**ללמד 'ילידיות' את בני הארץ - שליחות המורים העבריים בערים הערביות בראשית המאה ה-20**

**Teaching 'Indigeneity' to the Sons of the Land: The Mission of Hebrew Teachers in Arab Cities in Palestine in the Early 20th Century**

The concept of *indigeneity* has been a subject of global research and legal dispute, often defined by a collective connection to the land inhabited by indigenous groups, either presently or historically.[[1]](#footnote-1) This discourse typically unfolds within the broader context of cultural and political hierarchies, contrasting local populations with immigrants, settlers, or conquerors.[[2]](#footnote-2)

In critical scholarship, indigeneity is frequently linked to the concept of settler colonialism, characterized by conflicts among imperial powers, local governance, settlers, and indigenous populations. It also highlights structural inequalities between settlers and locals, alongside cultural identity questions.[[3]](#footnote-3) In colonial contexts, settler culture is often associated with Western European norms, while indigenous culture is defined through shared stereotypes. [[4]](#footnote-4)

Discussions of indigeneity typically address encounters between distinct peoples. In the Zionist immigration to Palestine, however, notions of 'Jewish indigeneity' also shaped the interaction between veteran, native-born Jewish communities and European Zionist immigrants. This tension reflected a duality between a natural, daily indigeneity rooted in local life and a Zionist vision of 'desired indigeneity,' connecting biblical nostalgia with European modernization ideals.[[5]](#footnote-5)

While much research examines how indigeneity and settler narratives influenced political and cultural integration with the Arab surroundings, or with the concept of *Ottomanism*, this study shifts focus to education. It examines the gap between 'natural indigeneity' and the 'national indigeneity' Hebrew education aimed to instill within Arabic-speaking Jewish communities. These peripheral, economically disadvantaged communities shared daily lives with their Arab neighbors, yet faced growing pressures to differentiate amid deteriorating Jewish-Arab relations, culminating in the decline of Jewish communities in Arab cities by the 1930s.

A growing body of literature explores the political and social implications of the widespread use of the terms *natives* vs. *settlers* in the context of Jewish nation-building in Palestine.[[6]](#footnote-6) Much of this research examines how indigeneity and settler narratives shaped political and cultural integration with the Arab surroundings or the declining use of the concept of *Ottomanism*.[[7]](#footnote-7) These discussions span concepts of integration that characterized local Jewish society in the late 19th century to the notions of separation that gained prominence among Jewish immigrants from the early 20th century, particularly following the Balfour Declaration. [[8]](#footnote-8)

Emphasis is often placed on the impact of imperial shifts in the region, including the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the disappearance of 'Ottoman citizenship' as an option, and the establishment of the Mandate system after World War I. [[9]](#footnote-9) Some studies (and memories) describes how native elites, especially Jewish-Sephardic elites, sought to capitalize on their 'natural indigeneity' as an assent in their efforts to integrate into the Zionist movement and influence its trajectory.[[10]](#footnote-10) Other studies highlight the opposition of native-born Jews to the Zionist movement, as they resisted relinquishing their Arab identity—not only as a cultural characteristic but also as a profound sense of belonging to the region.[[11]](#footnote-11)

In this study, I aim to shift the focus from political debates to educational efforts, specifically addressing the disjunction between the inherent perception of nativeness among those born in the Land of Israel and the envisioned sense of nativeness that Hebrew education sought to cultivate as the national 'desired' nativeness. The analysis centers on educational initiatives introduced by the Zionist movement within veteran, Arabic-speaking Jewish communities, who, while religiously distinct, shared cultural and daily-life commonalities with their surroundings.

Rather than focusing on the elite political and cultural figures in major mixed cities like Jerusalem and Jaffa, this paper examines communities in peripheral towns that shared harsh living conditions with their Arab neighbors. Against the backdrop of escalating Jewish-Arab tensions, the imperative to distinguish between the two populations grew, ultimately leading to the dissolution of most Jewish communities in Arab cities by the mid-1930s.

The discussion on the encounter between teacher-emissaries and members of local communities regarding indigenous culture necessitates a nuanced analysis. This encounter was multilayered, influenced by the teachers' diverse cultural backgrounds, Zionist nationalist ideologies, modernization processes, and political agendas. The communities examined in this study were part of the broader Palestinian context, a space characterized by diverse cultural interactions, exchanges and shifting power dynamics among various actors and agendas. In this regard, the article adopts the approach of *entangled histories*, enabling the construction of a complex and multifaceted understanding of the processes shaping the development of national pedagogy within Jewish society.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The sources for this research are limited, as they pertain to small and impoverished communities that were largely peripheral to the Zionist movement’s central concerns.[[13]](#footnote-13) The study primarily draws on letters and memoirs written by teachers sent to these communities, reflecting the perspectives of these educators and occasionally those of key community leaders advocating for change. Consequently, these accounts often convey a critical view of the native population.

Few studies have examined the development of education in Jewish communities within Arab cities such as Gaza,[[14]](#footnote-14) Beisan,[[15]](#footnote-15) Acre,[[16]](#footnote-16) and, also the Holy cities of Safed,[[17]](#footnote-17) Hebron[[18]](#footnote-18)and Tiberias.[[19]](#footnote-19) These studies also rely on documents from the National Education Department archives, including a limited number of complaint letters from local parent committees, found at the Education Department files at the Jerusalem Zionist Archive (CZA), and the Archive of Jewish Education in Israel and the Diaspora (Education Archive), Tel-Aviv University.

However, the predominant voices in these sources are institutional and educational rather than those of the local communities themselves. This study attempts to recover the local perspective from the remaining correspondence and to uncover insights hidden between the lines.

**'Zionist Indigeneity'**

Within the Zionist movement, a significant debate emerged around the concept of Jewish indigeneity in the Land of Israel. From a Jewish national perspective, the land was regarded as an ancestral homeland, and its people were considered native, irrespective of their birthplace. As a pre-state national movement, Zionism was deeply grounded in a profound dialectic between historical reality and ideological aspiration. The movement sought to enact a transformative realization of Jewish identity, reimagining an ancient ancestral essence through the lens of Jewish Enlightenment literature and modern nationalist discourse. This vision portrayed Jews as an independent, sovereign nation, living on their land, rooted in its soil, and sustained by their labour.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This conceptualization, however, often overlooked the complex historical experiences of Jewish communities, both in the Land of Israel and in the diaspora. The imperative to "become natives" sought to eliminate the perceived distance between the Jewish people and their land, reshaping identity and belonging. Cultural dimensions of this reimagining became central to Zionist discourse. European immigrants grappled with adopting Levantine cultural traits while aligning Zionism with European modernization ideals.[[21]](#footnote-21) This duality fostered a divided identity, raising questions about artistic expression, clothing, language development, and integration with the local Arab environment.

Internal debates reflected power struggles within the Jewish population, driven by ideological differences, immigration waves, and competing claims of *nativeness*. The term nativeness thus became a contested negotiation of identity and belonging.[[22]](#footnote-22) During the late Ottoman period, the concept of the local indigenous space was multifaceted. While Zionist concept of indigeneity referred to Palestine only, earlier conceptions extended beyond its borders to the Ottoman space.[[23]](#footnote-23) These pre-Zionist notions, that continued into the early 20th century, emphasized local and 'indigenous' Jewish participation in cultural revival and the Arab Enlightenment, alongside a nostalgic longing for Jewish life in Andalusia and Baghdad.[[24]](#footnote-24) According to Noy, such approaches sought to establish a local modernity that connected European Enlightenment, classical Arabic traditions, and Jewish heritage. [[25]](#footnote-25) With the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of Ottoman citizenship as a viable option, this intellectual circle positioned itself as a mediator between Eastern culture and local communities (both Jewish and Arabs), and the Hebrew revival movement. [[26]](#footnote-26)

Until the early 1930s, terms like 'Sons of the Land' and 'indigenous inhabitants' were used as tools for political and cultural negotiation. Local elites employed these terms to navigate shifting cultural and political landscapes, whether by resisting change or seeking to influence its direction.[[27]](#footnote-27) Echoes of this can be found in the writings of the Jewish-Polish historian Avraham Shmuel Hershberg upon returning from Palestine in 1910: "Sephardic look at the Ashkenazim as guests who have recently come to encroach, and they pride themselves on their citizenship, considering themselves indigenous inhabitants (although among them there are also many foreign subjects(!)) based on their Eastern dress and language, as most of them know the language of the land".[[28]](#footnote-28) Research has highlighted these 'Sons of the Land' as both critics to European Zionist separatism and as marginalized voices largely excluded from the dominant Zionist narrative, since The pluralistic approaches of the late Ottoman period were eventually replaced by a singular, separatist national conception that defined Jewish-Arab relations and Jewish identity.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Although much attention has been given to Sephardic community members, European-origin locals also occasionally invoked indigeneity to assert their advantages over recent immigrants and influence the Zionist movement's trajectory. Thus, young people of European origin born in the early Zionist agricultural settlements sometimes aligned with the members of the Sephardic Yishuv in challenging the separatist national ideology gaining traction before World War I. Their shared claim to indigeneity emphasized a direct connection to the land and culture, overlooking their cultural-ethnic differences. [[30]](#footnote-30)

Hebrew education emerged as a catalyst for change, leveraging the economic and organizational advantages gradually consolidating within Zionist institutions. However, these efforts were not defined by a simple dichotomy between veterans and newcomers. Agents of change included individuals from local communities and those rooted in Ottoman-era societies. For some, Hebrew education symbolized a pathway to modernization; for others, it was a means to integrate into the Zionist national movement. The outcomes of these educational initiatives were deeply intertwined with the political tensions and deteriorating Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine.

**Organizational Aspects of Hebrew Education in Arabic-Speaking Jewish Communities**

The relationship between the new Zionist immigrants and the established Jewish communities in Palestine was a central element of nation-building efforts. In education, this encounter encompassed organizational, pedagogical, and personal dimensions, shaped by ideological disagreements, tensions between traditional and modern educational approaches, and struggles for political and economic influence. A key focus was the attempt to reshape the consciousness of national indigeneity, which required differentiated strategies for recent immigrants and native-born residents.

The period under study here, from the late 19th century to the early 1930s, represents a critical phase in the organizational evolution of Hebrew (Zionist) educational systems. Initially, Hebrew education was one of several competing frameworks operating within Jewish society in Palestine, each offering distinct interpretations of European modernization.[[31]](#footnote-31) By the 1880s, approximately 85% of Jewish students attended schools operated by philanthropic organizations, such as the Alliance Israélite Universelle, primarily concentrated in major cities like Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Safed, and Tiberias. The remaining students were distributed among Ashkenazi Talmud Torah schools and Sephardic kuttabs. [[32]](#footnote-32)

The strategic advancement of Hebrew education was spearheaded by two key institutions: The Palestinian Hebrew Teachers Association, founded in 1903, and the Hebrew Education System, established in November 1913 under the auspices of the Zionist Organization's Education Committee. Despite their ambitious aims, these institutions initially wielded limited economic and political influence, confining their impact largely to emerging Zionist settlement circles. [[33]](#footnote-33)

Before the establishment of the Hebrew Education Department, Zionist involvement in education within secondary Arab cities was minimal. Only a few teachers were occasionally dispatched to the poor Jewish community of Gaza, primarily to facilitate immigrant absorption rather than to address the needs of the local Arabic-speaking population.

World War I catalyzed a transformation in educational governance, diminishing the influence of philanthropic organizations and incrementally elevating the Zionist movement's role.[[34]](#footnote-34) The National Education Department, founded in 1920, became the operational arm of the Zionist Organization's Education Committee. This structural shift centralized Hebrew education and subordinated it to the political priorities of the Zionist Organization and the Palestine Office.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The consolidation of the Hebrew educational system proceeded rapidly. By 1921, approximately 80% of Jewish children in Palestine were enrolled in schools administered by the Education Committee.[[36]](#footnote-36) This numerical expansion was accompanied by efforts to standardize pedagogical and administrative practices.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Institutional strengthening allowed for increased involvement in Arab cities, contingent on the general support criteria set by Zionist authorities. [[38]](#footnote-38) These criteria required a minimum of ten students for teacher salary funding, with remaining educational expenses delegated to the responsibility of the local community.[[39]](#footnote-39) The Education Department maintained control over teacher appointments and supervision, adhering to a bureaucratic and budgetary logic that paradoxically undermined the sustainability of education in smaller Jewish communities within Arab cities.

Beyond organizational parameters, the Education Department imposed additional conditions for support. These included a requirement to promote an ambiguously defined "Hebrew education" and to implement Hebrew-language instruction. Under these terms, teachers were deployed to secondary Arab cities such as Gaza, Nablus, Acre, Peki'in, Hebron, and Beit She'an, with more limited representation in Safed and Tiberias.

Against the backdrop of increasingly segregated Jewish-Arab societal and geographical dynamics, Zionist institutions demonstrated limited interest in sustaining veteran Jewish communities in secondary Arab cities.[[40]](#footnote-40) The Education Department rarely deviated from its established criteria, even when these communities were too impoverished to meet financial obligations or to undertake the radical lifestyle changes required to align with the Zionist educational model.

As a result, the narrative of Hebrew educational integration in Arab cities became closely linked with community deterioration. By the mid-1930s, most of these communities had been abandoned, reflecting broader patterns of disconnection between Zionist educational policies and the realities of Jewish life in secondary Arab cities.

**The Demand for Cultural Change**

The teachers sent to secondary Arab cities encountered peripheral, impoverished communities. Their shared mission, aligned with the goals of the Zionist establishment, was to instill a Hebrew national consciousness in their students and, through them, influence their parents.

The agenda of cultural transformation, framed by national distinctiveness and a 'Hebrew' character, was accompanied by opposition to the conservative cultural norms and impoverished lifestyles typical of these peripheral communities. Critiques of assimilation into the Arab environment, and the criticism of social conservatism were interwoven with criticisms of social conservatism, converging in an aspiration to cultivate an imagined Biblical-modern Hebrew nativeness.

Hebrew education sought to reshape perceptions of indigeneity in three ways: 1.) Cultivating intellectual and geographic familiarity with the local environment through educational excursions, studies of nearby nature, and local geography and history, under the assumption that native familiarity was insufficient; 2.) Promoting a national, rather than local, sense of belonging; 3.) Encouraging a separation from the shared language, customs, and lifestyles of Jews and Arabs alike.  
This approach aimed to redefine local indigeneity as distinct, even for native-born individuals.[[41]](#footnote-41)

In collective memory, this educational mission is often portrayed as a failure, with responsibility placed on local communities for not sufficiently supporting Hebrew education and for creating challenges for the teachers. Another explanation for the perceived failure lies in the cultural distance between the predominantly European-born teachers and the Arab cultural environment of these communities.[[42]](#footnote-42) However, this portrayal is somewhat one-sided. From the 1920s onward, some teachers were themselves native-born, and their cultural distance from these communities stemmed more from their aspirations to lead processes of modernization and revival within local Jewish society. Criticism of the local way of life among these teachers often targeted its conservative and impoverished aspects rather than its Arab essence. Additionally, the growing tension between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and the increasing geographical separation between the two societies influenced this dynamic.

The Hebrew education emissaries' call for separation, their criticism of local lifestyles, and their often dogmatic stance—rooted in a sense of intellectual and cultural superiority—frequently provoked resistance among community members.[[43]](#footnote-43) The cultural distance was greatest for European-born teachers, who linked the idea of Hebrew revival to Zionist sense of nativeness, which emphasized separation from local Arab culture and alignment with European modernity. As most teachers and supervisors were of European origin, their positions held significant weight.

The Jewish community in Gaza on the eve of World War I was small, numbering approximately 160 Jews and 40 children, primarily North African immigrants from Jaffa and a few Ashkenazi families.[[44]](#footnote-44) The first teachers sent to Gaza, such as Eliezer Zeldes (born in Russia and educated in Switzerland), struggled to adapt. Zeldes criticized local customs, such as spending time in coffeehouses with hookahs and allowing children to walk barefoot "like the Arabs."[[45]](#footnote-45) This criticism elicited resistance from residents, who defended their cultural practices, highlighting their relevance to local conditions. Zeldes left Gaza after two years, unable to reconcile these differences.

Similarly, Eliyahu Yudoff-Yehudai, a Bulgarian immigrant, faced challenges upon his arrival in Gaza in 1913. Despite being Sephardic himself, Yudoff-Yehudai found the local Arab culture alien, writing despairingly about his inability to connect with the community: "I will briefly describe the desolation I encountered upon my arrival here, but will elaborate on the characteristics of the residents of Gaza, mostly native-born Sephardic Jews. Apart from their Arabic jargon mixed with strange Hebrew words, they are indistinguishable from their Muslim or Christian neighbors."[[46]](#footnote-46) In another letter he wrote: "What to do with these 'Sephardim.' Even though I am Sephardic myself, I admit I cannot recognize myself among them".[[47]](#footnote-47) He left after a year, expressing a profound sense of missed opportunity. [[48]](#footnote-48)

In Beisan, the Jewish community, primarily composed of Kurdish immigrants, faced similar tensions.[[49]](#footnote-49) The first teacher, Aaron Briskin, described the community in 1924 as indistinguishable from its Arab neighbors: "For four years I have been working as a teacher in the school in Beisan. The city – mostly semi-wild Arabs, the environment is Bedouin. The few Jews here are no different from the Arabs".[[50]](#footnote-50) Another teacher, Shimshon Midbari, who was sent to the school in 1931 and stayed only one year, similarly attributed difficulties to cultural gaps between the Ashkenazi teachers and the Arabic-speaking Mizrahi families.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Other teachers who merely visited the city viewed the cultural proximity to local Arabs as a national problem. The Tiberian teacher Weinberg interpreted this Arabness as distinctly exile-like (galuti), perceiving it as distancing Eastern Jews from national culture and its customs rather than fostering a sense of nativeness. This national culture, in Weinberg's view, was grounded in an imagined native identity shaped by European-modern foundations.

He described the Jewish community of Beisan as “imbued with a Diaspora spirit of many generations, lacking any idea about our sentiments of national revival and remote from any influence of European culture.” He elaborated: “The Arab language […] preserves the centuries-old ties between our Oriental brothers and the culture and habits of our [Arab] neighbors, which estrange them from our national culture and our habits. That makes the travail of the Hebrew teacher seventy-seven-fold more difficult […] and any positive result becomes clearly deficient.”[[52]](#footnote-52)

The perception of assimilation into local culture as a mark of exile-like characteristics also shaped the attitudes of teachers sent to Jewish agricultural settlements in the Lower Galilee. These settlements, established by European Jewish immigrants during the First Aliyah, encountered similar criticism. The farmers, who endured significant hardships, adopted the Arabic language and some customs of their neighbors, thereby drawing disapproval from teachers..[[53]](#footnote-53)

In the case of the Beisan community, while it was indeed an immigrant community, it was distinctly Oriental. The first Jews who settled in Beisan apparently arrived in the late 19th century, with early reports of Jewish families dating to 1896–1897. These settlers were primarily Kurdish immigrants and Arabic speakers. [[54]](#footnote-54) Gafni attributes their arrival to cultural proximity with some Muslim residents of Beisan who also had Kurdish roots, fostering a shared sense of connection.[[55]](#footnote-55)

Briskin and others’ framing of the Arab-Jewish culture in the city as a local culture overlooked the immigrant aspect of the community’s identity. In fact, most parents and children Briskin encountered were themselves immigrants. Their 'nativeness,' if it existed at all, was tied more to the broader Arab-Ottoman milieu than to a specifically Palestinian one. [[56]](#footnote-56)

Criticism of the Arab way of life and its influence also came from Hebrew teachers who were native-born and intimately familiar with this culture. Some viewed Hebrew education as a tool for modernization, while others sought to leverage their indigeneity as an asset for integration into the Zionist movement.

These teachers were often members of the local educated elites, primarily Sephardic, who considered themselves part of the national revival movement. For many, teaching was a partial or temporary occupation; they moved between local communities and the emerging Yishuv society, alternating between educational roles and other public positions. In doing so, they aimed to influence the transition from the Ottoman Jewish society into which they were born to the evolving Mandatory Yishuv society.

Notable figures among these educators included Avraham Elmalih, born in Jerusalem in 1876, who taught in Jerusalem, Istanbul, and Damascus, later becoming a journalist and a member of the Israeli Knesset; Yitzhak Shami, born in Hebron in 1888, a writer and publicist who taught in Hebron, Tiberias, Haifa, and Damascus; Yehuda Burla, born in Jerusalem in 1886, a writer and principal of Hebrew schools in Damascus, Zikhron Ya’akov, and Haifa; and David Yellin, born in Jerusalem in 1864, a pioneer of Hebrew education and founder of the Hebrew Teachers' Seminary, who also served as head of the Jewish National Council (1920–1929).[[57]](#footnote-57)

Although they taught in the major mixed cities, they consistently criticized Jewish assimilation into the conservative Arab environment. However, their critique was not aimed at Arabness itself but at what they perceived as the backwardness and conservatism of the Arab milieu in these cities and the resulting erosion of a distinct Jewish identity. Asserting a native Jewish identity was central to their vision of integrating into the Zionist leadership in Palestine. To achieve this, such an identity had to be both strong and modern.

In poor and peripheral communities, teachers often served as the sole agents of modernity and modern nationalism. From the mid-1920s onward, the Education Department sought to deploy native-born teachers to these areas to mitigate the cultural gaps that had previously hindered relationships. Familiarity with the local culture and language indeed allowed these teacher-emissaries to build stronger connections with the communities and generally remain in their posts for longer periods. However, this cultural closeness did not diminish their determination to reshape local perceptions of identity and modernity.

Avraham Solomon, a native of Petah Tikva, was sent to Beisan in 1929. Despite being part of the Old Yishuv and descended from one of Jerusalem’s prominent veteran Ashkenazi families, Solomon’s lifestyle and worldview aligned with the values of the New Yishuv. His pedagogical and cultural approach was shaped at the Hebrew Teachers’ Seminary in Jerusalem and during his years teaching in Europe before his arrival in Beisan.

In 1933, the school’s final year of operation, Joshua Perach arrived in Beisan. Perach, a native of Safed and a descendant of one of its long-established traditional Mizrahi families, had similarly developed his pedagogical and national outlook at the Hebrew Teachers’ Seminary in Jerusalem. [[58]](#footnote-58)

Reports from these teachers reveal the growing influence of national tensions. Despite their shared cultural and linguistic background with the community, proximity to Arab neighbors was increasingly viewed as a threat—even by community members themselves. Solomon reported to the Education Department:

"The children – out of fear of Arabs – never dare to venture far from home, and in their leisure time, the Jewish child runs in the street among crowds of Bedouins who come to shop in the market, terrified of any Arab child they encounter. The language spoken at home is of course Arabic... We dedicated great importance to this subject [homeland studies and nature]. It was aimed at providing these children with interesting foundations of nature – compensation for their spiritual poverty in these subjects. We increased field trips because our children generally take very few trips due to the constant security threat." [[59]](#footnote-59)

**Teaching Hebrew**

The centrality of the Hebrew language in national education and the challenges surrounding the revival of a non-living and non-local language have been widely discussed.[[60]](#footnote-60) Hebrew language instruction was not limited to Hebrew schools but emerged as a hallmark of modern Jewish educational efforts in Palestine at the turn of the century. In the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU) schools, Hebrew was taught as a spoken language—not as an isolated value but as part of an ideology that positioned Hebrew as a connective language for Jews gathering in Palestine from diverse diasporic origins.[[61]](#footnote-61)

For the veteran Jewish community, the Zionist demand to speak Hebrew was entangled with the demand to abandon the Arabic way of life and the (Arab) native-ness.[[62]](#footnote-62) The majority of Arabic speaking Jews saw Hebrew as a language that should join Arabic as the language of the land and not replace it, creating an indigeneity that was based on constant Hebrew–Arabic movement and translation. [[63]](#footnote-63) However, the Zionist movement sought to establish Hebrew as the native, spoken language for all Jews in Palestine.[[64]](#footnote-64) While Hebrew education acknowledged the importance of Arabic as the dominant spoken language in the region and incorporated it into many schools' curricula, Arabic was nevertheless treated as a foreign language.[[65]](#footnote-65)

However, in smaller and more peripheral settlements, this debate related more to their own every-day life in their small, mixed environment. Arabic could not be considered a foreign language, as it was their own language.

Tension played out in daily life also among European immigrants whose native language was Yiddish. Despite their preference for Hebrew, the practical realities often led them to learn Arabic, the local lingua franca and the means of communication with their neighbors, instead of Hebrew. An example can be seen in the words of teacher Horowitz, who was sent to Mishmar HaYarden, and expressed dismay in 1923 about the children in Lower Galilee settlements*:* "They wallow in dust and garbage all day long together with the Arab children. They speak among themselves a jargon (Yiddish) mixed with Arabic, or more accurately, Arabic curses that grate on the ear and harm the soul."[[66]](#footnote-66)

From the perspective of the Zionist Education Department, teaching Hebrew was not only an ideological imperative but also a practical condition for recognizing schools as "Hebrew" and qualifying for financial support, thus the issue extended beyond ideological considerations to practical administrative questions. However, the resistance, or lack of interest among parents and children in adopting Hebrew as their daily spoken language was not the only obstacle. A significant obstacle was the teachers themselves: while fluency in Hebrew was a basic requirement for employment, knowledge of Arabic, the community's vernacular, was not. Consequently, many Hebrew teachers struggled to communicate with Arabic-speaking parents.

Native-born teachers fluent in Arabic were more successful in establishing rapport with parents, but they also faced challenges in their mission to promote Hebrew as a spoken language among both children and parents. Many teachers in non-Hebrew-speaking communities adopted the pedagogical principle of "Hebrew in Hebrew," striving to incorporate Hebrew into all aspects of daily school life. [[67]](#footnote-67) They took pride in their students' gradual adoption of Hebrew as an everyday language. Yehuda Burla, for example, noted that after two years of intensive efforts at the Hebrew school in Damascus, all the children were speaking Hebrew, within a curriculum aligned with the Palestinian educational program. [[68]](#footnote-68)

For most parents, however, the Hebrew-language curriculum created a cultural and generational divide. The national ideal of reviving Hebrew was often seen as a desecration of a sacred language, traditionally reserved for religious texts, or as irrelevant in a daily environment conducted in Arabic, while English was the administrative language of governance.

When Zaldes arrived in Gaza, parents resisted teaching exclusively in Hebrew, arguing: "The mother tongue of all the children is Arabic, and even though they all understand Hebrew... they have not heard Hebrew spoken".[[69]](#footnote-69) Zaldes was particularly concerned about the education of girls, who, in religious society, did not learn Hebrew even as a sacred language. The relevance of teaching Hebrew remained contentious nearly two decades later. Teacher Yehoshua Bar-Droma in Gaza wrote: "Within the Sephardic circle, the opinion prevails that there is no need for a Hebrew school or the Hebrew language. In Gaza, there is a government school where students will learn Arabic and English for free, the languages that provide for a person."[[70]](#footnote-70)

Educating children in Hebrew aimed, in part, to influence parents to adopt the language themselves. Evening Hebrew classes for adults were seen as a complementary measure to this goal. In Haifa, for example, the community committee funded evening Hebrew classes for new European immigrants and veteran Arabic-speaking residents.[[71]](#footnote-71) However, in small and impoverished communities, such initiatives were rarely feasible. Most parents found little practical value in acquiring Hebrew and, even if interested, were often too preoccupied with subsistence to attend classes.[[72]](#footnote-72) The second obstacle was economic: the Education Department only paid teachers for instructing children. Teachers, who were underpaid and struggled with their own financial hardships, were expected to provide adult classes voluntarily—a nearly impossible demand under the circumstances.

In Gaza, teacher Bar-Droma attempted to teach adults and strengthen their national identity. In a September 1927 report, he noted proudly: "The mere presence of a teacher in Gaza and the existence of a Hebrew school caused the language to spread among adults. Directly or indirectly, I also worked among the adults. Sometimes I would give lectures on historical topics and the like."Yet the success was short-lived. He later lamented: "Now, with the Zionist Executive's decision to reduce the education budget, the settlement is anxious about the fate of its school."[[73]](#footnote-73)

Similar challenges were encountered in Acre, where Jerusalem-born teacher Yehoshua Miyuḥas was sent in 1924. A graduate of the 'Ezra' and Hebrew Teachers' College, Miyuḥas had previously taught in several Upper Galilee settlements, Damascus, and Haifa. Like Salomon and Pereḥ in Beisan, he embodied a bridge between old and new, familiar with local culture but aligned with the evolving Jewish settlement.

In Acre, these characteristics were particularly significant: Until 1923, Acre had been a well-established Arabic-speaking community with roots dating back to the 18th century.[[74]](#footnote-74) Unlike other secondary Arabic cities, Acre began attracting new immigrants in 1923, primarily from Europe, increasing their numbers to nearly a tenth of the city’s population.[[75]](#footnote-75) Recognizing the growing importance of Hebrew, the Acre community committee sought to promote its instruction among adults as a means of solidifying the emerging Hebrew-speaking community. Despite these efforts, Miyuḥas encountered resistance or indifference from both veteran and new residents, who, amid their difficult daily routines, saw little purpose in learning a language that was not the local tongue. In the June 4, 1926 issue of the 'Acre's Living Newspaper'*,* Miyuḥas lamented the insufficient effort among Acre’s residents to learn Hebrew and their lack of participation in evening classes. He called for "using every means to establish Hebrew language in the city." His critique targeted Arabic-speaking residents, Salonican Ladino speakers, and European Yiddish-speaking migrants, who he felt were perpetuating a "diasporic atmosphere" in the town. [[76]](#footnote-76)

In an effort to revive adult Hebrew education, the Acre community committee approached the Zionist Education Department, requesting funding for evening classes for adults and older children who had missed formal schooling. They argued that teaching Hebrew to residents "distant from the Hebrew language and immersed in a completely Arabic atmosphere" was essential for fostering a cohesive Hebrew-speaking community. However, their request was denied.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The Education Department maintained a uniform policy for both strong and peripheral communities, expecting teachers to provide these lessons voluntarily as part of their national mission or requiring communities to fund the classes themselves, as had been done in Haifa.[[78]](#footnote-78) This approach, rooted in the Department’s centralized unification policy, was disconnected from the cultural and economic realities of Acre and ultimately proved unworkable.

**conclusion**

One of the central challenges facing the national Hebrew education system was fostering a national consciousness among veteran Jewish populations, particularly Arabic speakers. Hebrew education played a pivotal role in establishing the Zionist movement in Palestine while simultaneously reflecting the ideological struggles and power dynamics that shaped it.

As a predominantly European migrant society defined its return as a re-engagement with an ancestral homeland, Zionism encountered complex and often charged interactions with the land and its Jewish and Arab inhabitants. The aspiration to achieve "nativeness" intertwined with efforts to transform cultural norms and reconfigure relationships between the "new natives" and their environment, including interactions with other populations sharing the same space.

The political and cultural dynamics of this process were marked by negotiations and contestation, where terms such as "sons of the land," "natives," "migrants," and "new Yishuv" often overlapped. Ethnic distinctions between Mizrahi and European Jews were crossed, as the term " sons of the land " was used not only by Arabic-speaking Jews but also by First Aliyah European youth. This terminology served as a tool to navigate the tensions between integration and differentiation within Zionist policies.

Cultural distinctions blurred through internal transformations within veteran communities, reflecting tensions between conservatism and modernization. These changes also raised questions about the place of Arab culture, which were not always directly tied to Zionist initiatives. Similarly, geographical distinctions were somehow flexible; during the transition from an Ottoman-imperial reality to a British Mandatory reality, claims of indigeneity sometimes referred to Ottoman or Arabic-speaking subjects, rather than strictly local urban communities.

These dynamics, largely shaped by Jewish elites, were distant from the realities of veteran Jewish communities in secondary Arab cities. These peripheral communities were removed from centers of influence and focused on providing education aligned with their religious and cultural values. Hebrew education was one of the modern options proposed by educational agents. The aspiration for modern education and criticism of the local way of life was shared by initiators from within the communities and by teacher-emissaries, most of whom had recently immigrated from Europe, though some were local natives themselves. Support or opposition to Hebrew education often reflected internal struggles within the communities between innovators advocating for modernization and those seeking to preserve traditional lifestyles, rather than outright rejection of Zionism.

The demographic changes resulting from increased European immigration, the organizational and economic strengthening of Zionist institutions during the Mandate period, and escalating national tensions between Jews and Arabs all reinforced Jewish separatism and European modernization. The Zionist movement increasingly assumed responsibility for the entire Jewish settlement. The education department began sending teachers to all Jewish communities, shifting the initiative to open Hebrew schools from local communities to the national education system. However, this shift imposed national organizational criteria that often made Hebrew education inaccessible to poorer communities. Requirements such as parental payments, school maintenance, and a minimum of ten students for teacher funding posed significant barriers, leaving Hebrew classrooms unstable and hampering the efforts of local residents who supported Hebrew education but could not sustain it financially.

National aspirations for "unifying and separating" (building a Jewish national home) often conflicted with local communities’ perceptions, capabilities, and needs. Pedagogical concepts such as "Hebrew in Hebrew," "knowledge of the land," and the reinvention of agricultural holidays like Tu BiShvat and religious celebrations like Purim and Hanukkah carried different meanings for immigrants who sought to shape their national indigeneity compared to veteran communities asked to transform their ways of life, often without their consent.

The veteran Jewish communities in secondary Arab cities ceased to exist by the late 1930s, paralleling rising national tensions and the societal trend toward separation.

The history of Hebrew education in Arabic-speaking Jewish communities in Palestine reveals not only the complexities of national and cultural transformation but also the tensions and compromises required to navigate overlapping identities and competing visions of belonging, far beyond simplistic dichotomies of "European" versus "local".

בנרטיב הציוני, הסיפורים המקומיים מעלים תמונה של כישלון: החינוך העברי, שנועד לשמש סוכן שינוי בקרב הקהילות הוותיקות ולאפשר התקרבות בינן לבן הרעיונות הציוניים והתנועה הציונית, כשל במשימתו ובנוסף לא הצליח ליצור כוח משיכה לעולים חדשים. הקהילות נותרו עניות ומנותקות מהמעשה הציוני ועם התגברות המתח היהודי-ערבי חרבו או נעזבו.

**גורמים לכישלון**

כאמור, במרבית הערים הערביות היזמה להכנסת החינוך העברי הייתה מקומית. אלא שלנגד עיני ראשי מחלקת החינוך הלאומית לא עמד האינטרס המקומי, אלא השאיפה הלאומית המאחידה (ושיקולים פרופסיונליים שהיו קשורים בתנאי השכר של מורי הפריפריה) ולכן לא נעשה מאמץ להתאים את השליחות החינוכית לתנאי המקום ולאופי הקהילה. קשיי התקשורת, והסלידה של המורים שנשלחו מאורחות החיים המקומיות, הקשו גם כן על המטרה המוצהרת לקדם 'לאומיות מאחידה'.

ן: על ההקסמות והדחיה מהפלחים היהודים ומהסביבה הערבית – אצל בן צבי ובן גוריון

וגם:

1. Erica-Irene Daes, *Indigenous Peoples and their Relationship to Land*, UNE/CN.4/Sub.2/2001/21, U.N. Commission on Human Rights, Geneva, 11.6.2001 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example: James S. Anaya, *Indigenous Peoples in International Law* (Oxford, 2004); Havatzelet Yahel, Ruth Kark, and, Seth J. Frantzman, "Are the Negev Bedouin an Indigenous People? Fabricating Palestinian History", *Middle East Quarterly*, 19,3 (2012): 3-14 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See, for example: Patrick Wolfe, *Settler colonialism and the transformation of anthropology: The politics and poetics of an ethnographic event*. (London: Cassell 1999); Leorenzo Veracini, Settler colonialism: A theoretical overview. (London: Palgrave Macmillan 2010); Caroline Elkins and, Susan Pedersen (eds.), *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. J. A. Mangan, "Images for the confident control: stereotypes in imperial discourse"', in *The imperial curriculum: racial images and education in the British colonial experience*, ed. J.A. Mangan, (London: Routledge 1993), 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Arieh Bruce Saposnik, "Europe and its Orients in Zionist Culture Before the First World War", *The Historical Journal*, 49,4 (2006):1105-1123; Arieh Bruce Saposnik, *Becoming Hebrew: The creation of a Jewish national culture in Ottoman Palestine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For example: ‏Baruch Kimmerling, *Migrants, Settlers, Natives: Israel Between Plurality of Cultures and Cultural Wars* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved 2004) [Hebrew]; Menachem Klein. Lives in Common, A local history, (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad 2015) [Hebrew]; Abigail Jacobson, Moshe Naor, *Oriental neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in mandatory Palestine*. (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. On the ethos of the shared Ottoman homeland and Ottoman national citizenship, see for example: Karen Barkey, *Empire of difference: the Ottomans in comparative perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009); Yuval Evri, The Return to Al-Andalus, Disputes over Sephardic Culture and Identity between Arabic and Hebrew, Jerusalem: Magnes 2020) [Hebrew], 41-50. On Ottoman Palestine as a space of multiple loyalties see: Michelle. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2011); Abigail Jacobson*, From empire to empire: Jerusalem between Ottoman and British rule*. (New York, Syracuse University Press 2011); Yuval Ben-Bassat, Eyal Ginio (eds.) Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turks Rule V.29 (London: Tauris 2011) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hillel Cohen, Yuval Evri, "Shared Homeland or Jewish National Home: Sephardi Natives of the Land, the Balfour Declaration and the Arab Question**",** *Theory and Criticism* 49 (2017): 291-304 [Hebrew]; Evri and Kotef argue that one result of these processes is the transformation of Arab-Jews from natives to settlers. See: Yuval Evri, Hagar Kotef, "When does a native become a settler? (With apologies to Zreik and Mamdani). *Constellations*. 29 (2022) :3–18.; Cohen claims that this processes resulted with the disappearance of the Arab-Jew identity. Hillel Cohen, "The Life and Death of the Arab-Jew: Eretz Israel-Palestine and Beyond'', Iyunim Bitkumat Israel, 9: Homelands in Exile, 2015: 171-200 [Hebrew].

   [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Yuval Evri, Hillel Cohen, Bashir Bashir and, Leila Farsakh. Between Shared Homeland to National Home: The Balfour Declaration from a Native Sephardic Perspective. In: *The Arab and Jewish Questions*. (New York: Columbia University Press 2020.), 148.  [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See, for example: Eliyahu Elyashar, Living among Jews (Jerusalem: Markus 1980) [Hebrew]; Shlomo Alboher, *Identification, Adaptation, and Reservation: Sephardi Jews in Eretz-Israel and the Zionist Movement during the British Mandate, 1918–1948* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik 2002) [Hebrew]; Itzhak Bezalel, *You Were* *Born Zionists: The Sephardim in Eretz Yisrael in Zionism and the Hebrew Revival During the Ottoman Period*, (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi 2007) [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Gil Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), ch. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Margit Pernau, “Whither Conceptual History? From National to Entangled Histories”, *Contribution to the History of Concepts* 7:1 (Summer 2012):1–11; Noah W. Sobe, “Entanglement and Transnationalism in the History of American Education”, in Thomas Popkewitz (ed.), *Rethinking the History of Education: Transnational Perspectives on its Questions, Methods, and Knowledge* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013):96. On the use of Entangled Histories in the study of Jewish education in Palestine see: Talia Tadmor-Shimony , Nirit Raichel, *Intercultural Meetings in the Agricultural Colony's Schoolyard 1885-1914*, (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press 2020), 11-14 [Hebrew]; Miriam Szamet, *“We Are the Novelty” Jewish Pedagogues and the Pedagogical Discourse in Pre-State Israel* (Jerusalem; Magnes 2024), 21-26 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. On the Zionist concerns with Jewish settlement in secondary Arab towns see: Reuven Gafni, A Jewish Community in an Arab Town: Beit She'an, 1890-1936 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2018), 220-209 [Hebrew]; Anat Kidron, 'Hebrew community organizations in the mixed cities of Mandatory Palestine and the creation of the Jewish national home', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (2022) 2, 127–148; Anat Kidron, Shuli Linder-Yarkony, The Jewish Community of Acre in Mandatory Palestine, The Story of a Forgotten Community (De Gruyter Oldenbourg 2024), 222-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Zvi Shiloni, Edges of the margins: the history of Jewish education in Gaza in the late Ottoman period 1886-1915, *Dor Le-Dor* 49, 2014:385-435 [Hebrew]; Dotan Halevi**,** 'Breaking Boundaries, Bricking Walls: Oriental, Sephardi, and European Jews in a Late Ottoman Palestinian Classroom', *Journal of Levantine Studies*, (2017), 7:2, 9-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Gafni, Beit She'an, 153-125 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Kidron, Linder-Yarkony, A Forgotten Community, 183-172 [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Shmuel Har-Noy, Safed in the Turbulence of Education 1870-1920 (Zefat, Zefat Academic College 2020) [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Yoram Elmakias, We are Heading to Hebron: The Zionist Movement and the City of Hebron – Between Vision and Reality 1948-1882 (Jerusalem: Carmel 2019), 186-176 [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ido Israeli, "Tradition and Modernism: the Education System in Tiberias in Late Ottoman Era", *Derech Efrata* 17 ( 2023): 197-217 [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Hamutal Tsamir, "From History to Myth: Mythizations of Nativity in the Poetry of the State,” in: Yotam Benziman (ed.), Memory Games: Concepts of Time and Memory in Jewish Culture, (Jerusalem: Van Leer Institute and HaKibbutz HaMeuchad 2008), 98- 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Hanan Harif, For We Be Brethren (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar 2019) [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. David Tal, “Between Politics and Politics of Identity: the case of the Arab Jews. *Journal of levantine studies* *7*:1 (2017), 57–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Michelle. Campos, between ''Beloved Ottomania'' and ''The Land of Israel'': The Struggle over Ottomanism and Zionism among Palestine's Sepharadi Jews 1908-1913, International journal of Middle East studies 37: 4(2005), 461–483; Halpern wrote of Jews who immigrated to Palestine from across the Ottoman Empire referred to themselves as 'Bnei Ha'aretz' (sons of the land) to distinguish themselves from European immigrants, thereby creating a category of 'natives' who were not born in the land. Liora Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, nationalism, and language diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948*. (Yale, NH: Yale University Press 2015), 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Amos Noy, *Experts or Witnesses: Jewish Intelligentsia from Jerusalem and the Levant  
    in the Beginning of the 20th Century* (Tel-Aviv: Resling. 2017) [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Noy, *Experts or Witnesses,* 85; see also: Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*; Julia Phillips Cohen, Becoming Ottomans: Sephardi Jews and Imperial Citizenship in the Modern Era, (New York: Oxford University Press 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Yosef Gorny, Zionism and the Arabs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 40-77; Jonathan Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Halperin, Babel in Zion; Jacobson, Naor, *Oriental neighbors.* [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See. For example: Evri, The Return to Al-Andalus, 152; Newspapers served as a central arena for translating articles published in Arabic about Zionism, aiming to expand the knowledge base of immigrants who did not speak Arabic. Additionally, it was part of an effort to establish a Jewish newspaper in Arabic, led by a group of native-born Jews from 1909 until the outbreak of World War I. Jacobson*, From Empire, 83-116;* Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors,* 185-234; Moshe Behar, "1911: the birth of the Mizrahi-Ashkenazi controversy". *Journal of modern Jewish studies* *16*, 2 (2017): 312–331. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. **Avraham Shmuel, Hershberg,** Be'Eretz HaMizrach (Jerusalem: Izhak Ben-Zvi 1977), 196-197 [ Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Later attempts, such as the establishment of Natives of the Yishuv Federation *(Hebrew: Hit’ahdut Bnei HaYishuv* in 1939, were limited in scope and influence. Founded by Ashkenazi and Sephardic intellectuals who identified themselves as *Bnei Ha’aretz* (natives), the association was a political movement sought to represent Jews of the “Old Yishuv” (veteran Jewish society) as an increasingly marginalized population in Palestine, clearly positioning themselves against European Zionist elites. Aviv Derri, "The Construction of “Native” Jews in Late Mandate Palestine: An Ongoing Nahda as a Political Project", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53:2 (2021): 253-271

    [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See, for example: Maytal Mark, *Sons of Shem:” Visions for Jewish-Arab Integration and Semitism in the Second Aliyah (1904-1914),* University of Maryland, College Park, Theses, 2021. Embon highlighted the use of the term Bnei Ha'aretz (natives) as a bargaining tool in internal struggles within the Orthodox Ashkenazi community in Safed during the first half of the 19th century. These conflicts predated the rise of the Zionist movement and were disconnected from any cultural or other ties to Arabic-speaking communities in the Galilee. Rivka Embon, *Sons of the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem: Zionist Library 2024). Later attempts, such as the establishment of Natives of the Yishuv Federation *(Hebrew: Hit’ahdut Bnei HaYishuv* in 1939, were limited in scope and influence. Founded by Ashkenazi and Sephardic intellectuals who identified themselves as *Bnei Ha’aretz* (natives), the association was a political movement sought to represent Jews of the “Old Yishuv” (veteran Jewish society) as an increasingly marginalized population in Palestine, clearly positioning themselves against European Zionist elites. Aviv Derri, "The Construction of “Native” Jews in Late Mandate Palestine: An Ongoing Nahda as a Political Project", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53:2 (2021): 253-271 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Philanthropic organizations viewed modern education as a means to improve the conditions of Jewish communities in their respective locales. Notably, the French *Alliance Israélite Universelle*, the German *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden (Ezra)*, and the English *Jewish Association* played pivotal roles in advancing modern education. Haim Sa'adoun (ed.), *Serving Their* *People in Their Way: Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Advancement of Jewish Communities in Muslim Lands,* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi 2020); Yehuda Maimaran, *Alliance Israélite Universelle* in Israek (ibid: 281-295) [Hebrew]; Tadmor-Shimony ,  Raichel, *Intercultural* *Meetings*, 23-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Yosef Azaryahu, *Hebrew Education in Eretz-Israel*, (Ramat-Gan: Masada 1946); Yosef Lang, "Teachers in the Education Institutions of Eretz-Israel 1881-1904," *Cathedra* 90 (1998): 169-182 [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Yuval Dror, National Education through Mutually Supportive Device: The Zionist Story (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2008) 163. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Rachel Elboim-Dror, *The Hebrew Education in Eretz Israel*, vl.2 (1914-1920), (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi 1990), 2-3. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Shimon Reshef, Yuval Dror, Hebrew Education in the Years of the National Homeland (1919-1948), (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik 1999), 6. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Yosef Luria, Education in Eretz-Israel: Report, (Jerusalem: Education Department 1921), 57; Rachel Elboim-Dror, "Decision-Foci of the Hebrew Education System in Eretz-Israel", *Cathedra* 23 (1982), 125-156, 125. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. It should be noted that under the British Mandate, Hebrew education was considered a private educational system, and therefore not mandatory. In each of these cities, there were government-run schools, but Jewish children were reluctant to attend them. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Minutes from a meeting of the Education Committee from June 1, 1920, Doar Hayom, 27.5.1920. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Gafni, Beit She'an, 209-230; Kidron, Linder-Yarkony, A Forgotten Community, 203-225.

    [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Yosef Luria, the director of the Education Department, defined the goals of national education as: imparting Hebrew as a living language, instilling a love for the land in the hearts of the students, and educating for labour and diligence. These objectives implicitly included a critical stance towards traditional ways of life, even though they refrained from addressing it explicitly. Luria, Education, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. For example, Elkayam, 154-156; Ada Fishman, "A Teacher in the first Hebrew School in Safed", in: Bracha Habas (ed.) The Book of the Second Aliya (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved 1946), 575-578. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Zlatenreich shows that these aspects also complicated the charged encounter between Hebrew teachers and farmers in the Agricultural colonies of the Lower Galilee. Yair Seltenreich, *People from Here: Education and Educators in Galilee Moshavot During the Yishuv Period 1882-1939* (Jerusalem, Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi and Bar-Ilan University Press, 2014), 99. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Elkayam, *40 Years*, 5; Meir Benayahu, "On the History of the Jewish Settlement in Gaza from the End of the 17th Century until 1929," *Bulletin of the Israel Exploration Society*, 20, (1955): 21-31. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Elkayam, *40 Years*, 156 [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. From Yehudai to Yosef Luria, 15.1.1913, ***Education Archive,*** Container 4.13 File 1136 [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. From Yehudai to the Teachers' Centre, 1.1.1913, ***Education Archive,*** Container 4.13 File 1136; On Yehudai see also: Yaakov Iram, "The Experience of a Teacher in a Hebrew School in Gaza in 1913," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 11:2 (1993): 198-204. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. From Yehudai to the Teachers' Centre, 16.7.1913, ***Education Archive,*** Container 4.13 File 1136 [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. In the British census of 1922, Beisan had a population of 1,941, of which 40 were Jews. By 1931, the population had grown to approximately 3,100 residents, of which 88 were Jews. *Palestine Blue Book, London 1938*, p. 330; The first Jewish settlers most likely arrived in the late 19th century. For discussion of the Jewish population in Beisan see: Gafni, Beit She'an, 18-21, 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. A. Briskin to the Director of the Education Department, 29.8.1928, *CZA* S2/165 [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. S. Midbari to Inspector of education Abraham Arnon, 7.1.1935, *CZA* J17/565 [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. (Weinberg Collection) in: Yair Seltenreich, "The Teacher Weinberg: Social and Cultural Aspects of Nascent Hebrew Education in the Galilee", *International Journal of Jewish Education Research*)3 2011) :5-33, 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Seltenreich, *People from Here*,157-159 [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Gafni, Beit She'an, 29. The community also included several Ashkenazi and other Western families. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. On the Kurdish origin of Beisan' Arab population: Mustafa Abbasi Beisan During the British Mandate (1918–1948), Iyunim Bitkumat Israel 25 (2015), 487-506, 495. [Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. In the census of Palestine's Jews conducted by the Zionist Organization in 1918, the Jewish community of Beisan numbered 91 souls. The homeland of more than half of the city's Jews was listed as "Mesopotamia" – a term primarily referring to Kurdistan. *Census of Palestine's Jews*, 29. According to local testimonies, the first Jewish child born in the city was the son of merchant Abraham Mizrahi in 1925. For a detailed discussion of the community's numerical development, see: Gafni, *Beit She'an*, 34-41 [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Burla and Shami were also known for their literary writing, through which they attempted to shape their Oriental identity in a modern-national format, see for example: Keren Dotan, *Form and its Discontents, Hebrew Mizrahi Writers in Eretz - Yisrael / Palestine in the turn of the 20th century* (Jerusalem: Pardes 2022) [Hebrew]; Dotan, Orientalism and Secularization: The Relationship between Hebrew Literary Criticism and the Mizrahi Writer—The Case of Yehuda Burla, ***Mikan*,** **20 (2020), 228-254.**[Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Gafni, *Beit She'an*, 145 [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Avraham Solomon, Report to the Education Department on the Hebrew School in Beisan 1931, *CZA,* J17/565. See also: Gafni, Beit She'an, 239-250 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Yael Reshef, *Hebrew in the Mandate Period*, (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language 2015) [Hebrew]; Halperin, *Babel in Zion, 5-10*;Caroline Kahlenberg, "How the Locals Grew an Accent: The Sounds of Modern Hebrew in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine." *Jewish social studies* *28*: 3 (2023): 105–142. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Szamet, *“We Are the Novelty”*, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Evri, Kotef, "When does a native become a settler?", 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Eyal, *The Disenchantment of the Orient*; Moshe Behar, Benite.Z. Ben-Dor, " The possibility of modern Middle Eastern Jewish thought", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 44 (2014): 43–61; Yuval Evri, " Partitions and translations: Arab Jewish translational models in fin de siècle", *Palestine. Journal of Levantine Studies*, 9 (2019): 71–93. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. For discussions surrounding the debate over the use of Arabic that persisted until the mid-1920s, see, for example: Evri, *The Return to Al-Andalus*, 41; Campos, ''Beloved Ottomania''; Anat Kidron, *Between Nation and Locality, The Jewish Community in Haifa during the British Mandate* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi 2012), 157-158.[Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Halperin, *Babel in Zion*, 183-221

    [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Horowitz to the Education Department, 1923 (no specific date), *CZA*, S2/533/302. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. The "Hebrew in Hebrew" method was developed by Yitzhak Epstein in the Upper Galilee colonies, particularly in Metula and Rosh Pina. In 1901, Epstein published a textbook under this title. The principles of this approach emphasized exclusive instruction in Hebrew, alongside progressive, activity-based pedagogy and co-educational learning for boys and girls. See, for example: Shlomo Haramati, *The Pioneer Teachers in Eretz-Israel* (Israel: Ministry of Defense publishing 2000) [Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Yehuda Burla, " The Hebrew School in Damascus", in: David Kimchi (ed.), *Jubilee Book of the Teachers' Organization 1903-1928* (Jerusalem 1928), 175-177[Hebrew] [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Yaacov Iram, "The experience of a Teacher in the Hebrew School of Gaza, 1913", *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies 11 (1992), 198-204* [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Yehoshua Bar-Droma, Report on the school condition, 29.9.1927, CZA, S2/155/1  [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Parents who opposed the use of Hebrew as a secular, everyday language generally did not enroll their children in Hebrew schools. Therefore, this discussion does not address religious-based opposition. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Yehoshua Bar-Droma, Report on the school condition, 29.9.1927, CZA, S2/155/1  [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Kidron, Linder-Yarkony, *A Forgotten Community*, 26-30 [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ibid, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Yehoshua Lurie, *Acre, the Walled City, Jews Among the Arabs, Arabs Among the Jews* (Tel-Aviv: Yaron Golan 2000), 333 [ Hebrew]. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. From Katriel Nehemia Magril to the Education Department,28.10.1929. CZA, J17/7023/2. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Kidron, *Between Nation and Locality* , 158-160 [↑](#footnote-ref-78)