

# NATIONAL DENIAL, SPLITTING, AND NARCISSISM – GROUP DEFENCE MECHANISMS OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN PALESTINE IN RESPONSE TO THE HOLOCAUST

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**Abstract** – *Using a combination of historical and psychoanalytical tools, this article explores the national defence mechanisms used by the education system of the Yishuv, the Jewish community in pre-independence Israel, in response to the Holocaust (1943-1948). The article also explores the significance of these responses, as well as their contemporary implications. Three personal defence mechanisms will be identified for the purpose of analysing the reactions of the Israelis as a national group. 'Denial' as a whole is generally associated with the defence of various systems, with 'splitting' and 'narcissism' being two facets of excessive nationalism. The article concludes with contemporary applications of national defence mechanisms and their possible educational uses: community emphasis, educational periodisation, and, above all, recognition of the need to consider national defence mechanisms when planning educational responses to national crises. It is proposed that the educational model presented has wider applications, beyond the case of Israel and the Holocaust.*

## Introduction

**T**he purpose of this article is to identify several national defence mechanisms used by the education system of the Yishuv, the Jewish community in pre-independence Israel, in response to the Holocaust in 1943-1948, and to explore their significance and contemporary application.<sup>1</sup> This article is part of a broader research by the author on the education system of the Hebrew Labor Movement in the three decades preceding the establishment of the State of Israel and the early independence years (1921-1953).<sup>2</sup> In a previous study (Dror 1989), the educational response of the Labor Movement schools to the Holocaust in 1943-1948 was examined in view of the primary and secondary source material that the author had found and used in the aforementioned study. It is the author's assumption that the Labour Movement and its education system were largely representative of the entire Yishuv. This article, based on some of the earlier findings, focuses on the psychoanalytical-educational model of defence mechanisms as an initial response to the Holocaust, specifically with reference to

the way educators in the Yishuv, and those who trained them, dealt with the Holocaust in the first few years of their awareness of it.

The current article probes the issue with the help of an important document only recently discovered in the personal archive of Petachia Lev-Tov, a veteran educator:<sup>3</sup> a booklet published for the National Pedagogical Conference, held in Tel Aviv in December 1994, containing poems and articles on *The Present Holocaust in Our Children's Education – In Our Children's Words* (Education Center, 1944). Although not found in various archives or libraries, the booklet was known to exist, having been cited several times in the publications lists of the Education Center, which falls under the auspices of the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine/Eretz Israel). This source material allows us to examine the subject from the perspective of students, something which could not have been done in the previous research.

The Labour Movement established its own education system in 1921, shortly after the beginning of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1918, and disbanded it – along with other politically affiliated educational systems in Israel – in 1953, five years after the state was established. During this lengthy tenure, it was the educational arm of the Jewish labor movement in the cities and villages of the Yishuv. These schools became part of the establishment in the 1930s and, in 1939, were officially incorporated into the Jewish Education Department, which the British recognized as responsible for this area of endeavor. By the 1940s, the Labour Movement system accounted for one-fourth of Jewish education in Palestine (Reshef 1980; Dror 1994).

The horrors of the Holocaust became known to the Yishuv in November 1942 (Porat 1986, p.62). From then until 1948, when the State of Israel was established, the Jewish people experienced tempestuous events, including the end of World War II in Europe and the War of Independence in Israel. Research on the years between these two wars – between the Holocaust and the Jewish national resurrection – acknowledges the historical importance of the educational response of the Yishuv to the Holocaust but has not yet examined it.

Perusal of earlier and more recent findings indicates that certain types of national defence mechanisms were invoked in response to the Holocaust and, perhaps, to other national crises in subsequent periods. The present article does not elaborate on the response to the Holocaust, for this is treated in the case history. Nor does it delve into the issue of mechanisms of defence. To justify the international study of the Holocaust, we quote in brief some psychoanalysts – and first of all Volkan, noted for his comparative studies in *The Psychodynamics of International Relations* (Volkan 1990). Two years before this book appeared, at an international psychoanalytic conference on the meaning of the Holocaust for those not directly affected, Volkan presented a paper at the end of which he noted

*“the inability to mourn seen as a group process. The sociopolitical dilemma that Israelis face today may be examined from a specific psychological viewpoint that connects it with the effects of the Holocaust... The Holocaust cannot be mourned; human nature forbids it... An individual in a state of established pathological bereavement – and, by extension, a group in such a state – makes continuing efforts to adjust to ambiguity by using various defence mechanisms... I appreciated the unbelievable burden the Holocaust inflicted on the Jewish people – and, perhaps, on humanity as a whole”* (Volkan 1988:34-36).

Defence mechanisms were mentioned by both Freuds – Sigmund and Anna – and were defined in 1985 as *“Actions or beliefs that a person utilises to escape experiencing painful emotions, such as anxiety or guilt”* (Barner-Barry 1985, p.306). Denial as a whole is generally associated with the defense of various systems, splitting and narcissism being two facets of excessive nationalism as a defence mechanism. These three principal defence mechanisms will be applied in a national context. Among Israeli psychoanalysts are several, notably Moses and Falk, who concern themselves with the effect of the Holocaust not only on the survivors but also on Israeli society as a whole, as part of a developing interest in the application of psychanalytical defence mechanisms of the individual to national groups. This article will focus, within the broad field of psychoanalytic literature, on attempts to extrapolate from the individual to the national group. Moses comments about this fruitful but problematic technique, which became established in the 1980s, as early as his summary of articles by Israelis in *Americans in Psychological Bases of War* (Winnik, Moses & Ostow 1973), published as a reaction to the Six-Day War:

*I am aware that I here extrapolate from the individual to the group as though they were alike, and that this has its danger and limitations. This is a problem which has been brought to our attention by several contributors to this volume – Neubauer, Rosenberger, Jaffe, Noy, Atkin, and Gumbel... As psychoanalysts, we deal with individuals rather than with groups. Yet... many of us extend our professional interest to group phenomena... It is conceivable that we might transfer... efforts to the group, the community, the nation, the state* (Winnik et al. 48; 256-257).

The focus on the psychoanalysis of the nation is particularly appropriate with reference to Israel. Moses surveyed the influences of the Holocaust on Israel, and mentions *“the loss of security in the interpersonal world”* among the survivors and their children, particularly in new and strange circumstances. In addition, he discusses the effect on Israeli society as a whole: the denial and avoidance of this

field until the early 1960s (the Eichmann trial); guilt feelings of the survivors and of Israeli society as a whole; disregard for the feelings of survivors in Israeli society, which considers praiseworthy the subordination of the individual to the common good; the first and second generation in Israel who perceived European Jewry during the Holocaust to have been "*led like lambs to the slaughter*", which in turn led to the "*Massada complex*" and the slogan "*Never Again!*" The term "*Holocaust syndrome*" is commonly used, and there is a tendency to use linguistic terms connected with the Holocaust to describe present reality: current enemies are described, by an unconscious compulsion to repetition, as the latter day personification of the Nazis of the Holocaust (Moses 1984:53-69).

In the group-national psychoanalytical analysis of the Israeli reaction to the Holocaust, we shall concentrate on the defence mechanisms of the Yishuv in the years 1943-1948. The focus on educational responses to national crises is another unique feature of this article, to be supported by a psychoanalytical analysis of the experience of the Yishuv in the 40s.

We now examine this thesis, broached by one of the most eminent international experts in the field, as it relates to our case history. Between 1943 and 1948, the patterns of coping with the Holocaust trauma changed and became more moderate. On the assumption that we are dealing with a national process that may resemble an individual's personal coping with death, a comparison should be drawn between the initial shock and the subsequent response. This article does not discuss every educational response of the Holocaust but elaborates on the beginnings of such treatment. It also discusses the national dimensions of the educational response to the Holocaust and various community aspects that were added over time, associated with place of residence, school, and family.

We shall begin with the psychoanalytical analysis of reactions to the Holocaust that are central to this article, and conclude with contemporary applications of national defence mechanisms. We mention in the summary possible educational uses of the group defence mechanisms: community emphasis, educational periodisation, and, above all, recognition of the need to consider defence mechanisms of nations when planning educational responses to national crises. We end with an argument for the generalisability of the proposed educational model.

### **Denial (including escape)**

Denial (including escape) as a defence mechanism (Dorpat 1985; Mahl 1971:155) was an intrinsic part of the response of the Labour Movement education system to the Holocaust. On the one hand, the subject was avoided in favour

of general educational problems that predated the Holocaust; on the other hand, educators argued that the information coming in was not sufficiently clear, which made it easier to deny. Although no decision to avoid the Holocaust in preference to general matters was ever made, this was the *de facto* result, especially in view of the paucity and vagueness of the information at hand. The absence of a decision to subject the Holocaust to an educational discussion was tantamount to a decision to deal only with general problems that pertained only indirectly to the Holocaust. This is not meant as a negative value judgment but as an attestation that denial and escape were essential defence mechanisms in the individual and national grieving process in the years immediately following the Holocaust. Klein and Kogan (1989:302) state that denial and the secondary defence mechanisms that went with it were also essential: an ostensibly moderate, healthy, and adaptive way of dealing with the Holocaust had been achieved only by massive denial of the emotional impact of this period on the individual as well as the group.

The Yishuv's collective escape mechanism from the Holocaust was manifested in the concern shown by the Labour education system, in various fora, with basic educational issues as substitutes for concern with the Holocaust. Even before the Holocaust, this system vacillated about basic ethical and content problems in matters of Judaism and the Diaspora: should emphasis be placed on Judaism and Zionism or on socialism and other general theories? What branch of history, Jewish or general, should be central? Should Zionism be presented as authentic Judaism, divorced from the Diaspora and negating it, or as part of a continuous Jewish destiny that includes the Diaspora? Should individual elements within the socialist movement be stressed, or the unity of the working class, the Yishuv, and the nation as a whole?

Basic didactic and curricular dilemmas erupted at this time. Should emphasis be placed on Jewish humanism and broad education, or on the sciences and vocational training? Should historical content be taught in order to deal with current events and develop ethical standards, or for its own sake? Should attention be paid less to frameworks (social education and modern didactics) and more to content? Should relations among youth movements, and between the school and the youth movements, be strengthened? Every component of this education system faced the same dilemmas, although with differences in form, specific quality, and nuance.

Even a year or two after the end of 1942, when they already knew about the Holocaust and the mammoth issues involved in resisting the Nazis and their collaborators, Labour Movement educators preferred to confront these basic dilemmas. An escape mechanism was invoked in avoiding the direct dilemmas presented by the Holocaust (for example, rebellion versus perishing in the manner of "*lambs to the slaughter*"). The Holocaust dilemmas were complex and, during

the 1940s, blurred by the paucity of clear information. Additional reasons for this escape mechanism were guilt feelings concerning the relatively scanty assistance that the Yishuv rendered to Diaspora Jews and the traditional enjoinder against judging others without having shared their experiences.

Evidence of this escape mechanism arises in a collection of children's writings gathered for a 1944 conference under the heading, *The Present Holocaust in our Children's Education*. The Holocaust is mentioned in general terms only: "*The evil Hitler is sending the poor Diaspora children into the forests*"; "*Thousands are being slaughtered in the Diaspora*"; "*In the dense German forests / are thousands of orphaned children.*" The few dilemmas deriving directly from the Holocaust in this publication are depicted in slogans: "*The defenders of the ghetto are fighting bravely without weapons, empty-handed... They are preserving Jewish dignity... We children can do nothing and our parents cannot do much, but there are people who can save the victims and do not want to...*"; "*Why are men, women, and children, being led like lambs to the slaughter?*"; "*Once again Jews are being buried by the scores, murdered because of their Jewishness... How long will the nations of the world remain silent?*"

In contrast, other basic dilemmas such as national unity and Yishuv-Diaspora relations are given pronounced attention: "*To the children and adults who have come to us from far away... here life will be good for you, you will forget all your troubles and sufferings in the Diaspora*"; "*The Diaspora children have a dream / that they have suddenly come to the Land of Israel.*" "*We are waiting for our many brothers / Joyously shall we welcome them, joyously shall we rescue them*" (Dror 1989).

National denial of the Holocaust in the early 1940s was manifested in the disregard for, or feeble involvement with, the subject of unbearable pain. To prove that this mechanism was invoked, one must first consider the small quantity of available source material and ponder the quantity that is missing. The numerous sources reviewed for this study include the remarks of both teachers and teachers of teachers, all the protocols and journals of Labour Movement educational institutions, the journals of Labour-affiliated kibbutz and moshav movements, and notes taken at lectures and responses to them at conferences and seminars held under the auspices of Labour Movement educators – including printed material prepared for these occasions and speeches of Labour Movement educational leaders.<sup>4</sup>

The review shows a lack of curricula, textbooks, and anthologies for the period under discussion. Lacking their own material, teachers used textbooks from the General Zionist education system, which was more centralist-liberal in outlook. Even curricula published by the Labour Movement educational establishment at that time, such as those in the Kavim (1937; 1948/

a) series, do not mention the Holocaust. Ruth Firer elaborates on this point, noting that

*"Jewish history textbooks up to 1948 had chapters devoted to a description of the Holocaust... The war period and the large number of fragmented eyewitness reports delayed the appearance of chapters on the Holocaust until the early 1950s"* (Firer 1989:74).

During the last two years of the war and the three years following it, one would not expect textbooks and curricula to deal with the shock of the Holocaust, because the full magnitude of the Holocaust was not known at that time. Books, textbooks, and curricula generally appear a long time after the events they are concerned with have taken place, and the Holocaust was no exception. This is the main explanation for the absence of curricula and textbooks in the period at issue.

Further evidence of a denial mechanism in dealing with the Holocaust is the infrequent mention of this subject by teachers and educators in their publications and at conferences. Although the Yishuv was first informed of the plight of European Jewry in September 1942, the magnitude and the methodical nature of the Holocaust were not known until the middle of November of that year. In November, Yitzhak Tabenkin, leader of the United Kibbutz Movement, published a hard-hitting article on the subject (entitled "The School and the War") in a collection of conference speeches (Tabenkin et al. 1942). Not until April 1943 did responses appear in the moshav movement journal, along with a few lines in the kindergarten teachers' journal on the absorption of Holocaust refugees' children (Barash et al. 1943). At this time, in May 1943, the Labour Movement pedagogical committee, on the initiative and under the pressure of senior inspector Moshe Beagle (Avigal), declared that *"the time has come to call a special pedagogical conference to discuss questions connected with emergency situations and war"* (Pedagogical Committee 1943a). The summary of the discussion included a decision to devote a biennial conference to this question. In July 1943, Avigal published a wide-ranging educational article about the Holocaust in the journal *Urim* (Avigal 1943). His major arguments were essentially those of most Labour Movement educators. In the summer of 1943, less than a year after the magnitude of the Holocaust became known, Zvi Zohar, a leader of the Ha-kibbutz Ha-artzi movement, published an article on the effects of the war in general and on education in the Diaspora in particular, with no specific reference to the Holocaust (Zohar 1943).

In late 1943 and early 1944, a year after the Yishuv discovered the magnitude of the Holocaust and six months after the pedagogical committee held its discussion, Labour Movement educators held two general conferences that dealt with the Holocaust (General Council 1943; Pedagogical Conference 1943).

Written material for educators' use was published both before and after the conferences. Another conference, one organised by kindergarten teachers on the theme "The Present Holocaust in Our Work," took place in April 1944. Several speakers there asserted the desirability of protecting children from knowledge of the Holocaust. From then until 1948, the response to the Holocaust was even less pronounced than before. The 1945 Holocaust anthology *Even Mi-qir Tiz'aq* ("A Stone Cries Out from the Wall") contains poems and short stories about the Holocaust that liken this event to the expulsion of Jewry from Spain in 1492 (Mordecai & Hanani 1945). At conferences in 1947-1948, when the War of Independence had begun but before statehood was declared, the Holocaust was linked to "*educational problems of our times*," i.e., the time of war in Palestine (Moran 1983, pp.206-214).

Beyond the meagre number of articles and references in conference protocols and subsequent publications, the official Labour Movement educational literature subjected the Holocaust to nothing more than brief, perfunctory discussion. Avigal's centrality and firm stance stand out against the apprehensions of all other Labour educational leaders. The most obvious example of the denial defence mechanism was the tardy educational response to the Holocaust and the small number of people involved in it.

Because the denial mechanism is so central, the psychoanalytical literature categorises it in various ways. In group-national manifestations of denial, Weisman's (1972) construct of first-, second-, and third-order denial may be invoked. So may Shlomo Breznitz's (1983) seven-category structure, including the first category, denial of information, and the seventh, denial of personal relevance. However, the most relevant definition of denial in our case, particularly in discussion of educational activities for children, seems to be the classic one: denial by means of words, fantasies, or actions (Dorpat 1985). Labour educators invoked words and fantasies of Jewish heroism as a way to deny or in an effort to obliterate the incomprehensible threat of the Holocaust. To deny the demise of members of individuals' families, and of the Jews in Europe as a people, the educational activities undertaken identified specifically with the survivors and endeavoured to help them. Words, fantasies, and activities actually performed by children were acts of denial that treated Jews as heroes in both the Diaspora and the Yishuv, whether they survived the Holocaust or helped its victims. In reality, however, revolt, heroism, and rescue affected very few relative to the millions who had been slaughtered.

During the war, schools in the Yishuv did much to demonstrate their connection with the Diaspora, and these activities eventually included mention of the Holocaust. Even at the beginning of the war, kindergartens and schools held assemblies to help assimilate Diaspora children who had come to Palestine;



pupils sent letters and holiday gifts to Yishuv soldiers who served at the front and planted trees in their name. In 1943, when information about the Holocaust came to light, the 'Teheran Children'<sup>5</sup> arrived, and the soldiers had become involved with the remaining refugees; these activities gathered momentum and helped to create a living link with the Diaspora. These endeavours were given high-profile attention at conferences and in various education journals. In an anthology presented at the aforementioned conference on "The Present Holocaust in Our Children's Education", children mention, among other things,

*"Our Jewish soldiers sailing away... to free thousands of people from Nazi slavery"; "To our soldiers in the field we send a blessing... Let the remnants of the refugees be saved..."* (The Present Holocaust in Our Children's Education, 1944).

In late 1942, some schools marked the Holocaust catastrophe with ceremonies, strikes, public petitions, and even community-wide days of mourning. The emphasis, however, was much more on the survivors than on the multitudes who perished. When the Yishuv-wide Rescue Project was organised in late 1942, children were mobilised for fundraising in the Diaspora. In *The Present Holocaust in our Children's Education* (1944), sixth-grade children tell about "*the activity of our refugee committee in Kibbutz Yagur,*" including special work assignments with the proceeds dedicated to the refugee children's fund, and "*saving and reduction of our allowances so the money can be sent to the refugee children; every child who celebrates his birthday gives up his parents' presents and the money goes into the fund.*" Children prepared hand-made gifts for young refugees who would come to Palestine. Sixth-grade children in Degania made similar efforts, and those in eighth grade embarked on three relief projects: planting potatoes for hungry children, warm clothes and other necessities for refugee children from Poland who had reached Teheran, and gifts for soldiers. Kindergartens emphasised Diaspora and Holocaust themes in drawing and class discussion, retelling of stories of courage, and the children's creative play (*Activities In The Kindergarten*, 1943). In schools, information about the Diaspora, including its economic situation, culture, community structure, and institutions, was given prominence in literature and history lessons (Porat 1986; Education Center, 1944:12,16,25).

Nonformal activities in Labour Movement education also became more intense shortly after the first reports about the magnitude of the Holocaust. Principally, they involved strengthening relations with the Diaspora and the Yishuv soldiers and practical assistance to refugees. The Yishuv expressed its escape from direct confrontation with the Holocaust in a ceremonial fashion because it was unprepared and unable to deal meaningfully with the dilemmas that

faced Jewry in general and itself in particular. The nonformal framework includes activities viewed as preparations for a possible Holocaust in the Yishuv: calisthenics and hikes by students in the higher grades under the heading of *hagam* (a Hebrew acronym for “expanded physical training”). These activities, like those mentioned above, focused on the Yishuv and its problems and placed no special emphasis on the Holocaust itself (Porat 1986:77-101; 74-101; 117-173).

The discussion of denial may be summed up in the words of Rafael Moses, who dealt with this mechanism as manifested in Israel and its attitudes toward the Holocaust. While acknowledging that Israel is a special case, Moses concludes that, “*firmly believe that the use of the mechanism of denial in political process is ubiquitous. In each nation and in each society, denial takes on a form, a garb, that is specific to those circumstances that elicit denial*” (Moses 1989:293).

### Splitting between Diaspora and Yishuv

“Splitting of the ego may result from either repression or denial” (Dorpat 1985:63-64; Kohut 1971). Splitting as a post-Holocaust defence mechanism is manifested in sharp differentiation between the Diaspora and Palestine and the rejection of the Diaspora – itself an older Zionist splitting mechanism – with certain ameliorating modifications. The Diaspora is part of the Jewish nation in Palestine, especially after the Holocaust, but deserves repudiation because the Holocaust proves beyond doubt that ‘we’ – the Palestine-born (*sabras*) and the Zionist immigrants – are superior to Diaspora Jews. The Diaspora should be remembered and memorialised, but its negation is expressed even more strongly by its association with deliverance and the imperative of absorbing the survivors by the Yishuv.

As part of the national radicalisation, all those who spoke and wrote about the Holocaust from an educational point of view (discussed later) revised their attitude toward the Diaspora and sublimated their negation by converting it and by linking the Diaspora with salvation. They now stressed the Diaspora, its link with *aliya* (Jewish immigration to Palestine/Israel), and its assimilation in Palestine – after years of negating the Diaspora as an educational principle that stressed the need for settlement in Palestine. Moshe Talmi of Kefar Yehezkel described this well at the General Council (1943):

*“Our children were given the impression that a nobler tribe was growing here and that in the Diaspora one finds a world of middlemen and shopkeepers... We turned this into a powerful creative fulcrum, but we exaggerated to the point of expressing an inhuman attitude to the Diaspora. We have to correct this... to unfold the tremendous balance sheet of Diaspora creativity.”*

Shmuel Golan, of the Kibbutz Ha'artzi movement, explained "*the profound contradiction between our renewal of life in Palestine and... the scenes of Diaspora life... Just the same, we must now make the foreign and negative Diaspora more attractive to the child*" (Pedagogical Conference, 1943). In 1943, Yitzhak Tabenkin, an affiliate of the more activist and nationalist United Kibbutz Movement, again mentioned "*the ingathering of the exiles*", the absorption of tens of thousands of orphans and other exiles in a "*settlement process*" (Educator's Conference, 1943:6,15).

The splitting mechanism in repudiating the Diaspora is recognisable, for instance, in statements by agricultural settlers who had been wont to accent the difference between the Diaspora and Palestine. Moshe Avigal and Ya'akov Halperin (Y. Niv) of Tel Aviv spoke of studying the Diaspora as opposed to studying and even loving Palestine, for such would help the Yishuv absorb refugees. The concepts they stressed included "*the many forms of kiddush hashem (martyrdom in sanctification of God's name) [especially] in the ghettos*" (Avigal 1944, p.6; Halperin 1944). In late 1943, the Labour Movement Pedagogical Committee asked several senior educators to give lectures in its local branches on "Diaspora Jewry and Our Education" in preparation for the 1944 conference (Pedagogical Committee, 1943b). At the kindergarten teachers' conference, *aliya* and the Diaspora were paired in order to sublimate the negation of the latter: "[to] create the right attitude toward aliya and the Diaspora – we have linked the slogans 'Open your children's hearts to the Jewish remnants' and 'Your children shall return to their country' (Jeremiah 31:17)" (*The Present Holocaust And Our Work*, 1944). In 1945, the aforementioned school reader *A Stone Cries Out from the Wall* included creative writing from the Diaspora with the writings of Hebrew authors who had settled in Palestine (Mordecai & Hanani 1945).

The splitting mechanism with regard to the Diaspora was also expressed pointedly in children's writings collected for the pedagogical conference in 1944: "*When I lie down to sleep, I think of the Diaspora children... When will the children be returned to their country?*"; "*To my brother in the Diaspora... be strong! Hold on until salvation comes!... Together we shall live a life of liberty and peace here in our country, the Land of Israel!*"; "*Listen to me, young man! Your destiny is linked to ours by ties unbreakable... The hope, the hope of the nation, depends upon you, your comrades, and your hundreds of brothers*".

One of the children in this collection mentions the positive side of the Diaspora in remarks about the Holocaust which has forced Jews to come to Palestine, combining all the elements of splitting in repudiation of the Diaspora:

*"Even now in Europe the Jewish flame, which has never been extinguished, burns with all its majesty and glory... and its light is touching*

*and illuminating all the dispersed Jews all over the world. This flame has spread Torah and knowledge throughout the Diaspora, and now – even though only a mere ember of this great flame remains, flickering and dying and burning again, it is never totally extinguished, just like the waning rays of light on the horizon after sunset, yesterday's refugees and the auguries of tomorrow's light... Behold, the great Mediterranean Sea spreads out before me... Who knows, perhaps at this very moment hundreds of desolate Jewish refugees are being borne by its waves, rowing to a safe shore... My brothers, my people in distress, do not despair: prepare for the approaching light of dawn" (Education Center 1944).*

### **National narcissism or excessive nationalism**

Barner-Barry (1985, p.307) defines narcissism as an individual trait with group ramifications: *"an abnormally high interest or investment in the self or one's self regard"* (also Mack 1983:54, 61-63). The emphasis on nationality, heroism, and education for war was most marked in the speeches and writings of Labour Movement educators after the Holocaust became known. In 1944, in speeches to the General Council and at the pedagogical conference, Avigal expressed the radicalisation of the Yishuv in dilemmas over content and ideology in Labour Movement education by referring to the "proportions of Jewishness and Europeanism":

*"It is our duty to build a sound structure of Jewishness in our children's hearts before we begin to embellish [this structure] with foreign ornaments... Perhaps we can use the idea of a chosen people to educate this generation and give it a stronger sense of self-pride, which will also make them better able to withstand danger to the country in time of need" (Avigal 1944).*

The pedagogical conference of 1944 was devoted to the sixtieth birthday of the historian of the Diaspora, Ben Zion Dinberg (Dinur). Moshe Talmi of Kefar Yehezkel suggested at the conference, and on other occasions (Pedagogical Committee, 1944a; 1944b; 1944c; 1945) that Jewish studies – Bible, *aggada* (Talmudic legends), and the daily and festival prayerbooks – "be strengthened". The pedagogical committee held many discussions on the matter and even heard a proposal to this effect, later published in the journal *Urim* (Talmi et al. 1945/6) by Dr. Max Solieli (Menachem Soloveitchik), the head of the Education Department of the National Council and one of the leaders of the radical, liberal-centre party in the World Zionist Organisation. In 1946, the committees proposed that Jewish studies be reinforced (Pedagogical Committee 1946).

The emphasis on nationalism from 1942-1944 on was accompanied by routine references to courage and strength, Jewish superiority, and the need to educate for war. Tabenkin began the public debate with his article "The School and the War" in November 1942:

*"Education in the spirit of militarism for the Yishuv, for every one of us, should begin in kindergarten, not only at school – even in the infant's home. Oppressed nations can overpower [evil]; the image of David, of Saul, [and] characters from the Bible educate for martial excellence, the importance of courage, and the fraternity of arms"* (Tabenkin et al. 1942).

Tabenkin expressed the same attitude at the pedagogical conference (1943):

*"Can the Jewish people educate its sons for war – to the inability to withstand these wars?... Is defence unethical?... The dream of pacifism has been destroyed..."* (Educator's Conference 1943:1-16).

Educators Haim Shifroni and Ya'akov Salant, members of Kibbutz 'Ein Harod like Tabenkin, supported his ideas (Tabenkin et al. 1942). David Barash of Kefar Yehoshua, writing in his movement's publication *Telamim*, expressed support for "education for struggle – with all of one's physical and mental strength, for Jewish independence", and believed that "Massada (and not Yavne)<sup>6</sup> is becoming the focal experience of our youth... [T]he blood of Massada is, first and foremost, our blood". (Barash et al. 1943).

These ideas of the rural settlement leaders, led by Tabenkin, aroused little opposition on the Left. Shmuel Golan (Pedagogical Conference, 1943) and Menahem Gerson (General Council, 1943), leading educators in the Hakibbutz Ha-artzi movement, opposed 'socionational isolationism' because "*The time has not yet come to deny ourselves European culture*", especially since Tabenkin himself had spoken in favor of an 'international world'. Throughout the Labour Movement, only a few leaders from *moshavim*, loyal to the pacifistic approach of A. D. Gordon, argued against the danger of education for war and urged "education for peace" (Barash et al. 1943).

National-war radicalisation also expressed itself beyond the settlement movements. Ya'akov Halperin (Niv), one of the leaders in Labour education, believed in "Love thy neighbour" on the one hand and in "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" on the other: "devotion to our honor and self-sacrifice in our own defence" (Halperin 1943; Niv 1956:89).

It took until 1944 for a review to appear of the booklet *The History of Defence in Israel*, written by Ya'akov Cana'ani (1940) and published by the Education Center of the Histadrut. The review stresses "*events [in which] Jews fought,*

*weapon in hand, the story of our people's defence in the Diaspora... as holy".* Missing from the booklet is *"the story of the courage of the tribes of Israel against the Arabs"* (Zeidman & Ben Yehuda 1943).

Avigal also stated explicitly that

*"One... also needs to know how to fight... among the [other] noble goals of education one should add the goal needed to attain all the other goals: education for courage... both for survival and for the war to build a new (Jewish-Hebrew) world"* (Avigal 1944:2-4).

At the 1944 pedagogical conference, Yehuda Polani claimed that *"The courage of the struggle should be portrayed as miraculous – be it death in the sanctification of God's name or be it self-defence"*. Leah Talmi asserted, *"We have nothing to hide about Joshua's conquest. Quite the contrary – we should illuminate all the heroism in the Bible"*. A participant named Rodnitzky summed up: *"We should reveal hitherto concealed events in Judaism [and] show the children that we are superior, nobler than other nations"* (Pedagogical Conference 1943).

The children's writings collected for this pedagogical conference show many expressions of national-war radicalisation in response to the Holocaust. Several examples follow: *"We, we the children, we remember / our soldiers fighting... for the homeland; the festival of Hanukka will encourage us to fight with redoubled courage, until we too defeat our enemies as the Maccabis did"*. *"Our soldiers, fight night and day / save the Jewish refugees. . . do not rest, Hebrew soldiers! Be like the heroic Maccabis"*. Another fine example connects Jewish history with the Holocaust and the struggle of the Yishuv against the British and unifies all three. *"Shouldn't we regard the Hasmonaean rebellion, the stand at Massada, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the resistance against the [British] authorities at Hulda, and the more aggressive resistance at Ramat Hakovesh, as a continuous strand of Jewish valour? Everyone who hates us has always had one aim: to oppress us, this small nation that strives to be its own master and attain freedom and liberty"* (Education Center 1944).

Tabenkin's and Avigal's statements were included in the booklet published for the National Conference of Kindergarten Teachers at Passover 1944 (*The Present Holocaust*, 1944), as were many descriptions by kindergarten children that were added to the schoolchildren's writings. The modern Jewish soldiers were repeatedly likened to the Maccabis; poems, stories, and letters emphasised the link between these soldiers and earlier Jewish heroism. Children's war games and courage were described in great detail. Summing up, the publication explained that the children should not be left with a feeling of helplessness; the young generation should be taught to know and feel that, because the Yishuv was so

small, no miracles would occur and that succour from outside or from the heavens should not be expected (*The Present Holocaust* 1944:52).

The protocols of the lectures and discussions at the kindergarten teachers' conference are replete with quotations from Tabenkin's attitude and similar expressions in support of heroism. Several examples follow:

*"We should sow love and respect for our heroes in the hearts of our children – admiration for the anonymous hero... respect for women, the heroic mother... [Let us] place the image of the hero at a distance... describe his exalted superhuman qualities... [Let us tell] stories that educate for devotion and patriotism... formation of character... love of nation, and national pride."*

The slogans of the conference were similar:

*"The Maccabis and today's unknown soldier are part of one continuous chain. The heroism of our defenders will be an example for the lives of our children. We shall sow admiration for the unknown soldier in the hearts of our children: he will be like a Maccabi and the heroism of the Diaspora will live in our hearts forever" (The Present Holocaust 1944).*

Emphasis on national heroism and education for war are two of the most conspicuous reactions to the Holocaust, each combining denial, splitting, and additional basic defence mechanisms: reaction formation ("a change in the impulse one is experiencing that distorts it") and projection ("Something internal to the individual... experienced as being lodged in some other person or object") (Barner-Barry 1985:307).

The negative qualities of fear and helplessness were transformed into heroism in the Yishuv and projected onto the Diaspora Jew. National heroism and education for war, as previously described, reflected, in essence, the fear and helplessness of the Jewish community, which engaged in reaction formation to the extent of cultivating excessive heroic nationalism. The splitting mechanism and denial of the Diaspora projected this fear and helplessness on the Diaspora Jews. Here it is proper to use the term 'primitive defences', which Muir (1982) invokes to denote the three mechanisms previously discussed – denial, splitting, and projective identification – that Laing (1967) includes among the 'transpersonal defences'.

Emphasising national unity at the expense of the individual qualities of the classes and currents within it is an additional aspect of the aforementioned defense mechanism. National narcissism and denial of internal differences, problems, and tensions in the Yishuv did not come to an end after the Holocaust but emerged in

differences of opinion in the sources already quoted. Subordinating the youth movements to the schools, as demanded at the time, was another manifestation of these defence mechanisms, contrary as such a step was to the divided nature of the educational establishment at the time.

The mechanism of unification – the stressing of national unity at the expense of the integrity of the nation's separate parts – stands out clearly in quotations from children's writing that illuminate the splitting mechanism in the sublimation of negation of the Diaspora. The Labour Movement educators had another aspect to keep in mind, that of Palestine in its political sense, i.e., the need to transcend narrow party considerations within the movement and throughout the Yishuv. The Holocaust cemented the long-desired unity of class and nation and gave it nearly universal consensus, as expressed in a speech by Avigal (1945):

*"In our children's education, it is incumbent upon us now to emphasise, accent, and deepen the feeling of solidarity, mutual responsibility, and common destiny of all parts of the nation with its many different classes and streams. This is a call not for uniformity in education. . . but for unity of the nation."*

Avigal specifically demanded a "real peace covenant between the Mapai (United Labor Party) factions", a truce – if not a merger – between Mapai and the leftist Hashomer Hatzair movement, and "unification of all youth movements in the Histadrut". Beyond the withdrawal into conservative education, emphasis was placed on a unification of educational elements in the proposal to merge the spiritual influence of school and youth movements: "[Within] the sphere of youth movements and school... [we should] move quickly to unite all the Histadrut youth movements... and strengthen the links between school and youth movement" (Avigal, 1945:213-260). All voices in the Labour education system agreed that the combination of the schools and the Histadrut youth movements was highly desirable: unification of all the Histadrut youth movements on the one hand, and their integration into the formal education system on the other.

Other speakers agreed with these demands and repeated their remarks on other public occasions. The left wing, however, expressed doubts about this issue, as about others, and held its political and ideological ground. Despite the broad consensus at the level of principle, the national-unification mechanism triggered by the Holocaust remained in the realm of short-lived declarations. Another aspect of the growing national narcissism stressed the uniqueness and superiority of the Jewish cultural heritage. From the standpoint of didactics and curricula, Labour education stood out even before the Holocaust for the equilibrium it sought between practical matters (especially in the study of science) and a broad liberal-arts education, particularly in the upper grades. One obvious dilemma in the



latter part of the curriculum was how to strike a balance between objectivity and education for relevant ethical conclusions through selected subject matter. The Holocaust resolved this dilemma by tilting education in the direction of Jewish humanism and relevant ethics. Just as nationalism and education for war typified the radicalisation of content and ethics, so, from the standpoint of didactics and curricula, did this radicalisation come into clearer focus in the propensity to deal only with relevant ethical subject matter in Jewish humanism. It was Avigal, as before, who led the public discussion of this issue. Here we see the beginnings of his ideas and the responses they elicited. His colleagues in the Labour education leadership, along with professional educators, accepted his proposal in greater part. *"On the subject of the balance between science and the humanities in our education,"* Avigal said at various conferences in 1943,

*"I myself believe... we shall return to the original Jewish approach, which assumes that humanism - principally Jewish humanism - lies at the very basis of education and transforms science and other practical studies into servants that realize its noble ethical goals"* (Pedagogical Conference 1943; General Council 1943).

Avigal did not challenge the necessity of science and practical education but believed that the proportions should be recalculated after the Holocaust, *"at the time when life is... tempestuous, in flux, and undergoing complete transformation"*.

Avigal and his colleagues recommended most of the changes in the ratio of exact sciences to Jewish humanistic studies in view of a clearly narcissistic preference for Judaism and its values over the exact sciences of the gentiles. The purpose was to strengthen the national consciousness of the children of the Chosen People. Avigal favored the choice of selected Jewish-humanistic subject matter, mostly historical, in order to draw conclusions about current events. *"Are we not obliged to choose the chapters from the history of each period and social situation that are suitable as a guide and example for current times?... This is so for economics and political geography, Bible studies, and literature."* He emphasised the quality of acquired knowledge for the purposes of *"ethical education"*, *"inspiration"*, and the *"development of spiritual powers and the creation of a worldview based upon ethics"*. Avigal's emphasis on ethics and current events was connected with the *"engagement of the spirit and cooperation between the educator's emotions and desires... and [those of] the student"*. Ideological studies were supposed to address themselves to the individual but without indoctrination (Avigal 1945).

Avigal's pragmatic and selective approach toward the humanities had its critics - especially among people of the Left and those, like Tabenkin, who

considered science and practical studies essential to prepare students for a life of pioneering self-actualisation. Most of the speakers and writers, however, agreed with Avigal, although they bickered about the priorities. Halperin (1943:35), for example, wrote about *"the absolute need to step up humanistic education at this time"*, and Shifroni (1944:21) – a science teacher – demanded a curriculum that would illuminate *"all discoveries reflecting the lives of the Jewish masses from the new Yiddish literature, revolutionary and pioneering literature, and the literature of the Jewish underground and its heroes"*. Avigal's selective approach was elaborated in *A Stone Cries Out From the Wall* (Mordecai & Hanani 1945), in which, as noted above, the Holocaust was likened to the expulsion from Spain. Scores of other historical events and heroes can be found in all the source material reviewed.

The demand for the formal study of subjects with Jewish content (in schools and in the youth movements under their authority) for the drawing of appropriate value lessons is not only a national-narcissistic defense mechanism, it includes two other mechanisms, namely 'intellectualisation' and 'rationalisation'. The first can be considered to be a subsystem of isolation. In this regard, Mahl (1971:183) notes that intellectualisation is *"An exaggerated emphasis on thought... is another frequent form of isolation. We all attempt to minimize our emotions when we try to think logically about a practical or intellectual problem. The isolator carries this process to an extreme for defensive purposes"*. 'Rationalisation' places an emphasis on values learned rather than on feelings. Both mechanisms are connected not only with nationalist narcissism but with denial as well: *"According to Haan... intellectualisation... denies the logically indicated connecting relationships among things... [and] rationalisation denies the reality of a chain of causal events"* (Dorpat 1985:17; Hann 1977).

## **Contemporary applications of national defence mechanisms**

What I have attempted to do in this article thus far is to draw on the history of education to provide additional evidence that defence mechanisms exist in relation to nations in general, and in relation to Israel as regards the Holocaust in particular. This is an addition to the psychoanalytic analysis of responses to the Holocaust which dealt principally with Holocaust survivors. In a survey article Kren (1989) mentions the works of Anna Freud, Bruno Bettelheim, Victor Frankl, Yael Danieli and others whose concern is with the ineradicable imprint of the Holocaust on those who survived, and on their own therapeutic methods. He mentions the new concern with the effect of the Holocaust on the children of survivors, and the fact that *"only in a limited way has the experience of treating survivors a modification of established psychiatric theory"* (p.16).

Discussion of defence mechanisms with reference to groups and nations, as well as to individuals, appears in the psychoanalytic literature as early as the 1970s. The evidence added and analysed in this article follows trends in this field in the 1980s. Myers mentions that

*"A prominent concept emerging in Kohut's 'psychology of self' is that of narcissism [and] Hitler as a narcissistic personality... It is a simple historical fact that Hitler was the Holocaust's primary cause, whereas from a larger psychological vantage point it was rather a society amounting to a kind of group self" (Myers 1988:314-316).*

Myers cites psychological and other sources that deal with narcissism, denial, and other group or national defense mechanisms, all of them relating to the German nation beyond Hitler himself during the Nazi period. A considerable body of research addresses itself to group or national defence mechanisms from a Jewish-Israeli perspective. R. Moses made the following points in 1984:

*"Psychological mechanisms, which we know well in the individual from our psychoanalytic observations, can be ascertained to exist in a group [although] there are considerable methodological problems... We have amassed a great deal of knowledge of group processes from a variety of settings beyond what happens intrapsychically within the individual... If we clinicians are cautious enough in approaching the [methodological] problem, our contribution should not and will not, I think, be dismissed out of hand" (Moses 1984:66).*

In 1991, after the Gulf War, Moses made the following observation:

*"We draw an analogy [with reference to pathological narcissism and excessive nationalism] from those of the individual... because of methodological difficulties [in bridging between a concept developed in relation to the individual and its application with respect to a group] we may lose all we have learned in decades. This knowledge must apply to a certain extent to the group as it does to the individual" (Moses et al. 1991:1).*

R. Moses and A. Falk (among other Israelis) elaborate on the case of Israel and its response to the Holocaust as a conspicuous example of the existence of group defense mechanisms. Falk presented his hypothesis at the Twenty-Third Scholarly Conference of the Israel Association of Psychologists in 1991, and again in an article (Falk 1993):

*"[My] hypothesis... is that the Jews have not been able to mourn their terrible historical losses and injuries. Instead, the unconscious defensive processes of denial, projection, externalization, and splitting have operated collectively. The Israeli Jews have not properly mourned their collective losses, above all the six million Jews massacred by the Nazis in the Holocaust, as well as the thousands of soldiers killed in their wars with the Arabs" (Falk 1991).*

Analysis of the case history we presented confirms the existence of the group defence mechanisms mentioned by Falk. In 1983, John Mack discussed the issue of 'Nationalism and the Self' in the *Psychohistory Review*, which devoted a double issue to 'Psychohistorical Studies on Science and Nationalism'. There Mack mentions the Israeli suspicion of a possible 'final solution' to the Israeli-Arab problem and notes the radical Jewish nationalism that may take shape in response to this ongoing problem, principally because of the psychological residue of the Holocaust (Mack 1983:54, 61-63). The historical research reported in this article proves that such residues do, in fact, exist.

The psychoanalytic approach of Moses, Falk, Mack, and others toward the Holocaust and its effects on Israeli society in conflict with the surrounding Arab peoples is part of the general analysis of international relations by means of psychoanalytic instruments. This method of inquiry finds comprehensive expression in a book edited by Volkan and his colleagues, entitled *The Psychodynamics of International Relations* (1990). Psychoanalytic studies on national and international issues may be educationally useful in times of national crisis. We shall now indicate two additional directions of such usefulness – educational uses and generalisability – returning to the example of how the Yishuv and Israel dealt educationally with the Holocaust.

### **The educational uses of national defence mechanisms – periodisation and community emphasis**

The educational uses of national defence mechanisms become particularly clear over a long stretch of time, as has been shown in the historical overview presented earlier. Several educational conferences took place in 1947-1948, the critical time shortly before and at the beginning of the War of Independence. At these conferences, Avigal and others linked the Holocaust with the crucial events in the Yishuv at that time. The educational dilemmas triggered by the Holocaust in 1943-1945 resurfaced in the context of the War of Independence. The educators still did not address themselves to the Holocaust itself but, having learned about

the Holocaust four or five years previously, presented the issues in a more balanced and moderate way.

In 1947, Avigal prescribed more extensive Jewish studies as a solution to the problem of "*Nazism, Fascism [and the impotence of Socialism]*", but this time more moderately than before. Gentile European humanism should still be soft-pedaled, he said, but this should be done according to "*a view of man and the world as reflected by Judaism... in order to fashion a unique brand of general humanism structured from our special point of view.*"

Of all people, it was Avigal – who in 1944 had believed in reconfiguring the curriculum to the detriment of science and practical subjects – who demanded in 1947 "*the broadening and strengthening of agricultural and technical education, [these being] necessary practical tools in realizing the vision of building the land and society of resurrected Israel... [along with] enhanced physical training*" (Avigal 1947; 1957).

Avigal's colleagues – who in 1944 had opposed any de-emphasis of didactics and social education – took the same position at the conferences in 1947. Ya'akov Halperin (1947) stressed "*the eternal values of Judaism*" side by side with "*the new scientific pedagogy*" and "*the institutions of children's society managed by the children themselves.*" Yehuda Ehrlich (1948) accentuated the "*discovery of the light in Judaism*" together with "*the organized social life of the children based upon mutual assistance and consideration of others*", and so on. As Moses (1989:66) says,

*"The use of the denial mechanism by Israelis is also evident with respect to the Holocaust. Although the bare facts had certainly become public knowledge by 1945, it took much longer for them to sink in, to be accepted, and to be integrated into the Israeli psyche. This denial extended to the recognition of psychological reactions to the Holocaust, descriptions of which did not appear in the professional literature until the late 1950s or the early 1960s – a time interval of fifteen years."*

This process of educational response to the Holocaust requires detailed periodisation. Our findings point to three distinct periods even in the 1940s: the initial shock (from the end of 1942 to 1944), lack of response (1945-1946), and the beginning of proportion in the educational response to the Holocaust (1947-1948). Ruth Firer, in her research on the articulation of the Holocaust in anthologies, textbooks, and research literature between 1948 and 1988, points to two periods and suggests a subdivision:

*"The period of Holocaust shock: 1945-1961, and the period of insight: 1961-1988. Between 1963 and 1973, the Eichmann trial took place and both*

*the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War broke out. During this time, the Israeli public consciousness of the Holocaust underwent a change that was manifested in textbooks from the 1970s onwards" (Firer 1989:147).*

Continuing with the proposed educational periodisation for the 1940s, we suggest that it is also possible to enumerate the periods after the establishment of the state – before and after the Eichmann trial – in a way that correlates them with Israel's wars. This educational periodisation is associated with the existence, balance, and moderation of national defence mechanisms.

This may be viewed as corresponding to the personal processes of coping with death and struggling with crises (Kaiser-Streams 1984), taken from psychology and the behavioural sciences and utilised for educational purposes. Such a periodisation may also be broadened and used as a procedural model for the examination of educational treatment of periods of national crisis in general (Wass 1982).

The national emphasis is very strong in all the mechanisms that typified the beginnings of the response to the Holocaust. Only after the Eichmann trial in the 1960s (as indicated in Firer's study) did the transition from educational activity at the national level to that at the local and family levels begin; this took place as part of the process described in detail above. The beginning of the process was characterised by displacement to the Diaspora and excessive nationalism. After the period of shock and the national silence that lasted until the 1960s, educational activities focused on the level of local communities and individuals and their families. Formal and nonformal educational activities focused with greater intensity on the individual and the Holocaust, the local and school community, and, principally, the family community. It suffices to review briefly the ways in which the Holocaust was memorialised in the 1980s: numerous individual and group testimonies; seminars for youth and teachers at Holocaust commemorative centres that focused on presenting evidence, dealing with ethical dilemmas, and family contexts; youth missions to Poland and the sites of the extermination camps; and curricula and enrichment material that stressed the currency and the personal and family relationship between today's youth and the Holocaust. The author has elsewhere discussed in detail this community model of social education as moral education in the Labour Movement education system; the findings there are also applicable to the educational response to the Holocaust (Dror 1993; 1994).

Scholarly research has hardly dealt with educational and curricular responses to serious national crises, let alone the Holocaust (Dror 1994:xiv, 83-94). It is impossible to equate the Holocaust with any other national crisis, yet it seems that the Jewish people has an approximation of this trauma in the form of Israel's wars, as the aforementioned sources in the psychoanalytic literature illustrate.

The Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War are accepted in many Israeli circles as demarcations of periods. They influenced curricula with an increase or decrease in favourable attitudes toward Jewish rural settlement and other matters. Ben-Peretz (1976) examined the implications of the Yom Kippur War for curricular planning in Israel by setting forth a planning process: from diagnosing national weaknesses to defining the consequent needs of the learners and proposing a detailed curriculum. Schremer (1983) set forth a "*pedagogical and curricular strategy*" for educational confrontation with current events arising from Israel's war in Lebanon, meant for use in Jewish education in the Diaspora. The model proposed in this article is meant to augment the curricular proposals. It illustrates the need to identify the national defence mechanisms of both teachers and students in order to find educational solutions to the dilemmas that surface in severe national crises. Our accomplishment here, at the very least, is in our reference to the initial period and the factors of process (time) and community. Our intention is neither to judge the Yishuv educators of the 1940s nor to determine which defence mechanisms are unsuitable or immature and which deserve to be called mature, as the term is used in the psychological literature with reference to personal defence mechanisms. This article identifies the defence mechanisms that Yishuv educators and their students used immediately after the Holocaust, on the assumption that some of these mechanisms and/or others will be used in other severe national crises. They should be taken into consideration in planning an educational response using the terminology of psychoanalysis.

### **The generalisability of the proposed educational model**

The generalisability of the proposed model is based on an analysis of reactions to the Holocaust among Jews in Palestine from the middle to the late 1940s. It points to the need to consider the possibility of generalising from this particular case, in historical, psychological, and theological research on the Holocaust, to other national settings.

The proposed use of the educational model (and mainly the periodisation) is compatible with the general tendency in the literature to advance, following Fred Katz, to the third universal existentialist phase of reference to the Holocaust. This phase follows the silence and denial of the 1940s and the study and attempts to explain and memorialise that marked the period from 1950 to 1980.

*"The Third Phase is still in a state of emergence. We do not know yet its total configuration... One starting point is that knowledge of the horrors of the Holocaust has not prevented additional genocidal actions from occurring*

*in many parts of the world. And, in confronting these horrors, the Third Phase includes a Holocaust-inspired sense of shared grief for the suffering of others. This points the way to a universalism, a moving beyond the earlier, very understandable, inward-looking orientation toward the Holocaust... The Third Phase requires moving onto a new universalism through which knowledge gained from the Holocaust may yet contribute some sanity and hope for the future"* (Katz 1989:1183-1186).

Chaim Schatzker numbers the 'existential approach' as the third phase in the impact of the Holocaust on Israeli society and education, following the first phase of 'demonization' and 'psychological repression' and the second, instrumental phase, in which the Holocaust is explained as human and social behavior, however deviant. Schatzker notes the Israeli educational focus on the national plane on one hand and its international significance on the other:

*"The 'existential' approach criticized the former 'instrumental' approach as being too one-sided, disciplinary, abstract, universal and sophisticated, thus missing the very core of the Holocaust, i.e. the existential struggle of Jews caught up in an inhuman, dehumanizing situation, facing persecution, the conditions of the Ghetto and the machinery of death... Is it perhaps the hidden hope of political and religious extremists to strengthen their arguments through identification with the Holocaust? Or is it just one more revelation of a world wide phenomenon, i.e. turning the Holocaust into a symbol of the 'condition humaine' of our time, characterized by the Vietnam War, Biafra, Cambodia, the energy crisis, unsolved economic and social problems...?"* (Schatzker 1989:974).

Comparably with our educational model, E. M. Pattison performs a similar ideological-cultural analysis. His inquiry is followed by conclusions that compare psychoanalytic and moral approaches in general, and attitudes toward the Holocaust in particular, and find them universal:

*"If psychoanalysis is to be a moral science, it must affirm the presence of objectively evil acts of man. Only then, can psychoanalysis affirm the evil of the Holocaust... A psychodynamic description of the moral process in man must account for the capacity to choose good or evil... The Holocaust is no isolated aberration of human behaviour. Genocide has occurred before and will occur again if we do not maintain vigilance. History teaches us that normal persons commit atrocities... We might well consider restoring the concepts of sin, evil, and moral process to our psychoanalytic lexicon as major components of human behavior that are uniquely human attributes..."*



*From this perspective psychoanalytic theory can address the Holocaust as the sinful saga that it is" (Pattison 1984:88-89).*

Like historians, theologians, and others, researchers who discuss educational tools in dealing with the Holocaust relate to its universal significance. We consider this important because, throughout the historical analysis, it has been shown that most of the educational and historical reactions have international and even current aspects. Yitzchak Mais, in his analysis of curricula, exhibits, museums, archives, and projects, draws conclusions with respect to exhibits that apply to the other media as well:

*"The basic goal of all Holocaust exhibitions is to heighten awareness, educate about the Holocaust, and most importantly stimulate questions and issues that will remain with the visitors and hopefully be incorporated into their understanding of the world they live in" (Maiz 1989:1780).*

At the end of their probing analysis of four major Holocaust curricula in the United States, Mary Glynn and Gisela Bock reach the following conclusion:

*"Our investigation will not give comfort to those Jews who see the Holocaust exclusively from within the perspective of Jewish history... The curricula studied had a measurable, positive impact on those very values which undergird American society" (Glynn et al 1982:131-132).*

A similar conclusion on the general human values to adduce from the Holocaust is reached by Luba Krogman-Gurdus, who discusses Holocaust research in the United States:

*"A similar method [to that of "Facing History and Ourselves", a program used in Brookline, Massachusetts], instituted by Arieh Carmon of Israel... appealed strongly to teachers in California. It rests on three basic assumptions: the ambiguity and the contradictions in our complicated world must be overcome; the individual should adopt values and grasp their personal consequences; willingness to teach values with familiar and relevant material... The fact that most educators are convinced that the lessons of the Holocaust are universal is a valuable teaching tool... It sensitizes the students to human suffering and makes them more aware of dangers and evils that threaten their own society. They recognize the need to bring the most conspicuous message of the Holocaust to students of all nations and religions... [Holocaust curricula taught in the United*

*States] tend to avoid historiography and conventional teaching plans and favor the socio-ethical aspect... [They] shift the emphasis from subject to learner and from historical facts to personal evaluation" (Gurdus 1984: 261-262).*

We, too, have tried to depart from the 1940s case history in keeping with the trend toward normalisation, universalism, and the ethical message of the Holocaust for all people, particularly in the educational domain. It is no coincidence that the main phenomena mentioned in this article are evident among various peoples, not only Jews in Palestine at the end of the British Mandate period. Not only in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust but to this very day, guilt feelings, escapism, repudiation of the Diaspora and splitting, narcissism, and excessive nationalism are universal types of human behavior that transcend the specific time and place that this article discusses. To a greater or a lesser extent, these defense mechanisms characterised all Holocaust survivors, all Jews at that time, and, for that matter, gentiles who did not extend a helping hand to the Jews and other slaughtered peoples, i.e., the Germans and some of the Nazis and their children. Only the repudiation of the Diaspora is specifically Zionist. Splitting, in contrast, is a common intergenerational mechanism in Germany, especially between the Nazis and their children. Present-day cases of genocide, too, display these mechanisms. It is no coincidence that historians and political scientists, psychologists and theologians, cite the Holocaust of European Jewry with reference to national calamities of our own day. Therefore, national defence mechanisms provide a suitable universal model of socio-educational response to national crises such as genocide events. The message of this model in terms of education and values is by necessity one of relatively primitive mechanisms functioning as a primary response, along with a subsequent attempt to replace them with more constructive mechanisms (the time dimension) that shift the emphasis from the nation to the individual and his or her community.

The national defence-mechanism model, expressed by both teachers and students, is also part of the history of education and may serve education policymakers as a tool in future national crises. The use of current historical knowledge for the future has been accepted in this field in recent years (Silver 1990). With respect to the case study and the response toward the Holocaust in particular, no judgment about the Yishuv's initial educational response to the Holocaust can be passed today. It is essential from the universal point of view to recognise the process of educational response to the trauma of the Holocaust when it began, at the height of the Yishuv period, and how it continues in Israel and among the Jewish people to this day.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> The research draws on primary and secondary sources from collections in the below mentioned archives:

KMA – HaKibbutz HaMeuhad Archives, Yad Tabenkin, Efal;

LA – Labor Archives in the Lavon Institute, Tel Aviv;

YJEA – Yellin Jewish Educational Archives (in the School of Education, Tel Aviv University).

<sup>3</sup> Personal collection of Petachia Lev-Tov, YJEA 5.200/2131.

<sup>4</sup> All protocols of the institutions of the Labour Movement school system, throughout its years of activity, are kept in the Education Center collection of the Labor Archives, Tel Aviv (LA, Division IV 215). Included and reviewed during the years under discussion are institutions of the Histadrut Education Centre (Secretariat, Board of Directors, Assembly, Council, and special meetings); the Education Centre institutes that represented teachers and workers (secretariats, central committee, conference/general meetings); and the institutions shared by the Histadrut establishment and labour representatives, i.e., the Pedagogical Committee and the official publishing house, Urim.

<sup>5</sup> The 'Teheran Children' are hundreds of Jewish refugee children, mostly from Poland, who reached Palestine via the Soviet Union, Iran, and India.

<sup>6</sup> Massada was the site of the Jews' valorous last stand in the Great Rebellion against the Romans, which ended with the collective suicide of the rebels. Yavne was the seat of the Talmudic academy that symbolised the Jews' spiritual resurrection; it was saved from destruction by a compromise with the Romans after the Great Rebellion.

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