

ISRAELI TEXTBOOK RESEARCH



**Exposing the misleading research of
Professor Nurit Peled-Elhanan**

IMPACT-se

Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education



Professor Nurit Peled-Elhanan is not a credible researcher of Israeli textbooks.

She has used anti-Semitic language and offensive political language over many years, handpicking evidence to support her own preconceived notions, while disregarding a host of material that does not support her claims. These facts render her an unreliable textbook analyst.

The following are some examples:

HATE SPEECH

At a public rally in 2010, Peled-Elhanan engaged in anti-Semitic hate-speech, accusing Israeli politicians of greed, deceit, deception, and child killing.

[Israeli children have learned that] all the disgusting qualities which anti-Semites attribute to Jews are actually manifested among our leaders: deceit and deception, greed and the murder of children.¹

ANTI SEMITIC TROPES

Later in the same speech she made reference to the ancient anti-Semitic trope of Jews stealing organ parts:

While accused of trading in transplanted organs, the unperturbed Government of Israel is engaged in trading in whole humans—for the time being.²

ZIONISM = ISIS

In a 2016 interview with Warscapes.com³, Peled-Elhanan compared Zionism to ISIS:

There are very strong voices for peace inside and outside Israel, like The Jewish Voice for Peace and Jews for Palestine, which are challenging Zionist aspirations. In fact, most Jews did not choose Zionism. It's important that Jews now fight for their own sake. **What Daesh [ISIS] is to Islam, Zionist Israel is to Judaism.**

JEW: CHILD KILLERS

In an interview in NRG (Makor Rishon)⁴, Peled-Elhanan returns to the Jews-as-child killers theme, while comparing Israeli leaders to the heads of *jihadi* organizations designated as terror groups by the international community.

Ehud Olmert and Ehud Barak, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and Hezbollah are all equivalent: They enjoy watching children die.

PRO-DEATH

She encouraged political violence, stating that George Bush deserved to be killed in the 9/11 terror attack:

The person who is hurt is never the one who deserves it—in the tragedy of the Twin Towers, was George Bush killed? No. He should have been killed.⁵

Peled-Elhanan is Unreliable:

- ✓ **Anti-Semitic Language**
- ✓ **Offensive Political Language**
- ✓ **Preconceived Notions**
- ✓ **Handpicking Evidence**
- ✓ **Disregarding Material**

... she addresses Israeli textbooks through the prism of her bias and hatred



These attitudes are all reflected in her paper, “The Presentation of Palestinians in Israeli Schoolbooks of History and Geography,”⁶ and book, *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education*,⁷ in which she addresses Israeli textbooks through the prism of her bias and hatred.

In effect, she:

- ▶ Distorts source material and invents data;
- ▶ Omits key materials that do not correlate with her thesis;
- ▶ Offers an illogical and biased interpretation of the evidence;
- ▶ Presents a political agenda-based thesis and then works to find evidence to support it.

IMPACT-se has examined fifteen underlying assertions made by Peled-Elhanan.⁸ Through references to the textbooks she researches, we found contradictions, distortions and incongruities. We include here three examples.

Assertion 1: Glorification of Massacres

Peled-Elhanan claims that Israeli textbooks glorify massacres of Palestinians using examples of the massacres of Deir Yassin in 1948 and Kafr Qasim in 1956. She asserts that such massacres are depicted positively—even festively—in Israeli textbooks, thereby justifying future massacres of Arabs by Israel.

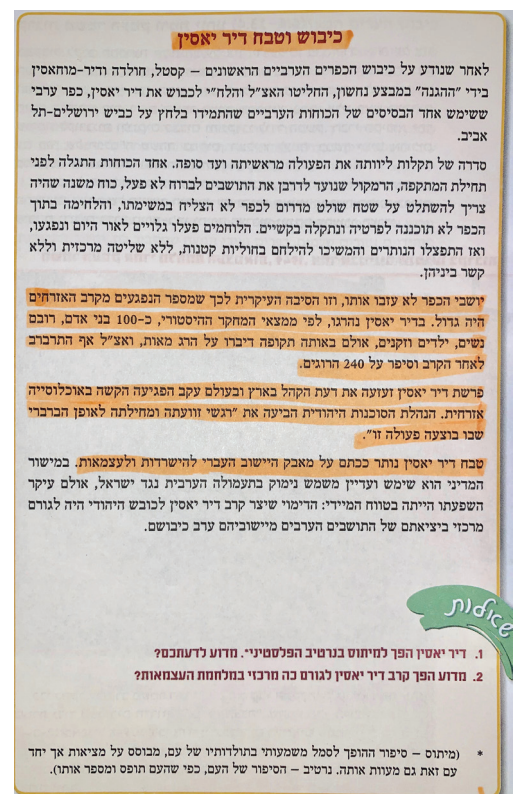
No Israeli textbook glorifies massacres of Arabs or Palestinians. The text [below] describing the “occupation and massacre of Deir Yassin,” taken from the same history book⁹ “researched” by Peled-Elhanan—and approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education for the 2019–20 school year—shows the exact opposite.

Contrary to Peled-Elhanan’s assertions, the curriculum textbook explains why the Deir Yassin Massacre represents a dark chapter in Israeli history. It states the “barbaric nature” of the actions, and acknowledges the murder of “mostly women, children, and the elderly”—which put a “stain on Israel’s struggle for survival and independence.” It resulted in feelings of “horror and disgust” among the Jews of Israel and shocked public sentiment worldwide.

In further contrast to Peled-Elhanan’s claims, two Israeli textbooks¹⁰ she referenced teach that the Kfar Qasim massacre was condemned as unlawful by the Israeli leadership; the murdered victims were memorialized in a moment of silence in the Israeli Parliament. The books acknowledge the murder of forty-nine civilian residents of Kafr Qasim, including men, women, and children, resulting in a high profile trial that for the first time considered the issue of when Israeli security personnel are required to disobey improper orders.

Textbook shows the contrary to Peled-Elhanan’s claims

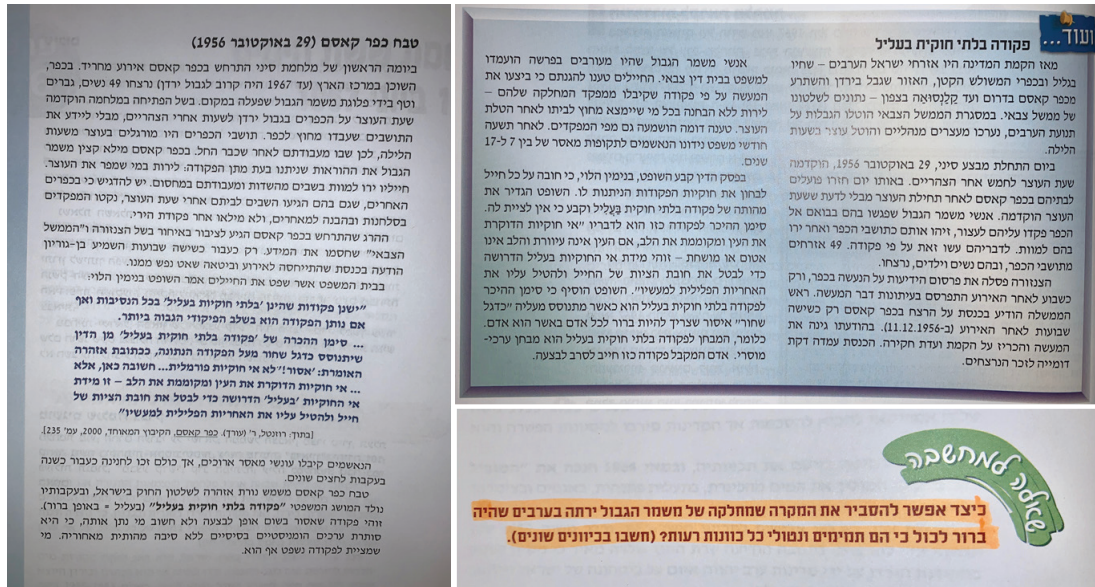
The Deir Yassin Massacre put a “stain on Israel’s struggle for survival and independence.” It resulted in feelings of “horror and disgust” among the Jews of Israel and shocked public sentiment worldwide.





In an exercise, students are asked:

How can one explain the incident in which the Border Police shot at Arabs when it was clear to everyone that they were innocent and had no ill intentions?



A current textbook approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education for the 2019–20 school year and not researched by Peled-Elhanan, states that:

In the case of the Kafr Qasim massacre, the most important element of the sanctity of life was grossly and arbitrarily violated . . . many were slaughtered without any deliberate provocation while those responsible for the massacre were not properly punished.¹¹

Another book includes quotes from a 2014 memorial service attended by current Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in Kafr Qasim.

“ I came here today, as a member of the Jewish people, as President of the State of Israel, to stand before you, the families of the victims and the wounded, and to mourn their memory together. The criminal killing in Kafr Qasim is an unusual and gloomy chapter in the history of the relations of Arabs and Jews living here.¹²

Assertion 2: The denial of Palestinian national & territorial identity is one of the core messages of Israeli textbooks

Terms “Palestinian” and “Palestinian identity” are in fact present in books Peled-Elhanan claims to have analyzed.

Peled-Elhanan asserts that the denial of Palestinian national and territorial identity is a core message of Israeli textbooks.

This is untrue. There are numerous examples of the term “Palestinian” and recognition of Palestinian national and territorial identity in the same books that Peled-Elhanan claims to have analyzed.

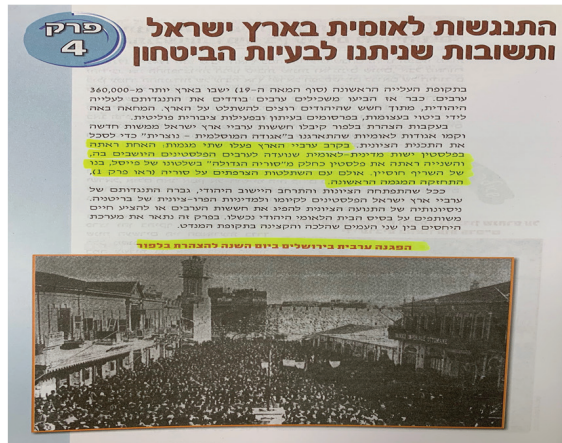
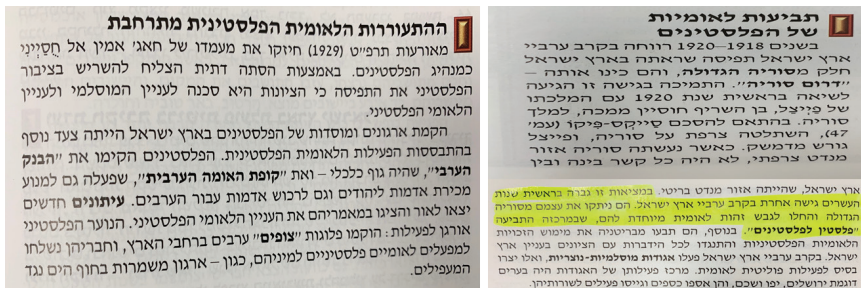


The images below, taken from the two books Peled-Elhanan used,¹³ clearly demonstrated this.

The passage on the right, "Palestinian National Claims" explains how during the 1920s the Palestinians "separated themselves from Greater Syria and began to construct a unique national identity for themselves, centered on the claim 'Palestine for the Palestinians.'"¹⁴

The bottom picture from another book includes an image of Palestinians demonstrating in Jerusalem a year after the Balfour Declaration (1918), along with an explanation that "Arabs in the land . . . saw Palestine as a national-political entity for the Palestinian Arabs living there."¹⁵

The passage on the left titled "The Palestinian National Awakening Expands," elaborates on the consolidation of Palestinian national activity in the region, including the publication of "new newspapers that printed articles about Palestinian national interests," mobilization of Palestinian youth, and the creation of national Palestinian factories and banks.¹⁶



Assertion 3: Israeli schoolbooks never show Palestinian faces, only stereotypical "object-signs"

Peled-Elhanan has claimed that Israeli textbooks never showed faces of Palestinians, but presented them only as "stereotypical 'object-signs,'" such as farmers or rural figures.

In fact, there are dozens of images covering the full spectrum of Palestinian life—including portraits—in books she analyzed. The following images show a few examples of Palestinian families as depicted in the textbooks, including those pursuing various professional careers, as well as a number of Palestinian politicians.

Claims debunked. Spectrum of images show Palestinian life including families, professionals, and politicians.

examples on next page



(Clockwise from top left: Palestinians protesting Jewish immigration in 1935; Palestinian family from the community of Tuba; passage mentioning Raleb Majadele, the first appointed Palestinian-Israeli Muslim minister in 2007; Palestinian-Israeli child and his family in which their culture and religion are discussed (the father is an engineer and the mother is studying for her Master's degree); Yasser Arafat, the late Palestinian national leader and President during the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony along with Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres).¹⁷

References to modernization in Arab society directly contradict Peled-Elhanan's misconstruction of a quote that describes Arab society as traditional and apprehensive of modernization.

Another textbook cited by Peled-Elhanan lists changes in Arab society, including modernization, decreasing dependence on agriculture, hierarchical changes in society, increasing levels of education and more.¹⁸ The image below explains some of the changes that have impacted Palestinian society.

השינויים
 החדשים הייחודיים בקרב האוכלוסייה הלא-יהודית הם גבוהים, אך כי במהלך עשרות השנים האחרונות שיעורים אלה נמצאים במגמת ירידה.
 הידידה בשיעורי הילודה של האוכלוסייה הלא-יהודית מושפעת מתהליכי השינוי המתרחשים בה. בעבר התאפיינה אוכלוסייה זאת באורח חיים מסורתי. רוב התושבים חיו בכפרים והתפרנסו מחקלאות, רמת השכלתם הייתה נמוכה, הם נהגו להינשא בגיל צעיר, מעמד הנשים היה נמוך, ולדות הייתה השפעה גדולה על חייהם. בחברה מסורתית כזאת, כפי שכבר למדנו, שיעורי הילודה בדרך-כלל גבוהים, אלא שמאז קום המדינה מתחוללים בחברה זאת תהליכי מודרניזציה: רמת השכלה ורמת החיים נמצאות בעלייה מתמדת; החקלאות, העוברת לשיטות עיבוד מודרניות, איננה עוד מקור הפרנסה העיקרי; מרבית האוכלוסייה עובדת במגזרי התעשייה, השירותים והמסחר; ובמעמד הנשים חל שינוי חשוב - מרבית הנשים רוכשות השכלה, ועולה מספר הנשים היוצאות לעבודה מחוץ לביתן. אם כי עדיין מעמדן נמוך בהרבה מזה של הגברים. (ראו תמונות - פריט 642 בעמוד הבא.)

The text reads:

Since the establishment of the State [of Israel], this society [the Arab society in Israel] has experienced modernization: the standard of education and living are constantly on the rise; agriculture, which has shifted to modern methods of cultivation, is no longer the main source of income; most of the population works in industry, services and trade; and an important change has taken place regarding the status of women—most acquire an education, and the number of women who work outside the home is rising.¹⁹

This does not appear in her research.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan Purposely Misleads:

As leading Israeli textbook researcher Dr. Yael Teff-Seker states:

There is a difference between claiming that Israeli [textbooks] could be improved in regard to their references to Palestinians, and to say that they are all racist, anti-Palestinian and anti-peace. [As a whole], Israeli textbooks promote peace with the Palestinians; depict their history in a balanced manner; and treat racism and war negatively.

By cherry-picking individual examples that “are either taken out of context or represent the exception to the rule,” Peled-Elhanan purposely misleads her audience regarding the content of Israeli textbooks and Israeli education.

Her unprofessional research methodology, anti-Semitic language, violent political expression, and extreme hostility to the society she is examining leave her entirely unsuited to textbook analysis and rigorous academic discourse.

- ✓ **Cherry-picking Examples**
- ✓ **Unprofessional Methodology**
- ✓ **Violent Political Discourse**
- ✓ **Hostility to Israeli Society**



Notes

- 1 Nurit Peled-Elhanan, “A Year after the Gaza War—Speech at the Protest Rally,” Canadian Dimension.com, January 2, 2010,
<https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/a-year-after-the-gaza-war-speech-at-the-protest-rally>.
- 2 Peled-Elhanan, “A Year after the Gaza War.”
- 3 Nurit Peled-Elhanan and Ambreen Agha, “Textbook Racism; a Canon of Division in Israeli Education.” Warscapes.com, July 26, 2016,
<http://www.warscapes.com/conversations/textbook-racism-canon-division-israeli-education>.
- 4 Nurit Peled-Elhanan, “The Bereaved Mother Supporting the Palestinians,” NRG (Hebrew), Jan. 7, 2009,
<https://www.makorrishon.co.il/nrg/online/54/ART1/836/739.html>.
- 5 Peled-Elhanan, “The Bereaved Mother.”
- 6 Nurit Peled-Elhanan, “The Presentation of Palestinians in Israeli Schoolbooks of History and Geography 1994–2003,” Institute of Education, London University, 2004.
- 7 Nurit Peled-Elhanan, *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education*, London: IB Tauris, 2012.
- 8 Arnon Groiss, Comments on Nurit Peled-Elhanan’s paper: “The Presentation of Palestinians in Israeli Schoolbooks of History and Geography 1998–2003,” IMPACT-se (formerly CMIP), 2016,
<https://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/NuritPeled2006.pdf>.
- 9 E. Nave, N. Vered, and D. Shachar, *Nationalism in Israel and the Nations—Building a State in the Middle East*, (Tel Aviv: Reches, 2009), p. 113.
- 10 E. Nave, N. Vered, and, D. Shachar, *Nationalism in Israel and the Nations—Building a State in the Middle East* (Tel Aviv: Reches, 2009), p. 213; K. Avieli-Tabibian, *The Age of Horror and Hope*, (Tel Aviv: The Center for Educational Technologies, 2001), p. 335.
- 11 A. Diskin, *Regime and Politics in Israel* (Jerusalem: Maggie Publishers, 2011), pp. 105–6.
- 12 V. Ashkenazi et al., *Being Citizens in Israel: In a Jewish and Democratic State* (Jerusalem: Israeli Ministry of Education, 2016), p. 243.
- 13 Peled-Elhanan, *Palestine*; “Presentation.”
- 14 K. Avieli-Tabibian, *The Age of Horror and Hope* (Tel Aviv: The Center for Educational Technologies, 2001), pp. 160–61.
- 15 E. Nave, N. Vered and D. Shachar, *Nationalism in Israel and the Nations—Building a State in the Middle East* (Tel-Aviv: Reches, 2009), p. 37.
- 16 K. Avieli-Tabibian, *The Age of Horror and Hope* (Tel-Aviv: The Center for Educational Technologies, 2001), p. 166.
- 17 K. Avieli-Tabibian, *The Age of Horror and Hope* (Tel-Aviv: The Center for Educational Technologies, 2001), p. 166; S. Goodman, T. Fine, O. Gal, *Living Together in Israel Part 2* (Tel-Aviv: The Center for Educational Technologies, 2006), p. 53; V. Ashkenazi et al., *Being Citizens in Israel: In a Jewish and Democratic State*, (Jerusalem: Israeli Ministry of Education, 2016), p. 479; S. Goodman, T. Fine, O. Gal, *Young Israelis, 4th Grade* (Tel-Aviv: The Center for Educational Technologies, 2017), pp. 6–11; A. Diskin, *Regime and Politics in Israel* (Jerusalem: Maggie Publishers, 2011), p. 281.
- 18 Y. Aharony and T. Sagi, *The Geography of the Land of Israel* (Tel Aviv: Lilach, 2002) pp. 192–206.
- 19 E. Rap, and T Fine, *People in Space* (Tel Aviv: The Centre for Educational Technologies, 1998), p. 109.

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