


State-religious education in Israel: between tradition and modernity

Zehavit Gross

Related papers

[Download a PDF Pack](#) of the best related papers 



[Tradition versus tradition: Mizrahi pupils in National Religious schools in Israel, 1948–1990](#)

Avi Picard

[The Bible, Hayden White, and the Settlements: Teaching Religious Zionist History in the Postmodern E...](#)

Roy Weintraub

[Faith-based history education: the case of redemptionist Religious Zionism](#)

Roy Weintraub

EDUCATION AND RELIGION:
THE PATHS OF TOLERANCE

STATE-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

IN ISRAEL: BETWEEN

TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Zehavit Gross

Introduction

STATE-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: INTEGRATING STATE AND RELIGION

The State-religious education system in Israel (hereinafter: SRE) is one of the most revolutionary inventions in the history of modern civilization, since it reflects the pedagogic confrontation of religious Jews with the challenges of modernity.

State-religious education is an integral part of the State education system in Israel, and its role is to provide educational services to a population interested in both secular and religious education. In 1953, as will be described later on, the State-religious education system was defined by law, and it was granted administrative and ideological autonomy on the one hand, while being subject to the procedures of the State

Original language: English

Zehavit Gross (Israel)

Lecturer at Bar Ilan University's School of Education. She has written articles in the field of religious education, and secular and religious identity. She has recently conducted a comprehensive study on religious, civic, feminine and Zionist socialization of adolescent females in Israel, and participated in an international study dealing with the study of religiosity, values and world views among adolescents, especially among Jewish and Arab pupils (Muslims, Christians, Druze and Circassians). Her first book, *Judaism and Kibbutz children – possible connection*, was published in Hebrew in 1995. She has won several awards, including the Berl Reptor Prize (1994), the Schupff Prize (1997), the Schnitzer Prize (2000) and the Frankfurter Prize (2002). E-mail: grossz@mail.biu.ac.il.

Prospects, vol. XXXIII, no. 2, June 2003

education system on the other hand (Goldschmidt, 1984). Therefore, SRE has been given a great deal of independence in shaping the lifestyle and atmosphere in its schools, choosing curricula and selecting staff and pupils who are required to meet specific criteria of religious behaviour.

THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF THE SRE SYSTEM

SRE policy is not organized as a systematic philosophy and has no mandatory practical application (Goldschmidt, 1984). This is, in my opinion, both the strength and weakness of this dynamic system, whose principles are forged and develop in accordance with changing circumstances and practical needs. We can learn much about the guidelines underlying this policy from the religious principals' circulars, published regularly by the SRE Administration, and from a document entitled *Guidelines for shaping the SRE philosophy* (1992), written by previous SRE directors and due to be changed and shaped, apparently, by the SRE directors yet to come.

The theoretical and practical principles behind SRE are based on a combination of the traditional values of the religious yeshiva education that has always been part of the Jewish people, with its general focus on teaching religious subjects only, and modern Jewish education, as it developed primarily in Germany under the influence of the Jewish Haskalah (Enlightenment) movement (Feiner, 2002; Schweid, 2002) and the *Torah im Derech Eretz* movement of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Ayalon & Yogev, 1998; Breuer, 1996; Kleinberger, 1969), which combined the teaching of secular studies with the teaching of Jewish studies.

The State-religious education system is based on three main tenets (Kiel, 1977):

1. **Religious education:** A traditional, Jewish religious education that includes teaching belief in God and the performance of commandments, and the advanced study of sacred texts, i.e. Bible, Mishna, Jewish law, Gemara, and writings of the rabbis and Jewish thinkers who have shaped the spiritual heritage of the Jewish people for generations.
2. **Modern education:** Teaching the basic skills pupils will need to function as citizens and conduct constructive lives as required of all members of a modern society in general, and a secular, democratic state in particular. Therefore, the SRE system has created a mandatory curriculum that incorporates secular contents and subject matter (math, physics, English, etc.) that will enable its pupils to pass the national matriculation examinations and allow them, upon completion of their education, to either continue with their studies or find a job that will permit them to support themselves and contribute to society.
3. **Nationalist education:** Education with a Zionist perspective, in order to preserve the unity of all sectors of the Jewish people (both secular and religious, as well as Jews living in the Diaspora), to intensify their feeling of identification with and contribution towards the Land of Israel (which is perceived as a territory with religious significance), and to reinforce their sense of loyalty and belonging to the State of Israel and its laws (whose establishment is seen as the first step of the Jewish redemption). SRE promotes the founding of settlements throughout

the entire country and encourages contributing to the homeland through army service in elite military units. Furthermore, the SRE system requires identification with the state on national holidays, such as Independence Day and Jerusalem Day (in contrast with the ultra-Orthodox sectors which do not celebrate these special holidays). The ideal graduate of the SRE school system is one whose every activity in the private and public spheres is the result of a perspective based on intensive Jewish study, which is then translated into behaviour and lifestyle in accordance with Jewish law, on the one hand, while becoming integrated into the modern way of life and applying the general secular knowledge he has acquired during his schooling, on the other (Dagan, 1999). This integration between tradition and modernity becomes even stronger in the context of the civic responsibility required of an SRE graduate, who is taught to understand the founding of the State of Israel as the beginning of the Jewish redemption, thus making his religious and civic obligations clear. In order to understand the essence and methodology of the SRE system, a general summary of the history of SRE, the dilemmas with which it must grapple and its achievements are presented below.

History of the State-religious education system

INTRODUCTION

We can analyse the State-religious education system from a morphological point of view (Bailyn, 1982) by reconstructing the historical context in which this system was created and presenting it as an integral part of the development of religious-Zionist society.¹ This approach is based on the ecological method of educational research (Cremin, 1980), which holds that processes that occur in schools are symbolic of deeper processes occurring in society as a whole. Therefore, the development of religious schools reflects the processes and changes that Religious-Zionist society has undergone during various historical periods.

SRE FROM A SOCIOLOGICAL-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In this article, the history of religious-Zionist education will be presented by applying the theoretical approach of Livesley and Mackenzie (1983), developed with regard to psychotherapy (Gross, 2003a). According to their approach, a social system can be defined through the roles and patterns of interaction that exist within it. Livesley and Mackenzie named four primary social roles necessary for the existence of a society: (a) The social role – Those with this role feel responsible for the unity of the group; (b) The task-oriented role – Those in this role feel responsible for focusing and achieving the group's goals; (c) The scapegoat – Those cast in this role are seen as being responsible for all of society's ills, in order to distract the society from its real problems; (d) The opponent or the cautious one – those in this role oppose the society and what is taking place by emphasizing their individuality, thus defining its boundaries.

This role-based method of classification will serve as a basis for describing the stages of development of the religious-Zionist sector and the functions of its unique education system will be analysed in this context.

Periodization of religious-Zionist education includes four main historical periods, which parallel the four roles described above:²

1902–1967: From the founding of the Mizrachi Movement (the religious party in the Zionist movement) in 1902 until the Six-Day War, religious society and religious education assumed the social role, based on Livesley and Mackenzie (1983).

Actually, the first religious-Zionist school was founded only in 1904, as will be described below. But in order to understand its uniqueness, we should understand an event that took place in 1902 and which was crucial for religious-Zionism, and this should also be analysed in the broader context. In essence, until the period of emancipation, the religious, ethnic and territorial components had existed within the world of the Jew as an inseparable and unifying concept. Modernization and emancipation of the Jews in Western Europe in the nineteenth century reinforced the trends towards secularization in Jewish society and gradually weakened the perception of ethnicity and religion as unifying concepts (Bar-Lev & Kedem, 1986). The establishment of the Zionist Movement in 1897, which was a nationalist Jewish movement and was founded against a secular background by secular individuals at the same time as other nationalist movements in Europe, served to a certain extent as a catalyst for the creation of a differential identity in the world of the Jewish individual, in which the religious component could also be included as a legitimate, alternative Jewish option (Gross, 1997, 2001). It is no wonder, therefore, that the majority of the religious public, which perceived it as heresy, rejected the Zionist movement. Indeed, Theodore Herzl, the founder of the Zionist Movement and the man who wanted the Jewish nationalist movement to represent all factions of the Jewish people, convinced the religious public to join its ranks while explicitly promising that it would only deal with an attempt to find a political solution for the Jewish people which had been, up to that point in time, dispersed without any political centre. However, in 1902, following the proposal made by Ehad Ha'am, the Zionist Movement decided to expand its activities into the cultural-spiritual realm (Gross, 2002b). This decision, which is known as the Culture Question (Bat-Yehuda, 1982), caused unrest among the religious branch of the Zionist Movement because it involved the matter of the public expression of Zionism in general, and what would be the desired cultural and educational characteristics in particular (Elboim-Dror, 1986). Thus, in 1902, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak Reines decided officially to join the Zionist movement and to establish within it a religious-Zionist faction, to be known as 'The Mizrachi Movement,' so as to enable efforts to establish a religious education system in the state, which would exist alongside the secular education system. From its inception, the Mizrachi Movement saw itself as being responsible for the religious-spiritual education of the people, in order to contribute to 'a revival of the national soul in its land, in the spirit of its Torah (holy scriptures) and its tradition' (Kiel, 1977).

This period can be divided into four sub-periods (Bar-Lev & Katz, 1991; Katz, 2003), as follows:

1904–1919: Private efforts, primarily at the initiative of parents and in conjunction with the Mizrahi Movement, to establish religious schools ('Tachkemoni' in Jaffa, 'Netzach Yisrael' in Petah Tikvah), whose goal was to change the traditional framework of Jewish education.

1920–1948: The establishment of religious schools through the 'Jewish National Council' which were ideologically, organizationally and economically connected with and subject to the religious-Zionist movement (Mizrachi).

1948–1953: The founding of competing religious schools through both the ultra-Orthodox stream (affiliated with Agudat Yisrael), and the secular stream (Zameret, 1992, 1997).

1953–1967: David Ben Gurion, prime minister of Israel, revokes the educational streams in order to separate them from the political party orientations, in an effort to create a melting pot through a uniform and apolitical State education system. Therefore, the State Education Law was passed, by which, as mentioned above, organizational and theoretical autonomy is given to the religious-Zionist education system. Throughout this period, religious education has accepted all the pupils of parents who had stated their desire for a religious education for their children, based on an acknowledged policy of 'religious education for all.'

It should be noted, that the policy of openness and 'religious education for all' led to the fact that as early as the 1940s,³ parents from economically stable religious families and generally of Western European origin decided to establish private, alternative religious high schools for their sons, which were influenced by the Western European religious education system, to provide them with a superior religious education (Bar-Lev, 1977). These schools (for boys only), which were private and selective, charged relatively high fees and were known as 'yeshiva high schools'. Later on, parallel institutions were also established for girls, called 'ulpanas' (Katz, 1999).⁴ And thus, through the yeshiva and ulpana framework, a correlation was introduced between a desire for religious excellence, a high socio-economic level and sectarianism, and this process was the start of the religious-Zionist elite.

In the 1950s, mass immigration to Israel had begun. These immigrants changed the country's social-demographic structure both in terms of quantity, and in terms of quality-identity. These new immigrants, and especially those from Muslim countries, maintained varying levels of religious observance and wanted to give their children a religious education. Those in the Mizrahi movement adopted a policy of bringing Jews closer to the fold and providing a religious education to anyone who asked, thus absorbing all the children of this immigration who were interested in joining its ranks. This non-selective approach increased and consolidated the scope of the SRE system and enabled it to build religious schools in more remote localities. On the other hand, this strategy jeopardized the scholastic level and religious character of the State-religious school and contributed to lowering its image in the eyes of both parents and pupils (Schwartzwald, 1990). The scholastic achievements of the children from these com-

munities (Jews from Muslim countries referred to as *Edot Ha-mizrach*, with low socio-economic backgrounds) were lower than the achievement of pupils from Western communities (Minkovich & Bashi, 1980; Schwartzwald, 1990). Since the SRE system had accepted oriental pupils from the *edot ha-mizrach* in quantities that surpassed its relative size, the number of pupils who were defined as underprivileged at the end of the 1960s was more than 70% (Schwartzwald, 1990). This reality gave the SRE system a poor self-image, both scholastically and religiously, and an apparent correlation was fostered between backwardness, religiousness and sectarianism (Gross, 1997; Schwartzwald, 1990). Thus, beyond the objective inferiority of the State-religious education as described above, the religious-Zionist movement was considered, at that point in time, as a 'marginal group lacking any influence' and was seen as being relegated to the sidelines, because the state and its institutions had been erected and manned by the secular sector and the religious-Zionist public, at that time, was not perceived as a significant and visible part of these activities (Rubenstein, 1982).

1967–1981: The task-oriented role – Beginning in 1967, a significant change took place in Israeli society in general, and in the status of religious society in particular. Rather than remaining on the sidelines, the religious-Zionists are now perceived as pioneers and leaders, taking upon themselves the task-oriented role of preserving the charismatic dimension (Weber, 1979) of the ideological aspect of society, in order to defend Israeli society against the stychic processes of institutionalization and routinization that threatened to erode the Zionist effort and rock its foundations.

Israeli society, according to Horowitz and Lissak (1990), is an ideological society that was founded by virtue of its ideology, and is destined to realize the ideological goals of Zionism. With the establishment of the state, when the vision and the dream became reality, secular Zionism suffered a serious crisis. This crisis was exacerbated and intensified as a result of the change in the ethical and spiritual-collective emphases on an individualistic and hedonistic value system. But while the secular-Zionist elite was undergoing a severe moral crisis, Israeli society witnessed the development of an alternative – a pioneering, active, religious-Zionist elite.

The peak of this process came in 1967, when the State of Israel was forced to participate against its will in a war that was imposed upon it by the Arab armies, and captured Judea, Samaria, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights. The Six-Day War and the return to the holy sites (in Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Shechem) inspired a religious mood in both the secular and religious parts of the population. As a result of this, the secular population underwent a change in its relationships with religion and tradition: from an anti-religious or selective approach, toward a more favourable approach of reinterpreting the religion (Gross, 1997). Along with the secular population, the religious population also felt a strong need for religious revitalization in order to bring the redemption closer, and in the 1970s, this trend influenced the desire of religious society to reinforce the religious schools, which had been perceived as being religiously 'lukewarm' and superficial for the reasons cited above. The historical processes gave rise to a feeling that redemption was at hand, particularly in light of our having regained control of the holy sites in the West Bank. Therefore, in

order to realize this, there was a feeling that it was necessary to establish an elite religious educational network that was appropriate for and suited to achieving this task. It should be noted, as stated above,⁵ that the need to establish schools as alternatives to the official SRE schools had already begun in the 1940s with the establishment of the yeshiva high schools. Indeed, in light of the geopolitical changes that took place in 1967, there was a feeling in the 1970s that a radical, system-wide change had to be carried out throughout all the SRE institutions, which was defined as the need for transition from 'religious education to Torah (more intensive religious) education' (Filber, 1973).

In light of the definition of this new orientation within the religious-Zionist public, a new educational network was established to compete with the SRE system, known as Noam (for boys), and followed by Zvia (for girls). These schools required enhanced Judaic studies, total separation between girls and boys and more stringent criteria for pupils and teachers concerning religious behaviour. Thus many religious families, especially those with European origins, left the SRE schools, manifesting a clear preference for the new elitist and selective schools that had been founded. On the one hand, this process weakened the SRE system even more, but on the other hand, the mass exodus from its ranks forced it to re-shuffle and re-assess its educational and religious activities, and make improvements.

At the same time, especially at the initiative of the religious-Zionist public and with the encouragement of SRE, massive settlement began to take place during the mid-1970s in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, and the religious public began moving from the large cities to settlements in the West Bank. This phenomenon also emptied most of the State-religious schools in the cities and changed their character. The religious-Zionist public was perceived as a symbol of renewed Zionist activity, and its appreciation by the general public as a productive elite was quite high.

1982–1996: The scapegoat role – One of the greatest crises to have been endured by the religious-Zionist movement was the withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula in 1982 and the return to Egypt of Jewish settlements in the Yamit region. Religious-Zionism, which saw itself in 1967 as the redeemer of Jewish territories as part of an overall process of national and transcendental redemption, began to feel a tremendous upheaval. The physical withdrawal from the occupied territories created a threat of metaphysical and ideological withdrawal from the concept of the Dawn of the Redemption.

The sights and sounds of the evacuation from Sinai and Yamit left a void, and even introduced into the Israeli public discourse new, militant behaviour and speech patterns that had been previously unknown. The attempt by religious-Zionists to renege on the peace treaty with Egypt was seen as damaging to the nationalist dreams. Beginning with this period, the public legitimacy ascribed to the religious-Zionist sector began to erode, because of its anti-government demonstrations and policies. Following the evacuation of the Sinai region, a drive towards legal and illegal settlements began flourishing in the West Bank, based on arguments of religious and Jewish law. Furthermore, a series of militant protest activities was initiated against the peace process and against the government, which turned the religious-Zionist public into a scapegoat.

As a result of this, the religious-Zionist sector was accused of jeopardizing the country's economy and its security.

From here on out we see the beginning of a sweeping process to delegitimize the religious-Zionist public. Religious education was blamed as constituting a factory for these destructive processes, because its pupils took an active part, with the encouragement of the education system, in all protest activities. At the same time, the educational emphasis within the SRE schools was on the need to reinforce Jewish settlement in Israel and to nurture Zionist attitudes that leaned more towards the political right, and these were perceived as religious attitudes (Gross, 2002b). The climax of this process was the discovery of the Jewish underground, whose members included graduates of the religious-Zionist education system, and later on in 1995 with the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, who was identified with the religious-Zionist camp and religious education despite the fact that he was never officially one of its pupils. It should be noted that both the members of the Jewish underground and Yigal Amir were radical fundamentalists, whose actions were a direct result of a fatal combination between Jewish particularistic considerations and Messianic activism (Don-Yehiya, 1993, 1998). All of them were anti-establishment and acted as individuals, and were defined as 'bad seeds.' But the fact that they were from the religious-Zionist sector associated and identified them with the SRE schools.

1997—the present: The role of the other – In March 1997 the first circular was written by the Religious Administration to officially shake off the role of the scapegoat, by referring to the contribution of graduates from the SRE system to Israeli society:

First, it is incumbent upon us to reject the generalized accusations that, unfortunately, also appealed to those who were part of the government and were familiar with the contribution of the religious education system. The way in which the victim is blamed for the catastrophe that has befallen him repeats itself, and it disgracefully recalls other racist points of view. . . . The attempt to accuse the philosophy of the religious education system because of certain exceptional revelations is either ignorance or evil, because it disregards the successes and contributions of the majority of SRE graduates in all spheres of life in Israel (pp. 1–5).

The circular demands that these exceptions, which had led to a spirit of zealotry, be pinpointed and that intervention programmes be developed to prevent fundamentalist and extremist phenomena. Beginning with this circular and onward, we can see that circulars coming from the Religious Administration, which present the official position of the State-religious education authority, deal with the question of the limits of religious-Zionism, the question of the relationship between religious-Zionist society and the sovereignty of the state, democracy and the status of the country's laws. Furthermore, clarifications were attempted regarding the character and nature of the link between Judaism and democracy, and the question of which came first. In reality, the terrible murder of Prime Minister Rabin made Israel's entire education system aware of the need for more intensive teaching of tolerance and acceptance of those who are different or may hold different opinions, as a condition for creating a healthy society. In the SRE system there was a feeling that because of its clear ideological line, SRE

did not foster pluralistic attitudes that accept difference as a legitimate option among its pupils. Surprisingly, at that same period of time there began to emerge many new and different religious educational institutions, which promoted different aspects of the human personality. State-religious and yeshiva schools were founded whose orientation was more in the direction of science, technology, agriculture, music, art, etc. This process of institutional differentiation undoubtedly gained momentum with the increased openness towards and awareness of the needs of 'the other', and those who were different, and this approach also led to dialogue regarding the need for openness towards a variety of religious behaviour patterns in the SRE system.

In summary, these four roles represent, in essence, the four stages of development of the SRE system, each of which encompassed a dramatic historical event that left its mark and obliged the SRE to reshuffle and prepare itself accordingly. What will be the next development stage of the SRE system only time will tell.

The common thread that weaves its way throughout all four of the abovementioned historical periods is the series of dilemmas and issues that accompanied the SRE system from the moment of its inception to this point in time, and these will be described below.

The major dilemmas of the SRE

THE STATUS OF SECULAR STUDIES IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SYSTEM

One of the innovations initiated by the SRE system was the legitimate introduction of secular studies into the official religious education system, as an integral part of the ideology and unique educational concept. This concept was inspired by the educational approach of the *Torah im derech erez* movement founded by Dr. Samson Rafael Hirsch. The main objective of this approach is to enable complete integration of SRE graduates into any field of endeavour in the country. Indeed, the SRE schools ponder such issues as what is the proper proportion of these studies relative to Judaic studies, when these subjects should be studied (in the morning, when the children are more awake, or in the afternoon), and what resources should be allocated to each one of the spheres (Ayalon & Yogev, 1998). **This dilemma relates to the contradictory aspirations of the SRE system to be open to the modern world on the one hand, and to shut itself up within the world of religion and *halacha* (Jewish law), on the other. Furthermore, this question is connected to the problem of how to cope with the values and lifestyles of the Western world and its culture while carefully trying to maintain a fully religious way of life (Dagan, 1999).**

THE IDEAL EDUCATIONAL MODEL

Should the religious education system develop an ideal educational model with a clear and unequivocal perspective (Schremer, 1985) whose religious properties are based

on an Ashkenazic-European point of view? Or is it possible to develop several alternative, and equally legitimate, religious educational models? Should the ideal model continue to be the traditional '*talmid chacham*' (religious scholar), or perhaps a modern 'pioneer' or a Jewish-religious engineer, pilot or scientist (see also Rosenak, 1996)? This question is closely related to the matter of whether the ideal model proposed by SRE prepares its graduates to leave the hothouse environment of the school and successfully enter military and civilian life. Can SRE pupils and graduates realistically live *with* the monumental ideal educational model presented to them in school, or in life are they actually working *against* this ideal model (Gross, 2002a)?

RELIGIOUS SELECTIVITY VERSUS EDUCATION FOR ALL

One of the dilemmas facing the SRE system is whether it should be open to anyone seeking this kind of education, or if should it be religiously selective (Gross, 2003b). As stated above, the consumers of SRE are religiously pluralistic and represent a broad range of religious behaviour, from those who are very careful to observe all the commandments prescribed by *halacha*, to those who are satisfied with a partial or even symbolic observance of Jewish law but who want their children to be part of a religious framework. Therefore, there is the question of how the SRE system can maintain its uniqueness and a coherent religious setting on the one hand, while remaining loyal to its state-mandated objectives and obligations, which support equality and integration, on the other. However, on a practical level, we can ask whether SRE can continue to function in the long term in the anomalous social reality in which the economically weaker sector – and the less religious group this contains – is in the majority (Adler, 2002).

ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STATE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

How should the SRE system regard the State of Israel, its secular-democratic regime and the laws founded on secular legitimacy? This dilemma is complex, because the Torah and *halacha* (*Jewish Law*), according to which the religious Jew acts, deals with how people should behave in their private or communal lives, but not their political lives (Adler, 2002; Dagan, 1999). The halachic literature does not discuss issues concerning foreign relations, economics or running a country with a secular, democratic Jewish regime because historically, the Jewish people have lived in exile for two thousand years, under foreign rule, and their civic activities had no significance in the religious-Jewish context throughout its long history. Indeed, in our time, with the establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the land of Israel, full participation in political life means accepting shared responsibility and granting legitimacy to public decisions that are secular in nature, which may contradict Jewish law. Therefore, SRE perceives the State of Israel, Zionism and Jewish nationality as phases in the development of the redemption, and 'the religious education system is charged with the task of demonstrating that it is possible to live as a Jew in a democratic country' (Adler, 2002). Indeed,

practical partnership with the secular elements in this country constitute a serious theological and ideological problem (see also Silverman-Keller, 2000).

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Should the State-religious education system remain under secular state-organizational sponsorship, or should it establish a separate educational organizational framework with a more religious character? In practice, despite the State Education Law (1953), the secular education system does not always take the special needs of the SRE into consideration (for example, the need for additional job slots because of gender separation for religious reasons in SRE schools). The desire of the State education system for equality and uniformity (in resource allocation, for example) is sometimes carried out by hurting the minority group. It should be noted that the decision to remain under state sponsorship was, and always has been, ideological rather than organizational-procedural, because of the religious significance with which the religious education system relates to the principle of sovereignty. In practical terms, all of these dilemmas are related to the central question that has occupied religious-Zionism from the moment of its inception to this very day, and that is the question of the Jewish nature and character of the State of Israel. **In other words, to what extent must the State of Israel possess particularistic Jewish characteristics (as a Jewish state) or a universal civilian character (a state of all its citizens). Solutions to this dilemma have a direct impact on the policies and activities of the SRE system. This question is also connected with the method by which the religious person and establishment copes with the phenomenon of secularization. Since the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) period, the foremost enemy of the Jewish people has been secularization.** The appearance of modern Zionism is connected, to a large extent, to the phenomenon of secularization (Gross, 2003), because this process denotes the liberation of modern man from the generalized perception of the sovereignty of God and emphasizes a person's individual responsibility for his own actions. Secular Zionism means the liberation of the Jew from the idea of national redemption by God, to a reality of national redemption wrought by man and under his full responsibility (Don-Yehiya, 1998). **The innovation of the religious-Zionist approach, in contrast with the ultra-Orthodox approach, was that it legitimized secularization (Sagi, 2000; Schwartz, 1996, 1999) and perceived it as a 'necessary evil' and a temporary reality that was a precondition for fulfilling and realizing the complete Jewish redemption.** It should be noted that Liebman (1982) proposes four main approaches for adopting modernity: assimilation, isolation, compartmentalization and expansion. Liebman claimed that religious-Zionism adopted the strategy of expansion in its relationship with modernity, and the practical interpretation of this was to sanctify the entire process of modernization and secularization which are, as previously stated, a necessary precondition, according to this approach, to the full Jewish redemption. Therefore, the entire secular aspect of political sovereignty and the state's institutions were given religious significance and validity. Furthermore, these dilemmas reflect the ideological status of the religious-Zionist movement which, from its incep-

tion, had already been straddling two dichotomous worlds within Jewish society: the secular-Zionist leadership that rejected Jewish tradition and religion as part of the process of creating a new national Zionist identity, and the traditional, Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox world, which perceived the Zionist movement and the creation of a Jewish national identity as heresy. The unique position of the religious-Zionist movement was, from its establishment to this point in time, the source of both its strength and its weakness, because it hoped to become an integral part of both worlds (the secular and ultra-Orthodox), while simultaneously not being part of either one of them (Gross, 2003a). Understanding the basis for this dialectic is an important foundation for understanding the existential dilemmas and difficulties in which the State-religious education system functions.

Despite the many existential dilemmas with which the SRE system is faced, and perhaps because of them, it has gained considerable success and many achievements, which will be outlined below.

The accomplishments of the SRE

The accomplishments of the religious-Zionist education system can be found in the following three spheres:

IN THE SOCIAL SPHERE

SRE graduates have integrated into key roles in all spheres of endeavour in Israel, while publicly maintaining and preserving their religious way of life. SRE graduates can be found in all walks of life and the State's modern activities: economics, industry, science, technology, security, law. Similarly, SRE has become one of Israel's official and important institutions for absorbing new immigrants. Because of its 'open to everyone' policies that, as stated, exacted a heavy pedagogic price, SRE has absorbed many new immigrants over the years, most of whom came from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. The absorption and nurturing in the schools of Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries during the 1950s, and Jewish immigrants from Ethiopia and the former USSR in the 1980s and 1990s and their successful integration into Israeli society should be studied and imitated.

IN THE SCHOLASTIC FIELD

State-religious education can be proud of the high percentage (66%) of its graduates eligible for matriculation.⁶ The success on matriculation exams can be seen in general subjects (math, English, etc.) as well as in Judaic Studies. State-religious education is particularly noteworthy for its high success rate among those pupils designated as disadvantaged, from schools considered to be failures. In 1995, the then-director of the State-religious education division, Mr. Mati Dagan, made a courageous decision to cancel all vocational study tracks (which did not train pupils for the regular official matriculation exams) in the comprehensive religious schools, and to convert all the SRE

schools into academic schools that would train pupils to receive a full matriculation certificate. As a result of this, the scholastic and educational status of the high schools in the periphery has improved, and the success rates in matriculation examinations among this weaker population are continually improving.⁷

IN THE RELIGIOUS SPHERE

Most of the SRE graduates (some 70%) remain religious to varying degrees of observance even after they complete the school socialization process (Leslau & Rich, 1999). Moreover, the yeshiva high schools and academic yeshivas established in Israel, and which house graduates of the SRE schools, constituted a basis for the revival of religious and Jewish centres in Israel following the destruction and devastation during the Holocaust of the centres of Jewish religious life in Europe (Gross, 2003a). The Jewish-religious revival in Israel as part of a secular, liberal, democratic state, constituted a new pattern of religiosity which integrated aspects of modernity and sovereignty, and this approach is a new, religious creation that demands further study and research.

In conclusion, it should be noted that despite the increasing processes of secularization of Israeli society on the one hand, and despite the isolationist tendencies of religious extremism that have developed among the religious elite and which threaten to disintegrate religious-Zionist society on the other hand, the State-religious education system has succeeded in maintaining a stable number of pupils⁸ and operating an extensive system of institutions, from preschools to teacher-training institutes,⁹ which serve approximately 20% of all the pupils in the Israeli state education system. These figures are worthy of note, particularly in consideration of the fact that the process of joining the SRE institutions is not stychic by virtue of the Compulsory Education Law, but is instead a conscious decision and an informed choice, made knowingly by parents and pupils in favour of a religious-Zionist education as their preferred education system. The success of this education system, despite all of the difficulties, apparently derives from the combination of careful preservation of several fundamental religious principles, and tremendous flexibility and openness to the changing needs of the open, modern and pluralistic world in which we live.

Notes

1. In this paper, reference to 'religious-Zionist society' will be inclusive, being cognizant of the fact that this society also includes several sub-groups that have behaved differently in each historical period.
2. It should be noted that the model described above is schematic and theoretical, and thus it describes primarily ideal situations that correspond to the model's basic perspective. Indeed, reality is dynamic and complex, and naturally involves additional processes beyond those described in the model. Therefore, reference to the model must be as representing, for each period, the main emphases of the characteristics that will be described above, despite the fact that in reality, in specific contexts, there may be additional processes as well.

3. The first yeshiva (yeshivat *HaYishuv*) was founded in 1937 by Rabbi Amiel, and later on came yeshivat *Kfar HaRo'eh* (1940) and *Midrashiat Noam* (1942).
4. The first ulpana was founded in 1960 in Kfar Pines.
5. The introduction of the entire process to be described, as with any historical process, began to blossom during the previous period, but the latent potential took on practical, dominant and obvious expression during the period discussed above according to the periodization proposed herein.
6. Thanks to Ms. Rina Attias, in charge of the SRE database, who gave me these figures: 66% in State-religious schools, in contrast with 60% in State secular schools. Thus, the percentage of those eligible for matriculation certificates in the SRE system is 6% higher than the number of eligible pupils in the State secular system. From 1992 to 2002, the percentage of pupils eligible for matriculation certificates in the SRE system rose by 23%: In 1992, the percentage of eligible pupils was 43%, and in 2002 it was 66%.
7. From an analysis of the data we see that the significant increase in the percentage of pupils eligible for matriculation in the SRE schools is primarily reflected in the results of the comprehensive schools and the schools dealing with weaker populations. In the yeshiva high schools and ulpanas, and in the academic schools, there was no significant change in the eligibility data for matriculation certificates.
8. In the 1997/98 school year, there were 189,082 pupils attending SRE elementary and secondary schools; in 1998–1999 there were 190,992 pupils; in 1999–2000 there were 190,819 pupils; in 2000/01 there were 191,072 pupils; and in 2001/02 there were 190,635 pupils.
9. The SRE system consists of the following: 1,851 preschools, 404 elementary schools, 256 secondary schools and 17 teacher-training institutes.

References

Sources published in Hebrew

- Adler, S. 2002. Challenges in 2003. *Circular for the religious principal*, pp. 6–13. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, Religious Division.
- Ayalon, H.; Yogev A. 1998. Torah with secular studies (Torah im derekh Eretz): the alternative perspective for State-religious high school education. In: Ayalon, H., ed. *Curricula as social reconstruction*, pp. 33–54. Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishers, Tel Aviv University.
- Bar-Lev, M. 1977. *Graduates of the Yeshiva high schools in Israel: between tradition and renewal*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University. (Doctoral thesis.)
- Bar-Lev, M.; Kedem, P. 1986. Unity and differentiation in the Jewish and Zionist identity and identification of the Israeli student. In: Eisenberg, Y., ed. *Outlooks in education*, pp. 155–178. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University.
- Bat-Yehuda, G. 1982. The question of the collective and the Mizrachi. In: Eliav, M.; Refaeli, Y., eds. *Book of Shragai: research on religious Zionism and the aliyah to Israel*, pp. 140–155. Jerusalem.
- Breuer, M. 1996. The historical roots of the Yeshiva high school. In: Bar-Lev, M., ed. *Celebrating the jubilee*, pp. 127–141. Tel Aviv: Friends of the Midrashia.
- Dagan, M. 1999. State-religious education. In: Peled, A., ed. *50th anniversary of the education system in Israel*, pp. 1011–1024. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

- Dagan, M.; Laval, M.; Greenbaum, N. 1992. *Guidelines for the State-religious education policy*. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Don-Yehiya, A. 1998. Religious fundamentalism and political radicalism: the nationalistic Yeshivas in Israel. In: Shapira, A., ed. *Independence: the first 50 years*, pp. 431–470. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center.
- Elboim-Dror, R. 1986. *Hebrew education in Israel*. Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi.
- Feiner, S. 2002. *The enlightenment revolution: the Jewish Haskalah Movement in the eighteenth century*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center.
- Filber, Y. 1973. From religious education to Torah education. *Morasha (Heritage)*, pp. 62–67.
- Goldschmidt, Y. 1984. State-religious education in Israel. In: Waserteil, A., ed. *Philosophy and education: letters of Joseph Goldschmidt*. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Gross, Z. 2002a. *The world of religious-Zionist girls: between charisma and rationalization*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, Institute for the Research and Advancement of Religious Education. (Research report.)
- Gross, Z. 2002b. The religious-Zionist identity of female graduates from the State-religious education system. In: Sagi, A.; Ilan, N., eds. *Jewish culture in the eye of the storm*, pp. 200–232. Tel Aviv: United Kibbutz Movement; Yaakov Herzog Center for Jewish Studies.
- Gross, Z. 2003a. The social roles of State-religious education. In: Sagi, A.; Schwartz, D., eds. *One hundred years of Zionism*, pp. 129–186. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University.
- Gross, Z. 2003b. Should State-religious education be religiously selective or open to everyone? In: Gross Z.; Dror, Y., eds. *Education as a social challenge*. Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishers, Tel Aviv University.
- Horowitz, D.; Lissak, M. 1990. *Trouble in Utopia*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers.
- Katz, Y. 1999. The Yeshiva high schools and Ulpanas for girls in the secondary school system. In: Peled, A., ed. *50th anniversary of the Israeli education system*, pp. 1025–1034. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.
- Katz, Y. 2003. State-religious education in Israel: development trends in the Zionist era. In: Gross, Z.; Dror, Y., eds. *Education as a social challenge*. Tel Aviv: Ramot Publishers, Tel Aviv University.
- Kiel, Y. 1977. *State-religious education: its roots, history and problems*. Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, Religious Education Division.
- Leslau, A.; Rich, Y. 1999. *Survey of 12th-grade pupil on State-religious examinations*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, the Eliezer Stern Center for the Study and Advancement of Religious Education.
- Liebman, Y. 1982. Neo-traditional development among Orthodox Jews in Israel. *Megamot (Trends)* (Jerusalem), vol. 27, pp. 231–250.
- Liebman, Y. 1998. *Political assassination: the Rabin assassination and political assassinations in the Middle East*. Tel Aviv: Rabin Center for Israel Studies and Am Oved Publishers.
- Minkovich, A.; Bashi, Y. 1980. *Educational achievements of the Israeli primary school*. Jerusalem: School for Education of the Hebrew University; Ministry of Education; Magnes Press.
- Rosenak, M. 1996. Educating the person: a Jewish ideal and modern culture. In: Bar-Lev, M., ed. *Celebrating the Jubilee*, pp. 142 – 50. Tel Aviv: Friends of the Midrashia.
- Rubenstein, D. 1982. *He who is with God stand with me: Gush Emunim*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers.
- Sagi, A. 2000. Religious Zionism: between acceptance and reticence. In: Sagi, A.; Schwartz, D.; Stern, Y., eds. *Internal and external Judaism: a dialogue between two worlds*, pp. 124–168. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

- Schremer, E. 1985. State-religious education: between fundamental commitment and operative criteria. In: Ackerman, V.; Carmon, A.; Zucker, D., eds. *Education in an evolving society*, pp. 349–373. Tel Aviv, Van Leer Foundation.
- Schwartz, D. 1996. *Belief at the crossroads: between theory and practice in religious Zionism*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers.
- Schwartz, D. 1999. *Religious Zionism: between logic and Messianism*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers.
- Schwartzwald, Y. 1990. *State-religious education: reality and research*. Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press.
- Schweid, A. 2002. *History of the philosophy of the Jewish religion in modern times. Part I: The Haskalah period – A new agenda for philosophically coping with religion*. Jerusalem: Am Oved Publishers; Shechter Institute for Judaic Studies.
- Silverman-Keller, D. 2000. Education in a multi-cultural society: the case of State-religious education. In: Bar-Lev, M. ed. *Teaching culture in a multi-cultural society: issues for teacher in-service training*, vol. 9, pp. 139–158. Jerusalem: Hebrew University.
- Weber, M. 1979. *On charisma and building institutions*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University.
- Zameret, Z. 1992. *The days of the melting pot*. Sde Boker, Israel: Ben-Gurion University Press.
- Zameret, Z. 1997. *Over a narrow bridge: education in Israel during the early years of the State*. Sde Boker, Israel: Center for Ben-Gurion Studies; Ben-Gurion University Press.

Sources published in English

- Bailyn, B. 1982. The challenge of modern historiography. *American historical review* (Washington, DC), vol. 8, pp. 1–24.
- Bar-Lev, M.; Katz, Y.J. 1991. State-religious education in Israel: a unique ideological system. *Panorama* (Brunswick, Germany), vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 94–105.
- Cremin, L. 1982. *American education: the national experience*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Don-Yehiya, A. 1993. The book and the sword: the nationalist Yeshivot and political radicalism. In: Matry, M.T.; Appleby, P.S., eds. *Accounting for fundamentalism*, pp. 264–302. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- Gross, Z. 1997. Agents of Jewish education: their significance and influence in the religious components of Jewish identity of secular kibbutz youth. *Panorama* (Brunswick, Germany), vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 125–136.
- Gross, Z. 2001. My mind is my God: images of God and self-definition. In: Ziebertz, H.G., ed. *Imagining God: empirical explorations from an international perspective*, pp. 171–190. London: Lit Verlag.
- Kleinberger, A.F. 1969. *Society, school and progress in Israel*. London: Pergamon Press.
- Livesly, W.J.; Mackenzie, K.R. 1983. Social roles in psychotherapy groups. In: Dies, R.R.; Mackenzie, K.R., eds. *Advances in group psychotherapy, monograph I*, pp. 117–135. New York, NY: International Universities Press.