CHAPTER II

AN OVERVIEW OF THE

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF ADULT EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

The history of adult education in Israel is deeply rooted in the history of the Jewish people. The Torah says that "Moses assembled all the Children of Israel"[1] ...that they may hear and that they may learn."[2] The priests and the Levites were to teach the fathers, who in turn were to "teach them diligently to your sons."[3] Goldman (1975) notes that over the ancient 'ark of the covenant' was written the words 'know before whom thou standest.' Without knowledge a Jew cannot truly worship Jehovah.[4] He adds, "there are rewards for learning that are intrinsic within the exercise itself. It is the duty of the Jew to learn, or as their honored men have said: 'We all need a little Torah Lishmah', or study of the Torah for its own sake."[5] Learning for a Jew was to covet the Lord God Jehovah. The ancient Jewish King Solomon recorded "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,"[6] and again, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."[7] For the ancient Jew the acquisition of knowledge and the application of that knowledge (i.e. wisdom) were linked to a knowledge of and love for God Himself. Israel's destiny has been tied for centuries to a covenant with God. From Abraham onward the people believed their heritage began with a meeting between

Abraham and the living God. God and man spoke together. They

negotiated understanding and communicated truth in a meeting of

'spiritual dialogue'. In his article,'The Meaning of Israel in

Jewish Thought', Seymour Siegel says,

> Jewish self-understanding still rests on
> the doctrine of closeness and covenant.
> It affirms that the Jewish people is not
> an ordinary people like all other peoples,
> but one called into being by God to serve
> His purpose in the world... consciousness
> of uniqueness, persistence of trust, eternal
> hope - this is Israel's covenant with the
> God of us all. (8)

Whatever the present religious orientation of the individual adult

educator in Israel, he/she must acknowledge the unique and im-

portant foundation that historical Judaism has laid for the

modern adult education movement in Israel.

The Jewish poet Bialik is quoted by Goldman as saying in 1934

that Jewish education of adults living in Israel must serve two goals:

> First to draw streams of Jewish knowledge from
> the heights of Mount Scopus (where the Hebrew
> University was established in 1918) in order
> to have them flow down to the lowlands where
> the masses of the people live...everyone who
> wishes can possess the Torah...Second, to re-
> vive among us the practice of setting aside
> fixed periods of time for Jewish study. With
> us Jews there is no such thing as an end of
> learning. (9)

Adult education was a 'way of life' for many of the adult Jewish

immigrants to Palestine, long before the formation of the State in

1948. In most of the Diaspora, [10] adult learning had remained

a high priority in spite of difficulties. Settlement in Israel
brought new learning responsibilities to cope with the staggering
reality of the Zionist dream. Adult education became a weapon for
survival - a common language had to be spoken, food had to be grown
and lives had to be protected. Grabelsky notes that,

> Adult education flourishes wherever there
> is social change and upheaval, at times
> when there is a sense of urgency and new
> situations have to be faced. (11)

If 'survival' generates a high motivational force for adult
learning, Israeli adult educators had a nation of ready learners.
However, the 'educators' in this land were not theoretical practi-
tioners. They were often adults who had 'gone ahead, learned and
survived' and were now sharing what they themselves had experienced.
A leader of adult education in the kibbutzim expressed his philo-
sophy of adult education when he said,

> If you really want to help people, the
> content of adult education must be the
> personal life problems of the people.
> The system or the basic strategy used
> (in adult education) has to facilitate
> meeting between people as they face
> similar problems, to search for those
> solutions...the formal academic aspects
> only facilitate the means to help them
> struggle with their needs. (12)

As people met, they worked together to solve mutual problems.

Adult education became a means to 'struggle with their needs'.

In his book, The History of Adult Education in Israel: 1900-1975,

Bezalel Shachar, a pioneer of adult education in the Trades'
Union ('Histadrut'), outlines how each wave of immigration to
Palestine had to overcome specific problems to become integrated
into the energing nation of Israel. [13]

Israel had many 'beayot' (problems) to overcome. Philosopher
Martin Buber noted that "the serious problem is that settlements
from the diaspora are extremely different from each other in
character, language and way of life." [14] One adult educator called
them 'differences'. He said, "An immigrant to Israel gets differences,
wonderful differences - like the love for milk in the morning, or for
water in the morning, to have a nap in the afternoon, or not to have
a nap. In New York nothing 'naps' but in Caracas it is dead in the
afternoon." [15] Buber perceptively noted that,

> The original plan meant to unite its
> pioneers in a new unity, a center of
> unification which would overcome the
> material and social differences
> existing among the various communities. (16)

However, the original 'plan' of the socialist Zionist pioneers was
swept away by the historical waves of destitute refugees who arrived
in Eretz Israel after 1948. Yet unifying the people remained a high
priority. Buber adds:

> We have no choice but to become, within
> a very short time, a real national unity
> with a uniform culture and a uniform
> economy. This unity will not be born by
> external means. Where is the spiritual
> factor able to create it? This factor is
> adult education and nothing else. (17)

This urgency to assimilate newcomers and 'old-timers' into one
nation was revealed in the founding Declaration of the State of
Israel in 1948. It was established that:

>The State of Israel will be open for the
>immigration of all the Jews from all
>countries of the Diaspora. (The Law of
>Return - 18) The State will guarantee
>freedom of religion, conscience, edu-
>cation and culture. (19)

The new Knesset [20] moved quickly on March 19, 1949 to approve
the formation of the Ministry of Education and Culture, with
the following stated aims:

>To assure a proper cultural level
>for every man and woman in Israel
>
>To impart the Hebrew language to
>all immigrants.
>
>To translate the cultural treasures
>of the world into the Hebrew language.
>
>To foster the cultural and social
>amalgamation of the people who come
>from all countries in the Diaspora. (21)

The magnitude of the challenge was succinctly expressed by a
former Director of Adult education in the Ministry of Education
and Culture when he said, "There were only 600,000 of us in 1948.
By 1950 we were a million and a half. Our population had doubled
and we had to build a country." [22] The absorption of new immi-
grants was an immense economic, physical, social and spiritual
task. This was acknowledged by the founding Prime Minister,
David Ben Gurion in 1950 when he said,

>A large proportion of the immigrants
>come to us illiterate, with no Jewish
>or general learning...they come from
>backward, remote, lowly and victimized
>countries. The difficulties of spiritual
>absorption of the immigrants are no less
>than those of economic absorption. It
>requires a gigantic moral and educational
>effort and a profound and pure love to
>unify these neglected people, to share
>with them our national treasures and
>values, to integrate these once remote
>and oppressed communities into our
>society, culture, language and
>creativeness. (23)

Such was the challenge facing the citizens of the new nation.

Fortunately, a spirit of idealism existed. "In 1948, many

immigrants wanted to come and contribute to the country, to

volunteer and build the country. Everybody was very idealistic.

We were certain that every Jew would want to come and build this

land." [24] Many did come, and brought with them their particular

educational needs. One of the developers of the community center

programs in Israel noted, "After we became a State we had Arabs

within the population, plus waves of immigration from Islamic

countries. We knew that a lot of them were incapable of signing

their name. They could 'read' the Bible by quoting it from memory,

but they did not understand it." [25] One Israeli-born teacher of

adults, suggested that it may have been these conditions that

prompted Ben Gurion as Prime Minister to state:

> We must have one education system for
> every child. This led to the Compulsory
> Education Act. (26)
> We must have one army, not isolated
> defence units. This led to the formation
> of the Israel Defence Force in 1948. (27)
> We must have one nation of Jewish people.
> This led to the Law of Return, guaranteeing
> citizenship for Jewish people from the
> Diaspora. (see 18)
> We must have one language to unite the
> people from seventy countries (1948).
> This led to the first Ulpan (28) being
> formed in 1949. (29)

Such publicly stated goals have value in that they identify the primary values of the new nation. Sociologist Sammy Smooha writes, "publicly stated, collective goals, ascertained from public statements or overall ideologies expressed by spokesmen for each group are important - even if contradicted by unofficial pronouncements, 'hidden intentions' or incompatible policies."[30] From his investigation of the historical goals of the State of Israel, Smooha identifies three interrelated ideologies which dominate Israeli society. They are nationalism (Zionism), Socialism and modernization.[31] Such national slogans as 'one people, one language, one culture', witness to the proclaimed goal of national identity and cultural integration. A former adult educator in the Israeli Army noted that "all our lives we were concentrating on the slogan, 'What are we doing to make the people ONE?' - to feel an identity with the land, to make people feel they have a link with the history of Israel."[32] Smooha verifies that this was the intended goal of the nation's policy makers by quoting the following government source:

> The government will work systematically
> for the merging of all communities,
> veterans and newcomers. All communities
> will be assured of equal opportunity
> for full integration in Israel's economy
> and society, in education, culture and
> social life, and the steps will be taken
> to remove the economic gaps between
> communities. (33)

Buber cautiously warned the people, that he saw no future for

Israel or 'oneness' unless there was a return to the 'attach-

ment to eternal values'.[34] He believed this attachment could

only be obtained "by a real integration with the Jewish and

Hebrew reality of the nation and the land...eternal values must

be drawn from the national traditional values. There is a need

to bind the human truth and the Israeli reality into a new unity."[35]

From Buber's perspective, it appears that unity was to be achieved

through identity with national traditional values, and identity

was to be attained through unity with eternal values. To assist

both in becoming realities, Buber offered what he called "a few

essential guidelines for the teaching of adults from the immi-

grating masses:

> The Hebrew language must be taught
> not only for its own sake, but also
> as a bearer of our share in the
> eternal values. The Bible should
> be taught not only as a prime asset
> of our national culture, but also as
> the entrance of the nation of Israel
> into the world of eternal values...
> (and)...the History of Israel...even

> Geography...in short we should teach
> the students the reality of life,
> but we should open their eyes and
> hearts to see that it is only a means
> to the spiritual truth and its way
> in the world. (36)

This was the historical and philosophical 'climate' of education

in Israel in 1948. From this background of history, policy and

human need, adult educators began their task of working together

with the citizens of Eretz Israel in developing a National Identity

and National Unity.[37]

FOOTNOTES: CHAPTER II – OVERVIEW OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF
ADULT EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

1. Exodus 35:1.

2. Deuteronomy 31:9-12.

3. Deuteronomy 6:7.

4. Israel Goldman, Lifelong Learning Among Jews: 'Adult Education
    in Judaism from Biblical Times to the Twentieth Century."
    (1975), p. 31.

5. Ibid. p. 44.

6. Proverbs 1:7.

7. Proverbs 9:10.

8. Siegel's article published in Evangelicals and Jews in
    Conversation on Scripture, Theology and History. Marc
    Tanembaum (1978), p. 117.

9. Goldman, (1975), p. 315.

10. Diaspora meaning 'the dispersion'. After the Destruction
     in 70 C.E. the Jewish people were dispersed throughout the
     world. In 1880 the world Jewish population was estimated
     at 7,646,000. Of this number 99.7% lived in the Diaspora
     and 0.3% lived in Palestine. By 1945/46 the world population
     was 10,784,000 (down from a pre-Holocaust total in 1939 of
     16,173,000). Of the 1945/46 figure, 95.0% lived in the
     Diaspora and 5.0% lived in Palestine. In 1972, with a world
     Jewish population of 10,640,000 souls, 79.6% lived in the
     Diaspora and 20.4% lived in Israel.

     Figures taken from The Population of Israel, Bachi (1974), p.75.

11. Ora Grabelsky "Trends in Adult Education in Israel", in
     Lifelong Education in Israel, Kalman Yaron (ed). (1972), p.35

12. Yehuda Bien, personal interview (3-12 p.1.)

A further note, "The struggle with life problems was really
the college for people to promote themselves. It was an
informal way of gaining, understanding and gaining skills,
and achieving also levels of knowledge."

13. Bezalel Shachar, History of Adult Education in Israel:
     1900-1975. (1975).
     (Excerpts translated from Hebrew for researcher by Israel
     Pekin - Psychology Graduate Student at Hebrew University)
     "Talmud Torah (Bible) was studied by Jews in Israel on a
     lifelong basis...on the one side individually every man was
     a learner - and on the institutional basis it was used as a
     social experience for organization and being together for
     the social value ...Here the Jew found his friends. He found
     his society...Adult education was based on values of that
     society   used as an identity card for its own existence."
     (p. 50-51)

In 1886 another society was formed in Jerusalem called the
'Israeli Revival'. Their aims were to 1) revive the nation
of Israel; 2) raise it from its lowest point and build its
soul/pride; 3) to renew the Hebrew language and put it in
the mouth of the people and 4) to have the people speak Hebrew
in the market/streets etc. (p. 64)

During the Second Aliyah (1904-1917) adult education was ex-
pressed in the combination of a general Hebrew education, plus
a technical, agricultural or professional education...A special
committee of workers put their aims of cultural activities to-
gether as 1) to spread the Hebrew language as the main means
for cultural education; 2) to spread agricultural education in
the workers' groups; 3) to enlarge the historical, geographical
knowledge of the country; and 4) to increase understanding of
the settlement needs and social problems related to settlement
in Israel...for many there was 'no time' due to war and the
difficulties of living and surviving in Israel i.e. draining
swamps etc.

In 1917 attempts were made to organize libraries and clubs for
intellectual pursuits, but the social needs prevailed...the
goals of cultural education had to be blended with agricultural
and professional education.

During the Third Aliyah (1924) the influence of the English
made it difficult to revive the Hebrew language. Books were
printed by the Histadrut at a low cost for workers to en-
courage reading in Hebrew...Cultural activities grew during
the Third Aliyah pragmatically as a response to immediate
needs...Travellimg groups were formed called 'Yedyat Haretz'
- 'to know the country' which studied geography, history,
economics together.

During the Fourth Aliyah (1924-1929) the emphasis was again
on the learning of Hebrew.

National image is not so different from the development of a
personal identity. Jews develop their self image up to a
crisis, but then need rehabilitation (therapy, help etc.)
to repair the self image. In times of a national crisis there
has to be a time of evaluation of values from the past and pre-
sent behavior. After the crisis of the Holocaust unity became
important. National identity follows a process like an in-
dividual's development. To have a national identity you need
1) a group of people; 2) a territory; and 3) a language. Simi-
larly a self image requires 1) peer concepts of self image;
2) a family or heritage; 3) language - and expression of our
inner self.

During the Fifth Aliyah (1929-1948) the Hebrew University
began 'People Education'. This education of the people justi-
fies the existence of the University, not only for education
in the sense of an inventory of knowledge, but the public
university must create the 'mental unity' that we miss in this
country because we come from various countries. (p. 160.)

From 1948 on the needs of the clients of adult education were
1) the Hebrew language, 2) to fight illiteracy, 3) job re-
orientation and professional completion. There was direction
towards Bible learning, knowing your land, and antiquity re-
search, (archeology). These items strengthen your resources
in the land and look for the Jewish Israeli identity. Na-
tional identity was concerned with rehabilitating the self-
image of the Jews from the Holocaust. Newcomers could feel
rejected and lonely and depressed without a knowledge of
Hebrew. One of the major roles of Ulpan was to give back
self security to the immigrant.

14. Martin Buber, Adult Education, (1972), p. 10.

This brief pamphlet (17 pages) is an excellent review of
the development of adult education philosophy in Israel,
and the impact of Buber on the whole Israeli adult education
movement.

15. Shlomo Kodesh - personal interview (10-1-K)

16. Buber, op. cit., p. 10.

17. Ibid. p. 10.

18. "The Law of Return was the first law of the newly established
country. It states that every Jew is entitled to return to
Israel (with full citizenship) if he wants to..."from personal
interview with Shlomo Kodesh (7-2-K).

19. <u>Government Year Book</u>, 5711 (Year 1950 C.E.) (1950), p. 44.

20. Knesset (meaning literally 'House') is the Parliament of Israel,
the supreme Legislative Assembly, composed of 120 members.

Israel is a secular, parliamentary, democratic republic.
Elections to the Knesset are universal, countrywide, secret
and proportional. Every citizen man or woman, is eligible
to vote from the age of 18 and to be elected to hold office
from the age of 21. The voter casts his ballot for the party
of his choice, the country forming a single 120 member par-
liamentary constituency, (from: <u>Facts About Israel</u>, (1980),
p. 113.)

Prime Ministers during the period of this paper:

        David Ben-Gurion - 1948-1954
        Moshe Sharett   - 1954-1955
        David Ben-Gurion - 1955-1962
        Levi Eshkol   - 1962-1968
        Golda Meir   - 1968-1974

21. Government Year Book, (1950), op. cit., p. 52.

22. Shlomo Kodesh personal interview (17.1-K)

The official government census, November 8, 1948 listed 782,000
inhabitants in Israel. 713,000 Jews and 69,000 'others' -
Government Year Book, (1950), p. 59.

23. Government Year Book, (1950), op. cit., p. 35.

24. Ora Grabelsky - personal interview (84.1-OG)

25. Chaim Zippori - personal interview (84.5-CZ)

26. The Compulsory Education Law (1949) obliges every child
     up to the age of 14 to attend elementary school. Special
     Compulsory Schools are provided for boys who have not com-
     pleted their elementary studies at the proper age, new
     immigrants...and the culturally disadvantaged.

     (From Illiteracy to Literacy, Ora Grabelsky, (1970), p. 4.)

     "When we issued the Compulsory Education Law, we said each
     child shall get an education until the age of 14. But...
     we had no teachers, no buildings, no books. I was a super-
     visor. I remember that we sometimes had three shifts in one
     room. From 8 to 12 in the morning, from 12 to 4 in the
     afternoon and from 4 to 8 at night! Yet we had thousands
     come out with a basic education."

     (Shlomo Kodesh - personal interview (18.1-K)

27. The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) was established on May 26, 1948
     by the Provisional Government...Its first officers were drawn
     from para-military volunteer units created in the Mandatory
     period (British control 1917-1948): the Haganah and its
     spearhead, the Palmach; the Irgun Tz'vai Le'umi and Lehi, and
     men of the Jewish Brigade of the British Army...The IDF has
     three main elements: a regular army of officers and non-coms,
     the basic professional nucleus; national servicemen - all
     citizens from their 18th year - men serving for three years
     and unmarried women for two, and a reserve of all able-bodied
     men up to the age of 55, and women up to the age of 34.

     (Facts About Israel, (1980), p. 125.)

28. Ulpan means literally 'the studio' in Hebrew. It is a word
     derived from the root 'alef' - to teach or instruct. With the
     stated national goal that of making Hebrew the national language
     and the spoken vernacular of the Jews in Eretz Israel - the Ulpan
     was established in 1949 as a formal vehicle to provide teachers,

textbooks, terms of studies and a given syllabus for aiding adult immigrants in the learning of their new 'mother tongue'.

(Excerpts taken from 'The Diffusion of Hebrew' by Shlomo Kodesh in <u>Lifelong Education in Israel</u>, edited by Kalman Yaron, (1972), pp. 87-92)

29. Ora Grabelsky - personal interview (84.4-OG)

30. Sammy Smooha, <u>Israel: Pluralism and Conflict</u>. (1978), p. 76-77.

Smooha's book was a helpful resource for this project from a sociological perspective.

Dr. Smooha distinguishes five major plural divisions: Palestinian Arabs in the occupied territories vs Israeli Jews (a demographic ratio of 29:71), Israeli Arabs vs Jews (13:87), Druze vs Christian vs Muslim Arabs (9:16:75) religious vs non-religious Jews (30:70) - (1977 ratios)

From this range of plural divisions, Dr. Smooha selects three for close analysis - the Oriental-Ashkenazi division, the religious-nonreligious division (both within the Jewish population) and the Israeli Arab-Jewish division. (from the Forward, pp. xiv-xv by Leo Kuper).

31. <u>Ibid</u>. p. 76.

32. Abraham Tsivion - personal interview (25.4-AT)

33. Smooha, op. cit., p. 77.

34. Buber, op. cit., p. 11.

35. <u>Ibid</u>. p. 12.

36. <u>Ibid</u>. p. 12.

37. Researcher's observation from personal journal:

"The adult educators I meet in Israel are from many walks of life and different ages, but I receive the impression, especially from the older educators, that they are an 'embodiment'

of their own philosophy. ...they are sold on their way of
developing adult education. They are not saying 'ours is
the only way', yet they are all contributing in some manner
to the development of National Identity-National Unity.
(97.6-YB-p. 9)