

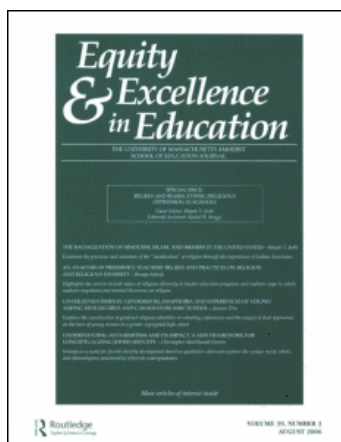
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## **Encounter Between Arab and Jewish Culture in Israel**

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# encounter between arab and jewish culture in israel

mahmoud abassi

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The encounter between the two cultures, Jewish and Arab, which has been renewed in such tragic and regrettable circumstances, is an ancient one. It goes back to remote antiquity and some traces of it are even to be found in the biblical period and the times of the Patriarchs and, later on, for long periods prior to Islam, at its beginning, and in the Middle Ages.

In our days the contact between the two Semitic cultures, the culture of the Arabs and that of the Hebrews, has been resumed in an ambience of a series of bitter wars and of bloodshed, but, for the first time since the Middle Ages, we have experienced a close and intimate contact during a spell of almost a quarter century. The contact has been on two planes:

1. The State of Israel, with a Jewish majority and an Arab minority, with all the educational and cultural problems of a confrontation between two cultures.
2. The State of Israel, as a minority in the midst of a group of Arab states bordering on it, with which no open social, economic, or cultural cooperation has been possible so far, on account of the warfare that has raged.

I shall deal mainly with the cultural and educational problems (cultural pluralism) that were occasioned by the establishment of the State of Israel, the treatment of those problems, achievements, and obstacles; the lessons to be derived and a clarification of future potential.

## historical background

History is filled with illuminating chapters of near-contacts and co-existence between the two peoples. The Jews and the Arabs belong to the same ethnic group that comprised the Babylonians, Assyrians, Canaanites, and Arameans, all with the same characteristics and the same cultural, linguistic, social and religious heritage. They were what was called the 'Semitic nation', a term first applied to kindred languages, such as Hebrew, Arabic and Aramean by the renowned German scholar A. L. Scholze in 1781, and derived from the name of

Shem, the son of Noah. In the nineteenth century this term acquired a racial connotation.

According to scholars and historians, such as Springer at the end of the nineteenth century, the original home of this group of peoples is believed to have been in the Arabian Peninsula. A famous orientalist, Ernest Renan, assumed that the origin of the monotheistic faith was to be found in the desert, and there were others who went further and claimed that the Jews were originally Arabian tribes that moved in migratory waves from the Arabian peninsula.

Jewish life under mediaeval Islam produced some of the great classics of the Jewish tradition. The first five centuries of Islam coincide roughly with what is termed the Gaonic period in Jewish historiography.

During this epoch, which lasted for eight hundred years, the reciprocating influences in the field of literary and philosophical creativity became more powerful. The impact of the Arab rhymed and rhythmic poetry on Hebrew poets, including Moshe Ibn Ezra Yehuda Halevi, Shmuel Hanaggid, Alharizi and others, was particularly strong.

The Jews in Spain and in Egypt during the Fatimid period occupied key positions in the administration, in politics, the army, handicrafts, and medicine. In respect of Egypt, special mention should be made of Yaacov Ibn Killis who served in the Egyptian court at the time of Khafour in the tenth century. In Spain, Hasdai Ibn Shaprut should be noted, a native of Cordoba who served as a senior diplomat under Abd el Rahman III. Shmuel Ben Yosef Ibn Negrella was a military commander and Vizier in Grenada at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

The Jewish-Arab contact was not broken off when the Middle Ages ended and Arab hegemony collapsed. Hundreds of thousands of Jews lived in Arab States in good neighborliness and held high places in teaching, trade, arts, and industry. Some of the best scholars of Arab literature and history have been Jews, such as Goldzieher, Goitein, and others.

So, the new encounter between the two peoples in the Middle East and the State of Israel is not happening in a vacuum. Its rich cultural and social background proves that each has an abundant literary, cultural, and religious heritage, so alike one to the other that no parallel can be found between any other two nations the world over.

Thus, Joseph Meyuhas in his book *The Fellaheen* cites two English scholars to prove that the life of the Arab villagers of Palestine fifty years ago was very much as that of the Jews in the biblical period and quotes passages from the Bible to prove it.

McAllister, an English professor who engaged in the excavations of Gezer, said in the preface to his book *Biblical literature in the light of archaeological excavations* that whoever wants to understand the Bible should study the life of the fellaheen in Palestine.

Wilson, another English scholar, says that if the contemporary Jews want to learn about themselves, in other words, their ancient way of life, types, features and characteristics, they must turn to the

villagers in Palestine who, in spite of all the wars and upheavals that plagued the country and the misfortunes that were their lot, had rarely abandoned their homes and way of life and can throw much light on life in the period of the Bible, but there are a number of essential changes in the renewed contacts and meetings between the two fraternal peoples.

- a. The encounter was renewed in tragic circumstances and in a succession of cruel wars filled with bloodshed, as a result of a clash between two national movements differing in their essence.
- b. There occurred a change in the status of the two peoples within Israel: suddenly, the Arab majority found itself a minority among fifteen Arab States numbering close to one hundred million inhabitants. There are at present inside Israel nearly 400,000 Arabs who constitute a sizable minority (almost 15 percent), under the rule of a Jewish majority of approximately two-and-a-half million.
- c. Great differences emerged in the way of life, tradition and cultural character of the two peoples since the Jews who came to Israel were mostly from Europe and brought with them a vast amount of Western culture, whereas the Arabs of Israel froze in their immobility and held on to their traditional cultural conservatism; their educational and intellectual progress has been very slow because of the long Turkish despotism, and the brief British rule.

It is clear that these contacts and the sudden change in political status caused stagnation and sowed confusion amidst the Arabs of Israel and naturally gave rise to grave problems, whose solutions was bound to be tardy: though the State has been in existence for nearly twenty-five years, they have not yet reached an ideal settlement. There were problems of many kinds, social, economic, emotional, literary, cultural, and educational.

I shall examine the situation in the realm of culture and education and touch on problems and achievements, pointing out what is still needed to arrive at an acceptable solution as close to the ideal as possible, and what, in my opinion, has to be done to reduce the existing gap and to overcome obstacles to the removal of barriers, to spread more enlightenment.

### contemporary problems

At the setting up of the State of Israel, the Arab population in Israel, numbering 140,000 souls, found itself in an educational and cultural void, since most of the Arab intelligentsia fled the country in the 1948 war between the Jews and the Arabs. It was difficult to adjust oneself to the situation that came about and to the new conditions, which created consternation and helplessness in the first days of the State. It looked as if everything had to be started again from scratch, under handicaps of an acute shortage of teachers, school premises, and textbooks. There was the heavy burden of preparing a suitable curriculum, of finding teaching personnel, of enlisting the help of people without full qualifications. Jewish

teachers originating in Arab countries were mobilized in great numbers, but their quota gradually diminished, as Arab teachers began to replace them. At present, the number of Jewish teachers in Arab schools does not exceed sixty teachers. The following will serve as a summary of the principal problems in education among the Arab population in Israel in the first years of the State:

1. Acute shortage of teachers.
2. A grievous lack of textbooks.
3. Uncertainty in fixing the syllabus.
4. Dearth of school buildings.
5. Remoteness of not a few Arab habitations, not connected to the national network of roads, and the structure of the Arab villages, based as they were on religious communities.
6. Insufficiency of secondary schools and of teachers with university training.

Let us examine each of these points.

1. The acute shortage of teachers compelled the authorities to recruit unqualified personnel, who did not complete a secondary education.

The employment of Jewish teachers and of non-local staff dislocated studies, inasmuch as two weekly days of rest became necessary, Friday, the Moslem one which had always been rigidly observed, and the Jewish Sabbath.

2. The grievous lack of textbooks necessarily affected the imparting of knowledge to the pupils in an orderly fashion.

3. The uncertainty in fixing the syllabus occasioned by the need to examine the conditions for teaching in Arab habitations, to fill the gaps and to adjust things to new conditions, created many shortcomings in actual instruction, and this, in turn, depressed the educational level.

4. Dearth of school premises that would be enough to answer the needs of compulsory education made it unavoidable to introduce a system of rotation of classes and their division into morning and afternoon sessions. In some places even this system was found to be unpracticable and classes had to be held out of doors, and under trees. It was often necessary to rent rooms all over the village and this interfered with regular supervision of the dispersed classes by the headmaster.

5. The remoteness of Arab villages and difficulties of transportation complicated the finding of teachers. The pupils suffered because teachers did not reach school on time at the end of the week or its beginning.

In villages, where, because of the denominational composition, it was necessary to have a weekly day

*... Only 171 Arab students out of a total population of more than a quarter of a million, are receiving university education, as against 14,000 Jews. So it is hardly surprising that the Arab population of Israel are now nearly all laborers or small tradesmen.*

—Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel, 1948-1966* (1968)

of rest on both the Moslem Friday and the Christian Sunday, troubles were caused by the stoppage of transportation services on the Jewish day of rest and the absence of Jewish teachers.

It was not easy for graduates of primary schools to go on with their studies, as they had to travel to far-away places for this purpose. This was aggravated by the heavy financial burden which such an arrangement entailed, and economic conditions at the time did not permit it in very many cases. The number of Arab secondary schools could be counted on the fingers of one hand at that time and only a few Arab pupils could yet attend Jewish secondary schools, as they did not know Hebrew.

These vexing problems were an impediment to the Arab pupils, and many years passed before the Israeli educational and cultural authorities could overcome most of them. As a result of conditions in the first stage, education in the Arab sector was of inferior standard and there was a good deal of early drop-out from school with negligible numbers obtaining a secondary education, a still lower rate of successful candidates in matriculation examinations, and, consequently, only a handful being able to enroll with institutions of higher learning. What, then, is the degree of success in surmounting the problems and obstacles described and what is there still to be done, to approach ideal conditions?

Though there was a long interval before improvements set in, nevertheless what has been achieved is far from unimpressive. The Arab population has been roused to its needs and has done important things in recent years. I shall refer to them in the same sequence that I employed in listing the problems.

1. *Teachers* In 1956 a training college was opened for Arab teachers with Arabic as the language of instruction. Its task is to qualify teachers, men and women, for all Arab schools, from kindergarten to grade eight. This college has advanced very much and now comprises ten classes and 380 students.

Apart from this, most of the old teachers underwent special training in courses on various subjects and were duly qualified. Scores of university graduates were absorbed in the teaching profession.

It seems to me, and I am close to these matters, that the problems of a shortage of teachers and of their level are no longer a significant issue. Though here and there vacancies occur because of the expansion of the educational network, that particular question is not at all severe.

2. *Textbooks* The Ministry of Education and Culture has successfully tackled the problem of shortage of textbooks, and when I recently visited Arab publishing houses, I saw that the deficiency had been rectified. The vast majority of the textbooks were compiled and edited by Arab educationalists and teachers; some were translated into Arabic from Hebrew by qualified scholars. The list of books that I examined covered all the textbooks in Arabic, English, Hebrew, mathematics, geometry, French,

*In large [Israeli] cities like Jerusalem, the existence of neighborhood schools means that the Oriental [Jewish] child of Nachlaot is not likely to attend classes with the European child of the wealthy area of Rehavia even though the two communities border each other. Two years ago pressure from parents of Oriental children on the education office of the city of Jerusalem finally brought an end to segregation of the schools in this area.*

—Mark Iris and Avraham Shama,  
*Society*, May, 1972

geography, history, natural science, agriculture, civics, Moslem and Christian religions, and scores of auxiliary textbooks and reading material. Even so, the now available textbooks do not embrace all the subjects and a number of authors are now engaged in making up the balance.

3. *School programmes* After a period of uncertainty in formulating curricula, it can be said that, thanks to the work of a number of pedagogic committees consisting of Arab supervisors and educationalists, a uniform syllabus has been instituted for all schools.

The Arab schools at present follow the same programme as that of the Jewish school, save in the following respect:

- a. Arabic serves as the language of instruction and special emphasis is laid on Arabic and Arab culture.
- b. Extended study of Arab history.
- c. Special programmes for the study of Islam and Christianity.

Otherwise, there are no distinctions whatsoever, be it in mathematics, geometry, geography, natural sciences, foreign languages, or general history.

One of the defects that must be pointed out is that the Arab pupil studies more of Jewish history and literature than the Jewish pupil does of Arab history and literature. Also, the study of Hebrew is obligatory, while that of Arabic in Jewish secondary schools is optional. Arab pupils study Hebrew beginning with grade three in Arab schools, while Arabic is not taught in Hebrew primary schools, except for some isolated cases.

The number of hours devoted to Arabic and Arab literature in secondary schools is identical with that assigned to Hebrew and Hebrew literature. The Arab pupil has to acquire knowledge aimed at, according to the programme, opening before him a door to Hebrew culture and its values in the past and present. It has also been claimed that the purpose of the Hebrew studies is to make it easier for the Arab pupil to understand Jewish society and culture in the State of Israel. It appears that this is too heavy a burden for the Arab pupil, who has to study the Bible, Mishna, Aggada, mediaeval literature, and Hebrew literature of modern and most recent times almost to the same extent as of his own culture.

*... Of every thousand born [in Morocco], only 450 enter school, 300 achieve literacy, 160 begin sixth grade, 21 begin tenth grade, 5 go to university, and one gets a university degree. Of those aged 6-14 in 1960 over a million were not in school; by 1972, the number will be over three times as many. Primary school enrollment . . . has remained virtually frozen for nearly a decade.*  
—James A. Paul, *New Politics* (September, 1971)

In my opinion, this burden should be lightened and more attention be given to Arab culture, all the more so as the study of Arabic and Arab culture is not compulsory for Jewish pupils and the study of Arab literature, culture and history occupies a negligible part in relation to the studies devoted to Arab pupils to Hebrew literature, language and history. There should be a single criterion in the two cases.

At the same time, there is the phenomenon of Arab pupils in their scores entering Jewish secondary schools, a phenomenon which is not two-way; in consequence, numerous Arab pupils study under the programme of the Jewish sector. According to recent data, Arab pupils in Jewish secondary schools were distributed, as follows:

Jewish Educational Institutions	Number of Arab Pupils
Teachers training colleges	10
Agricultural Schools	170
Secondary vocational schools	182
Secondary general schools	117
Wingate Sports Institute	3
Total	482

It can be said that the Arabs study more Jewish subjects than the Jews study Arab subjects, and in secondary schools Arab pupils learn as much of Hebrew subjects as they do of Arab subjects, with the extra emphasis on Islam and Christianity.

Here the fact is prominently demonstrated that the influence of Hebrew culture is on the rise, and this is due to political circumstances, even though the place of Arab culture is not being neglected.

As far as the study of religion is concerned, this is no problem in schools where all pupils are of the same faith or community. In such cases about three hours a week are devoted to Islam or Christianity, in junior, and two hours in advanced grades. In visits that I paid to mixed schools of Moslems and Christians, I found that grades are split and groupings made where the number of those belonging to one or other of the denominations is low. Textbooks on Islam which have been prepared by Moslem teachers and supervisors are of the same pattern as those in use in the Arab States and include chapters on Islam, its precepts, the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet. Religious textbooks for the secondary stage are still lacking, and qualified teachers of religion conduct the lessons without that aid.

4. *Dearth of school premises and educational Institutions.* The dearth of primary school

buildings in Arab villages was very marked until 1961. The change for the better began with the development of municipal authorities. The Ministry of Education and Culture grants each such authority, or educational network, the sum of IL 4,000 for every class, and shares in the cost of equipping it.

In 1961 the Ministry allocated IL 300,000 for the formation of new classes; in 1962 the amount was IL 530,000; in 1963 IL 700,000; and in 1964 IL 1,250,000. By 1970 it came to IL 1,900,000. The Ministry pays half the cost of equipment, as well.

This year 200 classrooms were built, as against 124 last year. In spite of the enormous expansion of modern schools, that are a source of pride, and especially the highly up-to-date model school in Baq'a el-Gharbiya which cost close to IL two million, there is still in evidence a shortage of schools in some Arab localities, owing to the large number of children and the natural growth of the Arab population in Israel, which has gone up from 140,000 in 1948 to 400,000 in 1970.

Here is the development of the educational network in the Arab sector over a period of some 20 years.

	1949	1964	1970/71
Primary schools	78	170	280
Number of teachers	350	1,800	3,600
Number of pupils	15,000	49,768	81,000

These figures do not include the scores of community and missionary schools with nearly 20,000 Arab pupils and about 600 teachers. There has, too, been a considerable development in the opening of evening schools in towns for working youth.

5. *Remoteness of villages and the integration of Jewish teachers in Arab schools.*

This problem has ceased to exist. Almost all Arab villages are now linked to the national road system. The Ministry of Education and Culture maintains a policy of appointing teachers indigenous to the locality who have graduated from University and teachers' training colleges. The difficulty of transportation and accessibility of schools in outlying Arab localities has been almost completely overcome. I pointed out that difficulties experienced in this regard in the past dislocated the regular sequence of studies and caused the loss of very many teaching hours. For instance, schools with Moslem, Christian, and Jewish teachers were generally closed during the holidays of the three religions. Now, these troubles have been removed and an attempt is being made to concentrate in each school staff of the same community and vicinity. However, two weekly days of rest are observed in Arab schools, as against one in Jewish schools, so that lessons have to be squeezed into five days: this makes it less easy for the children to grasp what is being taught.

## 6. Secondary schools.

The situation has improved. In Arab localities in 1963 there were five municipal secondary schools and six community ones. The present figures are given below:

	Number of Schools	Number of Pupils	Number of Teachers
Municipal general schools	14	3,365	181
Community general schools	11	2,067	145
Vocational and agricultural schools	8	1,181	123

Though the development has been considerable, from 11 secondary schools in 1963 to 33 today, the Arab population is still wanting in secondary schools. In most of the larger concentrations there are already post-primary facilities, but children from smaller places are compelled to go far afield to complete their studies. The level of studies has risen a great deal but still not enough. In some schools the proportion of successful candidates for matriculation was over 90 percent, but the general average, which in 1965 was 13.5 percent, still does not exceed 33 percent.

The main reasons are as follows:

- Absence of selectivity in accepting pupils for grade 9 and the fact that pupils who fail are not left in the same grade for another year.
- Although qualified and academic teachers have been absorbed in the Arab educational network, there is still not enough knowledge among teachers, or suitable training for them.
- A shortage of textbooks persists.
- A shortage of secondary school buildings, laboratories and equipment is still apparent.
- Local authorities are not understanding enough of the needs of secondary pupils.
- Pupils absent themselves during the season of agricultural work and some are away from their homes while studying, and are thus deprived of parental supervision.

The number of those going on to secondary school is relatively insignificant; the labor market easily absorbs youthful manpower and economic

difficulties prevent families with many children from providing education for all or even any of them. This state of affairs was improved to some extent by the introduction of free education in the intermediate stage up to grade 9. The percentage of those in receipt of graduated tuition grants in Arab secondary schools does not exceed 47 percent. It is obvious that the number of those completing their studies and going on to university is too small, though there has been marked progress in recent years in the number of Arab students in the universities, from 10 in 1949 to 600 this year, in addition to hundreds of others studying abroad, in the United States, Europe and Russia.

It seems from the facts catalogued by me and the personal survey which I conducted that in recent years there has been a great awakening in the midst of the Arab population to the need to acquire education and training; and the percentage of those in secondary schools and universities is rising steadily.

In summarizing the educational problems, we can make the following points:

- The standard of studies is developing and improving, but can be further still improved.
- The shortage of school buildings is being put right, though conditions are still critical in nearly thirty schools.
- There is no lack of textbooks in primary schools, but there is in secondary.
- Equipment and audio-visual aids and laboratories are still incomplete.
- Many teachers have qualified, hundreds are receiving specialized training in universities and professional courses, but inadequacy of knowledge and experience in the case of teachers and headmasters is still felt.
- There is a feeling among the Arab intelligentsia that Arab intellectuals and educators should be more strongly integrated in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Of twenty supervisors of Arab Education thirteen are Arabs and seven Jews, and Arab educators take part in syllabus committees. Their number should be increased and university graduates and educators should be appointed to key positions in the Department for Arab Education. We have to arrive at a situation where the Arabic education will be in Arab hands.
- The image and contents of the syllabus in Arab primary schools are Arab, the language of instruction is Arabic, religion and Arab history are extensively taught, but it is necessary to add to the number of hours devoted to Arab literature, history, and culture in the secondary schools. There the stress is on Jewish culture and religion which should, of course, be taught, but with greater selectivity and in not so wide a scope. I venture the opinion that the length of time devoted to Arab culture in Jewish schools should be increased.
- There are close to forty Arab teachers of Arabic and Arab history in Jewish schools and double that number of Jewish teachers in Arab schools. In my view, the mutual integration of teachers should be intensified, to demonstrate the cultural coexistence of the two peoples on a mutual basis.

*The ruthlessness of French attacks on Vietnamese culture and the thoroughness of French education very nearly succeeded in divorcing the Vietnamese elite from their culture. Some became completely deracinated, and even for the majority, who remained Vietnamese, the possibility of deracination existed. A well-known poet seemed to indicate this when he compared the Vietnamese situation with that of the Algerians. He told me: "We were not like them. We always spoke our own language among ourselves."*

—Martin Bernal, *New York Review*, August 12, 1971

The encounter between the two cultures is not confined to the sphere of education. Clearly, it is strongly reflected in the teaching and educational programme, but it has found expression in a variety of cultural enterprises, including the departments of higher learning intended to impart Arab subjects. Such faculties and institutes exist in all the universities of Israel and their level is among the highest in the world. Numerous Jewish orientalists have dedicated their lives to research into Arab culture and their treatment of the subject has been positive and factual. At the Institute for Asian and African Studies in Jerusalem a library from time to time publishes translations of Arab works into Hebrew and vice versa. Many publishing houses print Hebrew translations of the best literary and philosophical works in Arabic. Similarly, writings by Nobel prize-winner S. Y. Agnon and anthologies of poetry and prose have been translated into Arabic. Intensification of such two-way translations is likely to strengthen the consciousness of coexistence between two peoples that have so much in common. Thus, for example, the translation into Arabic of works by Agnon has provided proof of the affinity of the Jewish character to the concepts and ways of thinking of the Arabs. This was the subject of the seminar work which I submitted in the context of my studies for the B.A. degree at the Haifa University under the title: 'Persons and subjects in Arab literature and in the works of Agnon'. The similar exceeds the dissimilar. There is the same tradition of a monotheistic creed which unites the two peoples: the same customs and the tradition of hospitality, reverence for parents, the naive belief in the 'tsaddik' (the saintly person).

In the field of literature, signs can be discerned of a dialogue that is becoming more intense between Jewish and Arab intellectuals. The dimensions, however, are still modest. Since 1964 a committee has been at work to encourage Jewish-Arab literary co-operation, and every two years it publishes a review comprising works by Jewish and Arab writers in both languages.

The very fact that the Arabs in Israel constitute a national minority reinforces their conservative attitudes and the attachment to their patrimony and tradition, and to their literary values, in their everyday lives.

The regime in Israel is not of a kind to interfere with the traditional cultural life of its Arab citizens. It is true that the State of Israel, being a Jewish State in its essence, naturally exerts an influence on the Arab culture of its citizens, but, at the same time, Arabic is considered a second official language.

*... For every group to be liberated, it is essential to realize sooner or later that they themselves absorbed the dominant values that enslaved them and, in fact, based their identities on them. This is where the psychology of the unconscious enters, although it is obvious that the to-be-liberated should take a close look at psychological methods to make sure that they are not accepting what was invented to fortify the status quo.*

—Erik H. Erikson, *In Search of Common Ground*, 1973

All official forms are translated into Arabic. Government offices, however, often neglect to enclose an Arab translation in their correspondence. The Arab population has to make use of Hebrew in its contacts with the Jewish sector, at work and in social relations. As a result of this contact, we perceive the fact that Hebrew expressions have entered colloquial Arabic, and Arab expressions, especially phrases of greetings, have entered Hebrew.

In addition, the Israeli Arabs are not cut off from the fount of their culture and, because of the geographical circumstances, they enjoy a close cultural contact with their compatriots in the whole area. These are the reasons for it:

1. There are, in Israel, Arab broadcasts of a suitable level which derive most of their material from Arab poetry and music, Arab literature and history and from the Arab way of life, locally and in neighboring countries, and which also include current events and innovations in the Arab world.
2. The Arab population has a window open on the Arab world through Arab radio and television networks which are well-heard and seen in Israel. This is in addition to the Israeli television.
3. Books appearing in the Arab world, literary, traditional, religious and philosophical writings, modern and classical, are available to the Israeli Arab citizen in two forms:
  - a. Through reprints by local publishers of books by great writers of the Arab world and of classical and educative books.
  - b. Through direct imports via the West Bank — the books are easily obtainable.
4. Freedom of expression and of the press in Israel permits an unhindered outlet to Israeli Arab writers and journalists. A number of Arab weeklies and monthlies representing different political trends appear in Israel and, in addition, it is possible to read publications from the Arab world in the various local libraries in Israel.

All the above makes the possibility of assimilation of Arab culture in Israel remote. It is clear that Israeli Arabs can be influenced to a degree by Jewish culture, but not at the expense of their own. Interest in both cultures should be turned to reciprocity and the human element in them should be emphasized for the mutual good, and to strengthen the consciousness of coexistence in peace and brotherhood between the two peoples that, as I have said again and again, are the closest to each other among all the nations of the world. It is obvious that the political conditions around us and the state of war between Israel and the Arab States represent an obstacle to the maintenance of real and regular links between the two cultures in Israel.

Stress upon the relationship of brotherhood, of tolerance, of shared spiritual trends, of the co-operation between the two peoples over centuries, and constant educational efforts aimed at eradicating misunderstanding, doubt and mistrust will bring about tighter cultural and educational links to benefit and to be a blessing for both the Semite sister-nations in Israel and the Middle East.