On History and Evasion

A Response to the Education Ministry and Prof. Israel Bartal Concerning *A World of Changes*

Yoram Hazony

I. The Education Ministry's Response to the Debate Over Its New 9th-Grade History Textbook

It has now been over a year since the public debate began regarding the dramatic changes in how Jewish and Zionist history are taught in Israel's schools. The Shalem Center joined the debate in April of this year, with an article I wrote for *The New Republic* focusing on the history curriculum adopted for Israel's middle schools in 1995, and on the Education Ministry's new 9th-grade textbook, *A World of Changes*.[1] That article leveled a series of criticisms against how *A World of Changes* depicts the Zionist movement, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel. Subsequently, this book was the subject of a broader research study, carried out by three scholars from The Shalem Center's Israeli Textbook Project, comparing the new textbook to the series of Education Ministry textbooks published during the 1980s.[2]

Both the initial *New Republic* article and the subsequent study released by the Israeli Textbook Project have struck a resounding chord with opinion leaders, organizational leaders, academics and journalists, in Israel as well as in the Diaspora. But despite these reactions, the Education Ministry—which both wrote and published the book—has insisted that there is nothing wrong with the book whatsoever. In its first public reaction to my arguments in July, unnamed officials at the Education Ministry responded to a reporter writing a story on this issue by saying that a book that "gives the accounts referred to by Hazony" simply does not exist.[3] In August, when a concerned government minister approached the Education Ministry about *A World of Changes*, he was told—again, by officials whose names were not cited publicly—that my claims were "a pack of lies."[4]

Finally, on September 15, after a television exposé about *A World of Changes* appeared on Channel Two's highly regarded Friday-night news program *Ulpan Shishi*, the ministry was forced to offer a formal response. This time, the Education Ministry issued a statement which was read on the air on the same program, in which it explicitly rejected any and

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all criticism of the book. Here is the text of the Ed ucation Ministry's response:

> The book in question is a superb textbook for the 9th-grade level. The entire process of writing the book was conducted with the academic guidance of the most senior scholars in Israel.[5]

A few days later, after *Ha'aretz* carried an article by the renowned Hebrew University historian Yehoshua Porath, pointing to numerous flaws in how *A World of Changes* treats European and American history, Education Ministry spokeswoman Rivka Shraga told *The Jerusalem Post* that "any criticism of the textbook is 'lies, distortions, and exaggerations.'"[6]

Similar responses were issued by the ministry in reaction to concerned inquiries by local papers from school districts in which the book *A World of Chang es* is in use. Here, for example, is the ministry's response as it appeared in the local Jerusalem paper *Kol Hazman*:

> All of the claims… against the book have been checked into thoroughly by the finest scholars in the country, and each and every one of them has been proven to consist of half-truths and distortions.[7]

It is, of course, entirely possible that academics closely associated with the Education Ministry have checked into "each and every one" of the criticisms that have been leveled against the ministry's new 9th-grade history textbook. Unfortunately, there exists no public record of such a point-by-point response to the Shalem Center study comparing *A World of Changes* to the old Education Ministry books it was intended to replace.

The only attempt at such a response that has thus far been made public is a 8,500-word essay posted on the Education Ministry's website by Prof. Israel Bartal of the Hebrew University, who served as a member of the committee that designed the new middle-school history curriculum, and who was one of the academic advisors for *A World of Changes*. Prof. Bartal's essay, in Hebrew and English, appears on the Education Ministry's official website under the title "Education and Lies: Round Two of the New Historians' Attack."[8] Though he addressed addition al issues raised in my *New Republic* article, Prof. Bartal's response focused a large part of its argument on that article's treatment of *A World of Changes*. This report is intended as a point-by-point examination of Bartal's responses concerning this textbook.

II. An Overview of Prof. Bartal's Response to Criticism of *A World of Changes*

I am, of course, pleased that the Education Ministry has chosen to publish Prof. Bartal's response to the concerns raised over *A World of Changes*, so that the public can see a sampling of how the senior scholars constantly referred to in the ministry's press releases actually work when they are going about checking into questions concerning the contents of its books. Unfortunately, however, Prof. Bartal's response essay is hardly likely to allay the widespread concerns over the Education Ministry's work in recent years. Indeed, a breathtaking amount of his 24-page response to my article is devoted not to responding to my arguments, but to invective, hyperbole, and sarcasm. For him my arguments are nothing better

than "lies," "half-truths," "baseless accusations," "pernicious attacks," "propaganda," "distortions," "def amations," "deceit," "manipulation," "falsity for its own sake," "fantasies," and so on. Indeed, not on a single point is he willing to concede that I might have been right about something, and that he and his colleagues might need to rethink some elements of their work—not even on questions of clear-cut, straightforward, and indisputable facts.

The relentlessness of Bartal's "take-no-prisoners" strategy is not without its consequences in terms of the substance of the argument. For example, in *The New Republic* I pointed out that—as opposed to earlier Education Ministry history textbooks—the ministry's new 20th-century history textbook does not include any mention of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or of any of the other acts of resistance to the Nazis by the Jews of Europe.[9] An honest and fair-minded scholar—even one who disagreed with my overall assessment of the book—could surely have said something like: "I disagree with Hazony on nearly everything, but on this one issue he makes a good point."

Prof. Bartal, however, is so concerned with the overriding goal of rejecting any criticism that he cannot even bring himself to say this. Instead he responds with derision:

> [Hazony] goes on to talk about the fact that in the grade 9 book there is no mention of uprising attempts made by Jews [against the Nazis]…. [But] what can be done, the respected author once again "forgot" to tell the excited and agitated American reader… that on p. 132 the student learns at length about the recruitment of tens of thousands of Jewish volunteers for the war against the Nazis.

Bartal is, of course, correct that on p. 132 there is a description of the recruitment of Jewish volunteers against the Nazis. But the Jews on p. 132 to whom Prof. Bartal refers have nothing whatsoever to do with the Warsaw Ghetto uprising or other uprisings against the Nazis in Europe: *They were recruited into the British army in Palestine in order to defend against a possible Nazi invasion of that country from Egypt.*

What kind of a response is this to my claim that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and other acts of Jewish resistance against the Nazis do not appear in the new Ministry of Education textbook? Let's be char itable and call it an evasion.

And there is much more where this particular evasion came from. Indeed, the fact that Bartal is unwilling to concede anything leaves him with only two ways to respond to whatever truth there is in the concerns I raise in my article: Either (i) he ignores my arguments entirely, which he does in the great majori ty of cases; or (ii) he engages in evasive maneuvers like the above treatment of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, whose effect is to confuse the reader into thinking that perhaps he has received an answer to the question posed, when in fact he has received none at all. With this in mind, let us revisit the arguments that I made in my original *New Republic* article.

III. Prof. Bartal's Responses to Twenty Problems in *A World of Changes*

A World of Changes, which was designed for use in 9th-grade classrooms, is meant to present the student with a basic history of the 20th century (from 1918 to 1995) in terms of both Jewish and general history. While there are other books—both those published by the Education Ministry and those published by research institutes and private companies—that have been affected by the shifting of worldviews in the Education Ministry, it is my opinion that *A World of Changes* epitomizes the spirit of the transformation that is taking place.

Moreover, this book cannot simply be dismissed as "just one of many" in a free market of books. Of the three 9th-grade history books presently available which conform to the middle-school history curriculum prepared by a committee headed by Moshe Zimmermann and published in 1995, *A World of Changes* is the only one which was produced by the Education Ministry itself: It was written by a team headed by Danny Ya'akobi, then a staff member of the Curriculum Division of the Education Ministry and the editor of the Education Ministry's annual handbook for histo ry teachers; it was published by the ministry's Curriculum Division, together with Ma'alot Publishers, the company that publishes almost all of the textbooks produced by the ministry; it is featured prominent ly on the cover of the Curriculum Division's most recent catalogue of books, indicating that the ministry is interested in promoting its use in schools; and it received its academic credentials from a scientific advisory committee of which Israel Bartal, who had helped design the new middle-school curriculum, was a prominent member. None of the other books was as closely associated with the Education Ministry itself, so it is reasonable to assume that this book can give us the clearest view of what kinds of ideas are now becoming acceptable within the ministry.

In my article in *The New Republic*, I advanced 20 claims concerning the contents of *A World of Chang es*, virtually all of which consist of easily verifiable questions of fact regarding what was included in the book and what was not. Taken together, these claims suggest that the new Education Ministry textbook is not merely a poor book for teaching Israeli children about their past; it is a dreadful book. Nonetheless, Prof. Bartal has chosen the strategy of claiming that absolutely nothing I have said on the subject of this book is correct. Indeed, so certain is Bartal that the new Education Ministry textbook is a good book that he even argues that I should read it to help me along with my understanding of history, writing:

> We understand that this is hard for you, [Hazony,] but the study of Zionist history via the books that you attack might, perhaps, assist you in becoming familiar with additional aspects of Jewish history and of Israeli history which for some reason you lack….

Stripped of its sarcasm and contempt, the message is clear: Bartal appears to believe he and his colleagues have produced a very good history textbook, and they are prepared to defend it lock, stock, and barrel.

At any rate, of my original 20 criticisms of *A World of Changes*, Bartal's lengthy essay tackles only 6. And in all 6 cases in which he chooses to respond, his "responses" do not so much resemble refutations or denials of my claims, but are rather in the form of evasions of the issues that I raised. The other 14 remain unchallenged.

Let's take these points again one by one (in the order that they appeared), taking a look at Bartal's arguments wherever he thought it was worth responding:

1. Chaim Weizmann is not mentioned once for his activities in the period from 1921-1946, during most of which he was pres ident of the World Zionist Organization and the foremost Zionist leader.[10]

Bartal does not respond.

2. The Zionist Organization is mentioned only in passing, without any extended discussion of its critical role in bringing the Jewish state into being.

Bartal does not respond.

3. The fact that Chaim Weizmann went on to become the first president of Isra el is not mentioned in the book.

Bartal does not respond.

4. There is only a single, passing reference (apropos a meeting with General Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1945) to David Ben-Gurion's 40-year career as the political leader of Palestinian Jewry prior to the establishment of Israel.[11] **(There is also a brief quotation from one of Ben-Gurion's speeches, without any reference to who he was.)**[12]

Bartal does not respond.

5. Menahem Begin appears for the first time when he becomes prime minister of Israel in 1977.[13]**The fact that Begin led Jewish underground efforts against the British pri or to independence, and that he served as leader of the opposition for decades, does not make it into the book.**

Bartal does not respond.

6. There are no photographs of either Weizmann or Ben-Gurion anywhere in the book. (There are, however, photographs of Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sigmund Freud, Salvador Dali, and the Beatles.)

Bartal does not respond.

7. There is no direct reference in the book to the fact that in 1939 Britain capped Jewish immigration into Palestine as a decisive step towards the establishment of an Arab state in place of the Jewish national home.

Bartal does not respond.

8. Jewish armed resistance against the British in Palestine, which receives 14 pages of treatment in the old Education Ministry textbook,[14] **is dispensed with in less than a single sentence in the new book. Here's the sentence: "The demand [for a change in British policy] was backed up with deeds: Illegal immigration activities on the one hand, *and acts of violence on the other*."**[15]

Bartal does not respond.

9. Israel's War of Independence against the Arab states, which in the old books took up 18 pages,[16] **is treated in only two brief par agraphs in the new one.**[17]

Bartal does not respond.

10. **The book frequently presents the Zionist and Palestinian Arab movements as moral Siamese twins, so that neither can be understood to have been more right than the other. Among the numerous examples is the description:**

> **The two nationalist movements that had tak en root in the same land struggled against one another.[18]**

Bartal does not respond.

11. **The old Education Ministry textbook described the 1947 UN vote on the creation of a Jewish state as being of immense historic significance to the Jewish people.[19] The new book has dispensed with this discussion of significance and values entirely, reporting only the fact that the UN vote caused Palestinian Jews to "celebrate happily."[20]**

Bartal does not respond.

12. **The description of the War of Independence in the old Ed ucation Ministry textbook *Not on a Plate of Silver* was studded with photographs—20 in all—of Jewish defenders, depicting the heroism and tragedy of that war in an effort to increase the students' capacity to sympathize with the Jewish cause, and to understand the price that was paid for establishing the state in which they live.[21] In the new book, all of these photographs have disappeared, and the War of Independence is represented pictorially by only a single photograph: A photo of Palestinian refugee children in Jordan.[22]**

Bartal does not respond directly to this point at all. But see his reaction to no. 13 below, which is his implicit response.

13. **The description of the War of Independence in the old book was accompanied by a map with arrows pointing inward towards the heart of Israel, graphically portraying the invasion routes of the five Arab armies.[23] This map no longer exists in the new book; in its place one finds a new map with arrows pointing in the opposite direction (i.e., *out* of Israel), showing the routes of Arab refugees fleeing the country.[24]**

Bartal responds as follows:

> Hazony is of the opinion that the power of an image is greater than the power of the written word…. Here [i.e., in the chapter on the War of Independence] there is no illustration, but rather a detailed description of the directions and names of the invading countries. If this is so, how is it possible to claim that the story of the invasion has been suppressed, or to assert that some "post-Zionist" subverter portrayed the Jewish side as aggressor and the Arab side as victim?… The narrative [in the text] is "glatt Zionist"! What bothers Dr. Hazony is that there is no map illustrating the text.

Thus Bartal responds to the disappearance of *all* photographs and maps depicting the Arab invasion, as well as Jewish heroism and suffering during the war, and their replacement with a photograph of Arab refugees and a map on Arab refugees, with three arguments:

(i) Hazony cares only about maps and illustrations.

This argument is ridiculous. Of the 20 claims I make regarding the Education Ministry textbook, 15 deal with the text. But Prof. Bartal chose to respond to only 2 of my arguments concerning the text. On the other hand, I make 5 claims regarding the photographs and maps that accompany the text—and of these Bartal chose to respond to 4. Thus, if the discussion concerning *A World of Changes* is being devoted disproportionately to analyzing photographs, this has little to do with the fact that I think that photographs are "more important" than text, and far more to do with the fact that my claims concerning the choice of photographs and maps are very nearly the only ones to which Prof. Bartal seems willing to respond.

(ii) Hazony falsely claims that the story of the Arab invasion was suppressed.

Bartal here misrepresents my views in order to be able to dismiss them more easily. Nowhere have I ever claimed that the story of the Arab armies' invasion of Palestine has been "suppressed" in *A World of Changes.* My claim, rather, is that the old Education Ministry textbooks included 20 photographs and a number of maps whose purpose was to sharpen the students' capacity to identify with the meaning of an invasion on four fronts, which took the lives of 6,000 Jews—fully one percent of the Jewish population in Palestine. By eliminating all of these photographs and maps, *A World of Changes* succeeds in drastically lessening the impact of the account of the war on the students.

In addition to the map depicting the invasion routes of five Arab armies, the Education Ministry's old 9th-grade book *Not on a Plate of Silver* includ ed pictures of the burning of a commercial center in Jerusalem; Jewish convoys attempting to break the siege of Jerusalem, and a Jewish convoy in flames; Jewish fighters trying to take the Castel overlooking the highway to Jerusalem; the destruction of Kibbutz Nirim and Kibbutz Ramat Rahel; a nighttime artillery bombardment of Jerusalem; the surrender of the Jewish forces in the Old City; the airplanes of the infant Jewish air forces; Israeli troops capturing Beersheba; and others.[25]

In *A World of Changes*, all of these are replaced by a map showing the routes taken by fleeing Palestinian Arabs and a single photograph—the *only* photograph in the entire chapter on the War of Independence—of a Palestinian Arab refugee teaching refugee children in Amman.[26]

I do not believe that the new Education Ministry book has "suppressed" the Arab invasion, and therefore I did not make such a claim. Nevertheless, what it has done in its selection of maps and photographs, as well as in the truncated text that it devotes to the War of Independence, is to give the student a rad ically different impression of what took place during that invasion—one in which the threat to the Jewish side and the suffering and heroism of the Jews has been downplayed, and the issue of Arab refugees highlighted to the point that it is virtually the only important issue dealt with in the illustrations.

(iii) Hazony falsely claims the Jewish side is portrayed as the aggressor and the Arab side as the victim.

As in number (ii) above, Bartal again misrepresents my views so that he can more easily dismiss them. Nowhere did I say that the Jewish side is portrayed as the aggressor and the Arab side as the victim during the War of Independence.

14. **The new book describes the events leading up to the Six Day War of 1967 without making any mention of the most striking act of war on the Arab side: Nasser's decision to blockade the Israeli port of Eilat. In fact, the book implies that Israel precipitat ed the Six Day War by downing Syrian combat aircraft.**[27]

Bartal does not respond.

15. The text of the old history books presented the unification of Jerusalem as the result of a war with Jordan that Israel did not want, but that, due to Jordan's insistence on entering the war, ended with some of the most heroic battles of Israeli history and with the return of the Jews to the Western Wall.[28] The new book has none of this—no Israeli pleas for Jordan to stay out of the war, no heroic battles, no Western Wall.[29]

Bartal does not respond.

16. The old textbook dramatized the narrative with a nearly full-page photograph of Yitzhak Rabin, Moshe Dayan, and Uzi Narkis entering the Old City on foot with their helmets still on.[30] In the new book, this picture has disappeared, and the only pictorial representation of the Six Day War is a photograph of an Israeli half-track in East Jerusalem's Kalandia airport under a sign in Arabic.[31]

Bartal responds as follows:

> More problematic is the use Dr. Hazony makes of pictures relating to the Six Day War…. Dr. Hazony would certainly seek to have the (Jordanian) sign replaced by a bold-lettered Hebrew sign, but what can we do? The airfield was captured from the Jordanians, and they, for some reason, were not in the habit of putting up Hebrew signs in their institutions. The story of the Kalandia airfield shows that the author of the article [in *The New Republic*] does not distinguish between the teaching of histo ry and political propaganda.
>
> In his eyes, it would be preferable to retouch a historical photograph, in order to rescue the soul of the nation's youth from an unpleasant encounter with facts. And this is what he calls "Zionist ideolo gy"! Fortunately, "Zionism" as we define it has no need of the censor's scissors and photomontage.
>
> Neither did the textbook writers of the previous generation need such methods, which are as distant from Zionist education in a democratic country as [the] capital city Jerusalem is from the Moscow of Zhdanov. I examined the good old books for which the spirit of the great protector of Zionism yearns, and I found that in one of the classic books of the previous generation appears the picture of "the capture of Lod airfield" ("capture" and not "liber ation" is printed there) of July 1948 and there one can see armored Israeli vehicles against the control tower of the airfield. (Avivi, Perski, *The History of Israel*, part 6, Jerusalem, 1960, p. 346.)
>
> There, as well, no large Hebrew sign is present to greet the liberators. Were the authors of this book as well to be suspected of "post-Zionism"? How did they dare reveal to the Israeli student that the Israeli army fought a foreign enemy who used a different language? Was it that they first had to win the war, and only afterwards change the signs on public structures?
>
> Here there is no longer an issue of distortion, but rather of an attempt to undermine the basis of democratic, critical and open education practiced in the independent State of Israel. And this in the name of an outlandish claim that "Zionism" means "distortion of history."
>
> Not by us, Dr. Hazony. The way we see things, there is no contradiction between Zionism and the presentation of historical facts. We understand that this is hard for you, but the study of Zionist history via the books that you attack might, perhaps, assist you in becoming familiar with additional aspects of Jewish history and of Israeli history which for some reason you lack….

To the degree that there is any argument at all in this passage, it is as follows: Hazony questions the

reasonableness of the editorial decision to remove the Rabin-Dayan-Narkis photograph and to choose as the sole pictorial description of the war a photograph of an Israeli army vehicle in East Jerusalem under a sign in Arabic. Therefore, Hazony propos es to retouch the photograph of the army half-track so that there is no sign in Arabic in the textbook. Therefore, Hazony is in favor of censorship and against democracy.

Yet again, Bartal bases his entire argument on a misrepresentation of what I wrote. My argument was that the photograph of Rabin, Dayan, and Narkis in the Old City is a classic photo, well-loved by Jews both in Israel and in the Diaspora precisely because it captures so well the return of the Jewish people to its ancient capital in 1967. By removing this photo, which appeared in the old Education Ministry textbooks, replacing it with one that sends a completely different message, and deciding that no other photographs from this war would be included, the ed itors of *A World of Changes* succeed in illustrating the same shift in historical perspective that also takes place in their text.

As I wrote in *The New Republic*, the new textbook's description of the Six Day War has been stripped of an entire series of crucial facts that were prominent in the depiction of the war in the old Education Ministry book: The Syrian efforts to divert the headwaters of the Jordan; the Egyptian decision to blockade the Straits of Tiran; the Israeli pleas for Jordan to stay out of the war; the heroic battles for the city of Jerusalem that ended with the Jewish return to the Western Wall and the Temple Mount. In deleting all of these, *A World of Changes* turns the Six Day War from a just war—and one of great Jewish significance—into a neutral (or perhaps even unjust) war of questionable significance to the Jewish people.

And this is reflected in the choice of the photograph as well: The old picture of Dayan, Rabin, and Narkis walking through the Old City on foot clearly emphasized the strong element of Jewish homecoming ("after two thousand years"). The new photograph shows an Israeli military vehicle camped out in the middle of an airport in an obviously Arab city—an image which suggests little other than military occupation of a foreign country. When taken together with the change in the text, the replacement of the old photograph with the new one sends a very clear signal that the old conception of the Six Day War has been wiped out and replaced with a new conception of what took place during that war.

Obviously, this argument has nothing whatsoev er in common with Bartal's assertions that I favor the retouching of photographs, that I am seeking to undermine the bases of democracy, and all the rest. In a democracy, in particular, one has to be allowed to question the editorial decisions made by a government ministry as to how children are taught to understand the history of their country. If there is anyone here who has problems with the rules of public discourse in a democracy, it would seem to be those who respond to a disagreement about curriculum by saying that those who do not agree with them are opponents of democracy.

17. The text of the old Education Ministry textbook included 7 pages on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and other acts of Jewish resistance to the Nazis.[32] The new book makes no mention whatsoever of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising or any other Jewish resistance against the Nazis in Europe.

Bartal's response to my claim that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and other acts of Jewish resistance to Nazism have been deleted from the new book is threefold, but as in the case of the deletion of important aspects of the Six Day War from the book, none of his responses actually addresses my point:

(i) Hazony missed what was on p. 132.

As I mentioned above, Bartal's assertion about Jewish volunteers against the Nazis on p. 132 is sheer evasion. The Jews on p. 132 were recruited by the British army to fight the Nazis in case of an invasion of Palestine (and later for the European campaign). The fact that the book discusses recruitment in Palestine does not in any way refute my claim, which still stands: The old Education Ministry history book included extended discussion of the Warsaw Ghet to uprising and other Jewish resistance in Europe.[33] In the new book, there is not a single reference to any of these uprisings by the Jews of Europe, nor are there any references to the activities of Jewish partisans fighting against the Nazis.

(ii) The Holocaust is taught again in 11th grade anyway.

Bartal responds that it doesn't really matter that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising was left out of the new 9th-grade history book, because "in Israel the Hol ocaust is studied twice, once briefly in grade 9, and once at length in grade 11."

But this argument is completely irrelevant to my point. Nowhere have I argued that all accounts of European Jewish resistance to the Nazis have been removed from all Israeli textbooks. The point of comparing the Education Ministry's new textbook for 9th grade to the previous ones, which were published in the 1980s, is to attempt to see whether one can identify an overall trend in the changes that have been taking place. And the treatment of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in *A World of Changes* does in fact suggest that there is something terribly wrong with the way the Education Ministry prepared and approved this book.

Consider the following facts: The new 9th-grade textbook contains no fewer than 62 pages of material on Nazism, World War II, and the Holocaust—the equivalent of two months of classes and homework assignments—and nowhere in those two months is there any mention of Jewish resistance in Nazi Europe. Moreover, it is not as though the subject of the Jewish ghettos were not included in the book: There is one entire page and part of a second page devoted to the topic of life in the ghetto, which discuss the political and cultural life of the Jews living there—including the fact that the Jews received instructions from the Nazis through their ostensible representatives on the *Judenrat*.[34] In other words, it is made abundantly clear that many Jews in positions of leadership in the ghettos collaborated with the Nazis, but there is not a word about the fact that some Jews resisted the Nazis.

Similarly, *A World of Changes* discusses not only ghettos in general, but also the Warsaw Ghetto specif ically. Here is what the new book has to say about this particular ghetto:

> The largest of all the ghettos was the Warsaw Ghet to, in which, at the peak of its operations, about 445,000 Jews lived. About one-fourth of the Jews of Warsaw died of hunger and disease, because the Nazis created harsh living conditions there.[35]

Thus, the authors of the book saw fit to consider specifically the case of the Warsaw Ghetto, including the fact that one-fourth of the Jews there starved to death. But it is not considered worthy of mention that thousands of Jews in the ghetto were in 1943 in a state of revolt against the Nazis for a month, and that they met their deaths under these extreme ly different circumstances.

Moreover, there is a second reference to the Warsaw Ghetto in *A World of Changes*: One of the three photographs chosen to appear in the chapter on the destruction of European Jewry bears the caption "Raid on the Warsaw Ghetto, 1942. Most of the ghetto's residents were transferred to a death camp." The photograph itself shows many Jews with their hands in the air. As I argued in my *New Republic* article, all of the explicit, ghastly photographs from the old textbook—the ones that actually show Jews being murdered or on the verge of starvation—have

disappeared from this book, and the "Raid on the Warsaw Ghetto" photo is no exception; it only shows people with their hands in the air, and even the one clearly visible German soldier in the picture does not have a weapon that is immediately evident.

But the picture *is* horrible in a completely different way: *A World of Changes* chooses to depict the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto in all their helplessness. The fact that most of the Jews of the Warsaw Ghet to went to their deaths with their hands over their heads is the only aspect of their deaths that is preserved pictorially for Israeli 9th-graders. Of the fact that some of them died a heroic death defending themselves, their families, and their people, there is not even a hint. (See Photo 1 below)

(iii) The Warsaw Ghetto appeared on a matric ulation exam this year.

Bartal responds that in the year 2000, students are asked to answer a question on the matriculation exams about the Warsaw Ghetto uprising: "If such questions are asked in the matriculation exam of summer 2000, it must be that the students in the Israeli state schools learned, are learning, and will learn about the heroism and about the suffering of the Holocaust period."

This claim that the Warsaw Ghetto uprising is still on exams that are taken by 12th-graders is actually identical to claim (ii) above that students study the Holocaust again in 11th grade. Again, nowhere did I argue that all references to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising have already been removed from the schools. My point is that the new 1995 middle-school curric ulum (grades 6-9), as well as the Education Ministry textbook for 9th grade that is based on this curriculum, are derived from a new historiography, one of whose effects is that it often downplays acts of Jewish heroism. The new curriculum of 1995 affects middle schools *only*, but is important because it gives us a sense of the direction in which the entire system may be moving. To duck this issue by pointing to an exam based on an entirely different program misses the point of my analysis, and evades the very real questions concerning the future of Israeli schools as a whole.

Photo 1

Raid on the Warsaw Ghetto, 1942. Most of the ghetto's residents were transferred to a death camp.
(*World of Changes, p. 136*)

18. The text of the old book included 3 pages on the subject of the Allies' awareness of the Holocaust and their inaction on behalf of the Jews in the face of this knowledge.[36] The new textbook makes no mention whatsoever of the issue of Allied inaction with regard to the Holocaust.

Bartal does not respond.

19. The old textbooks included ghastly, explicit pictures of Jews being murdered during the Holocaust, of the gas chambers, and of the survivors—who appeared as living skeletons.[37] The new book has no pictures explicitly depicting the mass murder of Europe an Jewry. The photograph of Auschwitz, for example, has nothing obviously terrible about it at all.[38] The two photos of Holocaust survivors depict them as being apparently well-fed and not especially unhappy.[39]

Bartal makes two arguments in response:

(i) There are actually many horrifying pictures from the Holocaust that Hazony ignores.

Bartal responds to my criticism of the Holocaust photographs in the new history books by listing a blizzard of photos, maps, tables, and illustrations related to the persecution of Jews in Europe during World War II. In fact, *A World of Changes* does include various illustrations from the period of the anti-Semitic persecution in Nazi Germany *prior* to the Holocaust (1933-1941). And these pictures are, in many respects, a reasonable representation of that period. Thus, for example, the photograph of a boy sitting on a bench marked "Aryans only"[40] does illustrate an important aspect of the Nazis' racist laws in practice.

But such material cannot be a response to my argument, which was not addressed to this period at all: What I criticized was the photographic representation of the period of the mass extermination of European Jewry (1941-1945). This period is represented in *A World of Changes* in two chapters: Chapter 17 on "The Establishment of the Mass-Murder Organization and the Holocaust,"[41] which describes the murder of six million Jews; and Chapter 18 on "The End of the War and the Post-War World,"[42] which includes the pictures of the survivors.

With regard to Chapter 17, which describes the mass extermination program that was launched in 1941, *A World of Changes* includes exactly three photographs, and none of them is anything close to an explicit representation of the murder of a single Jew: "The Auschwitz Camp"[43] shows nothing worse than hundreds of people walking in formation in striped garb. "Raid on the Warsaw Ghetto, 1942,"[44] described above, depicts scores of Jews with their hands over their heads; not even a rifle is clearly in sight. The third photograph, "Ovens for Cremating Bodies in the Dachau Camp,"[45] is the only one that resembles familiar pictures from the death camps. (See Photos 1-3)

These three are *all* the photos included in this chapter, and they stand in stark contrast with the over 20 heart-wrenching photographs, many of them explicit in their depiction of actual murder, in the Education Ministry's old booklet on the subject. These included pictures of Jews as slave laborers; the doors being slammed on a freight train filled with Jews; graphic photos of Jews being led into the woods, forced to dig their own graves, and then being shot at point-blank range; an elderly Jew electrocuted on the fence of one of the death camps; the selection lines at Auschwitz, and a mother walking with her three small children towards the gas chambers; and the gas chambers and the ovens.[46] These pictures are moving representations of the actual murder of vast numbers of Jews, whereas the pictures in the new Education Ministry book do not succeed, in my opinion, in depicting this horror at all.

Photo 2

The Auschwitz camp (*World of Changes*, p. 136)

Photo 3

Ovens for cremating bodies in the Dachau camp (*World of Changes*, p. 140)

Even more clear is the outrageous representation of Holocaust survivors in Chapter 18 of the new book. The old book had two photos of survivors of the war, which showed them as living skeletons, walking representations of death itself.[47] The new book also has exactly two photos of survivors of the war,[48] and neither of them shows anything other than apparently well-fed people. (See Photos 4-5)

Prof. Bartal berates me for saying that there is a distinction between pictures that show explicit scenes of mass murder and those that only show large groups of people marching in formation in striped clothing: If Hazony "is in need of additional horror [beyond this], then apparently his threshold of sensitivity is higher than that of most Israelis." But the point, again, is not that I need "additional horror." It is that the photographs in the Education Ministry's old book graphically portrayed the mass murder of real Jews, while the pictures in *A World of Changes* reduce these deaths from a concrete reality to an abstraction or an implication—in my opinion, a terrible error on the part of the editors of this book.

(ii) Even the pictures Hazony singles out are "sufficiently dreadful."

This claim is remarkable: Not only does Bartal claim that I purposely ignored the many horrifying pictures in the Education Ministry book, he even goes so far as to claim that the pictures which I explicitly mentioned as most clearly misrepresenting the horror of the Holocaust ("The Auschwitz Camp," "Jewish Women Liberated from a Concentration Camp," and "Jewish Mother and Daughter after the War") are "sufficiently dreadful."

Now, while this argument has elements that are historical or didactic, ultimately each reader must decide for himself. Photos 2, 4, and 5 pictured above and on the next page are the three photographs to which I was referring, and which Bartal had just looked at himself when he wrote this sentence. It seems to me that Prof. Bartal's claim that these three photographs are "sufficiently dreadful" to serve as pictorial representations of the Holocaust is not likely to be shared by the majority of Jews who are familiar with that period.

Photo 4

Jewish women liberated from a concentration camp (*World of Changes*, p. 144)

Photo 5

Jewish mother and daughter after the war (*World of Changes*, p. 144)

20. The old Education Ministry textbooks for 9th grade devoted 60 percent of their space to telling the basic story of Zionism, the Holocaust, and Israel (i.e., the "Zionist narrative"), while the new book slash es these subjects down to only 30 percent of the text.

I went back and recounted all of the pages in question, and found that I had indeed made an error. In fact, the proportion of the old Education Ministry books directly related to the story of Zionism, the Holocaust, and Israel was *67 percent* (not 60 percent as I wrote originally), while these subjects occupy only 30 percent of *A World of Changes*. This change, of course, does nothing to strengthen Prof. Bartal's argument.

Bartal offers three responses to my argument that the new textbook dramatically cuts down on the proportion of the material available to teachers and students on these subjects, none of which seems to qualify as anything better than an evasion:

(i) Actually, the new book contains 39 percent on these subjects rather than 30 percent.

Bartal is wrong on the numbers. But much more important than the precise percentages is the broader meaning of these numbers, which is roughly the same whether one is talking about 30 percent or 39 percent. When I first presented these numbers, my intention was in any case not to make a quantitative argument so much as a qualitative one: My point was that the most important difference between a book that devotes 2/3 of its contents to the Zionist narrative and one that devotes only 1/3 is likely to be the perspective that permeates the narrative. Although there are always exceptional authors, it seems obvious to me that authors and editors who—whether

consciously or unconsciously—choose to present far more material about world history than about Jewish-national history (or vice versa) do so as a result of their own personal judgment regarding what is truly important and interesting, and what is not.

And this assumption is, I think, borne out in the case of the 9th-grade history books, old and new. It is no coincidence that the old books, which devote so much space to the story of Zionism and the Jewish state, are also permeated with admiration and sympathy for their protagonist, the Jewish people. The new book, on the other hand, has taken a large step towards treating these from a perspective of cool neutrality.

(ii) If you include the history of Nazism and World War II, A World of Changes *is far more "Zionist" than Hazony makes out.*

Bartal attempts to evade the fact that there has been a clear drop in the proportion of materials devot ed to Zionism, the Holocaust, and Israel in the new Education Ministry book by asserting that there are numerous related topics in the text, such as German history, which are necessary for understanding the story of the Jewish people:

> The respected author of the article [i.e., Hazony] omitted [counting] the chapters without which no serious study of the history of the Jews in modern times can be contemplated. He fails to mention that the great majority of chapters in the book that are not concerned with "Zionism, Holocaust, and the State of Israel" are an inseparable part of the instruction in the subject of the Holocaust!

Bartal is of course correct that you cannot teach the Holocaust without studying the rise of fascism and the history of World War II; it is also the case that you cannot reasonably teach Israeli history without teaching about the Cold War. But this is yet another evasion. The new Education Ministry book devotes large amounts of material to teaching about the rise of fascism, World War II, and oth er clearly essential subjects. *But so did the old books.* The question is therefore not whether one should teach a large amount of material beyond the core of the Zionist historical narrative. The question is how much such material do you need, and to what extent should it be included at the expense of the story of the Zionist movement, the Holocaust, and Israel?

In the old 9th-grade books, German history and other necessary subjects surrounding the story of Zionism, the Holocaust, and Israel constituted about 1/3 of the material. In *A World of Changes*, they constitute 2/3 of the material. And when this factor is combined with the fact that the new textbook has been slimmed down considerably compared to its predecessors, the result is devastating with regard to the ability of the teacher to seriously treat the story of Zionism—resulting, for example, in the almost complete disappearance from *A World of Changes* of crucial subjects from the history of the Zionist movement in the decades prior to the founding of Israel.

(iii) The new 8th-grade textbook is only 30 percent Jewish, so why does Hazony not complain about that as well?

Prof. Bartal here misreads the argument I made in *The New Republic* concerning the new Education Ministry history book for 8th grade, *From Conserv atism to Progress* (1998), and likewise misreads the textbook that I was citing. In order to make it clear that the historiographic revolution—which has had pronounced effects on books such as *A World of Changes*—has not had the same degree of influence on all the new history books published in the last few years, I noted that "the new 8th-grade textbook (which covers the period from the French Revolution to World War I) retains the heavy Judeocentric focus of the old schoolbooks, devoting 130 pages to the founding of the Zionist movement."

Prof. Bartal then divided those 130 pages into the total number of pages in the book, 418, yielding an answer of 30 percent.

However, I was referring to only *one* of the sections in the book that deal with topics stemming from classic Zionist historiography—the section treating Hovevei Zion and the World Zionist Organ ization. In addition to this material, the 8th-grade book includes another 90 pages on subjects such as anti-Semitism in Europe and Moslem countries, the failures of assimilation as a strategy, early Jewish nationalism, the relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, and so on.[49] All told, *From Conservatism to Progress* contains 220 pages that fit within the scope of the core story of Zionism, amounting to more than half of the book (53 percent).

Obviously, one cannot judge a history textbook solely or even principally on the basis of the proportion of its pages devoted to "Zionist" topics. But it is also no great surprise that *From Conservatism to Progress*—which is on the whole a much better book than *A World of Changes* in terms of the seriousness and sympathy with which it treats the national narrative of the Jewish people—is also a book that devotes 53 percent (rather than 30 percent) of its pages to telling the national story of the Jews.

IV. Additional Criticism of *A World of Changes* Raised in Israeli Textbook Project Paper No. 1

The following is the list of additional criticisms made concerning the Education Ministry's new 9th-grade textbook in The Shalem Center's September 2000 study comparing the new Education Ministry textbook to the ministry's books from the 1980s which it was intended to replace. Those interested in seeing explicit side-by-side comparisons of the texts and photographs in the new and old books should refer to The Shalem Center's recent report, *The Qui et Revolution in the Teaching of Zionist History: A Comparative Study of Education Ministry Textbooks on the 20th Century*. The points below are listed without elaboration.

- Berl Katznelson is not mentioned at all in the new textbook.
- The defiance of British efforts to prevent the immigration of Jews to Palestine in the years prior to Israel's independence is mentioned only twice in the new textbook; no details are provided.
- There are no pictures in the new textbook of illegal Jewish immigration.
- The new textbook makes no mention of the persecution of Jews in the Soviet Union prior to the establishment of the State of Israel.
- The new textbook has no photograph of the cere mony at which the Declaration of Independence was read and the State of Israel proclaimed.
- In the old textbook, the Declaration of Independence was presented in an abridged form, leaving out the passage proclaiming equal rights for all citizens. In the new textbook, the Declaration is abridged as well; only this time, it is the section describing the history of the Jewish people and its connection to the land of Israel that is left out.

- According to the old textbook, Israel launched the 1956 Sinai Campaign because of existential threats. In the new textbook, no such threat to Israel's security is described.
- The old textbook attributed to the Sinai Campaign clear diplomatic and military achievements, of which the new textbook makes no mention.
- The new textbook does not include a photograph of Jewish resistance to the Nazis.
- The old textbook described the deeds of Hannah Senesh and the other Yishuv paratroopers dropped behind Nazi lines during World War II. The new textbook makes no mention of them.
- Major figures responsible for the struggle for Israel's independence and security are barely mentioned until the 1970s and 1980s, including Yitzhak Rabin, Ezer Weizman, Shimon Peres and Moshe Dayan.
- The book does not explicitly mention a single terror attack perpetrated during the 1970s or 1980s by the PLO. The terrorist attacks at Munich, Ma'alot, Misgav Am, and the Coastal Road are not mentioned. Instead, a single banal sentence appears:

  > The PLO struggled to achieve its goal both by political means and by violent means, in the form of terror acts against Israelis, in Israel and in various countries around the world."[50]

- The daring July 1976 raid by IDF commandos on the Entebbe airport in Uganda is not mentioned at all. Nor are any of Israel's other operations against terror in Israel and around the world, such as the commando operation to take control of a hijacked Sabena airplane in Tel-Aviv in 1972.
- There is no mention of Operation Solomon, or of any other efforts to bring Ethiopian Jewry to Israel.

Notes

1. Yoram Hazony, "Antisocial Texts: Who Removed Zionism from Israel's Textbooks?" *The New Republic*, April 17 and 24, 2000, pp. 46-55; *A World of Changes* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and Ma'alot Publishers, 1999). [Hebrew]

2. Yoram Hazony, Michael B. Oren, Daniel Polisar, *The Quiet Revolution in the Teaching of Zionist History: A Comparative Study of Education Ministry Textbooks on the 20th Century* (Jerusalem: Shalem Center, 2000), Israeli Textbook Project, Research Report No. 1.

3. Leslie Susser, "Blame It on Buber," *The Jerusalem Report*, July 31, 2000, pp. 44-45.

4. Michael Melchior, "The True Spirit of Zionism," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 7, 2000, p. 6.

5. *Ulpan Shishi*, Channel Two Television, September 15, 2000.

6. Gil Hoffman, "HU Historian Charges New Textbook Ridden with Factual Errors," *The Jerusalem Post*, September 18, 2000, p. 4.

7. Puria Gal, "Ben-Gurion Cut from the Curriculum," *Kol Hazman*, September 22, 2000.

8. Israel Bartal, "Education and Lies: Round Two of the New Historians' Attack," Ministry of Education Internet site (www.education.gov.il).

9. Hazony, "Antisocial Texts," p. 55.

10. In my original *New republic* article, I erronoeusly stated that Weizmann is only mentioned once in the entire book. In fact, he appears twice, both only passing mentions, regarding events prior to 1921.

11. *World of Changes*, p. 144.

12. *World of Changes*, p. 97.

13. *World of Changes*, p. 235.

14. *Not on a Plate of Silver: From National Homeland to Sovereign State, 1939-1949* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Ed ucation and Culture, 1984), pp. 71-78, 91-96. [Hebrew]

15. *World of Changes*, p. 160; emphasis mine.

16. *Not on a Plate of Silver*, pp. 160-177.

17. *World of Changes*, p. 164.

18. *World of Changes*, p. 93.

19. *Not on a Plate of Silver*, pp. 97-100.

20. *World of Changes*, p. 161.

21. *Not on a Plate of Silver*, pp. 110ff.

22. *World of Changes*, p. 164.

23. *Not on a Plate of Silver*, p. 166.

24. *World of Changes*, p. 162.

25. *Not on a Plate of Silver*, pp. 115, 125-126, 144, 166-168, 170-172, 177.

26. Map is in *World of Changes*, p. 162; picture is on p. 164. In addition, there is a map on p. 165 that depicts territorial gains by the Jewish side during the course of the War of Independence, but does not indicate anything about the attacks against the Jewish state during the course of that war.

27. *World of Changes*, p. 179.

28. *The First Twenty Years of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1989), p. 73. [Hebrew]

29. *World of Changes*, p. 179.

30. *First Twenty Years*, p. 72.

31. *World of Changes*, p. 179.

32. *From One War to the Next: The History of Europe and the Jews, 1918-1945* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture, 1981), pp. 192-198. [Hebrew]

33. *One War to the Next*, pp. 163, 192-198.

34. *World of Changes*, pp. 122-123.

35. *World of Changes*, p. 122.

36. *One War to the Next*, pp. 188-190.

37. *One War to the Next*, pp. 146, 151, 156, 179, 182.

38. *World of Changes*, p. 136.

39. *World of Changes*, p. 144.

40. *World of Changes*, p. 119.

41. *World of Changes*, pp. 133-140.

42. *World of Changes*, pp. 141-150.

43. *World of Changes*, p. 136.

44. *World of Changes*, p. 136.

45. *World of Changes*, p. 140.

46. *One War to the Next*, pp. 141, 143, 150-151, 157, 181-182.

47. *One War to the Next*, pp. 146, 156.

48. *World of Changes*, p. 144.

49. *From Conservatism to Progress* (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Pedagogical Administration, and Ma'alot Publishers, 1998), pp. 81-96, 106-112, 120-128, 169-203, 368-376, 386-397, 412-413. [Hebrew]

50. *World of Changes*, p. 261.