

Excerpt From:

REFORM ZIONISM

AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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**Section 4 - Aspects of
Zionist Jewish Education**

Aspects of Zionist Jewish Education

Introduction

1. Movement, Youth Movement, Zionist Youth Movement: A Clarification
2. For Those That Seek: Self-Fulfillment & Self-Realization: Two Terms — Two Outlooks
3. Educating To Zionism (Excerpts)
4. Model Community for Zionist Jewish Education
5. Policy Guidelines for the Joint Authority for Jewish Zionist Education*
6. The Meaning of Zionist Education in Our Generation

* JAJZE: Joint Authority (World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency for Israel) for Jewish Zionist Education.

Synopsis of the Section

The articles in Section 4 deal with the subject of Zionist education. All Zionist education is also Jewish education but not all Jewish education is Zionist education — even if its orientation is pro-Israel. The articles relate to the issue of defining and educating to Zionist values which are not normative in the Jewish community. The questions are discussed from an ideological and professional (educational) point of view. The target audience is sometimes the young Zionist leadership and sometimes the institutional world of Jewish education.

From the early Nineteen-Fifties as a *Madrich* (youth leader) in Vancouver Habonim, I have been involved in Zionist Jewish education. Indeed, my doctoral thesis for the M.D. degree at the University of British Columbia, "An Adolescent Subculture," sponsored by the Dept. of Psychiatry, dealt with the social psychology of Habonim Labor Zionist Youth in Vancouver.

It was the late Professor Simon Herman of the Hebrew University, himself a student of Kurt Lewin, the founder of Group Dynamics, whose writings shaped my approach to the field of Zionist Jewish education. His unpublished doctoral dissertation (1948), "The Social Psychology of *Chalutzit* in North America" (MIT), has unfortunately been bypassed by two generations of Zionist educators. I am in debt to Professor Herman for the entire concept Zionist education as a dynamic process of acculturation to a non-normative subculture. Similarly, Herman's differentiation between Zionism and Pro-Israelism is fundamental to articles 3 to 6 in this section.¹

In the mid-Eighties I was active for a period of time on the education committee of the United Kibbutz Movement (UKM). The absence of an educational and ideological rationale in the Israeli youth movements (symptomatic of the severe ideological anemia in the kibbutz movement) was leaving its mark.

MOVEMENT, YOUTH MOVEMENT, ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENT: A CLARIFICATION (1987) deals with educational parameters of youth movement from both an organizational as well as a philosophical point of view. SELF-FULFILLMENT & SELF-REALIZATION: TWO TERMS — TWO OUTLOOKS seeks to clarify what I believe to be a root conflict between Judaism in its cultural Zionist expression and the extant norms of Western liberal capitalist philosophy.

These were two of many articles I wrote during this period on kibbutz education.² However, the above articles stemmed directly from my involvement

1. Simon Herman, "Zionism and Pro-Israelism: A Distinction with a Difference" in *Jewish Identity: A Social Psychological Perspective*, Sage Publications, London 1978 — pp. 117-135, 140; also "Yesodot Hachinuch Hayehudi Zioni," *Kivunim*, 2, (New Series) December 1990, W.Z.O. Jerusalem.

2. See: "Lelamed Hashkafah Rayonit" (Teaching an Ideological Outlook), *Iggeret L'chinuch* 79-80, July 1987. "Tigbur Limudei Hayahdut B'beit Sefer Kibbutzi" (Reinforcing Jewish Studies in the Kibbutz School), *Iggeret L'chinuch* 81, January 1988, "Hachinuch L'Kibbutz" (Educating to the Kibbutz) *Shdemot*, June & October 1988. "Hanchalat Arachim b'Chativat Habeinaim" (Value Education in Junior High School), *Iggeret L'chinuch* 83, October 1988.

over the previous decade in Reform Zionist education. They were written in order to provide background for programs of Zionist value clarification and confrontation in general. But in fact, the intention was to create discussion material for Reform Zionist youth work in particular.

The Department of Jewish Education and Culture in the Diaspora

As a result of the elections to the 31st Zionist Congress, the World Reform Zionist confederation, "ARZENU" received the chairpersonship of the Department of Jewish Education and Culture in the Diaspora. Rabbi Henry F. "Hank" Skirball was asked by ARZENU to chair the Department. In 1989 I was asked by Rabbi Skirball to serve first as adviser and then as his Director General. I served for over three years, until after the 32nd Zionist Congress when ARZENU left the coalition with the World Labor Zionist movement — see Section 3. All the Departments of Education were soon to be integrated into the Joint Authority (World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Israel) for Jewish Zionist Education (JAJZE). What would be the distinct ideological and educational input of Reform Zionist thinking to this process?

This was the context within which I wrote the memoranda and essays — EDUCATING TO ZIONISM, MODEL COMMUNITY FOR JEWISH ZIONIST EDUCATION, POLICY GUIDELINES FOR THE JOINT AUTHORITY FOR JEWISH ZIONIST EDUCATION and THE MEANING OF ZIONIST EDUCATION IN OUR GENERATION. An abridged version of EDUCATING TO ZIONISM was published in Hebrew ("Lechinuch Yehudi Zioni," Kivunim, 2, New Series, December 1990, WZO, Jerusalem).

MODEL COMMUNITY FOR JEWISH ZIONIST EDUCATION was specifically formulated to include a geographic model (Metrowest, New Jersey experimented with it) as well as the regional religious community model. My hope was that UAHC Regions would define themselves as communities. The Center for Jewish Education (Reform) in London, under the leadership of Dr. Michael Shire, did in fact meet with most of the criteria and in 1992 was awarded the Shazar prize for Jewish Zionist education by the Department of Jewish Education and Culture.