sprinkled this term, as well as similar phrases such as “the sovereign state of the Jewish people,” throughout the Declaration of Independence. Likewise, the architects of the young nation, led by David Ben-Gurion, put this theory into practice, most notably in a Law of Return guaranteeing citizenship to every Jew, a State Education Law aimed at inculcating a love of Jewish culture and a loyalty to the Jewish people, and military and diplomatic policies aimed at protecting Jews throughout the world.¹

Since the 1960s, however, the idea of the national state (or “nation-state”) has increasingly come under attack around the world, with scholars such as Elie Kedourie launching biting critiques.² In its place has come the principle that all states should be established in accordance with a model—ostensibly based on that of the United States—in which the state exists to serve the welfare of its individual citizens, and not to advance the interests of a particular people. In Europe, the cradle of the modern idea of the national state, nationalism has been in retreat for decades, as continent-wide integration and the belief in a universal culture have chipped away the foundations of particularist traditions and identity. In Israel, too, a growing minority drawn principally from the intellectual and cultural leadership is demanding that the Jewish state become a “state of all its citizens,” which would give up its nationalist laws and symbols, its links to the Jewish nation, culture, and religion, and its special relationship with the Jewish people around the world—a position which over the last few years has been openly advocated by the mainstream political leadership of the Arab minority in Israel.

While Israel’s status as a Jewish state has increasingly come under attack, the country’s Ministry of Education—which for nearly half a century stood at the forefront of efforts to teach about the necessity and

legitimacy of a Jewish state—has been curiously reticent in defending it. In fact, at times the public school system seems to be sending students the message that Israel's status as a Jewish state is insignificant, problematic, or even undesirable.³

This problem is most acute in the subject of Citizenship, a one-year course that all college-bound students must complete during eleventh or twelfth grade. Since 1994, when a new curriculum was published that radically revised the goals and subject matter of high-school civics education, there have been growing signs that Israeli schools are not only neglecting to teach students the philosophical and historical underpinnings of their country's status as a Jewish state, but are also portraying Israel's Jewish character as being in conflict with its status as a democracy. Immediately after this program was adopted, the ministry began acting in the new spirit, radically reducing the emphasis on Israel's role as the state of the Jewish people in the matriculation exams in citizenship, which play a decisive role in determining what will be taught in the classroom.

Until this past year, the impact of the new program was limited by the lack of a new textbook conforming to its guidelines. In time for the 2000-2001 school year, however, the Education Ministry completed its revolution in the teaching of citizenship by publishing *To Be Citizens in Israel: A Jewish and Democratic State*, which went beyond the 1994 curriculum in downplaying and undercutting the reasons why Israel should be a Jewish state.⁴ The ministry decreed that only this book could be used in state schools attended by Jewish students, and announced that until further notice, all students in these schools would be tested on the matriculation exam in citizenship based solely on the contents of this textbook.⁵

This is a troubling development, to say the least. If the current trends are left unchecked, the next generation of Israelis may well enter adulthood without any clear understanding of why their state should be a Jewish one, and burdened with the belief that the Jewish state in which they live cannot be truly democratic. As such, it will be far more difficult for them to justify in their own minds the real sacrifices involved in their subsequent years of

military service, or to meet head-on the challenges which continue to confront the project of sustaining a modern Jewish democracy in the Middle East.

Yet there is nothing inevitable about the direction in which education for citizenship in Israel has been moving—indeed, it is likely that most educators and parents would prefer an approach in which Israel’s role as the state of the Jewish people is presented more prominently, and more positively. The aim of this article is to contribute towards such a rethinking by examining the principles that shaped civics education until 1994, by showing how the new curriculum and textbook systematically undermine the ideas underlying the Jewish state, and by suggesting a set of principles that could guide a renewed effort to educate young Israelis for citizenship.

II

The study of citizenship has been an essential component of education in Israel since the state school system was first established in the early 1950s. At first, civics was taught in high school as a sub-field of a discipline called “Contemporary Israeli History,” but it became a separate subject after an independent curriculum, “Citizenship,” was promulgated by the Education Ministry in 1976.⁶ That curriculum laid out one course of study for the general state system—which most Jewish students in Israel attend—and a separate one for the Jewish religious state schools.⁷ Since the 1979-1980 academic year, when the curriculum went into effect, college-bound students in these schools have been required to take one full “study unit” of citizenship, consisting of three classes a week for a full year, and to pass an end-of-year matriculation exam.⁸

The 1976 civics curriculum for general state high schools reflected the values of the Labor Zionist movement, whose leaders governed Israel

continuously during Israel's first three decades. It was developed by a panel of scholars, teachers, and Education Ministry officials appointed during Golda Meir's government, when Yigal Allon was minister of education, and it was approved and published during Yitzhak Rabin's first term as prime minister, when Labor stalwart Aharon Yadlin was the minister of education.⁹ The committee was headed by Gavriel Cohen, a Tel Aviv University historian who had served in the Knesset as a representative of the Labor Party. In keeping with the prevailing Labor Zionist ideology, the curriculum sought to inculcate in students the belief that Israel should act to advance the Jewish people and culture in Israel and around the world; to strengthen Israel's democratic institutions and the pluralistic society on which they rested; and to pursue social justice in keeping with the teachings of social democracy. Indeed, from its opening words, the 1976 curriculum stressed Israel's Jewish, pluralistic, and social-democratic elements:

The proposed course of study is based on highlighting the State of Israel as the state of the Jewish people... and as a state that includes national and religious minorities; and on recognizing Israeli society as a pluralistic society that is grappling with social and moral challenges....¹⁰

The goals of study for the general state high schools emphasized each of these elements, with special emphasis on the cultivation of the tolerance and critical thinking that are essential to democratic citizenship.¹¹ The section on "Goals Concerning Values," which set out the principles and attitudes the student was supposed to internalize during the course, was especially strong on this point, as it called on schools to foster "a positive relationship to the values of democracy, together with an openness to a critical attitude..."; and to encourage students to develop "openness to other opinions" and "tolerance of other opinions."¹²

However, the program's authors were equally unequivocal regarding the significance of Israel's Jewish character. Indeed, no fewer than four separate goals were devoted to teaching students in the general state schools

to appreciate and identify with their state's Jewish character. On the *philosophical* level, students were "to become familiar with the ideas, approaches, and ideologies that are likely to assist them in understanding Israel's character as a Jewish, democratic state." To give *historical* depth to this understanding, students were to study "the historical background" that gave rise to Israel's special character, including its status as a Jewish state. Moreover, in the *political* and *cultural* spheres, students were "to know and understand the multifaceted connections linking the State of Israel and the Jewish people."¹³ The section on "Goals Concerning Values" sought to go beyond imparting knowledge about the Jewish state, and called on the educational system to nurture within students "a feeling of solidarity with the Jewish people."¹⁴

The course of study outlined in the curriculum was aimed at translating these goals into practice. Every civics student had to take a mandatory unit on "The Political Regime in Israel," which included a section covering "Israel as a Jewish State: Expressions in Legislation and Public Life," an extensive discussion about the role of the Jewish religion in Israeli public life, and a lengthy treatment of "Israel and the Jewish people."¹⁵ In addition, Israel's character as a Jewish state played a significant role in two of the six optional subjects that were offered,¹⁶ "Building Israeli Society by Absorbing New Immigrants" and "The Arab-Israeli Conflict": The unit on immigration opened with an extended treatment of "the Zionist ideology, the Declaration of Independence, and the Basic Laws of the state," moved on to consider "the mutual dependence between the State of Israel and Jews of the diaspora," and also examined "Jewish immigration to Israel as a basis for the existence and development of the Jewish state."¹⁷ Likewise, the study of "The Arab-Israeli Conflict" was centered on a discussion of "the right of the Jewish people to self-determination and... the Zionist ideology and movement as a response to the problems of the Jewish people."¹⁸

Though the 1976 civics curriculum was admirable in its treatment of the Jewish state, it suffered from two noteworthy defects. Most significantly, it did not include a historical or philosophical examination of

national states in general, and therefore left students unaware that democracy and nationalism have been viewed as compatible by some of the most important political thinkers of recent centuries, and have been combined successfully in dozens of countries. Second, the curriculum tended to place undue emphasis on the nuts and bolts of Israeli government, without giving sufficient attention to the ideas—whether taken from democratic theory or from the Jewish and Zionist tradition—that underlay them. Although the Education Ministry itself did not produce a textbook for studying the core subject, “The Political Regime in Israel,” the vast majority of texts published by private textbook companies on the basis of the ministry’s curriculum mirrored these flaws.¹⁹

These shortcomings notwithstanding, the 1976 curriculum played an important role in providing Jewish high-school students with a solid grounding in Israel’s character as a Jewish state. It signaled teachers that Israel’s Jewish character was a crucial part of learning about citizenship, outlined a course of study that would expose students to the most significant ideas and institutions of the Jewish state, and served as the frame of reference for the enrichment courses offered to civics teachers by the Ministry of Education.

Most importantly, the 1976 curriculum had a profound influence on the annual matriculation exams, on which college-bound students need to do well in order to be accepted into the most competitive college programs, and which therefore have a decisive impact on what is actually taught. In this regard, the exams given in accordance with the 1976 curriculum sent a clear signal to students and teachers that it was worth studying about Israel’s character as a Jewish state. In all but one of the fourteen exams offered before the introduction of the new civics curriculum in 1994, there was at least one long question about Israel as a Jewish state, and in most years students could choose to answer two long questions and one short one.²⁰ In practice, this meant that a student knowledgeable about his country’s Jewish character could parlay this knowledge into 65 points out of a possible 100—enough for a passing grade in and of itself, and more than two-thirds of what was needed to attain a grade of “excellent.”²¹

Moreover, the questions on the examinations generally reflected the premise that Israel's status as a Jewish state was the object of consensus, and that the laws and institutions expressing this status should be viewed positively. In the 1983 exam, for example, one of the questions students could choose to answer in the section on "The Political Regime in Israel" read as follows:

The State of Israel defined itself from the beginning as a Jewish state. This character is manifested in the laws and institutions of the country. Name two laws possessing a Jewish character, and explain the purpose of each of them.²²

Similarly, in 1984 one of the questions in the section on "The Diaspora" noted that a substantial portion of American Jews supported Israel, and called on students to explain the form in which this support was expressed and to describe "the factors that explain the powerful connection between American Jewry and the State of Israel."²³

In addition, the exam writers seemed to go out of their way to raise current issues that could be linked to positive elements of Israel's Jewish character. In early 1989, for example, lobbying by American Jewish leaders persuaded Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir not to amend the Law of Return in a way that they believed would delegitimize conversions carried out by non-Orthodox rabbis. A few months later, the Education Ministry included in its end-of-year civics exam a question that highlighted the Zionist meaning of such political activity on the part of diaspora Jewry: Students were asked to "explain three reasons for the involvement of diaspora Jews in the State of Israel's internal affairs"—and then to give three reasons why "the State of Israel takes into account the views of Jewish groups and organizations in the world."²⁴

Thus, from the inception of the 1976 curriculum until the early 1990s, the goals, course of study, and annual examinations in the subject of citizenship encouraged students to identify with the Jewish character of

their state. Moreover, one would be hard-pressed to defend the assertion, so often heard today, that the old Labor-Zionist conception of the Jewish state in some way downplayed education about democracy; on the contrary, the same curriculum that so clearly reflected the Labor-Zionist support for a Jewish state also taught students about the theory and practice of democracy, encouraged them to become committed to the ideas and institutions on which Israel's democracy is based, and sought to foster the critical thinking and tolerance that are the linchpin of its open society.

III

All of this was to change, however, in the wake of a new citizenship curriculum published in 1994, which was developed by an Education Ministry committee chaired by Hebrew University political scientist Emanuel Gutmann.²⁵ The committee was appointed in 1989 during the national unity government headed by the Likud's Yitzhak Shamir, when the Ministry of Education was in the hands of the Labor Party's Yitzhak Navon. It consisted of ministry staff members and teachers representing Israel's various educational streams, as well as several academics known for their commitment to the idea of Israel as the state of the Jewish people.²⁶ Indeed, the authors of the curriculum sought to make it clear that they considered the Jewish and the democratic elements of Israel's character to be equally crucial elements of learning about citizenship, as they noted in their introduction that "most committee members attributed equal weight" in teaching about Israel's character as "a democratic state and as a Jewish state."²⁷

Even so, the new curriculum introduced radical changes in the way students would be taught about Israel as a Jewish state. These became clear in its opening pages, where the assumptions and conclusions guiding the

members' work were set forth. First, the committee members decided to develop, for the first time, a unified curriculum for academic-track students in all four streams of the public school system—general, religious, Druze, and Arab—each of which had previously had its own course of study.²⁸ This approach was based on what seemed to be a reasonable premise: That young Israelis needed to learn about what was common to all of them, so that sectoral factionalism would be replaced by a shared sense of citizenship.²⁹ But in practice, this meant that the curricular goals related to teaching about Israel's Jewish character had to be suitable for instruction in the Arab sector, in which many teachers and students find it difficult to accept the idea that Israel ought to be a Jewish state or to feel "solidarity with the Jewish people." Since committee members were reluctant to impose such goals on the Arab sector, the decision to develop a unified curriculum left them with little choice but to water them down for Jewish students as well.

Moreover, the new curriculum undercut the schools' ability to develop students' identification with the Jewish state by removing almost all material about the Zionist movement and its institutions in the period before the founding of Israel. While the committee members recognized the significance of this historical background, they concluded that time constraints limited them to "recommending that textbook authors accompany the study material with short historical references."³⁰ Though the Zionist movement and the founding of Israel would continue to be studied as part of high-school history classes, their near-total elimination from the civics curriculum meant that when students came to grapple with questions of Israel's character as a Jewish state, they would be doing so without reference to the historical context—the Holocaust, for instance, or the opposition of the British government and the Arab regimes to Jewish immigration into Palestine—that could help them understand why it had been critical to establish a Jewish state, and why they should identify with its goals.

More ambiguous in its impact was the committee's determination that the old curriculum had downplayed "the tensions and conflicts within

Israeli society,” and that the new program of study should stress differences of opinion on all issues.³¹ Such an approach held out the prospect of allowing students to learn to respect a range of viewpoints, and to find and develop that conception of Israel as a Jewish national state that best fit their own worldview. But the danger inherent in such a curriculum should have been clear as well: Carried too far, the emphasis on points of contention among the various streams of Zionism would obscure the broad consensus that lay beneath the idea of founding a Jewish state, and that supported the creation and maintenance of the central laws and institutions expressing Israel’s character as the state of the Jewish people.

Finally, the new program called on textbook writers and teachers to focus on the “tension” between the Jewish and democratic elements in Israel’s character.³² The underlying premise, which had not been shared by the 1976 curriculum, was that Israel’s status as a Jewish state is necessarily in conflict with its status as a democracy—and therefore, by implication, that the maintenance of Israel’s Jewish character undercuts its ability to function as a full-fledged democracy. Though important Israeli figures had begun speaking about such a tension several years before the 1994 curriculum was published, it is important to bear in mind that the view they articulated went against the dominant trends in Israeli political thought, which had traditionally seen no disharmony between the state’s overarching Jewish aims and the quality of its democratic government.

As a result of the committee’s conclusions, the stated aims of the 1994 civics curriculum marked a dramatic change from those of the program it replaced. In the section on “Goals Concerning Knowledge and Understanding,” *not one of the nine goals* referred to Israel’s character as a Jewish state. Whereas the previous curriculum had required young Israeli Jews to focus on the case for Israel as the state of the Jewish people—marshaling arguments in the realms of philosophy, history, and politics and culture—they were now asked only to “examine the issues from the viewpoints of the various sectors and communities in Israeli society.”³³ In other words, they were to learn to see Israel’s status as the Jewish state not only from a Jewish

national perspective, but from all possible perspectives—which meant, at least in principle, that Jewish nationalism was to be given no greater weight than the anti-Zionism of those elements in Arab society that relate to Israeli independence as *al nakba* (“the catastrophe”) or of haredi extremists who see the reassertion of Jewish sovereignty as heretical.

The retreat from teaching about the Jewish state was also dramatized by the new section on “Goals Concerning Values.” According to the 1976 program, students were to develop “a feeling of solidarity with the Jewish people.” In the new curriculum, however, they needed only to “recognize the fact that Israel is the state of the Jewish people, and understand the commitment of the State of Israel to the Jewish people in the diaspora.”³⁴ Now, as the only Jewish aim in a set of goals aimed at inculcating values, this is rather lame: It calls only for “recognition” and “understanding”—which is to say, for the inculcation of no values at all. And this value-neutral language stood in sharp contrast to the four other goals on the list, which reflected a no-holds-barred embrace of democracy in general and of Israel’s democratic character in particular. The citizenship course, the committee members wrote, should teach students to “internalize democratic values”; to “work to realize” human and civil rights; to “be prepared to fulfill” their duties and defend their rights; and to “be involved” in public affairs.³⁵ These four goals are couched in highly active, if not emotional, terms—and the contrast seems to imply that Israel’s character as a Jewish state is something in which students need not have a personal stake.

Moreover, the detailed course of study outlined in the new curriculum focused so heavily on the divisions among supporters of the Jewish state that the points of consensus were hopelessly blurred. In the section on “The State of Israel as a Jewish State: Characteristics and Different Worldviews,” textbook writers and teachers were asked to present students with no fewer than five separate views on what a Jewish state is: “A state containing a Jewish majority”; “a state that belongs to the entire Jewish people”; “a state possessing a secular Jewish character”; “a state in which the Jewish religion plays a major role in legislation, in institutions, in the judicial system, and

in the way of life”; and “a state based on the principles of Jewish law.”³⁶ Absent completely from this section of the curriculum was any attempt to describe the broad areas of agreement that united the leading figures in these camps, or to describe those essential Jewish-national features of the actual State of Israel that had been enacted with the support of all of them.

Finally, despite the committee’s explicit decision to put “equal weight” on Israel’s character as a Jewish state and as a democratic state, the detailed program of study reflected nothing of the kind. The most obvious problem was that of the 90 total class hours, only 12 were devoted to examining Israel as a Jewish state.³⁷ More significant, however, was the qualitative difference between the “Jewish” and “democratic” sections of the course. The section on democracy ends with a unit on “Why Democracy?” in which students are to compare democratic regimes to all of their competitors and understand why a democratic regime is the best of all possible alternatives. Tellingly, there is no parallel unit in the section about a Jewish state: The authors of the new curriculum apparently did not think it necessary for students to be taught why it is preferable for Israel to be a Jewish state rather than any of the possible alternatives.

IV

The 1994 curriculum was not immediately implemented throughout the Israeli school system, as time was needed to develop a textbook conforming to its guidelines. Indeed, through the end of the 1999-2000 school year, the 1976 curriculum, with a few modifications that had been introduced over time, was still officially in effect. Nonetheless, the impact of the new curriculum began to be felt right away, as its ideas were adopted in various ways by Education Ministry officials. Civics teachers throughout

the country were required to take enrichment courses based on the new program, while sample textbook materials conforming to its guidelines were widely circulated and tested in various schools.³⁸ Most strikingly, within months of the new curriculum's publication, the content of the nationwide matriculation examinations in citizenship began changing in accordance with two of its most problematic elements: The downgrading of Israel's Jewish character as a subject of study, and the emphasis on the controversial nature of this character.

Thus in the Summer 1994 exam, not one of the thirty-six questions posed to students in general Jewish high schools required them to know that Israel is a Jewish state, let alone to be able to justify this status—the first time in the history of the citizenship exam that knowing about Israel's Jewish character was not worth even a single point.³⁹ Nor was this omission a fluke: In 1997 and again in 1999, not a single question was asked about Israel's Jewish character; and in 1995 and 1996, students could only earn a maximum of 10 points out of 100 by answering questions about Israel as a Jewish state.

Moreover, the few questions that were asked about the country's Jewish character tended to focus on its *negative* consequences for the state's non-Jewish citizens. In 1995, for example, students could gain credit for knowing about Israel as a Jewish state only if they elected to “explain two difficulties with which Arab-Israelis must grapple because of the fact that Israel is the state of the Jewish people.”⁴⁰ In 2000 as well, students could use their knowledge about Israel as a Jewish state only if they chose to respond to the following question:

The State of Israel is the state of the Jewish nation. Explain, using two examples, how this fact is liable to cause problems for Arab citizens of Israel.⁴¹

Thus in most of the years since the new curriculum was published, understanding why Israel should be a Jewish state, or even why it had been

established as one, could gain the student nothing in taking his matriculation examinations.

But the truly radical transformation in teaching about the Jewish state in civics courses was not completed until the 2000-2001 school year, when the Education Ministry introduced to classrooms across the country a new textbook, *To Be Citizens in Israel: A Jewish and Democratic State*. This massive 600-page work was written and produced by a ministry team headed by Hana Adan, the staff member responsible for citizenship studies in the ministry's Curriculum Division. Adan's team spent seven years drafting material, testing it in sample high schools throughout the country, receiving comments from academics and ministry officials, and revising the material into final form.⁴² The principal academic advisor for the book was Binyamin Neuberger, of the Political Science Department of the Open University, who served as chairman of the ministry's supervisory committee on citizenship studies during most of the period in which *To Be Citizens in Israel* was being prepared—and was therefore the ministry's most authoritative academic voice on this subject.

When *To Be Citizens in Israel* was published in March 2000, it became the first book on the market that conformed to the 1994 curriculum. Shortly afterwards, the ministry's director-general issued a directive making the new curriculum obligatory for all Jewish high schools as of the fall of 2000, and declaring that only this textbook was approved for use.⁴³ The ministry's two national supervisors of citizenship studies then sent letters to all civics teachers in the general and religious state schools informing them that during the upcoming school year, they were to teach from the ministry's textbook, and stipulating the specific pages they were to cover.⁴⁴ When the ministry sent teachers the annual handbook on teaching civics, it included a 43-page guide explaining how to achieve the goals of the new curriculum using *To Be Citizens in Israel*.⁴⁵ And when the school year opened on September 1, 2000, virtually every state-run Jewish high school had in fact switched over to the new text.⁴⁶

What, then, does the only citizenship textbook available to Jewish high-school students teach them about the Jewish state in which they live? On the surface, *To Be Citizens in Israel* seems headed in the right direction, as the first of its three major sections, spanning 65 pages, is devoted to the question of “What Is a Jewish State?” The second section, “What Is Democracy?” sets out the nine major principles underlying democracy, and includes sources showing that these principles can be found in Jewish texts and traditions. The bulk of the textbook, covering “Regime and Politics in Israel,” is supposed to “examine how and to what degree the two foundations—Judaism and democracy—find their expression in the state.”⁴⁷

A closer examination of *To Be Citizens in Israel* reveals, however, that despite the promising headings, the authors have managed to create a text that systematically undermines any possibility that students will emerge with a genuine understanding of why they should want Israel to be a Jewish state. This failure stems, first and foremost, from the book’s inability to articulate a coherent explanation for why a Jewish state is needed, to provide a compelling historical account of how and why the idea of the Jewish state was realized, or to show convincingly that the principal features that make Israel a Jewish state today are worthy of admiration or loyalty. Second, *To Be Citizens in Israel* delivers the message that Israel’s Jewish character ultimately undermines its democratic standing, and that the resultant flaws lead to inexcusable economic, political, and cultural discrimination against non-Jewish minorities—who in turn are prevented from fully identifying with the state or redeeming the promise of the Israeli citizenship they hold.

The first of these problems surfaces a short way into the opening chapter, “Nationality and National States,” which introduces the section on “What Is a Jewish State?” and is presumably meant to explain the rationale behind the founding of national states such as Israel. This is where one would expect to find a forceful explication of the idea and practice of the national state as developed over the last several centuries in the British

Isles and Europe. Such a discussion would naturally touch on the distinguished tradition of political thought undergirding the national state, including its ancient roots in classical Greece and Israel, and its modern development in the writings of Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Rousseau, Michelet, Herder, Hegel, Mazzini, Lord Acton, Ernest Renan, and Woodrow Wilson. Likewise, it would be natural to address the experience of national movements in Greece, Italy, and Germany in the nineteenth century, which served as an inspiration to many of the early Zionist thinkers. Jewish students' understanding of their own national state could also be aided were they to read about parallel efforts in the first half of the twentieth century—in places as disparate as Czechoslovakia, Ireland, and India. And to complete the picture, the book's authors could have depicted the recent success of national states such as Poland and Hungary in breaking away from Soviet tyranny and establishing themselves as nationalist democracies.

Yet none of these ideas, people, or events are discussed in the chapter's six pages. Indeed, hardly a word is said about the reasons that have motivated certain peoples to aspire to self-determination within the framework of an independent state. Instead, the development of national states, and the history of their successes, is condensed into two sentences.⁴⁸ The lion's share of the chapter is devoted to an extended critique of the theoretical and practical problems of national states, and is written in a manner so hostile that it is difficult to imagine any student coming away with the impression that such states constitute any kind of a model worthy of emulation. (As the ideas presented in this attack on the national state are of some significance, I will treat them at greater length below.)

This same pattern—of declining to explain why Israel was created as, or should continue to be, a Jewish national state—is continued in the four remaining chapters on “What Is a Jewish State?” Here, too, there is not a single reference to the reasons *why* the Jewish national movement came into being as a movement devoted to establishing a Jewish state. Though the ministry's staff could have chosen to follow the advice in the 1994 curriculum by including short historical notes, they chose not to do so in the

chapters devoted to the Jewish state. Thus, there is no mention of the persecution and hatred of Jews in Europe that brought Herzl to write *The Jewish State*, or of the horrific events which persuaded much of the world half a century later that he had been right.⁴⁹ Likewise, there is no mention of the heroic efforts that went into establishing the Zionist movement, nurturing the Jewish settlement in Palestine, or winning independence through military and diplomatic struggle.

Instead of depicting the historical circumstances that would lead students to understand why founding a Jewish state was widely viewed as desirable and necessary, *To Be Citizens in Israel* presents readers with a chapter entitled “The State of Israel: Different Approaches,” which offers an extreme application, almost a caricature, of the Gutmann curriculum’s principle of exposing students to the “tensions and conflicts within Israeli society.” In this chapter, Israel is not depicted as having any constitutional foundation or political tradition that can be said to determine its character as a Jewish state. Instead, the entire question of the Jewishness of the state is presented as being a matter of virtually total dispute among no fewer than five opposing camps—with the implication that there is no way of actually reaching a consensus, not only concerning why Israel should be a Jewish state, but also as to which of its nationalist features deserve to remain in place.

After presenting two views of Israel that are associated with the religious camp—“A Tora State” and “A National-Religious State”—the authors dissect the mainstream of political Zionism into no fewer than three distinct conceptions, which are depicted as being at odds with one another: (i) “A culturally Jewish national state,” which “draws from the national, cultural, and religious tradition and the Jewish heritage”; (ii) “the state of the Jewish people,” which emphasizes that Israel belongs to Jews around the world; and (iii) “the state of the Jews,” whose proponents are described as seeking to secure a Jewish majority, which in turn will shape the country’s culture and character. Now, anyone with even a limited grasp of Zionist history will quickly recognize that Theodor Herzl, Ahad Ha’am, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Berl Katznelson, Golda Meir, Moshe

Dayan, Yigal Allon, Menachem Begin, Ezer Weizman, Yitzhak Rabin, and Shimon Peres—in short, the major figures who founded and built the state—belonged to *all three* of these “camps,” for the simple reason that they are not separate camps, but rather different aspects of a single political tradition—a clear tradition, which in general had no difficulty reaching consensus on a variety of basic political and cultural issues, from the values expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the Law of Return, and the State Education Law to the holding of the Eichmann trial and the creation of a united Jerusalem after the Six Day War.

Yet a high-school student encountering this material for the first time will be led to believe the opposite: The most likely conclusion to be drawn from this extraordinarily misleading presentation is that there never was a Zionist mainstream with an essentially consensual tradition concerning the basics of what a Jewish state should look like; that it certainly does not exist today; and that there is no single group with which anyone wanting Israel to keep its current, nationalist features can identify. And, lest the student try to form such a synthesis on his own, the authors of *To Be Citizens in Israel* appear to be determined to prevent this: In the questions at the end of a number of the chapters, students are presented with a series of passages or a list of symbols and institutions, and are asked to categorize each one of them as belonging to one of the five approaches.⁵⁰

In keeping with this divide-and-neuter approach to the ideas that have stood at the heart of the Zionist political consensus, *To Be Citizens in Israel* seems to take particular care in making sure that high-school students see every element of the state’s Jewish character that has served as a source of national cohesion as having actually been, above all, a source of discord. This is particularly striking with respect to the Declaration of Independence, which was adopted unanimously by every Jewish political party in existence in Israel in 1948—from Agudath Israel to the Communists. In “The State of Israel: Different Approaches,” the dramatic achievement of having reached consensus on such a complex founding document is essentially ignored, and instead the authors devote a full page and a half to the

argument among the signatories over whether God should be referred to explicitly in the text—a presentation that ends with the words, “the dispute as to what is the desirable character of the Jewish state has continued unchanged ever since.”⁵¹

Later, the authors of the book perform a similar disservice to “Hatikva,” the national anthem that has been a rallying point for Zionists since being penned by Naftali Hertz Imber a century ago. Rather than describing how this anthem gradually gained acceptance until it became a central source of inspiration for the Jewish people in our own day, the book devotes most of its space on “Hatikva” to emphasizing the fact that the anthem was *not* acceptable to everyone:

Over the years, even before the founding of the state, there were those who objected to the status of “Hatikva.” Members of the Labor movement proposed as an alternative the song “Tehezakna,” which expresses the suffering of the worker and his struggle to attain his rights. Members of the religious Zionist movement suggested replacing the anthem with Psalm 126.⁵²

Instead of explaining the significance of choosing “Hatikva,” which spoke to the broadest possible range of Jews rather than to a particular sector, *To Be Citizens in Israel* ends the discussion inconclusively by presenting the student with the full texts of all three of the proposed anthems.

This problem recurs in the discussion on the Law of Return, in which the authors briefly note that this historic piece of legislation was adopted “without opposition” by the Knesset, and that it was understood by many to represent the essence of Zionism.⁵³ The book then emphasizes that there are “many controversies, which arose from disputes [about this law] that continue through today”—after which it devotes two full pages to chronicling the feuding among various political parties as to whether Orthodox Jewish law should be used to determine “who is a Jew” for purposes of implementing the Law of Return.⁵⁴

The same pattern repeats itself in discussing those governmental institutions that reflect Israel's Jewish character. *To Be Citizens in Israel* dedicates no fewer than four and a half contention-filled pages to describing Orthodox Jewish institutions that are part of the state. Thus, the reader is told that "The involvement of the chief rabbis [in public issues] stirs up controversy within society over whether they are going beyond their authority."⁵⁵ Similarly, the authors make sure that students are aware that "in the realm of activity of the religious councils there are also subjects mired in dispute."⁵⁶ On the other hand, those Jewish-nationalist aspects of Israel that are not "mired in dispute" are usually disposed of without any kind of real discussion at all. Thus, fewer than a dozen lines are devoted to covering the activities of both the Absorption Ministry and the Jewish Agency, which together have borne the principal responsibility for bringing Jews to Israel and establishing Jewish communities throughout the country.⁵⁷ Likewise, the Education Ministry, which for half a century has been charged with what is probably the most important mission deriving from Israel's status as the state of the Jewish people—providing a Jewish education to Israelis from all backgrounds—is not even listed as an institution reflecting the Jewish nature of the state.⁵⁸

The shallow, fragmented, contentious, and unpersuasive presentation of the state's Jewish character stands in bleak contrast to the compelling nature of the section in *To Be Citizens in Israel* that is devoted to the country's democratic foundations.⁵⁹ For while the textbook scrupulously refrains from advocating that Israel *should* be a Jewish state, the section on democracy does not hesitate to argue on behalf of democracy. Indeed, the final chapter, "Why Democracy?" speaks unabashedly of the need to "clarify for ourselves what democracy is, and why democracy is to be preferred over regimes that are not democratic."⁶⁰ Nowhere is there a parallel chapter, "Why a Jewish State?" that explains what makes such a state preferable to any of the competing models that have been proposed for Israel.

And this asymmetry dogs the entire book: The idea of the Jewish state is presented as fragmented and fragmenting, while the idea of democracy is

presented as essentially cohesive, based on ideas “that are held in common by all of the Western democracies.”⁶¹ Similarly, the poverty of historical depth used in describing the development of the idea of the Jewish state stands in stunning contrast to the rich heritage of democratic thought, described in a two-millennium-long tour beginning with ancient Athens and continuing with John Locke, the French Enlightenment, the American founders, Abraham Lincoln, John Stuart Mill, and many others.⁶²

Perhaps most damning of all, however, is that while the Jewish state is presented as a series of disconnected facts (lists of laws, institutions, and so on), democracy is presented as a series of lofty *values and principles*—including popular sovereignty, pluralism, human rights, equality, rule of law, and separation of powers—which impart to it a conceptual coherence, as well as giving it a moral status as the preferred form of government.⁶³ Of course, the idea of the Jewish state was also based on a long line of values and principles, the product of a century of Zionist thought and argument on the subject—including the idea of the Jewish people as a united polity, the principle of the ingathering of the exiles, the unique political tie of the Jews to the land of Israel, the right of every Jew to return to Israel, the idea of Israel as a spiritual center for the Jewish people, the idea of Israel as a safe haven for persecuted Jewry, the centrality of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew Bible as the basis for modern Jewish culture, the redemption of the desert and wilderness, and the vision of the Jewish state as an exemplary society. All of these values and principles could have served to create a rich and powerful section on the Jewish state, which would have breathed meaning into the ossified “facts” of Jewish institutions and laws described in the book. In their absence, high-school students are left to wonder why or how anyone could become committed to the idea of a Jewish state.

V

But the greatest problem with *To Be Citizens in Israel* is not that it fails to give students a good reason to support the idea that Israel should be a Jewish state. Worse yet is that the new textbook seems to suggest that Israel's Jewish character is detrimental to its ability to function as a full-fledged democracy. True, the authors stop short of articulating the view that a Jewish state cannot be democratic, nor do they argue that Israel has to accept the position of those who call upon the state to shed fundamental elements of its Jewish character; indeed, to the extent to which they expressly back any position, the authors seem to maintain that it is *possible* for Israel to be both Jewish and democratic.⁶⁴ What they do, however, is to systematically undermine the claim that Israel *should* maintain its Jewish character, by providing the reader with a steady stream of arguments, sources, and graphics to remind us of the toll that Israel's nationalist character takes—and of the potential inherent in giving up on the idea of the Jewish state and transforming Israel into a non-Jewish “state of all its citizens.”

This tactic is evident already in the first chapter, which deals with national states generally. There the authors distinguish between countries such as the United States, in which nationality is defined “politically”—that is, in terms of one's citizenship alone—and those such as Israel, Germany, and Poland, in which nationality is defined “ethnically.” In the latter group, the state is depicted as being “controlled” by a certain ethnic group that it is “difficult for minority groups to join.”⁶⁵ The efforts to build a world based on the idea of the national state have therefore failed, and with grim consequences:

The aspiration to establish nation-states... escalates the social, economic, and political tensions between national minorities and the national groups

comprising the majority.... Moreover, these tensions frequently turn into violent struggles....⁶⁶

Before he knows it, the student finds himself reading a tirade on the evils of the nation-state, which focuses on the bloodshed it has brought in virtually every corner of the globe, including Iraq, Lebanon, Georgia, Chechnya, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Spain, India, Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Congo, and Rwanda. The authors then conclude the chapter on an ominous note:

In these places, blood-soaked civil wars have been waged between members of different nationalities who were for decades citizens in the same country. Citizens who studied and worked together, and in many cases had become family relations, turned overnight into sworn enemies, because of their struggle to win control over the nation-state....⁶⁷

But there is a way out, the authors seem to indicate. Though nation-states seem doomed to failure, bloodshed, or civil war, those countries that are based on “political nationalism,” such as the United States, have no problems of sufficient magnitude even to deserve mention. In democratic countries belonging to this category, “the state is identified with all of the citizens in the country and not with a particular ethnic group....” Hence, the authors term such a democracy a “state of all its citizens.”⁶⁸

This same term comes back in the very next chapter, “The State of Israel: Different Approaches.” Alongside the five species of Jewish state that are described, the authors present a sixth view, according to which “the State of Israel must be a state of all its citizens, a state that is not identified with the Jewish nationality, but is instead a democratic state that is committed to giving fully equal rights to all its citizens....”⁶⁹ The decision to discuss this viewpoint in the ministry’s textbook on citizenship, while it reflects a departure from the 1994 curriculum, is not problematic in and of itself, and is in many respects even commendable. The concept of the “state

of its citizens” has become salient in Israeli discourse, in large part through the efforts of MK Azmi Bishara, and the schools have a role to play in educating students to understand the demand that Israel be transformed into such a state.⁷⁰ But the problem is that *To Be Citizens in Israel* presents the option of Israel’s being a “state of all its citizens” not only as legitimate—which is unprecedented for an Education Ministry textbook—but as the highest realization of democratic principles. In the words of the authors,

This approach strives to see in the State of Israel a democratic state that belongs to all of its citizens, a state in which the national identity is political-Israeli, and its values democratic.⁷¹

Moreover, nowhere in the chapter is there any reference to the fact that accepting this idea would require the jettisoning of the central political traditions of the Israeli state, and the repudiation of the central vision that led to its founding.⁷²

In addition to presenting the option of a non-Jewish state as having advantages without drawbacks, the authors go out of their way to lend credibility to this option by making it the centerpiece of the discussion they aim to spark among students learning from the book. At the end of the chapter, students are asked to read and classify six lengthy citations from various scholars and public figures—of which three turn out to favor one or another element of transforming Israel into a “state of all its citizens.” The author of the first excerpt, Yitzhak Reiter, a Hebrew University lecturer in the field of Arab-Israeli affairs, calls for amending the Law of Return so that it will no longer discriminate against Arabs and “changing several lines from the national anthem” so that “they express the Arab tradition.”⁷³ In the second excerpt, Atallah Mansour, an Arab-Israeli journalist who writes for the national daily *Ha’aretz*, describes Israeli Arabs as the victims of structural inequality and discrimination, which can be cured only if Israel enshrines in a constitution the idea that “it is a state like all

states, which takes care of the welfare and security of all its citizens.”⁷⁴ And the final excerpt in this chapter, by Assad Ghanem, a scholar of Arab-Israeli affairs at Haifa University, takes this line of thinking to its logical conclusions:

In order for Israel to become democratic, in the manner that is customary in the democratic world, it must effect a very substantial foundational and ideological change, so that it becomes via this transformation a state of all its citizens... and in parallel and beyond its recognition of Jewish nationalism, it must recognize the Arab nationalism of its Arab citizens and give them collective rights that are equal to those of the Jews.⁷⁵

In a similar vein, the section explaining “What Is a Jewish State?” ends not with an explanation of why such a state is desirable, but with a passage that is headlined, “The Consequences of Israel’s Being a Jewish National State for Arab Citizens in Israel.” It reads as follows:

The fact that Israel is the state of the Jewish people means that it is the state of all members of the Jewish people, including those who are not citizens of the state. This fact at times causes the Arabs to feel that the state of Israel is not their state, but rather the state of the Jewish people. They see the Law of Return as a law that discriminates in favor of Jews, because it gives all Jews the right to immigrate and claim citizenship. Moreover, the Arabs feel that they are not equal citizens in their own country, because there are special national institutions whose aim is to help only Jews, such as the Jewish Agency, which is responsible for relations between the State of Israel and the Jewish diaspora.... All of these institutions, which redound only to the well-being of Jewish citizens, serve to exacerbate the sense of inequality that Arab citizens feel, and their feeling that the State of Israel is not their state.⁷⁶

In case this passage is not sufficient to persuade the students that Arab-Israelis are being treated unjustly, the exercises at the end of the chapter

present students with an entire page of argumentation from a study claiming that Israeli Arabs are harmed financially by Jewish immigration, as well as an advertisement of a Finance Ministry policy aimed at assisting Jewish educational institutions in the diaspora. “Examine the excerpt and the advertisement,” the book instructs the student, and then goes on to ask:

- 7a. What hardships do Arab citizens of Israel face because of the fact that it is the state of the Jewish people?

Other exercises in this chapter are of this same type:

5. In your opinion, is it the case that the fact of Israel’s being a Jewish national state, whose symbols are special only to Jews, harms its character as a democratic state? Explain.
6. There are those who believe that the Israel Lands Law does unjustified harm to Arab and Druze citizens. Do you agree with this view? Explain.
9. Today, one hears voices calling to change the flag, the seal, and the anthem of the state. Do you support or oppose these changes? Justify your position.⁷⁷

In each of these questions, the assumption is that there is good reason to think that the Jewish state might not be defensible as a full-fledged democracy because of the deleterious impact of its nationalist character on the Arab population.

The claim that Israel’s Jewish character demands a constant sacrifice of the state’s democratic ideals continues to be a theme in subsequent chapters of the book. For instance, the discussion of the Law of Return closes with the claim of those who see the law in its entirety as illegitimate:

There is a small Jewish minority and a huge Arab majority who believe that the State of Israel is first and foremost a democratic country that

belongs to all its citizens, without distinction among religions and national peoples. Those who favor this approach see the Law of Return as a discriminatory law that should be canceled by passing a law that will determine the conditions for immigration and becoming a citizen that are appropriate for the State of Israel, as is done in all democratic states.⁷⁸

And here, too, the questions at the end of the chapter are used to make sure that the students understand that Israel's Jewish character causes discrimination in a manner that might simply be inconsistent with democracy. Thus, students are asked to explain the arguments on both sides of the question as to whether the Law of Return and the Citizenship Law "are laws that discriminate unjustly against non-Jews," and then to give their own opinion as to whether "the preference that is accorded to Jews in the Law of Return and the Citizenship Law contradicts the democratic principles on which the State of Israel was established."⁷⁹

But the message that Israel's Jewish character cannot be reconciled with its commitments as a democracy is brought home most sharply in the portion of the book devoted specifically to Arab-Israelis. There the main body of the text all but endorses the claim made by those Israeli Arabs who believe that Israel's Jewish character prevents it from being democratic:

On the one hand, the Jewish Israeli society demands from the Arabs to demonstrate loyalty to the state and to identify with it as Israelis, without allowing them to join the collective that is dominant; on the other hand, the Jewish Israeli society is not prepared to accept activities of the Arabs that are geared towards a change in the definition of the national identity of the state in a manner that will include them, and it forbids all organization aimed at changing the Jewish character of the country. For these reasons, some of the Arab citizens feel that the state is not their state.... According to their understanding, Israel cannot be a democratic

country as long as it fulfills the vision of the members of one religious-national group at the expense of residents and citizens who belong to a different nationality.⁸⁰

Immediately afterwards, the ministry's textbook seeks to buttress the claim that Israel practices systematic, unjustified discrimination against Israeli Arabs. After reviewing the laws and practices that lead to discrimination against Arabs in matters of citizenship, army service, and land apportionment, the book then marshals its single most impressive section of graphics—more than half a dozen tables, bar graphs, line graphs, and picture graphs—in order to demonstrate that Arabs suffer disproportionately from poverty, unemployment, school dropouts, and educational underachievement, and are given less than their fair share of government funds for health, welfare, education, and housing.⁸¹ No attempt is made to offer the student any perspective other than that government policy is “inequitable” and “discriminatory,” and that it is a consequence of Israel's character as a Jewish state.

Perhaps the reason why the discussion on Arab-Israelis leans so hard against the claim that a Jewish state can be democratic is that the Education Ministry chose as the author for these pages none other than Assad Ghanem—who was quoted earlier as opposing Israel's status as a Jewish state, and arguing that it could not be a democracy until it transformed itself into a “state of all its citizens.”⁸² In fact, Ghanem went on record three months after the book was published, arguing that the non-democratic character of the State of Israel justifies the use of violence by its Arab citizens. As he told an interviewer for the Jerusalem weekly *Kol Ha'ir*:

In all the non-democratic countries, such as Israel, which discriminated against minorities, a change did not come about until after the use of violence. I hope that this will not happen here, but if the Israeli policy towards Arabs continues, there will be no choice but to go through the experiences that have transpired in Northern Ireland, Belgium, South Africa, and France. Clashes with the state will be essential.⁸³

It is certainly remarkable—one should really say amazing—that a man such as Ghanem, who believes that Israel is not a democracy and that it should not be a Jewish state, was chosen to participate in the writing of a civics textbook for the State of Israel. And perhaps even more remarkable is that he was asked to write one of the most sensitive and complex sections in the official Ministry of Education textbook, the section on Israel's Arab minority.

Thus despite paying some lip service to other points of view, *To Be Citizens in Israel* ends up sending students a rather clear message: That for Israel to be a truly democratic country, it may well have no choice but to give up on many of the central elements that make it a Jewish state. Today, this message is being broadcast in every Jewish high school in Israel.

VI

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the high-school course on citizenship, which ought to be the place where young Israelis learn to understand and identify with the Jewish state in which they live, can no longer be counted on to fulfill this crucial function. The curriculum issued in 1994 radically downsized the Jewish-state orientation that had characterized its predecessor, stripped away from civics classes the historical depth that is irreplaceable for fostering a proper understanding of Israel's Jewish character, instructed the school system to focus on that which divides rather than building a common denominator that could form the core of citizenship, and introduced the idea that students should be taught that Israel's Jewish and democratic foundations are in serious conflict with one another.

Moreover, the textbook that the Education Ministry produced, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, which now enjoys monopoly status in Israeli high schools,

goes well beyond the 1994 curriculum in directions that cannot help but undermine the belief of young Israelis that the state in which they live should be a Jewish one. The new text eviscerates the compelling ideas that have long been at the heart of the Jewish state by transforming them into a collection of squabbles among rival camps, deprives the Jewish state established in 1948 of purpose and meaning by disconnecting the historical motives from the results, and turns most of the actual policies that have reflected the country's national character into the object of so much discord that the sensitive student may well be left wondering whether anything could possibly justify their continuation. At the same time, without ever endorsing the idea that Israel should cease to be a Jewish state, the authors make it clear that its failure to transform its nature puts an enduring strain on its character as a democratic regime.

What, then, should be done so that young Israelis will receive the education that will prepare them to be citizens in a Jewish democracy?

The answer lies in developing a citizenship course that will provide students with the conceptual frame of reference they need to develop a loyalty and commitment to Israel's character as a Jewish state, to its democratic institutions, and to its open society. Such a course should address all the issues that undergird Israel's continuing mission as the state of the Jewish people: The theoretical justification for national states, the compatibility of the particularist traditions of such states with a democratic form of government and with an open society, the historic reasons for the establishment of a Jewish state, the political and constitutional tradition of the idea of the Jewish state, the policies that have expressed this ideal in the past and in the present, and the compatibility of Israel's Jewish character with democratic government and individual rights.

Certainly, students should be taught that there are different views about many of these matters, and that no single view possesses the monopoly on truth. Likewise, they should be taught to think critically—about their own assumptions, the texts they read, the decisions of those in power. But it must be understood that citizenship in a Jewish democracy presupposes

some kind of a common understanding of, and sympathy with, the constitutive purposes and principles which underlay its founding, and which have served as a source of cohesiveness and pride in the ensuing half-century. In times of peace, an ability to identify with the fundamental character of the Jewish state would be crucial for its preservation. But at a time when Jews are being called upon to protect their country from evident danger, there is a real need for a civics curriculum that will help its young people understand what justifies the sacrifices that may have to be made on its behalf.

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Notes

1. For a discussion of these and other manifestations of Israel's character as a Jewish state, see Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 267-275.

2. Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1960).

3. See, for example, Yoram Hazony, "Antisocial Texts," *The New Republic*, April 17 and 24, 2000, pp. 46-55.

4. Hana Adan, Varda Ashkenazi, and Bilha Alperson, *To Be Citizens in Israel: A Jewish and Democratic State* (Jerusalem: Ma'alot, 2000). [Hebrew]

5. Directive of the Director-General of the Ministry of Education 9A, May 1, 2000, p. 12. Directive of the Supervisor-General of Citizenship Studies, no. 4 for 2000, May 25, 2000. The Arab and Druze schools are to begin using the new textbook once an adapted version has been prepared in Arabic.

6. *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher 6* (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1990), p. 39. On the founding vision for teaching civics in a Jewish state, see the speech by Benzion Dinur, Israel's third education minister, "Educating for Citizenship," pp. 169-188 of this issue.

7. A separate curriculum was developed for Arab students in 1980, and for Druze students in 1984.

8. Citizenship is mandatory in “academic” high schools and in the academic tracks of “mixed” high schools that also offer vocational studies. The one-unit course consists of 90 academic “hours,” each of which is 45 minutes long. Typically, these hours are spread out over the course of eleventh or twelfth grade. In those schools in which citizenship is studied during the senior year, the number of hours is generally reduced by around a third, as the students end classroom study around Passover time, and spend the remainder of the year preparing for matriculation exams.

9. *Curriculum in Citizenship for General and Religious State High Schools* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1976) (hereafter, “Citizenship Curriculum, 1976”). On the development of this curriculum, see *Annual Guidebook 6*, p. 39.

10. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 1. To make these separate elements clearer, the program’s authors immediately went on to note that the State of Israel must carry out the missions that stem from its being “a Jewish state,” “a democratic state,” and “a welfare state.”

11. The 1976 curriculum contained a separate section on the goals and program of study for religious state high schools. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, pp. 25-47.

12. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 5.

13. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 4. In addition, three other aims related to Israel’s Jewish character implicitly, by requiring students to acquire the factual, conceptual, and historical basis to grapple with the challenges that had been faced by Israelis in establishing and maintaining their state.

14. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 5.

15. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 8. Initially, the subject of “The Political Regime in Israel” was not made mandatory, but it was studied in the vast majority of schools, and it officially became mandatory during the 1986-1987 school year. *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher 4* (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1989), p. 5.

16. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 3. The other optional subjects were “Fundamental Problems in Israeli Economic Policy,” “Economic Gaps, Hardship, and Social Welfare Policy in Israel,” “Labor and Labor Relations in Israel,” and “National and Religious Minorities in Israel.” Four of these six came within the rubric of “Israeli Society as a Society in Formation,” and were initially defined as “half-subjects,” such that two of them together counted as a single subject. In

practice, however, these half-subjects were counted as full subjects on the annual matriculation exams.

17. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 14.

18. Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, p. 21.

19. In addition, the leading texts contained an additional flaw: They placed undue emphasis on the controversial religious elements of Israel's Jewish character, such as the Orthodox rabbinate's monopoly on marriages and divorces, while underplaying the nationalist elements that were the object of wall-to-wall consensus—the Law of Return, the actions of the IDF to save Jews around the world, the state's provision of a “core Jewish curriculum” for all sectors of the population, and so on. This approach characterized the dominant civics textbook used during the 1980s, Shlomo Yovel's *The Regime in the State of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987) [Hebrew], as well as the most popular text of the 1990s, David Shahar's *The Regime of the State of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Yesod, 1993). [Hebrew]

20. In the Summer 1992 exam, only part of one long question was devoted to this subject. Students were generally allowed to choose one of the three long questions in each of the three areas which they had studied—“The Political Regime in Israel,” plus two of the optional subjects. Therefore, if there was one question on Israel's Jewish character appearing in each of two different areas, the student could answer both of them. Though the large number of questions from which students could choose also made it possible to skip over questions about Israel's Jewish character, students clearly had an incentive to study this material.

21. The scoring system changed over the years; starting in 1981, long questions were worth 30 points, and short ones were worth 5 points, such that two long questions and one short question totaled 35 points. As of the 1985-1986 school year, long questions were worth 25 points, and short questions were adjusted accordingly, but this change did not materially affect the prospects of students who were knowledgeable about Israel's Jewish character.

22. Citizenship Matriculation Exam, Summer 1983, question 3.

23. Citizenship Matriculation Exam, Summer 1984, question 4. The unit on the diaspora was a revised version of the unit on absorbing immigration.

24. Citizenship Matriculation Exam, Summer 1989, question 4.

25. *Citizenship: Curriculum for High School for Jewish (General State and Religious State), Arab, and Druze Schools* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, 1994), p. 2 (hereafter, “Citizenship Curriculum, 1994”).

26. In addition to Gutmann, the academics on the panel included Eliezer Don-Yehiya of the Political Science Department at Bar-Ilan University, Chaim

Adler of Hebrew University's School of Education, and Tzvi Tzameret of the Yitzhak Ben-Zvi Research Institute. On the committee's work, see *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher 5* (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1989), p. 10.

27. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, p. 5.

28. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 4-5.

29. Indeed, the previous curricula had encouraged an unhealthy element of separatism: The study of citizenship in religious state schools, for example, had explicitly sought to develop in students "a feeling of belonging to... the religious sector." See especially Citizenship Curriculum, 1976, pp. 25, 28.

30. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 5-6.

31. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 4-5.

32. See especially Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 5-6.

33. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 7-8. Similarly, students were to "recognize the range of views in Israel on the problems that are the source of controversy." The goals that are cited here for 1976 come from the curriculum for the general state high schools.

34. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, p. 8.

35. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, p. 8.

36. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, p. 9.

37. At the core of the 1994 citizenship curriculum was a mandatory course on "The Regime and Politics in the State of Israel," which was to account for 70 of the 90 total class hours. Of these 70, only about 12 cover material that corresponds to Israel's Jewish character. According to the committee's proposed course of study, 8 hours were to be taken up by the consideration of Israel's character as a Jewish state, 2 hours were to be devoted to Israel's status as a Jewish and democratic state as evinced in the Declaration of Independence, and 12 hours were to be devoted to an examination of democracy. The remaining 48 classes, more than two-thirds of the total, were to be devoted to a series of subjects the committee referred to as "The Regime in Israel—a Jewish, Democratic State." Though the word "Jewish" appears in this title, the actual content consists of a tour of Israel's legal system, the branches of government and the balance of power among them, the process of legislating, the structure of the judiciary, the function of the political parties, and so on. With trivial exceptions, amounting perhaps to 2 hours or so, Jewish symbols, laws, practices, and values are not listed among the subject descriptions, clarifications, and comments that outline for teachers and textbook writers what is

actually to be taught. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 3, 9-23. In addition, the optional courses that were outlined for students in the general state high schools, which accounted for 20 hours of study, were almost completely devoid of anything about Israel's character as a Jewish state. The partial exception, on Arab and Druze citizens of Israel, addressed only the difficulties that Israel's Jewish character caused to non-Jewish citizens. Citizenship Curriculum, 1994, pp. 25-26.

38. On the enrichment courses, see, for example, *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher* 10 (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1994), p. 4; *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher* 11 (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1995), p. 5.

39. Citizenship Matriculation Exam, Summer 1994. The exam that year did include questions on Israel's Jewish character in the section on "Religion, Society, and State," but this topic was restricted to students in the religious state high schools.

40. Citizenship Matriculation Exam, Summer 1995, question 10.

41. Citizenship Matriculation Exam, Summer 2000, question 3. Both of the questions cited in this paragraph appeared in the optional subject on Arab-Israelis—which effectively became mandatory for students in the general state high schools beginning in 1995-1996, when the Education Ministry canceled the last of the remaining optional subjects that had not been dropped earlier.

42. Members of the citizenship staff of the Education Ministry's Curriculum Division began working on study material based on the new curriculum during the 1992-1993 school year, even before it had been formally approved. *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher* 8 (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1992), p. 5. They began testing this material in classrooms around the country during the 1993-1994 school year, and continued doing so in subsequent years. *Annual Guidebook* 11, p. 5; *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher* 12 (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 1996), p. 78.

43. Directive of the Director-General of the Ministry of Education 9A, p. 12. According to ministry officials interviewed for this article, Arab and Druze schools are supposed to switch over to the new program starting in the fall of 2001, once suitable versions of the ministry's textbook are published in Arabic.

44. Directive of the Supervisor-General of Citizenship Studies, no. 4 for 2000. The directive was signed by Hana Shapir and Sarah Veider, the supervisors-general for the general state and religious state schools, respectively.

45. *Annual Guidebook for the Citizenship Teacher* 16 (Jerusalem: Curriculum Division of the Ministry of Education, 2001), pp. 10-52.

46. This finding comes from a telephone survey conducted for this article by the author and his research staff.

47. In addition, the book's concluding chapter, "The State of Israel: A Jewish and Democratic State—Closing the Circle," is devoted explicitly "to examining how it is possible to integrate the Jewish foundation and the democratic foundation in the State of Israel...." Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 562.

48. These two sentences are as follows: "The desire for self-determination led during the nineteenth century to an awakening of nationalist movements and to the recognition by the international community of the right of nationalities to self-determination within the framework of a sovereign state. The nationalist movements advanced the idea of 'a state for every nationality' and 'every nationality in a single state.'" Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 21.

49. The introduction to the book, which focuses on Israel's Declaration of Independence, devotes three lines to the Holocaust and its aftermath. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 14. These three lines, plus the text of the declaration, constitute the entirety of the book's treatment of those pre-state developments that could contribute to the understanding of why a Jewish state was necessary.

50. See, for example, Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 36, question 1, and p. 77, questions 3 and 4. The teacher's guide takes a more reasonable position, and asks teachers to explain to students that each school of thought also contains the ideas of the school of thought presented immediately afterwards on the continuum. *Annual Guidebook* 16, pp. 14-15.

51. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 30-31.

52. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 63-64.

53. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 266. The Law of Return is described briefly in the first section of the book, "What Is a Jewish State?" on p. 73, but the extended discussion to which I am referring here is in the third section of the book.

54. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 266-268.

55. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 67.

56. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 69.

57. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 69-70.

58. The law setting forth the Ministry of Education's role is disposed of in a single sentence. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 72.

59. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 81-238.

60. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 236. The need to include such a chapter in the section on democracy was explicitly mentioned in the 1994 citizenship curriculum.

61. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 94. There are occasional statements to the effect that there are differences of opinion as to how democracies should be constituted, and the introduction to the book (p. 6) suggests that this is parallel to the situation with regard to Israel's Jewish character. In practice, however, the sections on democracy focus on the common denominator, whereas the sections on the Jewish state magnify the differences.

62. See especially Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 84-88, 98-100.

63. For the list of these values, see Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 94.

64. On this point, see especially Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 6, 562-563, as well as the title of the book.

65. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 23.

66. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 23-24.

67. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 22-24.

68. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 23.

69. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 29.

70. See, for example, Azmi Bishara, "On the Question of the Palestinian Minority in Israel," *Theory and Criticism* 3, Winter 1993, pp. 7-20. [Hebrew]

71. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 29, 35.

72. Instead, there is merely an oblique, half-sentence reference several pages earlier to the fact that the "citizens' state" approach is not consistent with those provisions of Israel's Declaration of Independence that call for a state that is both democratic and Jewish. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 29-30.

73. Yitzhak Reiter, excerpted in Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 36-37.

74. Atallah Mansour, excerpted in Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 39.

75. Assad Ghanem, excerpted in Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 40.

76. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 76.

77. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 77-78.

78. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 268.

79. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 273.

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80. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 290-291.
81. Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, pp. 291-295.
82. The fact that Dr. Ghanem wrote the section on Arab-Israelis is noted in Adan, *To Be Citizens in Israel*, p. 279.
83. Interview with Dr. Assad Ghanem, "Apocalypse Now," *Kol Ha'ir*, June 30, 2000, pp. 80-81.