

## A Zionist Dream – Part 1

by

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My Zionist Dream is about the type of country we should have in a fast approaching future, one where technologies and machines will replace people in ever greater numbers. This could be a better future, where we work less and enjoy higher living standards. But it may also be a future where a few very wealthy people live behind walls for protection from everyone else. The future that our children receive will depend on our ability to think ahead, plan and outline a vision that targets where we want to go. This is true for all countries. It's particularly true for today's Israel, a place where the demands and desires of certain communities may bring them fulfillment today, but will eventually result in devastation for themselves and for the rest of us. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

If Israel so decides today, it can ensure that when it celebrates its 80th birthday in just over a decade, its elderly and disabled will not be poor, while its sick will have enough doctors and nurses amid short waiting periods and the world's best hospitalization conditions. Everyone in Israel would sign on for this small sample of the larger Dream, because it's not dependent on either religion or one's degree of religiosity. Realization of the full Zionist Dream will be possible only if we prioritize policies benefiting all over policies catering to narrow and sectoral interests.

To get from here to there, we'll need money – lots of money. Realization of the Zionist Dream requires both enlarging and reprioritizing the distribution of Israel's national pie. The path toward increasing resources passes through other parts of the Dream, providing equal opportunities for all and shutting down options for not shouldering the economic burden.

A considerably upgraded core curriculum would prepare all of Israel's children for a world with increasingly flexible employment conditions. Such a core curriculum must be mandatory in each of the country's schools. This isn't just a basic right of every child, it's the key to adult life in a country that one day will provide aid only to those unable to work and will shut the faucet off completely to those who don't want to work.

Systemic education reform should not be confined just to what is taught, it also needs to focus on who teaches and the way teachers are trained, compensated and employed. A normally functioning education system must include measures that enable accurate and constructive appraisals of the actual state of education in the country, what works and what doesn't.

Good basic education will widen the funnel into higher education – and this requires another fundamental change in approach. Israel doesn't need more people with degrees, it needs more people with knowledge. The Economy Ministry reports that for every three open positions in computers there is only one applicant, while Benjamin Bental and Dan Peled's research shows that the supply of academic degrees in technology fields is similar to demand. The problem isn't the number of Israeli graduates, it's that the quality of knowledge that many have doesn't match the requirements of a modern economy.

Machinating, cutting corners, not going the extra mile in completing projects – these are recurring themes in Israel. But a competitive global economy greatly reduces the degrees of freedom for taking shortcuts. Want a degree? Get a real one, not a piece of paper that doesn't

require serious study or any knowledge of English. Building an interchange? Then do it right, without traffic lights, so that traffic will flow freely and reduce congestion. Want tourists? What's the point of investing huge amounts in advertising abroad when sewage flows freely into the sea and the rivers smell to high heaven? Want a minimum wage that protects our weakest? Then it might be a good idea to invest in enforcing the existing minimum wage instead of instituting endless increases that benefit only half of those eligible for the minimum wage.

We are proud of our improvisational abilities, but that's no way to run an entire country. Patchwork policies are no substitute for a vision that specifies where we want to go, and a strategy detailing how to get there. If we want to move Israel to a sustainable socioeconomic trajectory, then we need to revise and redefine the Zionist Dream – and then implement it.