

Israel's Official Policy with Regard to Teaching Evolution in Public Schools

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Abstract

One of the main aspects of the creation–evolution controversy is the educational one, which deals with the question which explanation should be provided to students, mainly in public education, for the present form of life on Earth. This educational aspect is fertile ground for research; however, the official policy of various states' educational systems regarding the instruction of evolutionary theory has hardly been investigated. In addition, research about the way in which Jewish education deals with this topic is meager. This article explores the policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education regarding this issue. Findings show that the Israeli Ministry of Education, as well as its Administration of Religious Education, considers evolutionary theory to be the only option for scientifically explaining the formation of the animal kingdom and the human race, without dealing in any way with the seeming contradiction between this theory and the Genesis creation story. Since the Israeli population is mostly traditional, it is argued here that it would be advisable to revise the policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education so that it includes an explanation of why the evolution theory and the Genesis creation story need not contradict each other.

Keywords: Evolution, Creation, Educational policy

Introduction

The dispute about the origins of living creatures in general, and of mankind in particular, usually termed the *creation–evolution controversy*,

stems from the difference between the scientific explanation for the formation of organisms and the Genesis creation story, which is held by the Jewish and Christian canons alike. The history of this dispute is longstanding, and it involves theological, scientific, cultural and political aspects; however, it seems that today its educational aspect, which deals with the question of which explanation should be provided to students, mainly in public education, for the present form of life on Earth, has become a central one.

This educational aspect is fertile ground for research, dealing with questions such as what teachers actually teach and how they teach it (Moore, 2008; Moore & Kraemer, 2005), what teachers believe (BouJaoude et al., 2011; Fowler & Meisels, 2010), and what students' conceptions are (Berti, Toneatti, & Rosati, 2010; Donnelly, Kazempour, & Amirshokohi, 2009; Ozay-Kose, 2010). The official policy of various states' educational systems regarding the instruction of evolutionary theory has hardly been investigated; in addition, studies in this field dealing with the Israeli context are few and far between. This article explores the policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education regarding this issue as it is reflected in curricula, textbooks and statements made by position holders.

According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (2013), the Israeli school system numbers about 1.6 million students, with approximately 73% of them attending Hebrew-speaking schools, which serve the Jewish population, and the remaining 27% attending Arabic-speaking schools, which serve the non-Jewish population. Hebrew-speaking schools are divided into the public school system (77%) and separate, independent ultra-orthodox religious schools (23%). This article will focus on the policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education regarding Hebrew speaking public schools, which include state schools (75%) and state-religious schools (25%): the state schools provide secular education, and the state-religious schools provide religious (although not ultra-orthodox) education.

Theoretical background

The creation–evolution controversy

Where did present-day animals come from? According to evolutionary theory, all present-day animals descended from a universal ancestor who lived approximately 3.8 billion years ago. The current diversity of living creatures is due to evolution, namely, the change

in inherited characteristics of biological populations over successive generations. According to this theory, evolutionary processes occur due to causes such as natural selection, genetic drift and mutation (Hall & Hallgrímsson, 2007; Mayr, 2001; Panno, 2004). The appearance of the modern human, about 200,000 years ago, is also the result of a lengthy evolutionary process, by which people originated from ape-like ancestors. Thus, humans and the large apes of Africa – chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas – share a common ancestor who supposedly lived between 8 and 6 million years ago (Stringer & Andrews, 2012).

The biblical description of creation is radically different. According to the first chapter of Genesis, God created the world in six days by spoken commands. Each day marked the creation of plants, the sun, moon, and stars, fish, birds and animals, and finally also man and woman - Adam and Eve. The second chapter of Genesis adds that in order to create Adam, God took some soil from the ground and formed the shape of a man out of it; He then breathed life into his nostrils and the man began to live. Subsequently God made this man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping God extracted one of his ribs and formed a woman around it. Genesis goes on to list many of this couple's descendants, giving their ages when they had children and then also when they died; according to these genealogies, the biblical date of creation is less than 6,000 years ago (Jones, 2005; Slifkin, 2006).

The biblical description of creation seems to be totally incompatible with the evolution theory (Morris, 2012). This discrepancy bothers Jewish and Christian alike; for the purposes of this study, the positions of Jewish thinkers are important. Some religious leaders, as well as religious scientists, reject the evolution theory, claiming that it has only a very meager factual basis, and, moreover, that it is uncertain and keeps changing (e.g. Schneersohn, 2003; Trop, 2013). On the other hand, other religious leaders and religious scientists claim that there is no inevitable conflict between these two approaches, reconciling the contradiction in several ways, such as by claiming that our world was created on the ruins of former worlds, residues of which are the findings that establish the theory of evolution; by claiming that God created the world on purpose to look as though an evolutionary process had taken place; or – the most common way – by seeing the biblical description of creation as an allegory, based on the fact that a literal interpretation of this story among rabbinic commentators is exceptional, as written by Maimonides (1904, p. 211) with regard to the account of the sixth day of creation: “the account given in Scripture of the Creation is not, as is

generally believed, intended to be in all its parts literal” (e.g. Aviezer, 2001; Cantor & Swetlitz, 2006; Leibowitz, 2005; Levi, 2006; Nadal, 2012; Schroeder, 2002).

The first fully formed theory of evolution was proposed, mainly by Darwin, in the early 19th century (Mayr, 2001). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Hirsch, 1984, p. 263-264), who lived in the 19th century, claimed that the evolution theory could not be a threat to the Jewish belief; it may even be a reason for additional reverence of God by bringing us to understand His wonders:

This will never change, not even if the latest scientific notion that the genesis of all the multitudes of organic forms on earth can be traced back to one single, most primitive, primeval form of life should ever appear to be anything more than what it is today, a vague hypothesis still unsupported by fact. Even if this notion were ever to gain complete acceptance by the scientific world, Jewish thought, unlike the reasoning of the high priest of that notion, would nonetheless never summon us to revere a still extant representative of this primal form as the supposed ancestor of us all. Rather, Judaism in that case would call upon its adherents to give even greater reverence than ever before to the one, sole God Who, in His boundless creative wisdom and eternal omnipotence, needed to bring into existence no more than one single, amorphous nucleus and one single law of “adaptation and heredity” in order to bring forth, from what seemed chaos but was in fact a very definite order, the infinite variety of species we know today, each with its unique characteristics that sets it apart from all other creatures.

A few years later, at the beginning of the 20th century, Rav Abraham Isaac Kook (Kook, 1961, p. 165) wrote that the primary goal of the Torah is not to tell what exactly happened in reality:

Regarding the opinions stemming from new studies, which most of them contradict the plain meaning of the Torah. My opinion is that anyone whose views are straight deserves to know, that there is no necessary truth in all those new opinions, although we do not need to deny them clearly and stand against them, because it is not a main point of the Torah to tell us simple facts and occurrences. The point is the inside, the internal meaning of things.

Rav Kook (1963, p. 537) also claimed that the evolution theory is compatible with the mystical concepts of the Kabbalah:

The theory of evolution, which is continually winning over the world

now, is adaptable to the mysterious world of Kabbalah, more than all other philosophical theories. The development which treads the path of ascent provides the optimistic foundation in the world, for how can you become discouraged when you see that everything is developing and ascending.

A comprehensive overview of various Jewish thinkers' approaches to this topic is found in the book written by Rosenberg (1988).

Educational policy regarding creation and evolution

The creation-evolution controversy has given rise to an ongoing worldwide debate regarding the preferable explanation to be provided to public school students for the origins of the animal kingdom and the human race. Much research has stemmed from this debate, dealing with various questions such as what teachers teach on this subject, and how they do so (Moore, 2008; Moore & Kraemer, 2005), what teachers actually believe (BouJaoude et al., 2011; Fowler & Meisels, 2010), and what students' conceptions are, both before and after learning about evolution (Berti, Toneatti, & Rosati, 2010; Donnelly, Kazempour, & Amirshokoohi, 2009; Ozay-Kose, 2010). This article focuses on the official policy of a specific state with regard to the instruction of the evolution theory. What can be found in the literature about this?

The United States' policy regarding the instruction of evolution theory has been described in quite a few books and articles. The theory of evolution has been the subject of heated debate in the United States for many years; thus, the official policy for public schools, which prohibits the teaching of anything but the evolutionary theory as scientific knowledge, was established mainly through court rulings. After World War I, several states in the United States introduced legislation prohibiting the teaching of the evolution theory. This led to the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, in which a high school teacher, John Scopes, was accused of teaching Darwin's theory of evolution in a state-funded school. In 1968, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the law prohibiting the instruction of evolution was in violation of the First Amendment, and in 1987 it ruled that teaching creation theory alongside evolutionary theory, giving equal time to alternative theories of origin, was unconstitutional. In 2005 District Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania ruled that creationism, in its various forms, is religious belief and not science, and violates the constitutional restriction on teaching religion in public school science classes (e.g. Ayala, 2008;

Clark, 2000; Long, 2011; Moore, 2008; Moore & Kraemer, 2005; Wexler, 2003).

Thus, the literature elaborates on the United States' policy regarding the instruction of evolution. However, when one searches the literature for studies about other countries' official policies on this issue, none are to be found. This area deserves further research, which may not only describe the existing policies in various countries but also deal with subjects such as processes of education policy formation and the connections between the policy endorsed in a specific state and that state's religious, cultural and political characteristics.

Teaching evolution in Israel

This article, which deals with the policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education regarding teaching evolutionary theory, is focused on the Jewish public education system in Israel. What has been investigated to date regarding teaching evolution in Israel?

A recent study on this topic (Dodick, Dayan & Orion, 2010) explores the philosophical approaches of religious Jewish science teachers in Israeli high schools toward teaching science subjects which conflict with their religious beliefs. According to the findings, most of the teachers do not adopt one single philosophical approach, but rather relate separately to each source of possible conflict in accordance with the philosophical approach that appears to be the most suitable for resolving the given conflict. Findings also indicate that teachers felt less conflicted toward the specific subject of geological time as compared with issues connected to the creation of the Earth, and especially evolution.

Some earlier articles which appeared in the journal of Israeli biology teachers dealt with the attitudes of high school students toward learning evolution (Peled & Bernholtz, 2000; Ruach, Gross, Peled, & Tamir, 1996), with reasons for students avoiding the questions on evolution on the Israeli matriculation exam in biology (Orin, Ziv, & Frankel, 2000), and with the difficulties experienced by Israeli teachers teaching evolution (Orin, Frankel, & Ziv, 2001).

As for the United States Jewish education system, Wolowelsky (1997, p. 39) said that he does not find troublesome the section on evolution taught in the regular biology course required for a high school diploma, since "there is no contradiction between good science and Torah *hashkafah*, although there is an incompatibility between bad science and distorted *hashkafah*". Selya (2006) surveyed teachers in modern-orthodox high schools to better understand how they dealt with

evolution, and discovered four approaches to the subject: evolution is taught in class without mentioning any religious connection; evolution is taught by science teachers with the aid of a religious teacher or rabbi; students are assigned reading material on evolution but it is not discussed in class; and not teaching evolution at all. There were no instances of replacing the standard biology texts with a creation-science curriculum.

Two other studies do not focus directly on the creation-evolution controversy, but rather on a somewhat broader topic – the way Jewish education should deal with issues of *Torah and Science*, which is a fundamental notion in Jewish thought, expressing the interrelationship between the organized human knowledge about the universe on the one hand and Judaism on the other. The goal of Schneller's study (1974) was to determine which ways would be suitable for the religious education system to cope with the contradictions between Torah and science. He came to the conclusion that there was no single method which was found to be satisfactory for all students; for this reason he recommended explaining the contradiction according to several approaches, adjusting the explanation to the audience as needed. Green, Gutman, Levy and Sherf (1976) also explored methods of teaching issues pertaining to faith and science at religious secondary schools. The study went on to recommend using either the approach limiting the validity of scientific statements, or the approach interpreting religious statements symbolically rather than literally, but not the approach of absolute separation between faith and science.

As may be seen from the above, there is still much room for further research on this topic. The current article explores the Israeli Ministry of Education's policy regarding this issue as it is reflected in curricula, textbooks and statements made by position holders.

Methodology

Alongside interviews and observations, documents are also a valuable source of qualitative data, being that “documents are part of the fabric of our world” (Love, 2003, p. 83). Documents may be useful in various areas of educational research. For example, Jenkins (2009) used documents from various countries to investigate conceptual foundations of science curriculum reform in schools; Gregg (2011) explored what the National Association for the Education of Young Children's position statement articulates regarding children with disabilities included in early childhood classrooms; and Tupper (2008) examined a high school drug education text to discern its underlying ideological commitments

and political dispositions.

Documents are often used as secondary sources in qualitative research, since they are considered to be “valuable resources for confirming insights gained through interviews and observations” (Merriam, 2009, p. xi). One may claim that this is a shame, because documents as a source of research have a lot of advantages (Bowen, 2009), making things visible and traceable (Prior, 2003). At any rate some areas can be investigated primarily through documents, and that is the case with the subject of this study, which deals with the official policy of a state education system. Thus, this study is based on document analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) classify existing documents on educational research into three basic categories: personal documents - documents created by an individual; official documents - documents produced by institutions; and popular culture documents - mass-consumed materials, such as movies, music albums, books and advertisements. This study required focusing on official documents, which are public documents, i.e. documents produced for public consumption (Payne & Payne, 2004). Thus, curricula, textbooks and statements made by position holders were explored.

Analysis of documents seeks to clarify not only what their authors meant, but also to ponder the meaning of their actual existence. Documents should be analyzed not only by dealing with their contents, as produced by human beings, but also by dealing with their function within relational networks (Prior, 2008). Analysis of documents in this study was based on interpretation of the documents collected, which aimed at detecting explicit and implicit meaning concerning the topic at hand.

Findings

Biology curriculum

The primary source clarifying the policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education regarding evolution is the biology curriculum for high schools (Ministry of Education, 2010). In this curriculum (p. 8), evolution is considered to be one of the ‘main ideas and basic concepts’ of biology:

The various species of living organisms change gradually over time (eras), due to changes occurring in genetic information influenced by environmental factors as well as internal factors. According to the currently accepted explanation, genetic variance between individuals and the process of natural selection are the main causes for the vast

variety of creatures that lived in the past and those that exist today.

Thereafter evolution is mentioned in the context of the compulsory subject «ecology», and in the optional subjects titled «reproduction», «heredity» and «microorganisms». Thus, it is clear that the Israeli Ministry of Education considers evolution to be a certain fact.

This position was reflected also in the reaction to the Chief Scientist of the Ministry of Education's statement that the universe was created by God, and that there was no satisfactory scientific explanation for this, adding that the evolution theory was merely a hypothesis, and that students should learn its shortcomings along with its strengths (Rinat & Kashti, 2010; Yerushalmi, 2010). This statement was condemned by leading Israeli scientists (Kashti, 2010b), and in one university studies were halted for five minutes as an act of protest against this approach (Valmer, 2010). When this was first published, the Minister of Education expressed his reservations about it, noting that the Chief Scientist's utterance was "inconsistent with the policy of the Ministry of Education and thus unacceptable... evolution is the dominant theory in biology, and it will continue to be taught in schools" (Kashti, 2010a). Then, one month after the Chief Scientist expressed his views once more, the Minister of Education fired him. The Ministry of Education did not link the dismissal to the Chief Scientist's statements about evolution, but senior officials were quoted in the media as saying that these statements were in fact the reason for his dismissal (Zemer-Bronfman, 2010).

The biology curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 75) also includes a subject called 'evolution and cultivation'. Here too, evolution is accepted as certainty, so much so that there is no reference to the arguments denying it:

The theory of evolution proposed by Darwin and published in 1859 was a landmark in biological science, influencing the understanding of biological phenomena as well as other areas beside biology.

Today there is no controversy among scientists as to the proposed model for the occurrence of evolution, i.e. for species having been formed from other species in an evolutionary process extending over many years, but there are different opinions regarding the rate at which the process of evolution is taking place, as well as the mechanisms that allow for evolutionary processes.

However, the opening remarks on this subject note also that:

No other scientific theory is so difficult for some people (even today) to

accept, as the theory of evolutionary development in the way of natural selection, especially in the context of human origins. For many people, this theory conflicts with their deepest beliefs about the way and the time in which the world and all its living creatures were created.

The curriculum itself does not explicitly mention human evolution, which is more difficult for religious believers to accept. However, these opening remarks clarify that human evolution is an integral part of evolutionary theory. Although these remarks reflect some understanding for those who have difficulty accepting the theory, the curriculum considers it to be an unquestionable fact; however, 'evolution and cultivation' is just an optional subject, which is studied only by students who take the extended program in biology, and therefore only relatively few students are tested on this each year in the matriculation exams. One Knesset Member approached the Ministry of Education on this matter, claiming that all Israeli students should study this subject. The chief superintendent of biology studies answered her that «due to the sensitivity of the issue among certain groups, more extensive studies of evolution are taught only as an optional subject; I regret that studying evolution is not compulsory for all students» (Meniv, 2012).

Thus, despite the consideration of evolution to be a certain fact by the Ministry of Education, it takes into account the feelings of the religious public by reducing the number of students who study evolutionary theory. Notwithstanding, the Ministry of Education has recently announced that «the Pedagogical Secretariat [of the Ministry of Education] is currently examining the possibility of expanding the instruction of this subject [evolutionary theory] to additional age groups» (Blizovsky, 2013).

Textbooks about evolution, which are certified by the Ministry of Education, do not deal with the discrepancy between the evolution theory and religious beliefs (e.g. Frankel, Peled, & Brenholz, 1995; Hagay, Tzur, Reisfeld, & Stern, 2005; Markuza-Hess, 2001). Regarding a related subject - the Big Bang theory, one geography textbook (Savir, Segev & Shiloni, 2011), designed for middle school and approved by the Israeli Ministry of Education, provides a short explanation of this theory. Almost a third of this explanation is devoted to the seeming contradiction with the Genesis creation narrative, noting that (p. 17):

The Big Bang theory stems from scientific thinking and researchers use scientific tools of various types in order to validate it. However, it is important to note that this theory does not necessarily contradict

other explanations for the formation of the universe and the existence of living creatures in it. Thus, some believe the story of creation as it appears in Genesis, while some researchers believe that there is no contradiction between the story of creation and the Big Bang theory.

In this excerpt we sense the consideration for the religious believers' feelings. Actually, this consideration has led the authors even further – they ambiguously legitimize even the non-acceptance of the Big Bang theory due to religious faith.

State religious education system

The Israeli state religious education system is directed and supervised by the Administration of Religious Education of the Ministry of Education. The Administration of Religious Education has added 'additional goals' to the biology curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2010). Following the presentation of the program's goals, there is a paragraph titled 'additional goals for the religious schools'. This paragraph (p. 18) states that:

The instruction of biology in religious education will be based on the assumption that science cannot contradict religious belief and the religious value system, nor can it be their source; however, the instruction of biology and of science in general will serve as an opportunity for deepening students' faith and religious values derived from the Torah.

These 'additional goals for the religious education' in the biology curriculum demonstrate once again that the Ministry of Education takes into account the feelings of the religious sector. There are no such 'additional goals' in curricula of other subjects such as physics or chemistry, which may be due to the religious sector's high sensitivity to the teaching of evolutionary theory, but it may also result from the sectorial affiliation of the Minister of Education who was in office at the time the curriculum was written, a factor which sometimes influences the reference to the religious sector in curricula (Kliger, 2002).

However, the greatest significance of these 'additional goals' is their reflection of the fact that the Administration of Religious Education does not oppose the teaching of evolution. Without dealing with the creation-evolution controversy explicitly, it implicitly states that science cannot contradict religious belief, using the expression *seeming contradictions* to define the relations between science and religion, with the word *contradictions* in quotation marks.

One of the above 'additional goals' set for the religious education system is "developing the student's ability to cognitively and emotionally encounter the seeming "contradictions" between science and religion through sources dealing with these questions" (p. 18). How might this goal be achieved? The Administration of Religious Education published a book (Levi, 2002) named "Worlds meeting each other", subtitled "Science and technology through the lens of religious law". This book has replaced an earlier one (Nuriel, 1980), and its purpose is to address the state religious education system's way of dealing of with *Torah and Science* issues, noting that "teaching scientific and technological disciplines requires the student to deal with ethical dilemmas as well as halachic and ideological questions that necessitate educational attention" (p. 5). This book includes several articles that engage in the creation-evolution controversy, but the pedagogical processing of this article is incomplete and therefore it is inappropriate for classroom teaching.

One of the subjects in the high school curriculum of *Machshevet Yisrael* (Jewish thought) is *Torah and science* (Ministry of Education, 1994). This curriculum includes a list of sources to be learned in the context of this subject, some of which deal with the discrepancy between the biblical creation story and the evolution theory. In addition, the curriculum includes a list of topics for discussion based on these sources, which does not explicitly mention evolution. No textbook on this subject has been published. Since *Torah and science* is an optional subject studied only by students who take the extended program in *Machshevet Yisrael*, only few Israeli students actually learn it.

Discussion

There are various options for addressing the issue of the creation-evolution controversy within the context of an official policy regarding the teaching of the evolution theory in public education, such as teaching students the two alternative approaches in explaining the formation of the animal kingdom and the human race; teaching only the theory of evolution, while expressing reservations and explaining that it is scientifically controversial; and even explaining why those who deny evolution are wrong. The Israeli Ministry of Education chose another option: to ignore the creation-evolution controversy. It considers evolutionary theory to be the only option for explaining the formation of living creatures, without dealing in any way with the seeming contradiction between this theory and the Genesis creation story.

This choice is somewhat problematic both for the state education

system and for the religious-state education system. Although the state education system is secular, the Bible is important to almost all students: according to recent surveys, 80% of Israeli Jews believe that there is a God, and 71% believe that it is very important to study the Bible (The Israel Democracy Institute, 2012). Considering Bible study to be the basis for formulating a world view and a Jewish and Israeli identity, the state education system teaches the Bible to all its students (Ministry of Education, 2012). Thus, disregarding the discrepancy between the biblical creation story and the evolution theory may prove to be a mistake.

In addition, this article shows that the creation-evolution controversy, and therefore the debate about teaching evolution in public schools, appears in several arenas of Israeli public discourse, including the media, academic institutions, and the Knesset. Thus, the state education system cannot afford to ignore the creation-evolution controversy; it should provide students with some way of dealing with this issue.

This is even truer for the state-religious education system. While the students of the state education system study the Bible from a somewhat critical perspective, the students of the state-religious education system are educated to believe in God as the Creator of the world and in the stories of the Bible; this is one of the main goals of this system, and perhaps its primary one. At the same time, these students are taught the evolution theory which contradicts one of the most basic stories of the Bible. The reference to this discrepancy in some sources included in an optional part of the *Machshevet Yisrael* curriculum, which are studied by few students only, is insufficient.

Re-charting a new clear and detailed educational path in this subject is required, for both the state education and the religious-state education systems. As aforesaid, there are several options for addressing the issue of the creation-evolution controversy within the framework of an official policy regarding the teaching of evolution. The way that seems best suited to the Israeli education system is to avoid casting doubt either on the scientific validity of the evolution theory or on the belief in a Creator of the World, explaining how things can fit together: by claiming that our world was created on the ruins of former worlds, residues of which are the findings that establish the theory of evolution; by claiming that God created the world on purpose to look as though an evolutionary process had taken place; or – the most common way – by seeing the biblical description of creation as an allegory (see above “The creation-evolution controversy”). This approach is common in the

world today, as noted the United States National Academy of Sciences (National Research Council, 2008, p. 12-13):

Today, many religious denominations accept that biological evolution has produced the diversity of living things over billions of years of Earth's history. Many have issued statements observing that evolution and the tenets of their faiths are compatible. Scientists and theologians have written eloquently about their awe and wonder at the history of the universe and of life on this planet, explaining that they see no conflict between their faith in God and the evidence for evolution.

Resolving the contradiction between the evolution theory and the creation story is an interdisciplinary subject that can be taught either in science lessons or in Judaism lessons. At any rate, it requires providing teachers with appropriate study materials that will enable them to teach this subject properly.

Conclusion

This article presents the official policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education regarding the teaching of the evolution theory, which it considers to be the only option for scientifically explaining the formation of living creatures. Although it is aware of the religious population's difficulty in accepting evolution as indubitable, it does not deal in any way with the seeming contradiction between the evolution theory and the Genesis creation story.

This policy seems not the most appropriate for the Israeli population, which is characterized by scientific progress in tandem with faith in the Creator. All the more so for the Administration of Religious Education, which fosters belief in the Creator while approving of the teaching of evolution. Thus, it seems advisable that the official policy of the Israeli Ministry of Education with regard to teaching evolution in public education include an explanation of why the evolution theory and the creation story need not contradict each other.

Further research should explore the process through which the existing policy has been formed. In addition, further research should explore to what extent this policy is actually implemented in the school system, and what impact it has on students' attitudes.

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