

**The Place of Israel and Jewish Peoplehood in Jewish Education in the  
Diaspora: An Australian Case Study \***

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# The Place of Israel and Jewish Peoplehood in Jewish Education in the Diaspora:

## An Australian Case Study

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### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to identify the different notions of and focus on Israel as taught in the Zionist day schools in Melbourne Australia. It seeks to establish a comparison between schools, which all define themselves as Zionist, in how they differentially engage their students with Israel. This analysis considers how Israel is conveyed in the context of the school's ideological orientations.

### **Methodology**

Four schools were selected on the basis that they reflect different sectors of the Melbourne Jewish community but define themselves as Zionist: Bialik College, The King David School, Mount Scopus Memorial College, and Leibler Yavneh College. This selection enabled a comparative analysis to explore different definitions of Zionism and approaches to teaching about Israel and instilling Zionist values.

The research and analysis is based on three main sources of information:

- (1) Formal curricula devoted to the study of Israel and Hebrew, in terms of the school's organization and contents and number of hours at the secondary level, both mandatory and elective.
- (2) The nature and role of informal education, including the choice of the Israeli youth educators (*shlichonim*) in the schools, Zionist seminars and camps, and youth movement participation.
- (3) Israel visits, including how many, how often, when students go to Israel and with whom, and graduate participation in post-school Israel programs.

In addition to written materials, such as course curricular guides and mission statements, the research information is based primarily on interviews with senior staff of the schools. Each school nominated its interviewees. These were:

- Bialik College: Michael Cohen, Deputy Principal
- The King David School: Michele Bernshaw, Principal, Ittay Flescher, Middle School Informal Jewish Educator, and Shayndel Samuel, Jewish Studies Co-ordinator

- Mount Scopus: Rabbi James Kennard, Principal, and Avi Cohen, Director of Hebrew and Jewish Studies
- Leibler Yavneh College: Adam Segal, Deputy Principal and Head of Jewish Studies

The data could have been further enhanced by observational research in the schools and interviews with students, but this was not possible within the time frame and resources available.

### **Background: Day schools in Australia**

The Jewish day school movement in Australia has been well documented by Rubinstein (1991), Rutland (2008), and most recently and succinctly by Munz and Forgasz (2011). In Melbourne where the current research was conducted, Munz and Forgasz report that while Mount Scopus was established in 1949, growing to an enrolment of 2,600 by the mid 1980s,

“...a succession of ideologically diverse day schools began to spring up in Melbourne in the wake of its establishment, clearly indicating that various sectors of the community did not feel that their needs were being adequately catered for by this community-based venture. During the 1950s, Chabad established Yeshiva and Beth Rivka, a day school for boys and girls respectively, and the Adass Israel School was set up by the predominantly Hungarian ultra-Orthodox community. In 1962 the Mizrachi organisation established Yavneh College as a religious Zionist day school. The 1960s also saw the Bialik kindergarten and supplementary Hebrew language school... (that had been established in Carlton in 1942)... emerge as a secular Zionist *day* school but in which teaching about the Jewish religion was included. ....The 1970s saw the Progressive (Reform) Jewish community coming into its own when it established The King David School.” (2011: 1128)

With the exception of the Haredi Chabad and Adass schools, these schools are the focus of this chapter.

#### Munz and Forgasz report

“...that there are twenty-one Jewish day schools throughout Australia, twelve of them operating from K-12 and serving an estimated total Jewish population of 107,000. About 60% of Jewish children in Australia of primary and secondary school age receive a full time Jewish education; approximately 70% of the total Jewish pre-school age population is enrolled in Jewish pre-schools.” (ibid:1130)

What is particularly relevant here is that Munz and Forgasz point out that each school needs to devise its own Jewish studies program in line with its own ideology, particularly in regard to the relevant weight of Hebrew language, Jewish studies, and ritual observance. The contribution of this

study lies in the analysis of how these four Zionist schools each teach Israel differently, indeed teach a different Israel in line with their specific ideologies and vision.

### **About Melbourne Jewry**

To understand the Israel education in Melbourne's Jewish day schools it is necessary to understand something about the history, culture and sociology of Melbourne Jewry.

#### Melbourne Jewry facing the Holocaust

It has been argued that Melbourne is the Jewish community with the highest proportion of Holocaust survivors in the Diaspora and the imprint is clear. In the community, the Holocaust was memorialized in a community wide *Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration* at the Melbourne Town Hall. Lesh (2008) reports that in the 1980s this ceremony became the *Yom Hashoah* (Holocaust Day) memorial in order to allow the community to align itself with the date Israel chose for its day of Holocaust Remembrance (ibid:85). This community-wide solidarity of memory that crossed all political and denominational lines naturally had its impact on all the schools studied here, since many of the students were the grandchildren of these survivors.

It follows that the Holocaust is treated in all the schools both through a hefty section of the formal curriculum in years 9 and 10, as well as in school-wide ceremonies and participation to different extents in March of the Living programs. Across the schools we find intensive study of historical texts and literature, as well as encounters with survivor witnesses, visits to the Holocaust Museum, and, of course, participation in March of the Living as well as community-wide ceremonies. The schools may differ in the degree that uniqueness is argued for the Holocaust of the Jews or in its universal implications, but all the schools emphasize the role of the Holocaust in the collective memory of all local Jews and its implications for personal and collective identity and moral behavior.

#### Melbourne Jewry facing Israel

The Melbourne Jewish community has long been recognized as unique in its intensity of Jewish education as well as its relationship with Israel. Already in the 1991 community study it was reported that 73% of all adults had visited Israel at least once (Goldlust 1993:33), almost twice the rate reported in North America (Mittelberg 1994). What is the role of Jewish education, both formal and informal, in contributing to this remarkably high rate? Mittelberg (1996), in a secondary

analysis of this same Melbourne community study, reported that 86% of Jews by religion, (Denominational Jews, Orthodox, Traditional or Progressive) who were day school alumni had visited Israel at least once, and 77% of secular Melbourne Jews who were day school alumni had also visited Israel at least once (Mittelberg 1996:37). These findings point to the role of Jewish education in addition to home religious upbringing and practice as important factors in moulding the relationship of Melbourne's Jews to Israel. It is with this community background that the Zionist mission of the schools studied here must be understood.

One may ask how the Melbourne Jewish community at-large related to Israel in 2009. A comprehensive answer to this question can be found in the national demographic study (Markus et al. 2009), in which all respondents were asked: "Do you regard yourself as a Zionist? By the term Zionist we mean that you feel connected to the Jewish people, to Jewish history, culture and beliefs, the Hebrew language and the Jewish homeland, Israel", to which 82% of the respondents replied yes (Markus 2009:15). This value statement is also translated into behavior. An extraordinarily high percentage of Australian Jews, 86%, reported having visited Israel at least once, while in Melbourne, 50% reported that they had visited three times or more (ibid:17).

It is against this community backdrop that the vision and practice of the schools should be understood.

### **Conceptual framework of analysis**

An important conceptualization of the pedagogical alternatives currently adopted in Australia Jewish education has been formulated by Bryfman (2001) and is reported by Rutland (2008). Bryfman delineates three possible areas of Israel Education: what he calls "the separate approach, the integrated approach and the co-curricular approach". The separate approach is where Zionism/Israel Studies are taught as a separate unit; the integrated approach is where they are incorporated into an overall Jewish history program; and the co-curricular approach is where separate activities in informal education are conducted". (Rutland 2008:4)

Bryfman's work seems to imply that the informal and formal components of the school's Israel education are run in parallel with little shared consultation. As will be seen below, we will want to question the relevance of these findings given the degree of integration between the formal and informal in the schools we studied. For example, in some cases we find the same teachers teaching both in the formal and informal domains, while in some cases informal elements are introduced into

formal curricula. This suggests that there have been significant changes since the time of Bryfman's research, reflecting differences between Melbourne and Sydney, where Bryfman's research was conducted.

More recently, Pomson (2009) of the Melton Center at the Hebrew University, in a study of Israel education in American Jewish day schools, introduced a typology of "instruction" at the formal end of the educational spectrum and "enculturation" at the informal end. This typology is also utilized in our analysis

A final important issue raised by Bryfman is whether schools teach the mythical Israel or the real Israel. He contends that schools are largely conservative in this regard and teachers are found to be ill-equipped to teach real Israel material; and perhaps, as Rutland argues, they fail to fully exploit the potential that contemporary Israel has to offer the goal of Jewish identity education. Here too we will challenge the implication of an either/or dichotomy, for we will see that the schools studied here do differ in the degree to which they teach the *real* Israel compared to a *mythical* image of Israel; but critically they draw on different sites and sources of the real Israel, which serve to differentially enhance their educational vision and goals.

### **Zionism in the Schools**

The four schools reflect a diversity of Jewish and Zionist identity and practice. We will examine each in turn.

#### **Bialik College**

Bialik College, which defines itself as a cultural Zionist school, has the least religious practice and focus of all the Jewish schools and is regarded by many as a secular Zionist school, a perception and to some extent a practice the school is consciously trying to change. However, this is the tradition from which the school evolved. Cultural Zionist school means an emphasis on Hebrew, *avhavat Medinat Yisrael* (love of the State of Israel) and *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel). According to the school's value statement, "As a Zionist school, the College encourages active support for the State of Israel and an on-going commitment to its well-being." The Jewish Studies course offered by Bialik in years 7, 8, 9 and 10 includes three components: a historical component, a *Tanach* (Bible) component, and a festival component. Israel is a connecting theme throughout these components.

Explaining the school's philosophy, Bialik's Michael Cohen stated, "We want to give our students a strong connection to Israel because it reinforces Jewish identity in the student and Israel is central in that identity. One reinforces the other, there is a symbiotic relationship between the connection to Israel and Jewish identity in the Diaspora."

Despite this commonality between the schools, for a school such as Bialik, and to a lesser extent Mount Scopus, Israel is an alternative way of providing a sense of Jewish identity. As Michael Cohen said, "Israel is the defining element for many Jews, particularly for those without a strong connection to synagogue life."

### The King David School

King David is the school of the Progressive Movement, which adheres to and reflects and advances the principles and practices of Progressive Judaism. The King David School's mission statement is to be a school "where love of Israel and the connection of the Jewish people with Israel is fostered". The statement goes on to clarify that "Zionism, love for *Eretz Yisrael* (the Land of Israel)" is one of its core values. It is clear from these statements that educating about and instilling identification with Israel is an important objective for King David. Yet, as their mission statement shows, Zionism is seen as one of a number of core Jewish values – which also include egalitarianism and pluralism – that shape the identity of their students. Thus, the way Israel is taught, the type of Israel that is identified, and the way Israel coexists with these other values is continuously evolving and changing as facts change and students mature.

King David's Jewish Studies Coordinator, Shayndel Samuel, reflects: "We want to teach about Israel because it is the heart of being Jewish", But, while schools such as Bialik and Mount Scopus may view Zionism in a traditional sense, with Israel at the center of Jewish existence and identity, the broader approach taken at King David indicates the School has a less Israel-centric approach to Jewish identity, although Israel is a distinct part of that identity. As Samuel put it, "We have a foot in Israel and in Australia", and it follows that she "wants our kids to have strong connection to Israel because we are part of *klal yisrael* (the Jewish People) ... we are connected because we are all Jews". At The King David School there is no philosophical hierarchy of the place of Israel 'in the lives of the community the school serves, whether living in Israel or the Diaspora. Indeed, of all the Jewish schools in this study, King David is the clearest in consciously advancing the notion of Jewish Peoplehood in the broader sense of other Diaspora communities and not just Israel.

### Mt. Scopus Memorial College

Mount Scopus is a nominally Modern Orthodox school, but the authors recognize that in practice the lifestyles of Mount Scopus families reflect an affinity to custom and traditions rather than the adherence of *Halacha* (the laws of the Scriptures followed by Orthodox Jews). Families may affiliate to an Orthodox synagogue but not lead an Orthodox life.

Mount Scopus, like all the Jewish schools, defines itself as Zionist and teaches about Israel because it is central to being Jewish today and it reinforces Jewish identity. In the words of the principal, “Zionism is important because it is part of being Jewish, there is no distinction between Jewish life and Israel, the two are seamless. For many kids Israel is an important way they connect in to Judaism.”

Principal Rabbi Kennard says the School’s mission statement is to enable students to make an informed choice about their Jewish identity, and “Israel and Judaism are inseparable in what it offers to be traditional Jews today, and appreciation of Israel and knowledge of Israel and personal connection to Israel is part of informed choice.”

### Leibler Yavneh College

Yavneh is a Modern Orthodox school, but in contrast to Mount Scopus, modern Orthodox values are more intensely reflected in the actual day-to-day life of the school and its constituent families. Indeed, the school is affiliated with the modern Orthodox religious Zionist Mizrahi Movement. The Principal’s description of the School on its website notes how “our students are inspired with a love of Torah, Israel and their heritage and a belief in their destiny as Jews in a modern, sophisticated world”. For schools such as Yavneh, Israel exists within a religious framework that reflects and incorporates religious Zionist ideology.

#### **Approaches to Israel education: the formal and informal**

All the schools employ interrelated, coordinated and complementary formal and informal educational techniques to teach about Israel and instill a Zionist identity. This study focuses on secondary education, where the nature of the formal and informal Israel programs reflects the nature of the school’s Israel orientation and emphasis.

#### Formal Secondary Education: Israel and Hebrew Studies

Hebrew is an integral part of connecting the students of all these schools to Jewish tradition, and in differing degrees to liturgy, study and prayer, and serves as a language of communication to and with modern Israel. Munz and Forgasz (2011) report that at the level of teaching Hebrew as a language of communications, these diverse schools have been able to take cooperative advantage of the introduction of the Tal Am and Tal Sela programs in the primary schools (see <http://www.talam.org/talam.html>), and Neta in secondary schools, (see <http://netahebrew.com/>), though here is not the place to enter into a debate on the efficacy of these programs.

The schools allocate different amounts of time to Israel studies and have different Israel studies curricula. Separate consideration is given to years 11 and 12, where students cease compulsory studies and take optional Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) graduation exams.

The information and analysis in this chapter demonstrates that all the schools teach about Israel, but a key question this research explored is *what* Israel is taught in these schools in an ideological and philosophical sense? What political, religious and cultural dimensions of contemporary Israeli society are Jewish day school students exposed to, and in what way? What perspectives on Israel are offered, what diversity of views, how contentious are the subjects of discussion, how classically Zionist or post-Zionist are they, and where on the spectrum between these two poles are these studies located?

We would argue that the choice schools make is between the classical Zionist paradigm and the paradigm of Jewish Peoplehood as defined by Kopelowitz and Engelberg (2007), which includes the rejection of strong ideology, a multi-dimensional experience, and connection between Jews rather than Jewish identity. It is here that different approaches emerge between the schools.

All the schools are endeavouring to achieve two goals: to inculcate an emotional affiliation within their student body with the State of Israel, but also to critically understand complex issues in Israeli politics and society. However, how complex and how critical varies greatly.

#### Bialik College

Bialik College Information on formal Israeli and Hebrew studies at Bialik is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Bialik Formal Israeli and Hebrew Studies

Israeli Studies formal education compulsory until	Year 10
Israel Studies formal electives	NA
Israel studies within other subject	Part of Jewish Studies
Periods of formal Hebrew Studies per week by year level	4 periods a week years 7-10
Hebrew elective	NA
Bilingual program offered	Year 7, 20% uptake

As Table 1 shows, the study of Israel is compulsory up to year 10 at Bialik. In year 7 there are no specific Israel Studies courses *per se* but rather Jewish Studies which includes Israel studies. The year 7 Jewish Studies curriculum, in addition to exploring key Jewish historical events such as the destruction of the Second Temple and the Maccabean revolt, also includes a current affairs' section once a week as part of its “contemporary issues” component, which is focused primarily on Israel. In year 8, the curriculum focuses on the situation in Judea between the destruction of the two temples, and looks at The Golden Age of Jews in Spain and their expulsion, while current affairs continues with a particular focus around *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Independence Day). Jewish Studies in year 9 moves from the Middle Ages to the Second World War, including the development of Zionist movements and efforts to establish a Jewish State. In year 10 Jewish Studies focuses on the Holocaust and Israel's independence and on regular discussions based on events in the media relating to Israel.

In year 11, every student must take one subject that has a Jewish component, such as Religion and Society or International Politics. Where possible, Bialik adapts the government VCE syllabus to ‘Israelize’ it. In the case of International Politics for example, the course focuses on the Arab-Israeli conflict and contemporary Israel. In year 12, Bialik VCE students do not have to take a Jewish Studies course, and at this stage the informal program is the main vehicle for teaching Israel.

In terms of political content and focus, Bialik consciously tries to be broad rather than narrow minded. Thus, in relation to Israeli politics and the peace process, the school actively seeks to engage its students on the subject in a non-prescriptive way. Michael Cohen explains that the school “endeavours to instil a realistic Israel, so that contentious issues such as “Who is a Jew?” and issues in the West Bank and the rights of Israel’s non-Jewish minorities are openly discussed in a non-dogmatic way”. For example, in relation to the peace process, the approach is for the teacher to present the facts and the historical context as well as a range of arguments for and against the peace process, and then open it up for the students to form their views and express their diverse opinions.

As a cultural Zionist school, the study of Hebrew has always been a core and important part of Bialik’s curricula. For Bialik’s Michael Cohen, “Hebrew has served as the cement which binds the Jewish people”. Students have 4 periods per week from years 7-10, and about 20% of year 7 students participate in a bilingual ‘immersion’ program.

### The King David School

Information on formal Israeli and Hebrew studies at King David is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: King David Formal Israeli and Hebrew Studies

Israeli Studies formal education compulsory until	Year 8
Israel Studies formal electives	Years 9 and 10
Israel studies within other subject	One semester in years 7 and 8 of Jewish Studies is on Israel
Periods of formal Hebrew Studies per week by year level	4 periods a week years 7 & 8
Hebrew elective	4 periods a week years 9 & 10
Bilingual program offered	NA

As the data in Table 2 show, the study of Israel at the King David School is compulsory up to year 8, and an Israel elective is offered in year 9 that has a 75% uptake. In both years 7 and 8, one of four terms of Jewish Studies is dedicated to Israel.

In year 7, students commence the study of Zionist thinkers, starting with Theodore Herzl and progressing to 1948 and independence. At this stage these subjects are taught in accordance with a traditional Zionist narrative. In year 8 Israel’s wars and post-independence history are studied in a course developed by Robbie Gringras from Makom, tellingly called “Hugging and Wrestling with Israel”. Makom is the Jewish Agency's education department unit for engagement with Israel (see <http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Strategic+Partnerships/Makom/About+Makom>). According to course teacher Ittay Flescher, “We explore Israeli achievements that make us proud and inspired, such as the Entebbe operation and the idea of Israel as a *Kibbutz galuyot* [ingathering of the exiles]. At the same time, we also look at areas of Israeli society that are troubling for Progressive Jews, including... personal status issues, the law of return. There is also a big emphasis on Israeli culture through film, art and music”.

In year 9, a one-semester Israel Studies elective provides for more in-depth exploration of the roots of Zionism, the establishment of the modern Zionist Movement, and the various historical events and personalities that helped create the State of Israel. In year 10, this in-depth study is taken a step further with a one semester Israel Studies elective that explores Israel at “war and peace”. The course’s historical and contemporary analysis challenges students to gain an “awareness of the way Israel is reported in the media and how to respond”. This media response dimension to the study shows that these courses are more than just learning facts, but are also about learning how to be Zionistically active.

At The King David School there are no formal Israel Studies courses in the VCE years 11 and 12, but students are required to do a minimum of two units from Religion and Society, Hebrew or Yiddish. According to Ittay Flescher, the School has a foreground and a background in whatever they teach, explaining, “if the foreground is Judaism the background is Israel and vice versa”.

In terms of “what” Israel they teach, The King David School’s Principal Michelle Bernshaw makes clear that “When they show Israel they do so warts and all because they want their students to love Israel from an informed position rather than going out into the world and being thrown off balance by confronting the rifts in Israel society which they thought was utopian and cohesive”. She rationalizes, “If I lie about Israel the kids will think I lied about Chanukah”.

For The King David School there is a specific issue relevant to that school community that determines their 'warts and all' approach: “Who is a Jew?”, or the debate about recognition of non-Orthodox converts in Israel. Principal Bernshaw explains that as an issue that personally relates to families in the school community: “They know Israel is wrestling with these issues in a real way. Our kids are aware of the progressive approach to Judaism in Israel which has a political dimension” over personal status issues. The Progressive status of The King David School leads to an impetus to engage with Israel over the “Who is a Jew?” issue.

As community schools, the Jewish day schools reflect the communities from which their families are drawn and this affects the political orientation at King David. The School’s Jewish Studies coordinator Shayndel Samuel explains: “There is a lot of sympathy for the Palestinians amongst our families and the recognition that there are two sides in this conflict. Our kids are very aware of this”. Principal Bernshaw confirms the generally left leaning nature of the parent body that sees the

Palestinian issue as a complex one rather than a simple one of rights and wrongs. In practical terms this means that when The King David School teaches about Israel's conflict with the Palestinians, it offers two views using a dual narrative approach. Hence, the 1948 War will not be taught just as Israel's liberation but also the Palestinian's catastrophe. Samuel explains how the school wants to "expose the kids to the complexity of the debate, and even though we teach love of Israel and Zionism, there are many points of views and no right and wrong".

Hebrew is listed as one of the core areas of knowledge in The King David School's information book and students study 4 periods a week in years 7 and 8. It is described as "central to Jewish literacy and Peoplehood. Only through Hebrew can Jewish literature be fully appreciated. The School's focus is on: Hebrew as a tool to achieve Jewish literacy; Hebrew as a spoken language; and Hebrew as the national language of Israel". Like the other Jewish day schools, The King David School teaches Hebrew because, as Michele Bernshaw explained, "it is part of Jewish literacy, all our central text and beliefs come from Hebrew". However, unlike the other schools, The King David School approaches the study of Hebrew as a Language other than English (LOTE). This approach means that when they are not teaching Hebrew, Jewish subjects such as *Tanach* (Bible) are taught in English. At the same time, the schools expressed ideology of Peoplehood that mandates connection with contemporary Israel and Jewish literacy plays out in curricular choices made with respect to the type of Hebrew offered.

Overall, The King David School students are going to be exposed to more diversity in Israel; homosexuality and gay pride, for example, are discussed in the years 11 and 12 course on Religion and Society. Thus, while The King David School like the other schools adapts the government curriculum to enable them to teach about Israel, what it is they are teaching about Israel is quite different from what is offered by the other schools.

### Mount Scopus

Information on formal Israeli and Hebrew studies at Mount Scopus is summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Mount Scopus Formal Israeli and Hebrew Studies

Israeli Studies formal education compulsory until	Year 8
Israel Studies formal electives	Years 9 and 10
Israel studies within other subject	NA
Periods of formal Hebrew Studies per week by year level	5 periods year 7 4 period years 8-10
Hebrew elective	NA
Bilingual program offered	Years 7 and 8, 25-40% uptake

As the data in Table 3 show, the study of Israel is compulsory up to year 8 at Mount Scopus. After that, Israel electives are offered in year 9 with a 32% uptake and in year 10 with a 50% uptake. Thus, it is the most popular elective (alongside *Shoah* (Holocaust) Studies) in year 10, competing with over a dozen other subjects ranging from multimedia to outdoor education.

The year 7 curriculum takes an in-depth look at Israeli history and a small amount of politics. The year 8 curriculum has a focus on Israeli culture, the people of Israel, issues facing Israel such as religious-secular relations, and an appreciation of Israeli society. Year 9 focuses on the Israeli-Arab conflict and year 10 on topics such as society, religion and state, *aliyah* (immigration to Israel), and absorption.

At Mount Scopus, students must take one VCE subject with a Jewish component in years 11 and 12. Course options include Religion and Society, Yiddish, university level Hebrew or Jewish Civilization, Media (with Jewish flavor) and Text and Tradition. Wherever possible, the school endeavors to give these courses an Israel dimension, as seen in the Religion and Society unit where the focus is on the centrality of *Eretz Yisrael* (The Land of Israel) in Jewish belief; 80% of year 12 students took this unit in 2009.

In terms of the School’s approach to teaching Israel, Mount Scopus strives to strike a balance between teaching about Israel in a classically Zionist way and a mythical way, so that, as Director of Hebrew and Jewish Studies Avi Cohen explains, “they don’t just know about it but have an emotional attachment to it. More than just knowing about it we want them to fall in love with the place so that when they get off a plane they head straight to the *kotel* (Western Wall) knowing that this is the heart of the Jewish experience.” However, their Israel Studies curriculum, which is designed with the Melton Center at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is, according to Cohen,

“designed to look at Israel warts and all”, including religious-secular relations, the Arab minority in Israel, and socio-economic problems in Israel. Cohen explains that Scopus does this because they want their students’ knowledge and relationship to Israel “to be grounded in reality. We are talking about connection with Israel, with the real Israel”. The school aims to address these issues in a non-denominational way.

At Mount Scopus great emphasis is put on the study of Hebrew, which Principal Kennard explains “is an expression of the centrality of *Ivrit* [Hebrew] to Jewish life as a key to Jewish literacy, as key to Jewish connectedness to other Jewish people in the world and key to Israel.” Kennard is committed to *Ivrit* “being a tool for being a Jew today, not ‘big Z’ Zionism but as a means of connecting to being Jews. *Ivrit* is the lingua franca of the Jewish people”. Students study 5 periods a week in year 7, 4 periods a week in years 8, 9 and 10, and an optional bilingual program in years 7 and 8 with a 25-40% uptake.

#### Leibler Yavneh College

Information on formal Israeli and Hebrew studies at Yavneh College is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Yavneh Formal Israeli and Hebrew Studies

Israeli Studies formal education compulsory until	Year 10
Israel Studies formal electives	None
Israel studies within other subject	Taught through the history department and has more biblical/historical and religious dimensions
Periods of formal Hebrew Studies per week by year level	4 periods years 7-10
Hebrew elective	Twice a week years 8-10, 30-40% uptake
Bilingual program offered	NA

As the data in Table 4 show, the study of Israel is compulsory up to year 10 at Yavneh, taught through the history department where the emphasis is on the biblical/historical and religious dimensions. In year 7, students study ancient civilizations, including Abraham's journey to Israel as well as the majority of the *Tanach* (Biblical) period (Kings, Chanukah, etc). In year 8 they study Rabbi Yehuda Halevi’s poetry about Israel. It is not until year 10 that the students study a course that is similar to other schools, with the subject matter being Palestine from 1882-1948, covering the origins of Zionism including Herzl, the First Zionist Congress, pogroms, and *Aliyot*.

Yavneh is the only school that requires 5 weekly lessons of non-VCE Jewish Studies in years 11 and 12. Options include advanced *Gemara* (Talmud) which, while not about Israel, Deputy Principal and Head of Jewish Studies Adam Segal describes as having an “Israel vibe” as it is taught by the *Rosh Kollel* (Head of Advanced Yeshiva Studies). In the trimester subjects of *Neviim* (Prophets), *Chumash* (Bible) and Jewish Philosophy, Israel is often included. Year 11 students also participate in an intensive “Israel advocacy course”. Year 12 text-based subjects including *Gemara* are not Israel based but Israel features in discussions as they address post year 12 Yeshivot program options in Israel. Unlike other schools, Yavneh does not “Israelize” their VCE subjects.

Consistent with Yavneh’s philosophy, the emphasis on the teaching of Israel has a “Torah perspective” in which Israel is of profound religious significance. In the words of Adam Segal:

“As a religious Zionist day school, our connection to Israel is a religious one. Whilst constantly connecting the Torah to the land of Israel we endeavour to instil within our students a strong love for and commitment to Israel. We expose our students to the History of Israel and the challenges it confronts. Our formal and informal programs aim to educate our students on a variety of fronts and although we maintain a Torah perspective this in no way precludes us from enabling our students to question and challenge Israel. Our ultimate goal is to enable our students to regard Israel as not only a modern State but as the homeland of the Jewish people and the state of Israel as “the beginning of the final redemption.”

While Yavneh would share the motives of the other schools, it places additional emphasis on Hebrew as being the language of prayer and ritual as well as Torah and Jewish study. Adam Segal put it this way:

“Hebrew is the language of the Jewish people. It is the language in which our Torah is written and remains the language of our homeland, Israel. An ability to read and converse in Hebrew opens doors to our students in terms of Jewish learning and thus supports their Torah studies. At the same time it connects them to Jews throughout the world and to Israel. A knowledge of Hebrew helps create yet another link between a Jew and his/her heritage.”

At Yavneh students have 4 periods a week of Hebrew from years 7-10, with an optional Hebrew elective twice a week from years 8-10 (with a 30-40% uptake)

## **INFORMAL EDUCATION**

The informal program achieves outcomes not possible in the formal program and is common to all the schools. In a comment about Bialik, but which is true for all four schools, Michael Cohen said, “Israel education is increasingly coming through the informal channel”. The main elements of

informal education in the day schools comprise Israeli and local informal educators, Zionist camps and seminars, youth movements and Israel trips.

**Informal Education - Which Israel?**

Informal education includes the school-wide celebration of Jewish festivals and historical events such as Holocaust Day and Israel Independence Day. These are common foundations of the school cultures of each of the schools studied here, though needless to say the form of celebration is tempered by the particular ideology of the school. We have deliberately chosen to focus here on a dimension of the delivery of these programs which sharply distinguishes the different schools, namely, the educational personnel employed, particularly those from Israel who teach it and model it in a process that Pomson (2009) has called 'enculturation.'

Visiting Israeli educational emissaries (*shlichim*) are heavily involved in the delivery of informal educational programs so it is telling to establish if there is a religious/political orientation of these Israelis and any particular institutional affiliations they may have. These Israelis, of whatever religious/political orientation, embody the living link to Israel. The key issue for the purposes of this research is who is doing the informal education within the school curriculum and what Israel they represent.

All the schools have relationships to the Jewish youth movements in Melbourne, both Zionist and non-Zionist. The Zionist youth movements include Betar, Bnei Akiva, Habonim, Hashomer Hatzair, Hinenei (an Australian movement that would be similar to Meimad, a dovish Orthodox movement), and Netzer (Progressive). However, in practice there are differences in type and degree of youth movement involvement in the schools. Both the Israeli educators and the youth movements have an important role in Zionist seminars and camps run by the schools.

Bialik College Data on the informal education at Bialik is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Bialik Informal Education

Year of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Year 9
Length of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	6 days
Counsellors for Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Led by secular team from Israel (Gvanim) brought to Australia by the Zionist Federation of Australia (ZFA) and the Bialik <i>shlichim</i>
Number of local informal educators	0*
Number of Israeli informal educators	3 <i>shlichim</i>
Israeli staff's Israel affiliation	Masorti Movement – post-army
Diversity of youth movements in school	All movements, but only nominal involvement of Bnei Akiva

Frequency of youth movement participation in school	Weekly activities plus camps
Level of student's youth movement involvement outside of school	High
Student's main youth movement affiliation outside of school	Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, Netzer

\* At the time of writing Bialik is recruiting a local coordinator for informal education

In terms of number of Israeli staff (who are contracted to the school for a year) and their affiliation, Bialik has three *shlichim* (post-army) from the Masorti Olami Movement. Although the College is not affiliated to the Masorti movement, their *shlichim* reflect a traditional and Zionist orientation that suits the school.

As a reflection of the school's Zionist principles, unlike the *Sherut Leumi* (national service chosen by religious girls in place of military service) girls at Mount Scopus, all of Bialik's *shlichim* have served in the Israel Defense Forces, most as officers. Michael Cohen states frankly: "We would not engage the services of *Sherut Le'umi* girls owing to a degree of ideological dissonance. The *Sherut Le'umi* girls have a specific Orthodox orientation, while the Masorti Olami *shlichim*, many of whom are invariably *shomrei Shabbat* (Sabbath observers) and *shomrei mitzvot* (observers of the religious commands), have a pluralistic approach to Judaism which is more in consonance with the ethos of Bialik College". (However, the *Hesder* team (post-army, combines army and Yeshiva over 5 years) at Yavneh occasionally assist with Bialik programs on Independence Day and the High Holidays.)

At Bialik all the Zionist youth movements have access to the school, usually at lunch time. The school does not maintain closer ties with any one movement, although in practice the strongest youth movement in the school is Habonim Dror, followed by Hashomer Hatzair and to a lesser degree Netzer. The youth movements provide counsellors for school camps.

The King David School A summary of informal education at King David is presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: King David Informal Education**

Year of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Year 9, 1 day Year 10, 4 days
Length of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	1 day (year 9), 4 days (year 10)
Counsellors for Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Led by secular team from Israel (Gvanim) brought to Australia by the ZFA
Number of local informal educators	3 x 0.15 A part-time Rabbi
Number of Israeli informal educators	0
Israeli staff's Israel affiliation	NA
Diversity of youth movements in school	All youth movements except the Orthodox (Chabad and Bnei Akiva)
Frequency of youth movement participation in school	Weekly plus holidays
Level of student's youth movement involvement outside of school	Low
Student's main youth movement affiliation outside of school	Netzer, Hashomer Hatzair, Habonim

The King David School reports that it lacks the resources to maintain a contractual annual ongoing Israeli presence in the school. As principal Bernshaw put it: “If I have to choose between teachers and *shlicim* it’s an obvious choice.” Instead, The King David School avails itself of the various visitors brought to Australia by the ZFA, and the *shaliach* for Netzer, the Reform Zionist youth movement, has taken the initiative in proactively developing informal programs in the school, as well as welcoming the relevant Zionist youth movements.

### Mount Scopus

A summary of informal education at Mount Scopus is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Mount Scopus Informal Education

Year of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Year 9 Zionist seminar Year 10 is a Jewish identity camp which is not Israel focussed But Israel does feature and is run by the same Israeli counsellors
Length of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	6 days
Counsellors for Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Seminars run by counsellors brought over from Israel and youth movement leaders primarily from Habonim, Hineni
Number of local informal educators	3 full-time
Number of Israeli informal educators	4 Sherut Leumi women
Israeli staff's Israel affiliation	Bat Ami
Diversity of youth movements in school	All youth movements
Frequency of youth movement participation in school	Varies, can be weekly, but more around camp times and special events
Level of student's youth movement involvement outside of school	Low (about 20% on a weekly basis but higher for winter and summer camp participation, as reported by the school)
Student's main youth movement affiliation outside of school	Varied

In terms of number of Israeli staff (who are contracted to the school for a year) and their affiliation, Mount Scopus has 4 *Sherut Leumi* women from Bat Ami – the organization of Orthodox women. These informal educators have a prominent role in the School's broad informal education program.

At Mount Scopus every youth movement comes into the school at various times, including Chabad, which comes to the school once a week to get boys to put on *teffilin* (the phylacteries worn during prayer) during recess, but Mount Scopus is not a major hub for any of the youth movements.

Leibler Yavneh College A summary of informal education at Yavneh is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Yavneh Informal Education

Year of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Zionist seminar for years 9, 10 and 11
Length of Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	All seminars for 5 days
Counsellors for Israel/Zionist camps and seminars	Seminars run by counsellors brought over from Israel through the Zionist Federation (Gvanim)
Number of local informal educators	2 x 0.4
Number of Israeli informal educators	4 <i>Sherut Leumi</i> Women 4 <i>Hesder</i> men 1 <i>Rosh Kollel</i>
Israeli staff's Israel affiliation	Bat Ami and Tora Mitzion (under World Mizrachi)
Diversity of youth movements in school	Bnei Akiva only
Frequency of youth movement participation in school	Once to twice a month
Level of student's youth movement involvement outside of school	very high
Student's main youth movement affiliation outside of school	Mostly Bnei Akiva

In terms of number of Israeli staff (who are contracted to the school for a year) and their affiliation, Yavneh has 4 *Sherut Leumi* women from Bat Ami, 4 *Hesder* men and 1 *Rosh Kollel* from Torah Mitzion (under the auspices of World Mizrachi). Yavneh also has teacher emissaries, currently three in primary and two in secondary school.

The Israeli representatives in Yavneh clearly reflect the national-religious orientation and their *Rosh Kollel* also comes from what is generally regarded as the religious-political right in Israel. It is therefore clear that the choice of Israeli emissaries reflects the type of Israeli reality to which the schools wish to expose their students and by which they wish their students to be influenced.

At Yavneh, the only youth movement to come into the school is Bnei Akiva since, as the head of Jewish Studies put it, “we are a Bnei Akiva school”.

## ISRAEL PROGRAMS

### School Based Israel Programs

The schools run a range of programs in Israel whose length, focus and content are another way of identifying which Israel the schools connect with. This information is provided in the Table 9. It is

not just that the students go to Israel, but also where they go to in Israel and what this tells us about the type of Israel the school connects their students with.

Table 9: Israel Programs

Details of Israel Program	Mount Scopus	Bialik	King David	Yavneh
Year of participation	Year 10	Year 10	Year 10	Year 10
Location/affiliation	<p>1 group: Shaked religious school in Beit Shean Valley attached to Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu</p> <p>1 group: 5 week tour</p>	<p>Israel Experience Inc. Jerusalem, located at Ulpan Akiva in Nethanya as well as Alexander Muss High School</p> <p>The program includes a weeks visit at Shittim school in Arava* Melbourne's JAFI partnered community</p>	<p>Leo Baeck Reform High School Haifa and Reform kibbutz and touring</p>	<p>Orthodox High School</p> <p>In 2008 Netivot used K'far Pinus for girls and Netiv Meir for boys, but these locations can change each year.</p> <p>Mekor Chaim Yeshivah in Kfar Etzion is a popular destination for Yavneh students who go independently. This may be used for Netivot boys in the future.</p>
Length of Program	<p>Hebrew group 6 weeks</p> <p>Tour groups 5 weeks</p>	6 weeks	3 weeks	<p>Netivot 4 months</p> <p>Yeshiva 4 months</p>
Number of participants 2007-08	49	11	10	3**
% of year level participation in 2009	53 of 105 including 23 doing kibbutz program (51%)	11 students out of 70 (16%)	9 out of 65 students (14%)	5 out of 57 (9%)
Exclusively in Hebrew yes, partly or no	Kibbutz program = yes Tour = No	partly	No	No

Role of Hebrew (lingua franca, Hebrew taught) no Hebrew)	All instruction on kibbutz in Hebrew	Lingua Franca	No Hebrew taught	Some instruction in Hebrew, some in English and there is also an <i>ulpan</i>
Israeli participation in program (host families, reciprocal visits to Australia)	Host families for part	Host families  Reciprocal visits (15 from Shittim to Bialik each year)	Host families in the reform community	In dorms

\* in 2009-10 Bialik is introducing another program which has a non-Hebrew element. This is a Jewish-Israeli studies program at a secular State school in the Arava, the southern Negev. In 2010, Bialik launched a two month Ulpan program for 66 10<sup>th</sup> graders at Muss School in Israel, with a six day educational encounter with Shittim students in the Arava.

\*\* Yavneh figures for Netivot and Yeshiva Program

The above analysis shows that each school can point to different facts that reflect the different strengths of their Israel programs. Mount Scopus may have the highest participation rate, but Bialik's program has a major emphasis on *ivrit b'ivrit* (Hebrew instruction in Hebrew only), while The King David School's program is clearly focused around establishing strong ties with the fellow Progressive community in Israel.

What is interesting about the Bialik program is that it includes an exchange component whereby 15 students from the Shittim School in the Arava come to Bialik each year and are hosted by Bialik families.

The King David School notes that their participation numbers are modest, but Principal Bernshaw attributes this to the socio-economic circumstance of the school's parent body, although at the same time Samuel, the School Jewish Studies coordinator, concedes that "our kids and families are not that interested in *Ulpan* (Hebrew language program in Israel)". However, the school does not run programs to other countries or even places in Australia, such as central Australia, so that Israel can remain the focus for any trips.

Interestingly, Yavneh is the only Zionist school in Melbourne not to offer an *ulpan* or other year 10 program in Israel. Adam Segal attributes this to numbers, claiming that unlike Scopus, Yavneh does not have a critical mass, although small size does not hinder King David. However, Segal also explains that "many Yavneh parents place high priority on their children attending a post year 12 course for a year and finances do not allow sending kids on both." As is shown below, post year 12 Israel program participation by Yavneh graduates is extremely high. Segal also explains a lack of a

year 10 program by Yavneh but making provision for its students to participate in the post-year 12 Netivot program, which, Segal explains, “works closely with Bnei Akiva in planning etc. so it reflects our ideology”. Indeed, the physical location (see Table 9) and orientation of the Yeshivot reflect Bnei Akiva’s and Yavneh’s national-religious ideology.

### Post-School Israel Program

Arguably, the culmination of a Jewish day school's education is participation in a post-school program, and the authors contend this is one important outcome variable of the impact of Israel education in these schools. Neither the schools themselves nor the ZFA, under whose auspices Australian youth participate in Israel programs, keep data on which youths from which schools participate in which programs with which movements, but the information in Table 10 is based on the school’s estimates.

Table 10: Post-school Israel program

School	Number and Percentage	Programs
Mount Scopus	About 50%	Majority on Israel by Choice followed by Habonim <i>shnat</i> year course in Israel program, small numbers on Bnei Akiva programs, Yeshiva.
Bialik	Rough estimate of 20-25%	Majority on AUJS University students, Aviv and the JAFI Institute for Youth Leaders from Abroad - Machon L'Madrichei Chutz L'Aretz (mostly with Habonim Dror), occasionally one or two go to Yeshiva
King David	Approximately 10%	AUJS Academy, Youth Movement Machon L'Madrichei Chutz L'Aretz, mostly Netzer and then Habonim Dror*  No program, just visit Israel as part of travel to Europe and other countries.
Yavneh	Approximately 90%	Most on Bnei Akiva programs (Tafnit or MTA).

From Table 10 we see that participation rates range from 10% for King David to 20-25% for Bialik, 50% for Mt. Scopus, and an extraordinary 90% for Yavneh. It would be misleading to simply conclude from these figures that King David is the least Zionist school because it has the least percentage of students going to Israel. As King David has a lower socio-economic demographic than the other schools, economic factors helps explain the data. By going on programs affiliated to the particular youth movements, Yavneh graduates will have their national religious orientation reinforced: Netzer their Reform ideology, and Mount Scopus and Bialik the more secular left

leaning ideology of Habonim Dror. Overall, if post-school Israel participation is an important measure of the Zionist identity of day school graduates, Yavneh in particular and also Mount Scopus should feel they have achieved their objective.

## **Conclusions**

Having presented the comparative data on the informal and formal approaches to Israel education in Melbourne day schools, we can now review the frameworks within which these take place by utilizing Bryfman's three criteria. Firstly, there is the separate approach, where Zionism and Israel is taught as a separate stand alone unit. This is happening in some of the schools, such as the Israel Studies electives offered by King David and Mount Scopus. Secondly, there is the integrated approach, where the teaching of Israel and Zionism is incorporated into Jewish history courses. This can be found when Israel is taught within Jewish history in Yavneh and within Jewish Studies in Bialik. Thirdly, there is the co-curricular approach, where Israel is taught through separate informal activities. As we have shown, this is clearly occurring in all schools, for example through their year 9 Zionist seminars and camps.

While all three approaches are evident, none serves as the exclusive approach to the teaching of Israel. Rather, we have found that a mix of all three approaches is employed by the schools, a mix that differs in each school. In addition, we have also identified a fourth approach, which we refer to as the *instrumental* approach, whereby Israel is included in the teaching of a non-Jewish or general subject that is offered as part and parcel of the general VCE subjects taught by all the schools, ranging from media studies to political studies.

Thus, rather than arguing for the exclusive status of either the separate, integrated, co-curricular or instrumental approaches, we contend that there is a dialectical relationship between the formal and informal in Israel education, based on our findings on Melbourne's Jewish day schools. This holistic approach draws on all the above approaches in a complementary way, nuanced to each school, reflecting its particular political, cultural and religious orientation. Interestingly, Bryfman has recently argued that "...the false dichotomy between what has incorrectly labeled *formal* and *informal* Jewish education has largely disregarded the reality of Jewish education today. It is the *process* of Jewish experiential education that should most concern us...."(Bryfman 2011:774).

We could not agree more and welcome his innovative advocacy for an emerging field of *experiential Jewish education*. Indeed, we have sought here to elucidate inductively the process of Jewish Peoplehood experiential education in day school settings.

The relationship between the formal and the informal can be summed up as follows:

- Formal and informal are complementary and dialectically interrelated, one would not work as effectively without the other.
- The nature and extent of both the formal and informal varies from school to school based on the pedagogic, resource and ideological factors.
- Informal is multifaceted.
- Israeli *shlichim* have a prominent role in informal education.
- Informal does not just involve the schools but also how the school is engaged with external Zionist organizations such as youth movements.

While Pomson (2009:5) has identified a shift from instruction to enculturation in the American Jewish day school setting, in Australia these two dimensions of the paradigm are well integrated in a complementary way. It is clear from this study that all the Zionist day schools in Melbourne offer comprehensive Israel education programs, but do so in different ways, including the number of formal hours they allocate to the teaching of Israel and Hebrew, and the extent of informal programs they run in the school and complementary programs in Israel.

The findings in this paper illustrate how the Israel experience and youth movements are embedded in the Israel education at these schools; and, because the formal and informal are interdependent, one could not succeed, in terms of instilling knowledge of and attachment to Israel and the Jewish people, without the other.

The literature on Israel education also notes the contrasting approaches of teaching the **mythic** Israel or the **real** Israel. Based on the findings from Melbourne's Zionist schools, the authors believe it is not an "either/or" scenario. All schools teach **a mythic** and **a real** Israel, some more the latter and some more the former, but all do both. Yavneh would perhaps be more on the mythical side of the spectrum, but even its ideal of Israel gets challenged when it has to grapple with political decisions that may not sit comfortably with their ideological orientation.

Different models are offered in Israel education pedagogy of teaching either the mythical or the real, but the strong Zionist outcomes of all the Melbourne schools in this study, as evidenced for example in their high rate of participation in post-high school Israel programs, suggest that teaching both mythic *and* real Israel is an appropriate balance to strike. David Bryfman goes as far as to say that the conservative approach of teaching mythical Israel is a pedagogic mistake, but it is pertinent to note that there is no one mythic Israel and no one real Israel. The myths and reality that each school focuses on differ according to their own religious-cultural-political orientation. So even if it was agreed to adopt a mythic or real course of study, this never could be, and indeed in our opinion never should be, uniform. Yeshivot in Gush Etzion, Reform kibbutzim in the Arava as well as the neighborhood of Shenkin Street in Tel Aviv are all real, and the schools will and do choose the ones they seek to emphasize.

However, as we have already pointed out, the existential dilemma of Israel education in any Jewish Diaspora does not lie on a bipolar continuum of myth and reality, but rather within a prism of competing myths and competing and contested realities, all of which make up the Israel of today. No Israel education today can be utopian in the sense of being free of reality; nor can it be merely descriptive, realistic (*sic*), as if it were free of values and vision that are often constrained in hallowed though not hollow myths

Overall, we can say Israel education comprises multiple elements – curricula, informal programs, Israel experiences, Israeli personal contact in the schools – and the more there is of them, the more powerful the Israel education and experience. All the schools studied here, each in their own way, seek to instill a foundational love for Israel as well as to engage their students with a real and relevant Israel of their choice. They do so in the mix of formal and informal, cognitive and emotional, local and global.

The common, often unarticulated, goal of *all* the schools that transcends their significant ideological differences lies in their common pursuit of Jewish knowledge, Hebrew and cultural literacy, and emotional and personal connection with Israel and Israelis. All these together serve to make the unambiguous demand of the students to *belong* to the Jewish people both in the local Melbourne Jewish community and in a relationship with Israel, generating a commitment to Jewish Peoplehood and its common future.

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