

TEACHING ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE JEWISH EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ISRAEL 1948-2007

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Introduction

It is commonly believed that school textbooks do not merely convey an objective body of information. Textbooks, according to Howard Mehlinger, are the modern version of village storytellers, since they “are responsible for conveying to youth what adults believe they should know about their own culture as well as that of other societies.” In his opinion, none of the socialization instruments can be compared to textbooks “in their capacity to convey a uniform, approved, even official version of what youth should believe.”¹ Moreover, although textbooks pretend to teach neutral, legitimate knowledge, they are often used as ideological tools to promote a certain belief system and legitimize an established political and social order. In other words, the selection and organization of knowledge is an ideological process, serving the interests of particular classes and social groups.²

The role ascribed to the textbook of legitimizing an established political and social order is particularly relevant to textbooks in the field of history. Since each generation makes a considerable effort to transmit its traditions and belief system to the next

¹ H. D. Mehlinger, “International Textbook Revision: Examples from the United States,” *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, Vol. 7 (1985), p. 287. See also M. Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (New York: 1993), pp. 1-14, 44-63; F. Pingel, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision* (Hannover: 1999), pp. 7-8.

² M. W. Apple, *The Politics of the Textbook* (London: 1991), p. 10; K. Wain, “Different Perspectives on Evaluating Textbooks,” in H. Bourdillon (ed.), *History and Social Studies - Methodologies of Textbook Analysis* (Amsterdam: 1990), p. 39. Bernard Lewis wrote in this connection: “Those who are in power control to a very large extent the presentation of the past, and seek to make sure that it is presented in such a way to buttress and legitimize their own authority, and to affirm the rights and merits of the group which they lead.... This continuing thread can be traced from ancient inscriptions on rock faces through medieval annals, modern schoolbooks and textbooks”; see *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: 1975), p. 53.

generation, history textbooks have been traditionally “geared to the teaching of the national past and to generating identification with it.”³ Ever since the rise of the nation-state in Europe in the nineteenth century, history textbooks were used by states as instruments for glorifying the nation, consolidating its national identity, and justifying particular forms of social and political systems.⁴ Many studies in the West have demonstrated that ethnocentric views, myths, stereotypes and prejudices often pervade history textbooks. Michael Apple concludes, therefore, that most history textbooks present a biased view of conflicts: “our side is good; their side is bad. We are peace-loving and want an end to strife; they are warlike and aim to dominate.”⁵ By defaming the adversary, the history textbooks in particular play an important role in molding and reinforcing the state’s national identity.

Since in many Western democracies, and certainly in non-democratic societies, the state controls the education apparatus, it can shape the nation’s collective memory by determining what is to be included and what excluded from the curriculum and from textbooks. Such a course of action opens the way for the manipulation of the past in order to mold the present and the future.⁶ In this respect, the school system and textbooks becomes yet another arm of the state, agents of memory whose aim is to ensure the transmission of certain “approved knowledge” to the younger generation. Textbooks thus function as a sort of “ultimate supreme historical court” whose task is to decipher “from all the accumulated ‘pieces of the past’ the ‘true’ collective memories which are appropriate for inclusion in the canonical national historical

³ V. R. Berghahn and H. Schissler (eds.), *Perception of History: International Textbook Research on Britain, Germany and the United States* (Oxford: 1987), p. 1.

⁴ W. Jacobmeyer, *International Textbook Research* (Goteborg: 1990), pp. 4-5; V. R. Berghahn and H. Schissler, *Perceptions of History: International Textbook Research on Britain, Germany and the United States* (Oxford: 1987), p. 2; E. Dean, P. Hartman and M. Katzen, *History in Black and White: An Analysis of South African School History Textbooks* (Paris: 1983), p. 13.

⁵ Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (New York, 2nd ed., 1990), p. 85.

⁶ M. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: the Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: 1991), p. 3. See also B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Revised Ed. (London: 1991), p. 201; A. Funkenstein, “Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness,” *History and Memory*, Vol. 1 (1989), p. 8.

narrative.”⁷ In constructing the collective memory, textbooks play a dual role: on the one hand, they provide a sense of continuity between the past and the present, transmitting accepted historical narratives; on the other, they alter – or rewrite – the past in order to suit contemporary needs.

The argument that history textbooks convey the “approved” knowledge that the state or the ruling elite aspires to transmit to the next generation is self-evident. Yet, textbooks should also be regarded as cultural or social expressions, reflecting the *zeitgeist* and the changes that take place in society as a result of meaningful historical events and new historiography. The Ministry of Education, too, is not immune to calls for change coming from the “field” and is bound to respond to these pressures. In such cases, the content of a given textbook may reflect a synthesis between what is directed from above and what is transmitted from below. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the more centralized the educational system is, the less likely that the curriculum and the textbooks will be affected by changes from below.

This study aims to examine the depiction of Islam and Christianity in the Jewish textbooks in Israel. The analysis does not follow a chronological historical sequence, as presented in the textbooks, but rather focus on certain topics, which deal or engage with Jewish-Muslim and Jewish-Christian encounters throughout history. The research is based on the hermeneutic or descriptive-analytical method, focusing on the disclosure of explicit biases and prejudices found in the text.⁸

The current Israeli history textbooks belong, according to my findings, to the third generation of books. The first two generations contained many biases, distortions and omissions in relation to the presentation of the Other, which were largely eliminated

⁷ This was written in relation to Zionist historiography, but I think it applies as well to history textbooks; see B. Kimmerling, “Academic History Caught in the Cross-Fire: The Case of Israeli-Jewish Historiography,” *History and Memory*, Vol. 6 (1995), p. 57.

⁸ On the various methods, see E. B. Johnsen, *Textbooks in the Kaleidoscope: A Critical Survey of Literature and Research on Educational Texts*, Translated by L. Sivesind (Oslo: 1993), pp. 141-42. In his authoritative *UNESCO Guidebook*, Pingel classify the hermeneutic analysis as part of the qualitative method. He also mentions linguistic and discourse investigation as possible modes of analysis, see pp. 45-47.

in the third generation. This improvement reflects changes that have recently taken place in Jewish society in general and in the education system in particular.⁹

According to the history curriculum, the history of Islam and Christianity are taught in various stages of history classes both in the secular school system (in Hebrew: “the state school”) and in the religious school system (in Hebrew: “the state-religious school”) in junior and senior high school. The textbooks also deal with the topic of the “stranger” (in Hebrew: *ger*) in the context of Bible and oral Torah classes taught in both systems with different emphasis. The textbooks of the ultra-orthodox stream have not been examined as they are not under state supervision.¹⁰

The term for “other” in Jewish tradition – *ger* – appears in the Bible 36 times. At each mention, the Jews are commanded to treat the stranger with dignity, wherever he is to be found.¹¹ Similarly, the teachers’ guidance accompanying the textbooks on Bible study points to an interpretation in this spirit. For example, the explanation for the verse “And you shall love the stranger” (Deuteronomy) appears in the teacher’s guide to the religious school textbook thus: “Apparently, this should be interpreted that if the Lord of Hosts loves the stranger, then we are obliged all the more to do likewise. Or, as Rabbi Hirsch comments: We must imitate the qualities of the Holy One.”¹² The teacher’s guide emphasizes that the pupils should draw two main conclusions from the text: “First, that the Torah repeatedly forbids deceiving the stranger. Second, that there is a connection between fear of G-d and the commandment to love the stranger: inasmuch as everything belongs to the Holy One, His commandments are binding.”¹³ The attitude of Judaism toward strangers is also

⁹ See in this connection, Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2002).

¹⁰ On the Israeli education system, see Haim Gaziel, *Politics and Policy-Making in Israel's Education System* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 1996).

¹¹ L. Sheleff, “The Stranger in our Midst: The Other in Jewish Tradition – From Biblical Times to Modern Israel,” *Israel Studies Bulletin* (Spring 1999), p. 7.

¹² *Lessons in the Book of Deuteronomy, Teacher's Guide*, p. 111. The guide also cites commentaries on the verse from the Gemara.

¹³ *Ibid.*

reflected in the teacher's guide to the textbook on the study of oral Torah in secular high schools. In discussing this theme, the teacher's guide recommends "positioning the commandment to love the stranger, and the pronounced emphasis of the Torah on it, as the focus of the lesson on the Torah verses [dealing with the stranger]." ¹⁴

The attitude to the stranger in Bible and oral Torah classes, therefore, is not biased or distorted, either in the secular or the religious educational approach. However, when the discussion of the "other" shifts from the realm of the abstract to the concrete, the image reflected in the textbooks is far more complex. A good example is the depiction of Abraham in Bible and History classes. Since Abraham is the first Patriarch of the Jewish people and the person to whom God made the promises of giving the land of Cna'an ("the Promised Land"), it is hardly a surprise that his biblical stories (in the book of *Genesis*, chapters 12-25) are extensively studied in various educational stages. Yet, the fact that Abraham plays also an important role in the Islamic and Christian religions has been completely ignored in the textbooks. Though the reluctance of the Jewish education system to share Abraham with other religions is intelligible, it may be considered as a missed opportunity for discussing the commonalities between what is called "the three Abrahamic religions."

¹⁴*From the Sources on Conversion and Proselytizing*, Teacher's Guide, p. 6. Also see p. 15 in the companion textbook.

a. The Jewish View of Islam

History textbooks are the main source for the study of the pillars and history of Islam in the Jewish education system. The current textbooks, which belong to the third generation of textbooks in use since the establishment of the state of Israel, and date back to the mid-1990s when a revised history curriculum for junior and senior high schools was adopted. The history and the fundamentals of Islam are studied both in secular and religious junior high schools (seventh grade). It is taught in greater depth in senior high school but only in classes for matriculation majors in the subject “History of Islam and the Arabs.”

War and Peace in Islam

A textbook for the religious system presents the Islamic religion, *inter alia*, as the “religion of the sword.” The following text is quoted by way of illustration:

A widespread story among Arabs concerns a caliph who declared a jihad against the emperor of Byzantium. The emperor, fearing the Muslims and weary of war, called for the caliph and made him three proposals on the condition that he annul the threat of war: 1. He would pay the caliph all the costs that he had incurred in the war; 2. He would free all the Muslims taken into captivity, without ransom; and 3. He would use imperial funds to reconstruct a Muslim city destroyed by the war. The caliph, unable to decide, bowed down and requested guidance from Allah. At the end of the prayer he replied to the emperor: “Remember what the Qur’an replies in the name of the loyal slave Suleiman to Malakhi Bulkish the queen of Yemen (the reference is to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba): No matter what you possess, I possess more...for if money, gold and every treasure of the realm were held in one hand, and pure faith in God of the heavens were held in the other, the latter would be decisive. And as for your proposal to redeem the captives, the captives in your jail, if their souls and hearts are directed toward heaven and their eyes toward the goodness awaiting them in the next world – they are freed even while in captivity. And if their thoughts are directed toward greed for money and the pleasures of this world – they will be slaves even in their freedom. Thus, there is no reason to redeem them. As for your third proposal, know that that which is built by strangers is destruction. Only Muslims will build their city and only the sword shall decide between us.” When the caliph finished speaking, he faced the army and said: “Arise, for Allah has put the

enemy in your hands.” And indeed the Muslims were victorious over the Christians.¹⁵

At the end of the story, the pupil is asked to reply to this question: “Examine Chapter 20 of Deuteronomy and write: How must we behave toward a nation that seeks to reach a peace agreement with us?” The selection of this story, and the depiction of it as widespread “among Arabs” imbues it with an importance and centrality beyond its role in Islamic-Arab culture. The text itself conveys an unequivocal message to the pupil regarding the close affinity between war and its role in Islam: Muslim rulers prefer fighting by Allah’s command to arriving at peace agreements with an enemy prepared to surrender. The question presented at the end of the text harbors a particularly negative message. Deuteronomy 20:10-13 says:

When thou drawest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that are found therein shall become tributary unto thee, and shall serve thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God delivereth it into thy hand, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword.

Thus, Judaism teaches that if the enemy accepts the conditions of surrender (“if it makes thee answer of peace”), all hostile activity against it must be canceled. If the enemy rejects the conditions, war must be waged and the men must be killed. In other words, while Islam is presented as a religion in which war (*jihad*) is preferable to peace, Judaism is presented as a religion that prefers peace to war.¹⁶

¹⁵ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 215. The story is taken from Y. Meyuhas, *Children of the Night* (Hebrew), p. 49.

¹⁶ For further commentary on the verses cited from Deuteronomy, see *Lessons in the Book of Deuteronomy*, Grade 6, Teacher’s Guide, pp. 217-21. In this connection, Shlomo Dov Goitein argues that the idea of war by commandment – *jihad* – is so characteristic of Islam, that we tend to think of it as impressed in it from its beginnings, but this is not at all the case.” See his article, “Muhammad,” in H. Lazarus-Yaffe, *Chapters in the History of the Arabs and Islam* (Tel Aviv: *Reshafim*, 1981, Hebrew), p. 61. Similarly, Aviva Shussman has written: “In the beginning, Muhammad’s Islam was not a religion of wars, for he prophesied the end of the world and the Day of Judgment and other such prophecies. But with his arrival in Medina, his prophecies also included the announcement of a war of commandment. Apparently, Muhammad realized that he would not manage to attract believers by friendly

Muhammad and the Jews

One of the central issues in the depiction of the rise of Islam is Muhammad's attitude toward the Jewish tribes in the Arabian Peninsula. A textbook for religious junior high schools approaches the issue thus:

Muhammad hoped that belief in Allah would spread from the city of Yathrib [the former name of Medina], for Jewish tribes lived there as well and they would help him spread the belief in one god. However, the Jews of Yathrib distanced themselves from Muhammad and were therefore persecuted by him. In one clash, Muhammad's followers killed all the men in one of the Jewish tribes and sold the women and children into slavery. Muhammad divided the property of the Jewish tribes among his followers.

Three Jewish tribes lived in Medina, the Prophet's city. Under orders from Muhammad, his followers expelled two tribes [the reference is to the Qaynuqa and Nadir tribes]. The members of the third tribe [the reference is to the Quraytha tribe] were killed by the sword. Muhammad also accused the Jews of straying from the path of God. According to him, the Jews adulterated the holy books and inserted errors in them. Muhammad distanced himself from the Jews and altered customs that imitated Jewish customs....Yet, after Muhammad established himself in Medina and managed to disseminate his faith in the Arabian Peninsula, he changed his attitude toward the Jews. Muhammad promised them that he would protect their lives and property on condition that they recognize his rule and pay taxes to him.¹⁷

The following two passages are taken from two other textbooks, which are used in secular junior high schools:

Up until the rise of Islam, the status of the Jews in the Arabian Peninsula was reasonably good....When Muhammad began to spread his doctrine, he sought support for it from the Jews as well, but they rejected the new message and ridiculed its messenger. Once he acquired enough power and took control of Medina, Muhammad demanded that the Jews convert to Islam. When they refused, he accused them of falsifying God's Torah and making additions to it. Gradually, certain Jews whom Muhammad and his followers hated were murdered, and eventually two of the Jewish tribes (the Qaynuqa and the

persuasion." See "The Islamic Message," in H. Lazarus-Yaffe, *Islam* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishers, 1986, Hebrew), p. 25.

¹⁷ *From Generation to Generation*, II, pp. 200, 230.

Nadir) were expelled. The third tribe (the Quraytha) was massacred. Both in the Qur'an and in later tradition the attitude toward the Jew was alienating and contemptuous, reflecting the desire to block any Jewish influence on faithful Muslims.¹⁸

Muhammad, in his pronouncements, claimed that he was not establishing a new religion and that his mission as a prophet coalesced with and completed that of Moses and Jesus. In his view, the Jews and the Christians had not properly preserved the holy book that was given to them by God and he was therefore bringing another holy book from God, in Arabic. At first, Muhammad allowed the Jewish tribes in Medina to practice the commandments of their religion and promised to protect them. Muhammad anticipated that the Jews, too, would join Islam and expected them to use them in spreading his religion.... When the Jews did not join him, he altered some of the commandments he had laid down: he instructed Muslims to pray facing Mecca, to fast for one month each year, and to pray communally every Friday at noon. Muhammad also changed his attitude to the Jews and began fighting the Jewish tribes living in Medina. As a result, two tribes were forced to leave the city, abandoning all their property. Some of the tribespeople who left Medina settled in Khaybar; others migrated to Syria, Babylonia and the Jericho area. The fate of the third tribe, the Quraytha, which waged war against Muhammad, was different: the men of the tribe were murdered, while the women and children were sold as slaves. Thereafter, Muhammad set out to fight the Jewish tribes in Khaybar. They surrendered and were ordered to hand over half their produce to the Muslims. The Jews of Khaybar continued to keep the customs of their religion.¹⁹

The attitude of Islam and of Muhammad to the Jews is presented ambiguously in the religious school textbook referred to above (*From Generation to Generation*, II). Two sources are quoted at the end of the chapter dealing with the attitude of Islam to Judaism. One is the Qur'an: "Make war against those who will not believe in God and his messenger...those to whom the book was given, until they bring the tax in their hand and become humbled." (Qur'an 9:29) The second is a writ sent by Muhammad to the Jews: "And it shall come to pass when this letter reaches you you shall live securely, God's patronage and the patronage of His messenger (Muhammad) will be extended to you...for God's messenger will protect you..." (taken from B. Z. Dinur, "Israel in the Diaspora," 19, Hebrew).²⁰

¹⁸ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 31.

¹⁹ *A Journey to the Past*, p. 21.

²⁰ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 235.

The description of Muhammad's attitude to the Jewish tribes is fairly similar in all three textbooks referred to above. It is presented factually, even dryly, and therefore ostensibly without biases. The first two books deal with the "expulsion" of the tribes, while the third book claims that two tribes "were forced to leave the city."²¹ With this, a pronounced bias in this context seems to be the absence of a comprehensive explanation of Muhammad's behavior toward the Jews. Muhammad first approached the Jews in the expectation of assistance from them in light of their wealth and their religious proclivity toward him in his fight against the infidels of the Qurayish tribe. When the Jews refused to convert to Islam, Muhammad expelled or exiled two Jewish tribes with the intention of taking over their assets, which enabled him to mount a war against the infidels in the Arabia Peninsula and establish a homogeneous Muslim community. The destruction of the Quraytha was undoubtedly an exceptional act. Goitein, in attempting to assess the event historically, wrote that "It was the simple law of war: the enemy is condemned to death and the women and children to slavery. This rule was accepted in the Jewish and Muslim formal legal tradition."²²

French historian Claude Cahen wrote in this connection that "there was a basis for Muhammad's hope that he could gain the support of Medina's Jews. However, when this expectation was disappointed, he acted against them, alternating between attacks and diplomacy, until the Jews were removed from the city, whether by the sword or through emigration."²³ Another analysis holds that "Muhammad's wars against the Jews were not a goal in themselves but a part of his wars against the population of

²¹ Goitein uses the term "expulsion" for the Qaynuqas and the term "exile" for the Nadirs. See "Muhammad," pp. 65, 67.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 70. The author is referring to Deuteronomy 20:13-14, which says: "And when the Lord thy God delivereth it into thy hand, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword; but the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take for a prey unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee." Goitein adds that "in Judaism this tradition was annulled for tangential reasons, and in practice this rule was followed only in exceptional cases" (*ibid.*, pp. 70-71).

²³ C. Cahen, *Islam From its Birth until the Beginning of the Ottoman Empire* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1995), p. 28 (Translated from French to Hebrew by I. Kopelevich).

Mecca. Every time a war against the Meccans ended – whether successfully or in failure – the Jews fell victim to exile...or slaughter.”²⁴

In the absence of these explanations, which provide the historical context for Muhammad’s activity, his behavior is perceived as particularly anti-Jewish. Notably, in light of the good neighborly relations that were the norm between Jews and Arabs before the appearance of Muhammad, many Arabs expressed regret at the exodus of the Jews.²⁵ Lastly, the ambiguous presentation of the attitude of Islam toward the Jews, as it appears in the religious school textbook discussed above, obscure the position of Islam toward Judaism by attaching the same importance to two conflicting sources that it quotes.

The Sanctity of Jerusalem in Islam

The sensitive, politically significant topic of the status and role of Jerusalem in Islam is in fact presented in a reasonably balanced fashion. Following are two treatments of the subject in the junior high school textbooks for the religious and the secular school systems, respectively:

In the course of time, Jerusalem became the holy city for Muslims, too. According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad flew from Mecca to Jerusalem on a magic horse named *Al-Buraq*. Muhammad tied the horse to one of the stones of the Western Wall and ascended on foot to the top of the Temple Mount. From there he rose up to heaven and brought the Qur’an back to earth. After the Arabs conquered Eretz Yisrael, they built the dome of the Rock (popularly called the Mosque of Omar) on the spot from which Muhammad rose to heaven, according to their tradition, and on a spot further away, where Muhammad alighted on the Temple Mount, they built the outer mosque – the al-Aqsa Mosque. [The pupil is questioned on this segment thus: “Jews call the sole remnant of our Temple the Western Wall. Christians call it the Wailing Wall, and Muslims – *Al-Buraq*. What is the explanation for each of these names?”]²⁶

²⁴ Shussman, “The Message of Islam,” p. 26.

²⁵ See, e.g., H. Z. Hirschberg, *The Jews in the Lands of Islam*, p. 267.

²⁶ *From Generation to Generation*, II, pp. 202, 208.

According to Muslim tradition, Muhammad at first instructed Muslims to pray facing Jerusalem and only later decided that they should pray facing Mecca. Jerusalem is not mentioned by name in the Qur'an [a note adds: A hint of Jerusalem is to be found in Sura 17:1: "Blessed be His name whose servant was flown by night from the Holy Mosque (in Mecca) to the mosque at the furthest extreme." Muslim exegetes explain that the words "the mosque at the furthest extreme" signify the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem], but what is recounted is that Muhammad flew from Mecca on his magic beast *Al-Burak* – who had a human head, the body of a horse and wings.... Toward the end of the seventh century, Caliph Abd al-Malik built the dome of the Rock structure in Jerusalem [called the Mosque of Omar]. Abd al-Malik hoped that Jerusalem would replace Mecca, which was controlled by his opponents, and would become a center for Muslims. He saw many grand churches in Jerusalem and apparently wanted to build a structure that was more beautiful than the churches and that would serve as a source of pride for the Muslim faithful. His son, al-Walid, built the al-Aqsa Mosque south of the Dome of the Rock. The construction of the al-Aqsa Mosque enhanced the holiness of Jerusalem in the eyes of the Muslims.... The construction of the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque did not prevent the Jews from praying at the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. Muslim sources testify that Abd al-Malik appointed ten Jewish families as custodians of the Dome of the Rock, including craftsmen who produced goblets, candles, lamps and wicks for the use of the Muslims. In return, these Jews and their children were exempt from the payment of all taxes.²⁷

The formulation of the historical narrative above obliquely conveys a sense of the superiority of Jerusalem in Judaism as compared to its role in Islam, in that Jerusalem's holiness is not directly mentioned in Islamic sources but is referred to only indirectly, by means of Muslim exegesis for the Qur'anic verse "the mosque at the furthest extreme." It would have been more appropriate to add that regardless of the historic facts, Jerusalem is perceived as holy by Muslims. Hava Lazarus-Yaffe has written, in this connection, that "in the course of generations, [Muhammad's] legendary voyage has been accepted as historic fact and not as a dream or a vision." Therefore, she continues, "there is no longer any reason to question the holiness of Jerusalem in Islam, for the religious legend struck the deepest possible roots in it, and surely the force of religious truths is not necessarily nurtured by historic truths but by the extent of the belief they elicit. Thus, the holiness of Jerusalem to Islam is undoubtedly fact."²⁸

²⁷ *A Journey to the Past*, p. 31.

²⁸ H. Lazarus-Yaffe, "The Holiness of Jerusalem," in *Islam*, pp. 87-88.

Jewish-Muslim Relations (“The Covenant of Omar”)

The main issue dealt with by the textbooks in this context is the regulations of Caliph Omar II, which determined the status of protected persons under the rule of Islam. It is worded thus in the junior high school textbook for the religious school system:

These laws forbade protected persons to bear arms, ride horses, conduct religious ceremonies in public and build new houses of worship. Protected persons were required to wear special clothing to distinguish them from Muslims, and were forbidden to serve in offices that would give them control over Muslims. These regulations imposed severe limitations on the Jews, although most rulers did not implement them strictly. They would rather be aided by the Jews and make use of their talents for their own and their kingdom’s benefit.²⁹

Another volume of this textbook states that “the status of the Jews in the Islamic lands was also determined by Omar’s laws. These were laws compiled in a single document, apparently at the beginning of the eighth century. Their intent was to elevate the Muslims and denigrate the protected persons – the Jews and Christians.”³⁰

The junior high school textbook for the secular school system words this as follows:

Following the conquest of the northern Arabian Peninsula and southern Eretz Yisrael (632), the conquerors designated the status of the Jews (as well as of the Christians) for generations to come as part of the *conditions of surrender* [emphasis mine]: The status of the Jews and the Christians was indeed inferior, yet in exchange for a head tax (*jizyya*) which they were obliged to pay, the Jews became persons protected against all harm (*dhimmi*). These conditions were established as a tradition with the validity of a religious commandment in Islam.³¹

These passages teach the pupil, whether obliquely or directly, that “conditions” were imposed by the Muslims on the protected persons. The textbook for secular schools

²⁹ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 232.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, III, p. 42. Several examples of these laws are then presented, taken from B. Z. Dinur’s book, *Israel in the Diaspora*, 1/A, p. 66. Here, too, the point is brought out that “the sultans tended to turn a blind eye in the matter of implementing many parts of Omar’s laws” (*ibid.*, p. 43).

³¹ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 31.

terms these rules “conditions of surrender.” In contrast, Muslims view this document as a kind of “alliance” or “contract” (this is also the translation of the term used in Arabic, *‘uhud*) – an arrangement that anchors relations between the Muslim ruler and minority groups in a legal framework, with the use of the term “protected persons” designed to preserve the dignity of such groups. Furthermore, the material in the textbooks implies that the Jews were a primary factor in the fixing of the regulations, although they were intended for the benefit of all the non-Muslim monotheistic religions generally and in this context were applied to the Jews as well. The textbook for the secular schools minimizes this fact in particular, implying that these regulations were directed first and foremost against the Jews. Additionally, this textbook, in contrast to the textbook for religious schools, neglects to point out that in many cases the Muslim rulers did not implement these regulations.

The fact that Muslim commentary on the Covenant of Omar differs from Jewish (or Christian) commentary is not surprising.³² However, the textbook should have mentioned the contradiction between the Muslim perception, which views the document as an expression of Islam’s manifold tolerance for the stranger, and the Jewish perception, which views it at least partially as a reflection of discrimination and arrogance. Moreover, since the implementation of the regulations was largely dependent on the ruler, broad generalizations regarding the attitude of “Islam” toward the Jews cannot be made. Rather, each aspect of the issue should be considered on its merits – whether in the geographic or the chronological realm. In this context, Lazarus-Yaffe observed that “much has been written about their discriminatory laws, but occasionally the fact has been emphasized that even though the ‘contract’ was a kind of corpus of governmental regulations imposed on ‘protected persons,’ the Muslims, for their part, did obligate themselves to discharge their part of the ‘alliance.’”³³ Furthermore, in her view, the document does not reflect the true reality

³² For an example of the Jewish perception, see H. Z. Hirschberg, “The Jews in the Lands of Islam,” in *Chapters in the History of the Arabs and Islam*, pp. 270-71. The author treats the regulations as “The Conditions of Omar.”

³³ H. Lazarus-Yaffe (ed.), *Muslim Writers on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1998), p. 8.

of the status of the Christians and the Jews under Muslim rule so much as it reflects the “ideal” of their inferior and degraded status.³⁴

In addition to the above, the textbooks are singularly lacking in any reference to the inadvisability of judging the past through the conceptual prism of the present. Since Islamic society did not pretend to be egalitarian, Jewish society did not expect, and could not have expected, such treatment under Islamic rule.³⁵

Judaism between Islam and Christianity

The Jews passed under Christian and Muslim rule intermittently during various periods. These conditions inevitably led to comparisons between their situation under both these types of governance, invariably portraying Islam as more tolerant than Christianity. The textbook for the secular junior high schools states: “Generally, Islam was more tolerant than Christianity. Muslim rulers protected the autonomy of the monotheistic religious groups, and persecution based on religion was unusual.”³⁶ Elsewhere, the text states: “The Muslim conquest greatly eased the situation of the Jews wherever they lived. Following a short period of uncertainty regarding the status of the non-Muslims, the new rulers adopted a policy of religious tolerance. For the Jews, the conquest ushered in a period of unprecedented prosperity.”³⁷

Another textbook for the secular school system also describes the condition of the Jews both in Jerusalem and in Spain under the Muslim conquest in a more positive

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁵ This kind of approach is to be found in a special booklet published by the Ben-Zvi Institute for the Research of Jewish Communities in the East, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture’s Society and Youth Authority, designed primarily for informal education. See H. Sa’adon, *Jews and Muslims in the Countries of Islam: Complexity and Variety* (Jerusalem, 1997, Hebrew). See especially pp. 19-20, which deal with the Covenant of Omar and its significance.

³⁶ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 36

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

light than that during the period of Christian rule.³⁸ The teacher's guide for this book presents a comparative table depicting Jewish life in Spain under Muslim and under Christian rule. Two items appear under the heading "Confrontation and Struggle" during the period of Muslim rule: the al-Muwahhidun Affair and the murder of Jehoseph (see below), while under Christian rule the list cites "religious disputations, the massacres of 1391, the Inquisition, forced converts and Marranos, expulsion from cities, expulsion from the country" (see also the analysis of Christianity in the textbooks, below).³⁹ When manifestations of hatred and violence did appear in Muslim- controlled Spain, they are portrayed as the exception, e.g.:

Between the tenth and the end of the eleventh centuries, the Jews of Muslim Spain enjoyed a period of prosperity.... The Jews attained wealth, but their success evoked envy and hatred, which erupted on occasion (albeit rarely) in bloody riots. For example, hostility toward Samuel Hanagid broke out during the time of his son Jehoseph, and a great massacre of the Jews of Granada occurred.⁴⁰

The situation changes in depicting the reasons for the departure of the Jews from Andulasia, namely that the Golden Age came to an end with the invasion (in 1146) of the Muwahhidun, a "fanatic Muslim sect from North Africa [who] instituted religious coercion in the areas under their rule and ordered the annihilation of non-Muslims."⁴¹ Indeed, the accepted premise regarding the history of the Jews of the Maghrib is that there was only one case of "mass organized persecution." Notably, moreover, the toll among the Jews was less severe than among the Christians, while the Muwahhidun also killed many Muslims who were suspected of deviating from pure Islam. In any case, there is no resemblance between this example of persecution and expulsion and

³⁸ *A Journey to the Past*, p. 47. The student is asked in this context: "Jerusalem was conquered by the Muslims in the seventh century and by the Christians in the eleventh century. Compare the attitude of the Muslims to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and that of the Christians" (*ibid.*). For the Jews in Muslim Spain, see *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, pp. 78-79; *A Journey to the Past*, p. 175.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁰ *A Journey to the Past*, Teacher's Guide, p. 97.

⁴¹ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 78.

such acts ordered under Christian rule in Europe (see below).⁴² This issue, then, appears to be presented in a balanced fashion in the textbooks.

The Jews under Islamic Rule

The textbooks deal with three issues that fall under this category: the condition of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire; the condition of the Jews in Eretz Yisrael under Mamluk and Ottoman rule; and the condition of the Jews in Morocco, Persia and Yemen.

In the first case, all the textbooks (both for the secular and the religious school systems) emphasize the tolerance displayed by the Ottoman rulers toward the conquered peoples generally and the Jews in particular. For example, the junior high school textbook for religious schools states that “the sultan issued an order permitting the exiles [from Spain] to enter and reside in his country. Moreover, he warned the inhabitants of his country that ‘no governors of his towns would be allowed to mistreat the Jews or expel them; but rather all were to welcome them properly and, should they fail to do so, they should be executed.’”⁴³

The other two topics appear primarily in the textbook for religious schools, which is not surprising in light of the emphasis in this book on the study of Jewish history and Eretz Yisrael. The situation in Eretz Yisrael at the start of the Mamluk period, a short while after the termination of the Crusader Kingdom, is described by means of an extract from a letter by Maimonides to his son written in 1267 after the father settled in the city of Acre: “The desolation and barrenness [of the country] is great and, to sum up, he who is more blessed than his friends destroys more than his friend.”⁴⁴ Another, more detailed description of Mamluk rule is also provided:

⁴² Hirschberg, “The Jews in the Lands of Islam,” p. 276.

⁴³ *From Generation to Generation*, III, p. 19. Also see *A Journey to the Past*, pp. 208-9; *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 213.

⁴⁴ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 362.

For the Mamluks, Eretz Yisrael was a land beyond Egypt in the Syrian territories under their control, and they did not therefore bother to rehabilitate or develop it. Neglect and desolation were evident, especially along the coastal plain, which in the past had been heavily populated and in their day was deserted. Even great port cities such as Jaffa and Acre were reduced to ruins or had become impoverished villages. Destruction and desolation were apparent in Jerusalem, too. The city had no walls, and a livelihood was hard to come by. Only a handful of tenacious Jews resided there. However, when Rabbi Ovadiah from Bartinuro in northern Italy, known as Rabbi Ovadiah of Bartinuro, immigrated to the land (1488), a certain revival occurred in the city. The synagogues in the city filled with worshippers [and] study at the city's yeshiva was renewed.... Still, despite his efforts to restore the city to its past glory, he did not succeed in turning it into a major Jewish center. Jerusalem, which was holy to other religions too, attracted many believers, and riots and neighbors' quarrels broke out between them. The Muslim rulers of the city even limited the number of Jews permitted to live in Jerusalem.⁴⁵

In contrast to the desolation described during the Mamluk period, the Ottomans were portrayed as “investing great effort in developing the country.” However, this aspect is overshadowed by a long description of developments in the Jewish community during the Ottoman period, such as the emergence of Safed and Tiberius as important religious centers and the attempt to revive the Sanhedrin (the ancient juridical-legislative assembly of 71 ordained scholars).⁴⁶ Furthermore, Eretz Yisrael had become a destination for the forced converts from Spain:

In their view, the Ottomans' successes and the Christians' failures were signs from heaven of the impending arrival of the Messiah. They believed that whoever settled in Eretz Yisrael would be privileged to be among the first to welcome the Messiah. This faith impelled many to leave their homes in the Diaspora and settle in the land. They were certain that dwelling in Eretz Yisrael would help them purify themselves from the defilement of the Diaspora, especially from the years of forced conversion when they pretended to be Christians.⁴⁷

The negative tone in the depiction of the Mamluk period, side by side with the disregard of the role of the Muslims in Eretz Yisrael during the entire Ottoman

⁴⁵ *From Generation to Generation*, III, p. 26.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* The description of the Jewish community in Eretz Yisrael takes up seven pages (26-33).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

period, are meant to emphasize that in contrast to the various Muslim conquerors, who treated Eretz Yisrael with a measure of contempt, the Jews consistently viewed it as the center of their world and made strenuous efforts to settle and develop it throughout their history.

The third topic concerning the Jews under Islamic rule relates to a description of the conditions of the Jews in three countries not part of the Ottoman Empire – Morocco, Persia and Yemen. Following are passages from the textbook for religious schools:

Beginning in the sixteenth century, the rulers of Morocco, influenced by the religious leadership, adopted measures designed to degrade heretics. For example, the Jews of Morocco were obliged to remove their shoes each time they passed a mosque or the home of a Muslim dignitary. A Jew was obliged to bow to a Muslim who passed in the street, bless him and give him the right of way. The French consul in Morocco described the condition of the Jews in the country thus: “The lowest of Muslims believes that he is permitted to mistreat Jews, and no Jew dares defend himself because the Qur’an and the judge always justify the Muslim.” An English priest who visited Morocco wrote in the same spirit: “The present condition [of the Jews] under Muslim rule is nothing but a refined version of slavery...”

The rulers of Morocco isolated the city Jews from their Muslim neighbors. They settled them in special neighborhoods surrounded by a wall. At night, the gates of the neighborhood were locked, with no possibility of leaving or entering. Living conditions in the closed neighborhood – the *mallah* – were harsh and crowding was extensive. The water supply was poor and fires broke out periodically, destroying all the dilapidated buildings. A Jewish writer described the *mallah* thus: “The dimensions of the *mallah* were minimal, approximately a kilometer long by a kilometer wide. Not a single public park was to be found in it.... The sun’s rays would penetrate most of the narrow, dark alleys for only a few moments of the day.” Sometimes, an incited crowd would burst into the *mallah* and attack and loot the Jews who lived there.⁴⁸

The fate of the Jews of Yemen and Persia was even more difficult than that of their brethren in Morocco. Both these countries were ruled by the Shi’a. They believed that heretics were contaminated (*najis*) and therefore imposed degrading restrictions on them. For example, Jews in Persia were forbidden to walk about in the rain lest they step in a puddle and splash Muslim passers-by, thereby contaminating them. In Yemen, the Jews were forbidden to wear [proper] headgear but could only cover their head with a piece of cloth of a color different from that of their Muslim neighbors.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

The event carved in the memory of the Jews of Yemen above all others occurred in 1648. In that year, the governor of the city of San'a in Yemen ordered all the Jews in the city to convert to Islam or leave their homes. The Jews of San'a refused to convert and were expelled to Muzah, a barren, blazingly hot plain along the Red Sea. Many of the San'a Jews died on the way to exile or once they arrived in Muzah, but those who survived were recalled to the city. The Arabs in San'a had pressured the governor to annul the expulsion order, for they found it difficult to live in the city without the Jewish craftsmen.⁴⁹

The discussion of the condition of the Jews in Morocco, Persia and Yemen supports the recommendation (made above) to present the complex position of the Jews under Islamic rule not in broad generalization but by means of concrete historic examples. Moreover, the long description of the condition of the Jews in these three countries, side by side with the brief description of the "harmony" that prevailed throughout the Ottoman Empire, is distinctly disproportionate.⁵⁰ A reverse disproportion exists in the texts for the secular school system, which present the Ottoman period in a positive light but do not deal with the condition of the Jews in the Islamic countries outside the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹

b. The Jewish View of Christianity

As is the case for the study of Islam, history textbooks constitute a primary source for learning about Christianity in the Jewish school system. These books were published during the mid-1990s in tandem with the new history curriculum established for junior and senior high schools. The historic and religious principles of Christianity are taught in both the secular and religious junior high schools at seventh and eighth grades. In contrast to the method of teaching about Islam, however, the method of teaching about Christianity in the Jewish school system has never been examined academically. Yet, it would not seem an exaggeration to contend that the older-generation textbooks were laden with biases, distortions and omissions in the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47. For source segments, see p. 48.

⁵⁰ Cf. with the descriptions in *ibid.*, pp. 42-47.

⁵¹ See *A Journey to the Past*, pp. 208-9; *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 213.

presentation of Christianity – as was the case in the presentation of Islam – in comparison with the improved situation of today's textbooks.⁵² Seven topics illustrating how Christianity is learned in the Jewish school system are discussed below.

Jesus and the Early Christianity

The founding of the Christian religion is described in the textbook in a factual and balanced fashion.⁵³ However, the discussion in the textbook for religious schools is presented as part of the ancient dispute between Christianity and Judaism. Jesus is presented as someone who was “born Jewish and during his entire lifetime felt himself to be a Jew and apparently did not think of establishing a new religion.” By contrast, Paul, “although born a Jew, deviated from Judaism. He believed that after the appearance of Jesus there was no longer any need to observe the practical commandments, for faith in Jesus was the essence.”⁵⁴ In order to prove that the Christians drew their inspiration from the Jews, the pupil is given an exercise titled “From Whom Did the Christians Learn?” as follows:

Persecution by the Roman caesars created a dilemma for the Christians: should they deny their religion, or sacrifice their lives for it? They responded to this through drawings. Here are pictures of Daniel in the lions' den, and Hananya, Mishael and Azarya in the furnace. Answer these questions: 1. Why did the Christians often draw these particular characters? 2. Read Chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel. What was the reason that Hananya, Mishael and Azarya were thrown into the furnace? 3. Read Chapter 6 of the Book of Daniel. How was Daniel saved from the lions' den? 4. List the names of other figures from our history who could have served as a shining example of the sanctification of the Lord to Christians.⁵⁵

⁵² See, e.g., *The Jews Between Christianity and Islam* (1973) and *In the Days of the Crusaders* (1983), two textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture in experimental editions only.

⁵³ See, in particular, B. Ben-Baruch, *Greeks, Romans, Jews* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Books, 1996), pp. 137-39.

⁵⁴ *From Generation to Generation*, II, pp. 86-87.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

By reading from the Book of Daniel, the pupil is expected to understand that these Jewish figures, who were thrown into the furnace for their unwillingness to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar, constitute a shining example for Christians. Daniel, who was saved from the lions' den after praying to God continuously, constitutes a particular example to Christians because many of them were thrown into lions' dens in Roman times. The pupil is then asked:

The heretics (the Christians) say of the length of our exile that (it is because) we do not believe in Jesus' Torah. We answer them: "Why was there an exile before Jesus was born? Additionally: ...that G-d ordered us to be scattered in the lands of the Gentiles because we abandoned the Torah of our Lord, his commandments and his laws, and not because of Jesus' sin or any other reason." a. How do the Christians explain the exile of Israel? b. How do Jews negate the Christians' arguments? c. Find explanations for Israel's exile in the Bible or in sayings by our Sages of Blessed Memory.

This passage, too, is part of the religio-historic disputation between the Jews and Christians. The pupil learns the Christian argument, but in tandem he/she is guided as to how to respond to it and, with the help of the teacher, to locate additional explanations for Israel's exile in the Bible and the Sages literature.⁵⁶

The textbook for the secular system offers a balanced account of the adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire.⁵⁷ The textbook for the religious system, however, emphasized the various discriminatory measures were implemented toward the Jews. The textbook for the religious school system writes in this context:

The Jewish religion alone merited a special attitude in the empire. The Jews were not pagans and were also not Christians who had deviated from the path.... The Jews' crime, in the Christian perception, was that they did not understand that the time had come to change their customs and give up their religion. The church, therefore, did not prohibit the Jews from observing the commandments of their religion, and the ceasars even reaffirmed that Judaism was a permissible religion in the empire.... Nevertheless, discriminatory laws were issued against them. The Church fathers wrote that due to the refusal of the Jews to believe in Jesus, the Jews of every generation are partners in the crime of the killing of Jesus and for this they must bear punishment. Like

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵⁷ *Greeks, Romans, Jews*, pp. 173-79.

Cain, who was sentenced to wander forever because of his sin of killing Abel, all the Jews, who sinned by killing Jesus, must wander. One of the Church fathers quoted the verse: “Slay them not, lest my people forget, make them wander to and fro by Thy power, and bring them down...” (Psalms 59:12), explaining: killing the Jews is forbidden, but they must be made to wander, so that the Christians will see their degraded condition and will understand that their Christian religion is the true religion. In this spirit, the Church determined that the Jews must be degraded and depressed, ruled and not rulers, the subjects of commands and not the commanders. Thus, Jews may not hold public office or governmental posts, or serve in the Roman army. The harsh attitude of the Christian Church toward the Jews also influenced the rulers, and the prohibitions issued by church synods were approved by the caesars and quickly became law.⁵⁸

In an effort to underscore the power of the Church, the text explains that “even what was permitted to the Jews by law was not always protected” by the caesars. This issue is illustrated by a story about a caesar permitting the reconstruction of a synagogue destroyed by Christian ruffians. The bishop reacted thus, according to the story:

The honor of the Lord is offended by Caesar’s order to rebuild the Jewish synagogue. For soon the Jews will rejoice over the downfall that they caused the Christian people and they will engrave this inscription on their synagogue: The Temple of Heresy Built From Christian Spoils. And should you say that you cannot rescind – on the contrary, rise up, go out, and annul your decision! The bishop’s words impressed the caesar so deeply, that he was filled with remorse and confessed his sins. The bishop gave him a penance and forgave him his sins. The great Roman Empire had surrendered to the Christian Church!⁵⁹

The condition of the Jews under Christian rule during the early centuries A.D. is described slightly differently in three passages in the textbook for the secular schools:

The attitude of Christianity toward the Jews is complex. The Church claims that in the past the Jews were indeed God’s chosen people, but because they rejected Jesus, this chosen status passed to the Christians. The Jews must be punished for their attitude toward Jesus, yet the fact of their existence as a people testifies to the truth of the prophecies that appear in the Old Testament. The Jews, thus, are a witness people and therefore may not be killed. Side by

⁵⁸ *From Generation to Generation*, II, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

side with this attitude, however, there was great hostility and even hatred. The Jews, too, for their part, hated the Christians as well and ridiculed them...

This view of the Jews as a witness people – i.e., a people that by its very existence bears witness to the veracity of Christianity – is what allowed the Jews to continue to exist among the Christians in the West despite the grave indictment of them – the murder of God. Yet, Christian “tolerance” was accompanied by great hostility and even hatred toward the Jews. The Jews, too, for their part, hated the Christians and ridiculed them. The story of Jewish history under Christian rule is a story of a complex and difficult relationship between the “elder brother” (the Jews) and the “younger brother” (the Christians)....

The Jews [in the Ashkenaz lands, i.e., in Germany] comprised one grouping in the mosaic of groups and classes of Middle Ages society. Up until the first Crusade, and perhaps for a certain period thereafter, their condition was good and their social status secure.⁶⁰

The main problem that stems from all these descriptions relates not so much to the information contained in the textbook but to that which was omitted. Several issues should have been emphasized. First, the laws issued by the caesars were not aimed at the Jews alone but against various other minorities, including pagans. Second, the main reason that prompted Christianity to issue these laws related to its desire to protect itself from foreign competition and influence by means of undermining the character of rival religions. Judaism was perceived as especially threatening to Christianity because of the complex interrelationship that existed between the two religions during the early period of the spread of Christianity.⁶¹ On the opposite side, Judaism, too, attempted to protect itself, for example by incorporating the prayer composed by Rabbi Gamliel de-legitimizing apostates and slanderers so as to “distance Jews who converted to Christianity from the synagogue.”⁶² Third, despite the existence of discriminatory laws against the Jews, the many gaps between Christian doctrine and reality should be highlighted, namely, a substantial proportion of Church prohibitions were not implemented by the secular rulers. Generally, the

⁶⁰ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, pp. 76, 81-83. For a balanced account of some discriminatory laws, see *Greeks, Romans, Jews*, pp. 178-79.

⁶¹ *Jew Hatred From the Birth of Christianity to the Crusades*, Unit 3 (Tel Aviv: The Open University, 1985, Hebrew), p. 21.

⁶² *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 22.

condition of the Jews in Christian society until the crusaders was good, especially in comparison with other minorities.⁶³ This fact is not mentioned in the textbook for religious schools and is insufficiently emphasized in the textbook for secular schools. Lastly, the interrelationship between the Jews and the Christians should be analyzed through the prism of the early centuries – i.e., during a period when injustice and violence were permanent features of society. Even so, the Church tended to attain the baptism of Jews by persuasion rather than force or violence.

The Jews and the Crusades

The description in the textbooks of the condition of the Jews during the crusader period is exemplified by the events known as the “Massacres of 1096.” The textbook for religious schools portrays the Jewish community in France as “facing the choice of conversion or death. Some converted by force but most stood fast and were killed as martyrs at the hands of the rioters.”⁶⁴ The massacre that took place in Worms, Germany, is depicted thus:

The rioters shouted at every Jew who was caught: “Christianity or death.” One by one, the Jews chose death. The bodies of those killed were thrown out of windows into the street. Torah scrolls were burned to shreds. The crusaders competed amongst each other over who could kill more Jews. A widespread rumor had it that the Pope promised the pardon of sins to anyone who killed even a single Jew.... The number of fatalities mounted. But not all the Jews were killed by the crusaders. The rioters snatched Jewish children, brought them to the church and baptized them.⁶⁵

The textbook also quotes from sources in *The Book of Edicts Against the Jewish Communities of Ashkenaz and France* (A. M. Haberman, 1946, Hebrew): “Then they justified their judgment and trusted their instinct...and took their children and slaughtered them as martyrs to the revered and awesome G-d...and all...blessed G-d with all their heart and with a willing mind slaughtered one another, young boys and

⁶³ See also *Jew Hatred From the Birth of Christianity to the Crusades*, pp. 37-38.

⁶⁴ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 404.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

virgins, old men and old women.”⁶⁶ The textbook also presents the legend that grew up around the writer of the liturgical hymn *Oonetanneh Tokef* (“Let us tell the mighty holiness of this day”), written by Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, which became part of the Ashkenazi High Holiday prayer service. Amnon was tortured by the local bishop for resisting baptism. “When they began amputating his legs at the joints, they would ask him before cutting into each joint whether he wanted to convert, and he would reply ‘no.’ At the end, the bishop ordered that Rabbi Amnon be laid on a bed with all the joints of his legs placed next to him, and thus they sent him to his home.”⁶⁷ At the end of the chapter, the pupil is asked: “It may be argued that the brave death of the Jews triumphed over the crusaders. What is your opinion?”⁶⁸

A similar description of the condition of the Jews is given in the textbook for the secular schools:

The preachers called upon the crusaders to force the Jews to be baptized, and if they refused – to kill them. They argued: What is the point of going to war with the defilers of the Messiah’s grave in the East, when the murderers of the Messiah live amidst the Christians in the West? And the crusaders indeed attacked the [Jewish] communities and massacred those who refused to convert.⁶⁹

This textbook, too, quotes a passage from a historical source taken from *The Book of Edicts Against the Jewish Communities of Ashkenaz and France*:

And the enemies rose up against them and killed children and women, boys and old men, in a single day, they did not favor *kohanim* (priests), they did not spare old people, they took no pity on infants, they showed no mercy for pregnant women, they left no survivor.... For all of them called for martyrdom, and even when the enemy was upon them they all shouted loudly with one heart and one voice: “Hear, o Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is one.”⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 411.

⁶⁹ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 89. For a similar description, see Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, pp. 140-41.

⁷⁰ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 90.

In contrast to the textbook for religious schools, however, the textbook for the secular system emphasizes that

the Jew-hatred that burst out during the First Crusade was a new phenomenon, as was the popular Crusade itself.... The crusaders viewed the Jews of their time as murderers of Jesus. The death of the Christian Messiah was not a remote matter a thousand years old but a terrible injustice against which it was not too late to erase. This was the first time that the Jews in the West were subjected to large-scale massacres.⁷¹

The description of the capture of Jerusalem by the crusaders relates to the condition of the Jews in the city, both directly and indirectly. The textbook for the secular schools quotes the following passage from a source written by an anonymous crusader who depicts the conquest in emotional terms:

Our men pursued them [the defenders of the city] until Solomon's Temple and did much killing of them. The slaughter here was so great, that our men waded in blood up to their ankles.... Our men spread out throughout the whole city, looted gold and silver, horses and donkeys, conquering houses filled with all manner of good things. [Afterward] they all hurried, with tears of joy in their eyes, to the grave of our Redeemer Jesus, to honor Him and avenge the main debt.... A massacre of heretics such as this had never been heard of or seen heretofore.⁷²

At the end of the passage, the pupil is asked: "What impressed you most about the testimony in this document?" At the end of the chapter, the pupil is asked additionally: "Jerusalem was captured by Muslims in the seventh century and by Christians in the eleventh century. Compare the attitude of the Muslims toward the residents of Jerusalem with that of the Christians."⁷³ Both these questions are clearly biased, as they lead the pupil to emphasize the intensity of the hatred and violence of the Christians in comparison with the behavior of the Muslims. By contrast, another textbook for secular schools notes that "during the conquest of Jerusalem Jews were

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, p. 147.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

massacred not because of their religion but because they took part in defending the city... The Jews had the benefit of autonomy and were not subjected to persecution.”⁷⁴

The Expulsion of the Jews from England, France and Germany

The expulsion of the Jews from England (1290), France (1306) and Germany (the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries), side by side with the legislation by the Church of laws designed to discriminate against the Jews, constitute the climax of a period of Jewish suffering under Christian rule that began in the late Middle Ages and lasted until the start of the Renaissance. The textbooks written for the secular school system describe this period in detail:

Incitement, a satanic image and horror stories – all these contributed to the growing isolation of the Jews in Christian society.... Jewish history in the West in the fourteenth century is a tragic story of calamities....

The disturbances of the First Crusade did not have a lasting impact. The massacres were perceived as an exceptional outburst by an inflamed mob and not as a significant change in Christian policy....

In the wake of the religious revival in Christian society, the faithful resumed reading the New Testament, highlighting the suffering and death of Jesus. The Jews, they claimed, were responsible, which called for more concerted efforts at isolating and degrading them....

The Church helped fan the hatred and denounced money-lending for interest as an obscenity....

Apostates familiarized the Christians with the existence of the Talmud and translated passages for them that described, for example, Jesus burning in hell in boiling excrement.... The first reaction of the educated [Christians] was surprise and hostility...[and] the burning of the Talmud in France....

Highly negative images of the Jews were widespread in all strata of society. From the twelfth century onward, the Jews were accused of the ritual murder of Christian children and the use of their blood for various purposes.... Stories about the stench emitted by Jews were widely circulated among the people. The concept of the “Jewish nose” emerged, along with the image of the Jew as a Satan-worshipper. The Jew became a scapegoat.... Incitement, satanic image and horror stories – all contributed to the growing isolation of the Jews in Christian society.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 94.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-6, passim.

One of the textbooks for secular schools lays particular emphasis on the subject of blood libels:

Side by side with the development of closer relations between Jews and their neighbors, the libeling of Jews intensified. This slander stemmed from ignorance, popular superstition and incitement by priests and monks.... The libels entrenched the tendency by Christians to view the Jews as linked with Satan. Jews were depicted in distorted images with a tail and a goat's beard – as Satan was sometimes portrayed.... The most widespread libel amongst the Christians was the blood libel, according to which the Jews were accused of kidnapping Christian children before Passover and using their blood in the baking of *matza*. Believers in the blood libels claimed that in so doing the Jews were re-enacting the murder of Jesus, who, according to their faith, was crucified during Passover by the Jews, and in this way they disparaged the Christians.... The popes issued decrees denouncing the blood libels, and the libels were not widespread in the areas under papal control. However, the masses were receptive to them. Another anti-Jewish libel was that of the holy bread – bread present in Catholic churches which, according to Christian faith, becomes transfigured into the body of Christ in a special ceremony. In this libel, the Jews steal the holy bread from the churches, abuse it, and thus harm Jesus.⁷⁶

Within the context of blood libels, the textbooks mention the attribution by Christians of the smallpox plague (the “Black Plague”) to the Jews. According to the textbook for the religious school system, “the spread of the plague throughout Europe evoked terrible rioting targeting Jews. Scenes of horror reminiscent of the massacres of 1096 recurred, and the lists of martyrs in commemorative books lengthened. Whole communities were wiped out and in many places were never re-established. Many Jews who managed to escape the rioters migrated in search of a new place to live.”⁷⁷

The textbook for the secular school system, too, emphasizes that the plague heightened hatred: “The Jews were also stricken by the plague, yet they were still accused of poisoning wells and causing the plague with the aim of killing the Christians. This accusation was sufficient cause for the masses to vent their fury on the Jews and run riot among them. In some cases the city councils came to the aid of

⁷⁶ Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, pp. 120-21.

⁷⁷ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 442

the Jews; the Pope called for an end to the rioting, arguing that the plague came from heaven, but these pleas were disregarded.”⁷⁸

Although emotional writing characterizes the narrative in these textbooks, they seem in general to portray these harsh events in Jewish history in a reasonably balanced fashion. However, perhaps here, too, the spirit of the times should have been emphasized as an explanation for the killing by Christians of non-Christians.⁷⁹ Similarly, all the textbooks should have noted, as did one for the secular school system, that “blood-libel trials of Jews resembled the witchcraft trials that were widespread in Europe during that time.”⁸⁰

The Jews in Christian Spain

The Jewish-Christian relationship in Spain constitutes one of the main topics in the textbooks for the Jewish school system in light of its tragic conclusion with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. All of the texts make comparisons, both obliquely and directly, between the condition of the Jews in Spain under Christian rule and under Muslim rule. According to the textbook for the religious schools, with the conquest of northern Spain by the Christians, many Jews fled southward to the area under Muslim control, as “despite [Muslim] religious fanaticism, they preferred living in the shadow of the advanced Muslim culture rather than the Christian culture.”⁸¹ With this, Jews held important positions in Christian Spain, for the

⁷⁸ Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, p. 124. Also see *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 112.

⁷⁹ Aviad Kleinberg, for example, explains that the justification [in the past] for tolerance toward the Jews was the Christian belief that the Jews refused to change and that in punishment for rejecting Jesus they were frozen in time as a kind of historic fossil. However, since it turned out that the Jews...abused the educational role that they served in Christian society, and even worse, in their affinity for the Talmud they became as gentiles in relation to their own Torah, more and more Christians concluded that they no longer had a role in the West and that expelling them was permissible. See A. Kleinberg, *Christianity From its Beginnings Until the Reformation* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishers, 1995, Hebrew), pp. 119-20.

⁸⁰ Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, p. 267.

⁸¹ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 274.

Christians “relied on the Jews more than on the Muslims.” The turn for the worse in their attitude toward the Jews occurred in the thirteenth century, when “fanatic monks filled with hatred of the Jews” arrived in Spain. At the same time, the nobility and the mercantile class were not favorably disposed to the economic success of the Jews. The first sign of change was the public disputation on religion and faith held between Maimonides and a Jewish apostate in the presence of King of Aragon (1263). A passage from Maimonides’ argument during the disputation appears in the textbook for the religious school system:

And I said to the king...and I read them the portion from Deuteronomy...And it shall come to pass that all these things shall befall you.... And the Lord your God will bring down all these cudgels on your enemies and on those who hate you and have persecuted you.” And I explained to them that your enemies [are] the Christians, and those who hate you [are] the Ishmaelites, the two nations who have persecuted us. And they did not reply....⁸²

This passage is obviously meant to praise Maimonides (the text indicates that he won the disputation), yet it also entrenches the perception that both the Christians and the Muslims constitute enemies and haters of the Jews, an approach that contradicts the differentiation made in the textbooks between the conduct of the Muslims toward the Jews and that of the Christians.

The textbooks emphasize the massacres of 1391 in light of the deteriorating Jewish-Christian relationship. The textbook for religious schools writes:

Jew-hatred, which had always existed in secret, erupted in 1391. That year, the king of Castille died, leaving an heir who was a child. The masses took advantage of the weakness of the government and attacked the Jews. Rioters passed from city to city and, as in the massacres of 1061, demanded that Jews convert or die. Many thousands died a martyr’s death at the hands of the rioters, although there were many who converted.⁸³

Similar descriptions appear in the two secular-school textbooks:

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 457.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 450.

The social, economic and religious causes of hostility toward the Jews coalesced in a terrible outburst of violence in 1391 (known in Jewish history as the massacres of 1391). The rioting began with the death of the king of Castille and spread to Aragon. In some instances, the rioters allowed the Jews to convert to save their lives, but many were murdered on the spot.⁸⁴

Commercial and labor tension served as fertile ground for the buildup of a wave of violence that began in Seville and spread throughout Spain, during which many Jews were killed. These events are termed the Massacres of 1391. Sometimes during the events of 1391, a governor or nobleman would agree to protect a certain community and they were not harmed, but with the exception of such cases, many communities were destroyed, such as the Jewish community of Barcelona. In the wake of the rioting, many Jews left Spain.... In contrast, some Jews converted.... The converted Jews were referred to derogatorily as Marranos, or pigs. Acts of violence were perpetrated against the converts, such as the Toledo Massacres (1449), as well as violent rioting between “new Christians” and “old Christians” in cities in southern Spain.⁸⁵

The textbooks also devote considerable attention to the fate of the Jews who decided to convert – the forced converts. Labeled by the Christians with the degrading term “Marranos,” these converts “displayed supreme courage in the face of torture perpetrated in the dungeons of the Inquisition courts and did not reveal anything of their own or other converts’ practices.”⁸⁶ Another textbook recounts that “in 1491 the Inquisition in La Guardia sentenced several Jews and new Christians to death on charges of the ritual murder of a Christian child and of plotting to take control of Spain and to convert it [to Judaism]. The child was declared a saint, and the fabricated story of his torture by the Jews was circulated throughout Spain.”⁸⁷

A particularly emotional description of the story of the expulsion from Spain appears in the religious-school textbook:

⁸⁴ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 126.

⁸⁵ Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, p. 177.

⁸⁶ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 462. A note explains that “Marranos means pigs. Some believe that this derogatory word was applied to the new Christians when their identity was exposed by their refusal to eat pork.” *Ibid.*, p. 460.

⁸⁷ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 127

The expulsion decree was a shock to the Jews. They had lived in Spain for hundreds of years and had shared all the vicissitudes that had befallen it. They remembered the Golden Age as well as the harsh periods of persecution and anti-Jewish edicts. Even so, it was their homeland and the land of their fathers, and now – they were obliged to leave it within a few weeks. Could it be that after years of toil they would be forced to leave all their possessions behind and abandon their country naked and stripped of everything? For they could take only vital necessities! And the most pressing question was – where would they go? Who would accept them and where would they rebuild their lives?⁸⁸

A less emotional description is given in the secular-school textbook:

The Jews of Spain experienced a severe trauma.... Many of them sold their property cheaply and left the state; others did not manage to sell and abandoned their possessions. Many in the wealthy class converted and remained in Spain. Some Jews left during the expulsion but, encountering difficulties, returned to Spain and then converted. The authorities expropriated synagogues, cemeteries and community property. Some of the synagogues were turned into churches. We do not have accurate statistics about the number of emigrants; historians estimate the figure to be between 70,000 and 130,000.⁸⁹

This textbook emphasizes the differences between the condition of the Jews in Spain under Muslim rule (relatively good) and under Christian rule (relatively difficult). The teacher's guide contains a table showing the extent of the integration of the Jews into society vis-a-vis processes of confrontation and contention. Under Christian rule, the listing for confrontation and contention includes "religious disputations, the riots of 1391, the Inquisition, apostates and forced converts, expulsion from cities and from the state." In contrast, examples of the integration of the Jews in Islamic society are numerous, while confrontational examples are limited to two – the al-Muwahhidun affair and the murder of Jehoseph⁹⁰ (see the analysis of Islam as presented in the textbooks, above).

⁸⁸ *From Generation to Generation*, II, p. 465.

⁸⁹ Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, p. 180.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Teacher's Guide, p. 97.

In summary, although the expulsion of the Jews from Spain is one of the bitterest chapters in Jewish history, the textbooks present this event in a relatively balanced fashion, even if some of the descriptions are emotional in style (at least in the narrative of the religious-school textbooks). Notably, the textbooks also provide the social and religious context in which the Inquisition network operated, which allows the pupil to evaluate the events in the spirit of the time rather than in contemporary terms.

The Jewish Community of Poland

The condition of Polish Jewry during the fifteenth century is given prominence in the religious-school textbook. In explaining the background for the eruption of massacres in Poland at that time, the text notes that “the cultural and intellectual level of the Jews widened the [economic] gap between them and the Christians. This gap heightened tension and hatred between them.”⁹¹ A chapter titled “The Massacres of 1448-1449,” relates that the peasants “called the Jews heartless enslavers [because they served as lessees, or administrators] and greedy robbers. In the words of a folk song from that period: ‘While the peasant sings at the inn, the Jew robs him of all his money.’”⁹² The book devotes considerable space to the Cossack uprising (1648) led by Bogdan Chmielnicki, whom the Jews branded “Chmiel the Wicked”:

The Ukrainian peasants were eager to do battle, murdering noblemen and slaughtering the Jewish lessees with great pleasure. Anyone not caught by them fled in panic westward and all their possessions were set on fire.... A large Jewish community existed in the city of Nemirov, and the [aristocratic] escapees hid with the local Jews in the town fort.... When the Jews in the fort opened the gates [having been tricked], the Cossacks cried: “Christianity or death.” Most of the Jews refused to convert and died as martyrs. The Cossacks massacred some six thousand souls in the town...and they drowned several hundred in the water and by all kinds of cruel torments; and they slaughtered [Jews] in the synagogue, before the Holy Ark...and afterward they destroyed the synagogue a bit [sic.] and took out all the Torah scrolls and tore them apart...and they also made sandals of them” (Rabbi Shabtai ben Meir Ha-Cohen, *Megillat Afah*). In the city of Tulchin Jews and Poles joined forces and formed a unit that volunteered to guard the city, but when the Cossacks

⁹¹ *From Generation to Generation*, III, p. 163.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 176.

approached the city, the Poles betrayed their partners and handed them over to the Cossacks. The Jews of Tulchin, too, refused to convert and died as martyrs.... Tens of thousands of Jews were killed and slaughtered with horrible cruelty. One of Chmielnicki's assistants boasted that he "skinned all the Jews alive," and a Jew who witnessed the terrible outbreak wrote: "There was no weird death in the world that they (the rioters) did not inflict..." (Rabbi Nathan Hannover, *Yavan Metsulah*). Hundreds of communities were destroyed totally and others were severely damaged and atrophied. Thousands of Jews were seized by the Tatars and sold as slaves.⁹³

In contrast, the secular-school textbook merely cites the fact that "the peasant masses hated the Jews, both because they were in positions of authority as lessees on behalf of the nobility and because of their religion." In reference to the Chmielnicki uprising it states: "The uprising left a path of murder and destruction in the Jewish communities. Dozens of communities were destroyed, thousands of Jews were slaughtered. Many other Jews fled in every direction."⁹⁴

The focus by the textbooks on the fate of the Jews is justified, yet this focus blurs the fact that the Ukrainian Revolt, as it is termed in the literature,⁹⁵ was aimed not only against Jews but against all outsiders, including Christians who were not Greek-Orthodox.

The Reformation and the Jews

The Christian Reformation movement does not appear at all in the textbook for the religious school system, while the following passages appear in the textbooks for the secular school system:

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 179. The book also emphasizes, both in the text and pictures, that while "in the history of our people Chmielnicki is called 'Chmiel the Wicked,' in Ukraine he is considered a national hero." The pupil is asked: "Why is Chmielnicki considered a national hero in Ukraine?" *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁹⁴ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 202.

⁹⁵ See, e.g., *Jew-Hatred and Anti-Semitism*, Unit 7, pp. 120-34.

Luther was perceived [by the Jews] as having returned in practice to Judaism but as not yet admitting it.... Indeed, at first, Luther himself justified these illusions: he wrote a treatise in which he mentioned that Jesus the Christian was a Jew and insisted on treating Jews with grace so as to bring them to Christianity. However, when he realized that the Jews had no intention of abandoning their faith, he changed course and became fanatically and venomously anti-Jewish. Most of the other reformers, with a few exceptions, were also hostile to the Jews.⁹⁶

At first, Luther hoped that his preaching for a different kind of Christianity would lead the Jews to convert.... However, when the Jews did not convert as he expected, he changed his attitude toward them and began attacking them. In one of his treatises he proposed destroying synagogues, taking the Jews' holy books and their property away from them, forbidding them to deal in money-lending for interest, and even expelling them from the state (1543). During the religious wars, Jews were victimized as well. Many cities, especially Protestant cities, expelled the Jews because the Jews competed with Christian merchants.⁹⁷

The textbooks present a reasonably reliable picture of the Christian Reformation, although two points might have been emphasized: 1. Luther's primary struggle was against the Catholic Church, with his anti-Jewish stance a by-product of this main struggle, i.e., when Luther became convinced that he could not recruit the Jews to this struggle, he came out against them. 2. Luther's views about Judaism, as articulated in his various writings, were not unusual for his period, which was characterized by the expulsion of Jews from all parts of Germany.⁹⁸

Attempts at Integration in Christian Society in Modern Times

From the period of the French Revolution onward, the approach to Christianity in the textbooks is not treated as a separate issue but rather is integrated in various issues. The fact that religious identity was gradually being replaced by national identity in European society contributed to a shift in the discussion of the Jewish-Christian

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁹⁷ Tabibyan, *Journey to the Past*, p. 267.

⁹⁸ See in this context *Jew-Hatred and Anti-Semitism*, Unit 6, p. 29.

interrelationship away from the religious context. The growth of modern anti-Semitism, too, was no longer the product of a religious conflict but rather of national, economic and social contrasts. With this, however, the religious barrier between Jews and Christians continued to play a role in European society.

Thus, for example, in addressing the French Revolution, one of the textbooks for the secular school system writes that “delegates of the French people were still not prepared to accept the Jews as equals in French society. That society was still captive to prejudice. It viewed Jews as outsiders with a different religion who were not Christian and did not truly belong to French society.”⁹⁹ In this context the textbook quotes arguments by two priests who dealt with the Jewish question. One, who represented the church, claimed that

the name Jew is not the name of a religious sect but rather the name of a nation with its own laws, according to which it had lived in the past and still wants to conduct itself in the future. To consider the Jews as [French] citizens is as if we were to decide that the English or Danes [living in France]...who continue to view themselves as such, can be French.

The other priest argued, in contrast, that should they wish to become French, “the Jews will no longer have [community] leaders or communities. They will be part of our framework.... All documents, contracts, wills calendars and even public ritual must be in the language of the state [French].... Hopefully, one day they will manage to put an end to the rabbinic-German-Hebrew language [Yiddish].”¹⁰⁰

Another issue that occupied the textbooks was the political, economic, and social emancipation of Jews in Europe in the latter eighteenth century. Despite major changes that took place in the status of Jews in European society, many prohibitions against Jews were still in force. Thus, writes one of the secular-school textbooks, “the only admission ticket by which the Jews could be accepted as equals in general society was conversion, i.e., to Christianity. The temptation was great, and

⁹⁹ *From Conservatism to Progress*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

conversion became widespread among Jews.”¹⁰¹ The book provides the story of poet Heinrich Heine as an example:

Heinrich Heine decided to convert. Heine’s conversion did not stem from ideological reasons. He sought an admission ticket into German-European culture in order to integrate in it without difficulty. After converting, Heine felt uneasy. He was not at peace with having changed his religion and felt the duality between his Jewish identity and his integration in the European environment all the more strongly. He wrote to his friend Moses Mozer: “Now I am hated by both Jews and Christians alike. I very much regret that I was baptized; I don’t see that my condition has improved as a result.”¹⁰²

In this context, the same textbook recounts the struggle of Gabriel Reisser, a Jew who was a leader of the Liberal movement in Germany and a delegate in the parliament in Frankfurt. Refusing to convert, he replied to Germans who discredited the Jews as unable to integrate into Christian society: “The Christians have no right to criticize the Jews; they should first examine their own Christian morality. For the Christian religion has caused the persecution and bloodletting of Jews over hundreds of years of history. The Christians, therefore, may not make moral claims against the Jews.”¹⁰³

Despite the improved personal situation of Jews as a result of the Emancipation, blood libels were still widespread. The first occurred in Damascus, then under the rule of Muhammad Ali, as described in one of the textbooks as follows:

A Christian monk and his Muslim servant disappeared in February 1840. Authoritative sources claimed that the two were murdered in the Damascus market, while rumor-mongers held that the two were murdered by Damascene Jews in order to use their blood for Passover. The Ottoman ruler and the French consul supported the malicious libel for political motives. As a result, the dignitaries of the Jewish community were arrested, including the rabbi of the community, Ya’akov Antebi. They were tortured severely and two died of torture. Several could endure the torture no longer and admitted to the accusation.... Jews and non-Jews were alarmed by the appearance of a blood

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

libel. It was difficult to believe that Middle Ages libels against Jews were recurring in the modern age of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁴

Another infamous libel occurred in 1858 in Bologna. A Jewish boy, Edgardo Mortara, was kidnapped by agents of the Catholic Church and brought to a monastery in Rome. Two years previously, when the child was five, he had fallen seriously ill and a Christian maid who worked in his home secretly took him to church and baptized him. She hoped thereby to save him. The act became known to the Church, which ordered the kidnapping. The family tried to retrieve the child, but in vain. The textbook writes: “The Church claimed that the baptism of the child had taken place, and his conversion to Christianity could not be annulled even if his parents opposed the deed.” The Jews of Italy protested, addressing themselves to the Pope, but to no avail. “In 1859, Sir Moses Montefiore set out for Rome in order to intercede in the Vatican for the release of the child, but Pope Pious IX rejected all his entreaties. According to the Church, little Mortara asked to remain a Christian and changed his name to Pious.”¹⁰⁵

The discussion of modern anti-Semitism in the textbooks includes references to Christianity. The narrative points out that the process of the emancipation of the Jews of Western and Central Europe ended in the 1860s and 1870s, when they became citizens with equal rights.

However, specifically at that time, a period of technological and cultural progress, the Jews felt that they were not accepted in the society in which they lived. Although by law they were citizens with equal rights, *Christian* [emphasis mine] society viewed them as a foreign body, a minority that did not belong.... The renewal of Jew-hatred at the end of the nineteenth century was called anti-Semitism.... This anti-Semitism ushered in a new trend, a secular trend based, ostensibly, on logic and intellect and not on religion and faith. This anti-Semitism, therefore, was called modern anti-Semitism.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

To emphasize the differences between the old and the new anti-Semitism, caricatures are reproduced which are accompanied by the following text:

Let us observe the anti-Semitic caricature of the thirteenth century. The drawing depicts Isaac the Jew and his family as distorted, subhuman images. Such drawings were generally commissioned by the Christian Church in order to create a negative image of the Jews among the Christian faithful. The Jew was drawn with a distorted face and body: a crooked nose, the claws of a wild animal, horns. Generally, the Church wanted to influence the Christian public to believe that the Jews were greedy, satanic, frightening and harmful. Up until the nineteenth century, the Jew was portrayed in caricatures as the symbol of evil and wickedness, and sometimes as wretched and impotent. However, from the nineteenth century, the wretched image of the Jew changed; from then he symbolized, besides evil, power and dominance. Jews were identified by various political parties in Europe as capitalists, manipulators and scoundrels from whom it was advisable to beware, as they constituted a danger to European countries and were liable to take control of the world.¹⁰⁷

The complex topic of modern anti-Semitism in nineteenth century Russia is explained in light of social, economic and political developments and does not include a direct discussion of Christianity. However, negative implications are discernible between the lines. For example, in a discussion of passages from Mikhail Bakunin's book, Baron Rothschild and Karl Marx are perceived as two arms of the world Jewish conspiracy: "Rothschild's money and Marx's communist philosophy symbolize the totality of world Jewry, who are part of a conspiracy, according to Bakunin, to harm Christian society." Anti-Semitism was also used as a tool by the tsars against the Jews, such as during the wave of pogroms: "The attacks broke out on 15 April [1881], three months [sic] after the assassination of Alexander II... The attacks, or pogroms, as they were called in Russian...spread throughout six districts, striking over two hundred communities. Many Russians joined the gangs of rioters."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-76.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190. The textbook expands further on the pogroms (see pp. 190-93) but this material is not discussed in a religious context.

Conclusions

Overall, the textbooks for the Jewish school system do not make use of stigmatic terminology or present Islam and Christianity stereotypically. They generally present these religions in a reasonably accurate and balanced fashion. With this, however, various biases are to be found, stemming from the presentation of inaccurate or insufficient information, which distorts the picture conveyed to the pupil.

Four main problems emerge from the descriptions of Islam in the textbook. First, there is insufficient emphasis on the complexity of the Jewish-Muslim relationship in the Islamic lands. Broad generalizations about the nature of Islam should have been avoided, as far as possible, and instead an analysis of the behavior of Muslim rulers in various places and periods should have been provided. This type of analysis would have led to the conclusion that in certain places “harmony, cooperation and understanding were evident in a given region, while at the same time degradation, repression and bitter hatred prevailed elsewhere.”¹⁰⁹ Second, the textbooks avoid the use of a comparative view, i.e., the condition of the Jews under Christian rule. Such comparison is important because it could provide a broader historical perspective on the status of the Jews under gentile rule. Such a comparison could emphasize, as Bernard Lewis has noted, that “Jews and Christians under Muslim rule were normally called upon to suffer martyrdom for faith. They were not often obliged to make the choice, which confronted Muslims and Jews in re-conquered Spain, between exile, apostasy, and death.”¹¹⁰ Mark Cohen shares this view:

...despite the theological intolerance that Islam shared with Christendom, the Jews of Islam experienced far greater security and far more integration with the majority society than with their brethren in Europe. During the first six centuries of Islam... the incidence of violent persecution, with great loss of life, was comparatively low. The discriminatory restrictions of the so-called

¹⁰⁹ Sa’adon, *Jews and Muslims in the Lands of Islam*, p. 20. For this approach, see also B. Lewis, *Islam in History* (Tel Aviv: Zmora-Bitan, 1984, Hebrew), p. 125.

¹¹⁰ B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: 1984), p. 8. For an excellent example of such a comparison, see Mark Cohen, “Islam and the Jews: Myth, Counter-Myth, History,” in *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 38 (1986), pp. 125-37.

Pact of ‘Umar, most of them adopted from Byzantine-Christian-Jewish legislation, were more often than not observed in the breach. Such irrational concepts as the association of the Jews with the devil, a well-known feature of the medieval Christian attitude toward the Jews, has little place even in the popular Arab imagination. Blood libels – in Europe a by-product of the popular perception of the diabolical Jew – were absent during these centuries. Expulsion did not occur. And we hear practically nothing during this period about persecution of Jewish converts to Islam for alleged unfaithfulness to the new religion.¹¹¹

The third problem is that the textbooks tend to analyze past events through the prism of the present, thereby projecting ideas, values and norms from one historic period onto an earlier period. What is perceived as discrimination, repression and degradation in modern Western concepts is likely to have been perceived more as normative behavior in an earlier period. It should be emphasized that the Jews constituted an ethnic and religious minority within a Muslim majority; that this society was not egalitarian; and that Jews could not expect to become citizens with equal rights in that type of social system. As Ze’ev Hirschberg put it: “People in that period did not in the slightest perceive as degrading certain regulations that to us appear deeply humiliating. Those who imposed them and those who were subjected to them viewed them as a logical result of a factual situation that had evolved in the course of generations.”¹¹² The presentation of such a nuanced view would have the chance of eliminating distortions still existing in the present Jewish textbooks.

Finally, it seems that the Jewish education system does not provide its students with enough information on Islam – a problem that is more acute in high school. According to the history curriculum, the subject is taught only in the seventh grade. In addition, those junior high school pupils who study Arabic as a second foreign language may also study the Arab culture in Israel.¹¹³ In contrast, however, high school pupils may study on the Arab minority in Israel (this subject is not

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

¹¹² Hirschberg, “The Jews in the Lands of Islam,” p. 275. See also Sa’adon, *Jews and Muslims in the Lands of Islam*, pp. 20, 45.

¹¹³ See, in particular, *In Five Voices: Young Arabs in Israel Tell about Their Lives and Culture* (Tel Aviv: The Center for Technological Education, 1994).

mandatory)¹¹⁴ and on certain aspects of the modern Arab-Israeli conflict, but they do not repeat what they had studied on Islam in seventh grade. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Jewish students are largely ignorant of Islam.

With regard to Christianity, the description of its attitude toward Judaism is replete with grim terminology (e.g., massacres, slaughter, edicts, etc.). This stems mainly from the charged nature of the Jewish-Christian encounter. The intensity of the contact between Jews and Christians, side by side with the ongoing theological and historic dispute over the origins of Christianity, made it difficult for textbook writers to treat these encounters with equanimity. Indeed, various biases are observable in the textbooks, although they stem primarily from the provision of incorrect or insufficient information, which distorts the picture conveyed to the pupil. More biases appear to be present in the textbook written for religious schools, which is not surprising in light of the emphasis on the Jewish perspective in this book.¹¹⁵

As in the presentation of Islam, the main problem in the presentation of Christianity is that the textbooks tend to analyze the events of the past from the point of view of the present, thereby assigning ideas, values and norms from one historic period to an earlier period. What is perceived as discrimination, repression and degradation in the conceptualization of modern Western civilization is likely to be perceived as normative behavior in an earlier period. Another problematic issue is the fact that most aspects of Christian history and religion are taught only in lower grades and in a superficial way. On balance, it seems that the Israeli pupil receives even less information on Christianity than on Islam.¹¹⁶ Moreover, a broader treatment of the psychological aspects of hatred of the other is in place, along the lines of an appendix that appears in one of the textbooks for secular schools:

¹¹⁴ *The Arab Citizens of Israel: Mutual Relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel* (Jerusalem: The Ministry of Education, 1989).

¹¹⁵ Sara Vider, the history superintendent in the religious system, admitted that certain teachers in the religious education have reservations concerning teaching on Jesus "because we cannot ignore what Christianity had done to the Jews." See O. Kazin, *Ha'aretz*, 23 December 1999.

¹¹⁶ See in this connection the article, *ibid.* I should emphasize that this is a general observation, which is not based on any quantitative analysis.

The Jews resembled the Christians in every respect except in their religion. The Christians were uncomfortable with this resemblance. If they resemble us so much, if they live side by side with us, they thought, if they know us and our belief, they have no excuse for being different from us. The Christians felt that the Jews' stubbornness in adhering to their religion was illogical: either the Jews are foolish and do not understand what every "logical" person (i.e., a person who thinks as we do) understands, or they are wicked and purposely refuse to practice and believe in the proper faith. The condition of the Jews did not improve when Christians made an effort to become familiar with their customs and writings. This effort was not made out of a desire to understand and learn, but as part of an attempt to "know the enemy." While there were things in the books of the Jews that were hurtful to a Christian, the Christians were not satisfied with [criticizing] these, but slandered the Jews in a series of libels. Preachers recounted that the Jews were plotting to eliminate Christian society, that they murder little children and drink their blood, and that they have a peculiar body odor and a tail. In other words, sometimes a group chooses to take someone slightly different from it and turn it in its imagination into something totally different – nearly inhuman. In this way, a small difference gives rise to deep hatred; not affinity but distance.¹¹⁷

Perhaps this sophisticated kind of approach would succeed in eliminating the biases that are still to be found in the Jewish textbooks. But beyond the presentation of factual data as objective as possible, the student should receive the message that in spite of the differences between the three religions, there are certain commonalities, such as the concept of Monotheism, the image of Abraham, the idea of divine revelation, the existence of a holy book, and the ethical orientation. Such a study, it may be surmised, would foster tolerance and empathy toward the Other.

¹¹⁷ *In the Days of the Crescent and the Cross*, p. 284.

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