**From inferiority to independence: the development of Religious Zionist history education during Israel’s first two decades**

# **Introduction**

History education shapes the young generation’s worldview. It enables educators to infuse content and vitality into abstract values, integrating them into the current responsibilities of young students. Consequently, history education evolves into a unique cultural product that reflects a complex interplay among knowledge, power, and a spectrum of ideological, political, educational, and value concerns.

Over the past three decades, researchers have extensively explored the significance of shaping history education in the early days of the State of Israel and its profound impact on the society of the young country. From various research angles and approaches, scholars have investigated how history stood at the core of establishing the State Education (SE) system and functioned as a primary tool for forging a uniform Israeli identity. The critical role of shaping history education within the SE has also attracted public criticism and controversies over the years.

In this article, I aim to contribute an important layer to the discussion on history education in Israel by examining the development of Religious Zionist history education during the state's first decades. The focus will be on identifying the motivations behind the State-Religious education's (SRE) initiative to develop an independent and distinct history education and determining when this process occurred. Despite the significance of the Religious Zionist public and the extensive historiography on the history of history education in Israel, the systematic and thorough examination of this field's creation and development within SRE has not yet been undertaken.

As a contingent cultural product, the SRE's history education provides a unique window for analyzing the transformations within the Religious Zionist public and its dynamics with the general secular society. In this context, this article will challenge certain aspects of SRE historiography, including the accepted periodization and its relationships with the Ministry of Education (MoE). Thus, it aims to broaden the understanding of the history of education systems in Israel and of Religious Zionism.

So far, research has highlighted two main approaches to periodizing the independence of Zionist-religious education and its evolution. The first approach suggests that already with the Mizrahi stream Religious Zionist education adopted an independent, comprehensive approach that became increasingly radical over the years. The second approach identifies the Six Day War as a pivotal moment when SRE shifted its ambitions towards establishing a Religious Zionist ideal model, aiming to 'bring salvation'. Meanwhile, the limited research on SRE's history education has focused on two distinct periods: the first national curriculum in 1954 or the curricula following the Yom Kippur War.

Challenging these conclusions, this article will argue that while these dates were indeed significant milestones in SRE's history, they overlook a crucial period in the early 1960s when profound changes in SRE's status and goals occurred. I will demonstrate that the transformations during this period had a decisive impact on the patterns of history education in Israel and, more broadly, on the development of the public education systems in Israel.

Contrary to the customary approach in the historiography of history education in Israel, this article will not limit itself to a textual analysis of the finished educational product. Through meticulous archival work, which involved analyzing a wide variety of historical documents—most of which have not yet been examined in an academic context—I aim to uncover the network of forces among decision-makers and the processes shaping educational product design. This diverse corpus of sources, reflecting different processes and perspectives on the learning process, was crucial for forging new insights into the history of Religious Zionist education and the evolution of history education in the State of Israel.

Despite the rich variety of sources and issues discussed, this article will inevitably leave out important aspects due to its modest scope. These include the teaching process in classrooms, how historical consciousness was actually formed among the diverse student population, and the teaching of history in Religious Zionist kibbutzim, which necessitates a separate conceptual framework that encompasses secular kibbutz movements. The article's focus on transformations in the structural-systemic aspect necessitated a limited discussion on several issues related to the Religious Zionist historical concept, which have been expanded upon elsewhere.

The article presents a diachronic analysis in two chronological chapters: (a) from the establishment of the SE system until 1961; (b) from 1961 until the Six-Day War. The first chapter examines the impact of the SE system's establishment on Religious Zionist history education, analyzing its structural-organizational context, characteristics, and goals. The second chapter details the significant changes within Religious Zionist education, especially in history education, in the early sixties. It highlights the debate on Holocaust education around the Eichmann trial as a turning point and presents various aspects of the learning process where the system sought to establish independent history education during those years.

# **A. Subordination of Religious Zionist History Education to Ben-Zion Dinor and the Ministry of Education**

Nearly two thousand years after the destruction of the Second Temple and less than a decade following the Holocaust's end, Religious Zionism viewed the establishment of the state as an almost miraculous event. However, despite the religious significance of this historical event, it scarcely influenced the Religious Zionist history education. Instead, during this period, the Religious Zionist education system's history education was almost entirely conformed to SE officials' desires. Consequently, it was compelled to abandon the faith-based aspects that had defined its history education in the Mizrahi stream, which was independently developed by Religious Zionist educators.

Over the years, the declared education policy has misled research on this topic. Ostensibly, the first national curriculum, published in 1954, granted independence to SRE's history education. The curriculum's goals aimed to “instill in the student's heart the recognition that he is a member of the people of Israel, chosen by God:” and “to give the students the recognition that in the fact of the miraculous rebirth of our country the revelation of Divine Providence must be seen before our eyes.” However, a thorough analysis shows the curriculum and its surrounding educational policy reflected the exact opposite: it required all SRE institutions to conform to the SE's historical concept. Every attempt at change highlighted the religious Zionist educators' weakness compared to the MoE's authority.

## **A.1. The Structural Context**

On August 12, 1953, the Knesset passed the State Education Law, establishing the educational independence of Religious Zionist education. At first, the SRE system seemed to extend the legacy of Mizrachi educational institutions. However, the release of the first national curricula soon revealed a significant shift: MoE officials had a controlling influence over key subjects, particularly history. The role of Ben-Zion Dinur, the Minister of Education from 1951 to 1955, further intensified this control.

Dinur viewed the national curriculum for elementary schools as pivotal to building the national education system in the newly established state. Upon taking office, he prioritized its revision and implementation. An analysis of the curriculum committees’ actions across most subjects indicates Dinur typically endorsed their primary recommendations without directly meddling in the content. However, history education painted a stark contrast. Dinur actively engaged in history curriculum discussions, often sidelining other topics to focus exclusively on history. He provided detailed directives on curriculum design, teaching objectives, and recommended readings, thereby setting a distinct tone.

Dinur's profound engagement in shaping history education resulted in a national curriculum markedly different from the committee's initial proposals. The development of the history curriculum, initiated before Dinur’s term, began with Dr. Baruch Ben Yehuda, the director of the education department, forming a committee in May 1949 that included representatives from all educational sectors, including Religious Zionists. Despite listing the committee members in the curriculum, their proposed principles barely surfaced in practice. Instead, Dinur single-handedly crafted the educational approach for the entire SE system. Thus, in the state’s first decade, Religious Zionist education saw its history education autonomy, previously maintained during the Mizrahi era, overridden by the secular MoE’s oversight.

## **A.2. The Characteristics of the Unified History education in SE and SRE**

At the stated level, Dinur's curriculum not only acknowledged the religious community's foundations but also deepened them, surpassing the Mizrahi stream's curriculum. The curriculum outlined eight primary goals, with the first five aiming to reinforce students' connection to the nation of Israel. These goals emphasized Israel's historical uniqueness and the superiority of its spiritual heritage, work, and vision. The remaining three goals, specific to the SRE, concentrated on the faith-based perspective, which sees history as a tool for understanding the providence of God, "the minister of history."

The existence of unique goals for SRE raises questions given Dinur's control of the subject and his ambitions to use the curriculum to "assimilate the various currents of aliyah and merge them into one national-cultural division." The study process reveals the crux of this anomaly: while Dinor initially granted Religious Zionism's religious concept significant visibility within the stated goals, the actual teaching process painted a starkly different picture. In practice, the curriculum demanded an identical teaching process across both systems, blatantly dismissing the religious aspects central to history teaching in the Mizrahi stream.

The neglection of religious aspects was manifested throughout the curriculum. Dinur shaped the curriculum to cover the Jewish religion extensively, yet he approached it through a political and institutional lens, thus undermining the element of religious faith. While it concentrated on the history of the people of Israel, it notably left out significant sections on the contributions of rabbis in Spain, North Africa, and Western European communities. In its treatment of modern times, the curriculum failed to address the Orthodox Jewish engagement with contemporary challenges. Instead, it disproportionately highlighted the advancements of modernity, such as the American and French revolutions, the Industrial Revolution, and the emergence of nation-states — subjects that the Mizrahi curriculum barely touched upon. As a result, it paid substantial attention to the Enlightenment and the religious reform movement discussions but strikingly overlooked the Orthodox response. It completely omitted key figures like the Hatam Sofer and Rabbi Hirsch, who are vital in defining the Zionist-religious worldview.

Teaching Zionism also presented challenges for SRE members. In the Mizrahi stream, Religious Zionist educators depicted the Zionist process as a direct extension of religious aspirations across generations. This approach connected the ascensions of individual rabbis in the late Middle Ages, the journeys of Chassidim, and the disciples of the Gaon of Vilna directly to Herzl's activities and the Mizrachi Foundation's establishment. Essentially, they portrayed the Mizrachi movement as the realization of deep-seated religious aspirations throughout Jewish history.

Contrastingly, the state curriculum directed teachers to focus on the revolutionary and innovative aspects of the Zionist movement, differentiating it from the Jewish people's enduring desire to return to Zion. Moreover, discussions on the development of the Yishuv highlighted the Labor movement, pioneers, the Zionist Organization's institutions, and the heroism of the Haganah and Palmach. However, this detailed examination starkly omitted references to the history of Religious Zionists. The only mention of the Mizrahi movement in the entire learning process was summed up in a single point - 'the foundation of the Religious Zionist movement', under the topic that discusses the establishment of the Zionist movement. Thus the curriculum completely overlooked the renewal of religious settlement in the Land of Israel and its unique challenges.

Similar trends were evident in the high school curriculum published in 1957. After the state system's establishment, religious Zionist high schools remained under the high school education department's supervision within the MoE, outside the State Education Law's framework. Consequently, the SRE administration had very limited authority in this area. While the SRE council and its supervisors engaged in the field and sought to exert influence, the department for high schools, led by Dr. Michael Ziv (1902–1989), held ultimate decision-making power over study content, teacher training, and final examinations.

Similar to the 1954 curriculum, the high school curriculum's declared layer explicitly acknowledged the SRE's unique worldview and its religious objectives. However, in practice, these did not manifest in the teaching methods or study content. The curriculum mandated identical study processes across both systems. Particularly in addressing the religious individual's engagement with the modern world and Zionism, the high school program took a stance opposed to Religious Zionism's principles, failing to consider the SRE system's unique educational needs evident during the Mizrahi period.

The influence of senior MoE officials on SRE history education extended beyond the curriculum. An analysis of documents from the SRE administration and various MoE departments shows this influence in key educational aspects, including teacher training and annual guidelines. This alignment in history education most notably appeared in the selection of history textbooks.

By the late 1940s, Dr. Yaakov Katz had published “Israel ve-ha-amim” (“Israel and the Nations”), a series of history textbooks for Religious Zionist education. Despite this, throughout the 1950s, many SRE schools opted for textbooks designed for general SE. This preference was particularly for Baruch Avivi and Natan Perski's “Toldot Amno” (“The History of Our Nation”), published in 1946, and their subsequent series “Toldot Israel” (“The History of Israel”), aligned with the state curriculum of the late 1950s. SRE schools did not conceal their choice of general education textbooks, often informing the SRE administration of their selection and sometimes ordering these books directly through SRE's inspectors. Thus, in this period, the textbooks in the SRE reflected a multifaceted mix, significantly mirroring those used in SE.

## **A.3. Factors and circumstances for the unified study**

The reasons for this unified history education were twofold: the internal challenges and circumstances at SRE on the one hand, and the MoE's solid organizational and ideological framework on the other. A variety of sources, ranging from Knesset stage statements to sectoral media and internal SRE administration discussions, reveal that Religious Zionists continued to struggle for their educational independence even after establishing the SRE. The 1950's was marked by continuous battles—both national and local—over budgets, standards, and the organizational autonomy of religious education.

While grappling with basic needs, the SRE operated within the stringent organizational and ideological confines of SE. Similarly, SE faced its own set of significant challenges, but it benefited from a more stable organizational situation as the primary authority shaping the country's educational processes and controlling resource and budget allocations. As noted earlier, during this period, state leaders, led by MoE Dinur, firmly dictated the direction of history education. They aimed to embed a clear and unambiguous ideological stance, severely limiting the scope for alternative approaches. This period frequently showcased Dinur's and the MoE personnel's forceful actions, highlighting the SRE community's sense of inferiority.

In the field of history education, the SRE's limited influence was starkly evident in the 1957 curriculum revision aimed at reducing content scope. Avraham Ron (1920-2005), a central inspector and later SRE head, offered detailed feedback on specific subsections of the study chapters. Ron's suggestions, though conceptually narrow, advocated for enriching Jewish religious content at the expense of European history. Yet, of Ron's thirty-five proposals, only three received partial and marginal consideration, with his more substantive recommendations uniformly dismissed. This dismissal underscored a glaring disregard for the SRE's requests and the Religious Zionist community's needs in the curriculum's overhaul.

At that time, the SRE's demands were effectively narrowed down to essential religious teachings like the Bible and Oral Torah. This defensive stance emerged from the period's circumstances and viewing these subjects as crucial for forming the Religious Zionist students' identity. First and foremost, this focus is reflected in the demands the SRE submitted to the MoE. And indeed in these subject the MoE granted the SRE autonomy. Moreoever, the importance of these issue for the SRE was clearly evident in the SRE administration's internal directives and the rich pedagogical and didactic dialogue among its supervisors and educators. However, general teaching subjects, history in particular, was largely neglected. By the early sixties, indications suggest a shift in this trend.

# **B. SRE strive for independence in history education**

## **B.1. Changes in the dynamics between the systems**

Within a few years, the dynamics between the SRE and the MoE began to evolve. This transformation occurred on two fronts: internally within Religious Zionism and its educational system, and in the attitudes of MoE officials. Following Dinur's tenure, Israel's education system embarked on a new phase in the early sixties, moving away from the uniform recruitment approach of its initial years. Instead, educational leaders, under Zalman Aran's guidance, started embracing a differentiated approach that acknowledged the varying circumstances and needs of the student population. This shift is evident in two significant initiatives led by Aran: the “Center for Educational Institutions in Need of Cultivation” and a special program for the SE aimed at deepening “Jewish Consciousness.” While not delving into the specifics and limitations of these projects, their key contribution for this study lies in their recognition of the diverse needs across different student groups and their push for tailored and unique educational processes.

The MoE’s trend towards differentiation also intertwined with a movement towards professionalization in curriculum development. At the start of Aran's second term, Jewish-American educational researcher Benjamin Bloom (1913–1999) visited Israel. Bloom introduced new educational strategies to the MoE, challenging the conventional curricula focused merely on “covering material” and advocating for the inclusion of higher-order thinking aspects. Bloom's influence, culminating in the establishment of the Center for Curriculum in September 1966, marked a significant shift in the MoE's focus towards educational achievements over an ideological-missionary approach. Interestingly, it was this very trend that carved out organizational and ideological space for the SRE.

Contrastingly, the SRE experienced a period of stability and consolidation in the late 1950s and early 1960s, unlike the MoE's structural changes. The SRE's leadership and key officials remained largely unchanged during this time. Dr. Yosef Goldschmidt, who had been appointed head of the SRE administration with the State System's establishment, served for fourteen consecutive years until 1968. Similarly, the SRE's central inspectors, many of whom had been with the system from the beginning, brought a wealth of experience to their roles. This era saw the SRE's strategic issues and institutional frameworks stabilize, with supervision procedures standardized, facilities upgraded, and student enrollment processes refined.

This stabilization trend extended to the curriculum. After initial tumult and uncertainty about study content with the SE system's establishment, the SRE found a more secure footing. Concerns over losing educational independence in religious teaching subject diminished, as the MoE showed no intention of intervening in them. The fears of experiencing a fate similar to that of The Workers' stream's education system receded, becoming a distant memory. Furthermore, with significant support from religious Zionist politicians, the SRE expanded its influence and took control of secondary education during these years.

These positive developments significantly influenced the SRE members' perceptions. Goldschmidt articulated this sentiment to the SRE Council, stating:

The SRE is not an anomaly that appeared and disappeared overnight. It is a force emerging from the very soul of a people returning to Zion, encapsulating the hopes of those who believe in our future redemption by the will of God, the Giver of the Torah.

Goldschmidt's words mark a profound shift in the SRE members' outlook from the defensive and fearful stance at the SE establishment. Thus, the change in SRE's status extended beyond organizational and educational realms, reinforcing faith in the path of Religious Zionism and affirming its achievements. This renewal of confidence also shaped the SRE's demands in history education. However, I argue that this evolution must be seen in conjunction with significant ideological shifts within Religious Zionist society.

Currently, a broad research consensus acknowledges the pivotal role of “youth groups” in the emergence of the “Gush Emunim” movement and religious Zionism's ascendancy to a leading force in Israeli society. Termed the “Youth groups” in studies, the National Religious Party's young generation, as early as the 1960s, advocated for transcending the traditional confines of Religious Zionism. They aimed to influence and lead the social, cultural, and political discourse nationwide. The Six-Day War and the events of the 1970s served as catalysts, unveiling the Messianic ideologies and visions for a Torah state among the youth. These developments prompted a reorientation of the National Religious Party's political stance.

I wish to expand on these insights by asserting that the SRE's characteristics in the sixties should be understood in the context of the NRP youth groups' activities. It's important to note that these young individuals were not part of the SRE inspectorate or among the various entities within the SRE administration that shaped its policies. Yet, they significantly influenced the ethos within the Religious Zionist community, party mechanisms, media discourse, and particularly among the youth. Predominantly, they impacted SRE graduates but gradually extended their reach to younger audiences, establishing movement frameworks among high school students. Furthermore, across a broad spectrum of platforms and media, the youth groups engaged in educational debates, proposing alternative approaches to promote their values. They urged the NRP to seek leadership of the MoE, critiqued existing study materials and teaching methods, and motivated the younger generation towards careers in teaching and education. From the early sixties, the youth groups organized numerous meetings and conferences on educational matters, attended by leading educators, including the SRE head, its institution directors, and teachers. This period saw a robust exchange between youth circles and the various agents shaping the SRE system, significantly impacting the landscape.

## **B.2. Holocaust education**

The Eichmann trial in the spring of 1961 marked a turning point in the SRE's approach to teaching history, specifically the Holocaust. Until then, both the SE system and the SRE had addressed the Holocaust in a highly unstructured and marginal manner. Despite its inclusion in the curriculum, the Holocaust received minimal attention, compounded by a significant lack of teaching materials and methods. A March 1960 survey revealed that forty percent of all schools in the education system had not incorporated Holocaust education into their history lessons. A more detailed analysis showed that in the SRE, this figure rose to forty-six percent of schools.

However, before the Eichmann trial began, the MoE initiated a thorough review of Holocaust education across schools. This effort met with considerable pushback from SRE officials, unlike the curricular responses of the 1950s. Given the Holocaust's profound religious implications for Jewish believers, SRE inspectors rejected the MoE's guidelines, which emphasized Zionist narratives of physical heroism and armed resistance. This opposition led SRE members to collectively advocate for a history curriculum tailored to the needs of religious Zionist students. Remarkably, the MoE acceded to their demands.

Two days after Eichmann's trial commenced, on April 13, 1961, SRE supervisors convened to explore unique methods of Holocaust instruction suitable for religious educators. Shortly thereafter, they compiled and published the inspectors' recommendations in a document titled "The Holocaust and the Religious Educator". By June, Goldschmidt supplemented this with a special circular aimed at all SRE schools, linking Holocaust remembrance with the mourning period for the destruction of the Temple in a brochure named 'Between the Egyptians and the Holocaust'. These documents, widely disseminated in both SRE and MoE official publications, established guidelines and developed independent study materials for Holocaust education from a religious perspective. This initiative marked the first instance since the SE system's establishment that the MoE authorized an independent history education for the SRE.

Unlike the MoE’s emphasis on Jewish amred heroism, SRE materials adopted a theologically humble stance, focusing on mourning and lamentation. "With great embarrassment, we delve into this exploration," wrote SRE educators, questioning how to comprehend the tragic and bizarre deaths of millions. They reiterated their hesitation to address divine justice, stating, "we dare not offer an answer."

The religious inspectors only marginally addressed armed resistance against the Nazis, directing educators to highlight the spiritual bravery and faith of exceptional individuals. "Our focus deserves to be on the manifestations of faith and bravery, evident not among the masses but within those few with pure souls," they advised. Yet, Goldschmidt's circular, aiming to connect Holocaust remembrance with the mourning period for the Temple's destruction, took SRE's religious perspective further. He sought to elevate the narrative beyond historical accounts to a mythic dimension, explaining that believers' heroism lay not in battling human adversaries but in opposing "the force of impurity that stands against all that is pure and holy in God's and man's eyes." Despite the Jews' physical defeat, their spiritual victory and faith ultimately prevailed, Goldschmidt argued. He highlighted that the profound loss allowed for a burst of sanctity, illustrating the triumph of spirit and faith over physical destruction.

The various guidelines from the SRE reflect an effort to forge a mythic, timeless historical consciousness that links events across more than two millennia: from the destruction of the First Temple and the Jewish people's persecution throughout history to the Holocaust's atrocities in the twentieth century. These guidelines highlight instances of religious exemplarity amidst Jewish tragedies, showcasing the ultimate human achievement of unwavering faith and zeal in fulfilling God's command. They suggest that if Jews could sacrifice their souls in the face of furnaces and executioners, then such devotion is also expected of the younger generation in their sacred homeland. However, the SRE intentionally avoided drawing a direct connection between the Holocaust's devastation and the founding of the State of Israel, neither in theological terms of divine intervention nor as a political resolution to the Jewish plight.

Thus, the approach to Holocaust education revealed significant divergences between the teachings in religious-Zionist public institutions and general education — divergences not present during the Mizrahi era. This distinction underscores that the push for separate Holocaust education stemmed not from political motives or minor disagreements but from a profound educational necessity tied to the younger generation's faith. This initiative signaled the start of a multi-year effort by SRE members to secure autonomy in history education.

## **B.2. SRE officials efforts to establish a unique history education**

Following the pivotal changes in Holocaust education, the SRE system initiated significant steps in the early 1960s to assert its independence in history education. This movement was evident across various educational stages and involved a deeper conceptual examination of history's role in religious Zionist education. Coinciding with shifts in Holocaust teaching, one of the first moves involved a radical change in the SRE administration's stance on textbook approval across all subjects, especially history.

In March 1961, marking a first since its inception and the birth of the Mizrahi movement, the SRE issued clear directives forbidding the use of general education history textbooks. Despite the longstanding popularity of Avivi and Persky's textbook series within SRE institutions, it was only then that SRE inspectors critically assessed their alignment with religious Zionist educational needs. Inspector Menachem Shulman's review was clear-cut: the textbooks were unsuitable for SRE settings. Shulman highlighted risks to religious education, including the portrayal of the Oral Torah as a time-sensitive cultural product and the glorification of the Enlightenment and Jewish cultural reformers of the nineteenth century. Consequently, Shulman strongly recommended banning these books.

By the 1964 school year, three years later, the SRE had started to systematically regulate textbook use, appointing specific personnel for this task. During this period, the only history textbooks to receive approval were those from the second edition of the "Israel and the Nations" series by Yaakov Katz, published in 1962 and co-authored with educator Moshe Hershko.

In many ways, the “Israel and the Nations” textbook series mirrored the SE materials by adhering to the historical-disciplinary approach and avoiding - even in critical events like the founding of the state - depicting God as a pivotal factor in history. However, the series uniquely incorporated several religious viewpoints, notably: analyzing historical events through Torah principles, highlighting religious figures positively, exploring the development of modern orthodoxy in the early nineteenth century, and prioritizing the sanctity of life in ghettos over the heroism of ghetto rebels. Yet, the approach to Zionism, which underplayed the significance of religious Zionism, sparked dissatisfaction among SRE supervisors. This dissatisfaction propelled them to actively seek changes to the curriculum of this topic.

Simultaneously, at the start of the 1964 school year, Education Minister Zalman Aran initiated an expanded focus on the topic of “The History of Israeli in Recent Generations,” across all secondary schools. Work on the new curriculum began swiftly in December 1963, with discussions primarily involving secular educators. Shortly after the committee convened, SRE members collectively insisted that the SRE's supervisors should develop its institutions' independent curriculum. Although Dr. Michael Ziv, director of the high school education department, was not initially enthusiastic about the initiative, he did not oppose it. Ziv's tacit approval effectively green-lit the SRE to commence. This marked a groundbreaking approval for the SRE, granting it the chance to formulate an independent curriculum that extended beyond Holocaust education to encompass a broad scope of Jewish history in recent centuries.

The SE curriculum on the history of the people of Israel in recent generations was released at the end of the 1964 school year, with the SRE's unique program following a few months later. The SRE guidelines didn't propose a fundamentally different curriculum but introduced adjustments crucial for the Religious Zionist audience, particularly regarding the Jewish religion's interaction with modernity in Europe. The SRE inspectors began the curriculum with a new chapter titled "A struggle for the soul of the nation," addressing the "phenomena of disintegration in Jewish society," the education processes, religious reforms, and cultural shifts that challenged Orthodox Judaism. This section also presented responses to these challenges through Torah and moral life, the nation's teachers, spiritual leaders, and Torah scholars. Further, the program explored religious movements of the nineteenth century and the Jewish religious life across various countries and regimes. This inclusion marked the first time such central topics for Religious Zionist identity formation featured in the SRE education history curriculum.

When covering the development of the Hebrew Yishuv, SRE educators incorporated mentions of various religious settlements and the religious life and efforts of Rabbi Kook, topics absent from the SE curriculum. However, changes regarding Zionism extended beyond additional content, indicating deeper adjustments. For instance, whereas the SE curriculum opened the discussion on the Yishuv development with “the relationship between the people of Israel and the Land of Israel,” the SRE curriculum titled this section “the spiritual relationship between the people of Israel and its country.” It highlighted the early immigrations of Chassidim and followers of the Gaon of Vilna to underscore the spiritual bond motivating religious Jews to move to Israel even before the Zionist movement's emergence. Following the state's proclamation, SRE inspectors introduced “First flowering of our Redemption,” a theme previously unexplored in the curricula, to emphasize this spiritual connection further.

At the same time as significant changes were occurring in textbooks and curricula, the SRE system experienced a shift in its unified teacher training. Starting in the 1963 academic year, the SRE inspectors waged a persistent campaign for the separation of training programs, a demand consistently dismissed by the MoE's senior officials. By the 1966 academic year, following the release of the independent curriculum, resistance was futile. Goldschmidt presented the undeniable facts to the chairman of the Ministry's Teacher Training Committee, compelling him to concede and segregate teacher training in several subjects, particularly history education.

The shift in the SRE's stance on history education extended beyond just curriculum adjustments; it also sparked a comprehensive conceptual and educational examination. Unlike the 1950s, when the SRE seemed to undervalue history, allocating minimal resources and attention, a significant transformation occurred. SRE educators began to delve into discussions about the optimal historical approach for the SRE system, engaging in a detailed exploration of teaching objectives, characteristics, and challenges.

A clear indication of this changed attitude toward history within the SRE is evident in the activities of the religious teachers' organization journal "In the SRE's Field." This joural served as a key communication link between SRE administration members, educators, and various educational officials. From the launch of its first issue in June 1957 until the Eichmann trial in April 1961, the publication featured almost no articles or lesson plans on history education. Contrastingly, between 1961 and 1965, seven articles addressing the subject were published. The shift wasn't just numerical but also evident in the articles' content and focus, which thoroughly reevaluated history's role in SRE's educational process.

This period of introspection was mirrored by changes in the actions of the SRE Council. Council meeting minutes up to the mid-sixties indicate history teaching was considered peripheral. Yet, the evolving perspective among SRE educators on the importance of history eventually influenced the council. In a move rare even for discussions on religious teaching subjects, the council dedicated three meetings in 1965 to debating “the content and perspectives of history education in religious schools,” highlighting the depth of the change in approach to history education within the SRE.

In these discussions, the SRE Council unanimously recognized a critical issue in history education, underscoring the need for an independent and distinctive teaching process within the SRE. However, these discussions also uncovered significant disagreements among SRE leaders about this direction. The absence of a unified ideological-theological stance led to substantial debates over teaching goals and approaches, such as interpreting God's role in history and the relationship between the people of Israel and other nations.

To address these controversies, the Council formed a special committee led by senior inspector Yehuda Kiel (1916-2011), who would later succeed Goldschmidt as head of the SRE administration. Yet, the committee struggled to reconcile differing viewpoints among religious Zionist educators, failing to establish new history teaching goals or produce detailed study guidelines after a year of intensive effort. The debate over history teaching approaches within the SRE largely resolved itself within six months, catalyzed by the societal and religious Zionist upheaval following the Six-Day War in June 1967, which ushered in a new phase for the SRE system and its approach to history education.

# **Conclusion**

The shaping of history education in Isral's SE system was a pivotal process that profoundly influenced both the educational field and Israeli society for decades. This article highlights an important yet under-researched alternative: the history education in the SRE. Through mapping and analyzing the SRE's historical concepts and teaching characteristics, this study uncovers new insights into the evolving ambitions of Religious Zionist education and its relationship dynamics with the MoE. It demonstrates that comprehending the shaping of history education in Israel, as well as the transformations in Religious Zionist education over the years, necessitates a focus on the processes that occurred within it during the early 1960s.

Despite the significant role of the state's establishment in religious Zionist ideology, not only was the event not reflected in the SRE's history education, but its effect was the opposite. From the inception of the SE system until the early 1960s, the MoE maintained control over SRE history studies, necessitating the exclusion of key religious elements that defined the Mizrahi era. An analysis of various historical documents reveals that, contrary to official statements, the educational process within the SRE closely mirrored that of SE, influencing not just the curriculum but also essential aspects such as teaching materials, annual guidelines, and teacher training.

Contradicting common historiography on education in Israel, the analysis identifies the early 1960s as a crucial turning point for the SRE. During this time, SRE administrators and inspectors started advocating for a distinct approach to history education, one that better suited the religious community's needs and perspectives. The Eichmann trial in April 1961 marked this shift's onset. The religious sensitivity showcased in Holocaust education prompted SRE educators to call for an educational strategy tailored to the religious-Zionist student body. Notably, the MoE accommodated this request, setting a precedent for future educational adjustments.

The shift in the topic of the Holocaust initiated a process where the SRE aimed to achieve full independence in history education and to deeply explore its approach to the subject. Within months, the SRE imposed restrictions on the use of general public history textbooks, a move unprecedented even during the Mizrahi era. By 1964, the SRE for the first time since SE system's inception, published a unique history curriculum for its institutions. Consequssnly, after several years of struggle, the MoE responded to the repeated demands of the SRE supervisors and carried out a complete separation in the teacher training in history for SRE staff.

The early 1960s transformation in history education at the SRE resulted from two trends: the MoE’s softening of its uniform ideological approach, and the SRE's organizational strengthening, influenced by deep social and ideological currents within the Religious Zionist community, including the “youth groups.” The thorough conceptual exploration showed that the push for change in history education stemmed not only from structural adjustments but also from the SRE members' new aspirations. They advocated for an educational ideal that moved beyond sectoral confines to broadly impact the public. However, the lack of a clear ideological-theological stance on teaching goals and desired education outcomes hindered the development of a distinct historical narrative.

The Six-Day War brought to the fore the messianic element inherent in Religious Zionist ideology, significantly influencing the debate over history education. Yet, the transition was more complex than some research suggests, not abruptly adopting Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook's “The Redeeming Torah” historiosophy. In reality, developing a faith-based Religious Zionist narrative within the SRE system was a nuanced process marked by internal conflicts, meriting its own detailed study.