

CORRECTED VERSION

EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE

Subcommittee

Inquiry into the education of gifted and talented students

Melbourne — 20 February 2012

Members

Mr N. Elasmar
Mr P. Crisp

Mr D. Southwick
Ms G. Tierney

Chair: Mr D. Southwick

Staff

Executive Officer: Ms K. Riseley
Research Officers: Ms M. Scott, Ms A. Madden
Administration Officer: Ms N. Tyler

Witness

Rabbi D. Samson; and
Mr B. Gleiser, director, Aliyah, Australia and New Zealand.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Rabbi Samson, for joining the parliamentary Education and Training Committee. Just by way of background, as you are probably aware from our earlier dialogue, the Parliament has joint committees. This is one of the joint committees, and it specifically looks at education and training. We have a specific inquiry that we are undertaking at the moment, which is around gifted and talented kids. Part of what we are looking at is ways to support, encourage and provide assistance in the area of gifted and talented programs for these students.

It is great that you have been able to join us today. There are a couple of things we need to point out in terms of the committee process. Today Hansard will be recording the evidence, and that is the reason for the microphones in front of you. They are not for amplifying the sound; they are for recording purposes. We will give you an opportunity at some later point to look at the proof version of the transcript, which we will send to you electronically. If there are any typographical errors, you can correct them.

The other element of any public hearing we hold is that all our witnesses are covered by what we call parliamentary privilege when they give evidence, which is the same privilege afforded to members of Parliament. That means you can say whatever you like in the comfort of these four walls; however, it does not apply outside of the hearing proper, and I need to point that out.

You have met the people who are here, but I will once again introduce Nazih Elasmari, who is a committee member. There are other members of the committee, but they could not be present today. Assisting the committee are Kerry Riseley and Maria Scott, and also our Hansard reporters. Thank you to Michelle Coleman and Jane Rapke, who have joined us here today.

What we thought we might do is give you an opportunity to make some comments about what is happening in Israel and the theme of your visit to other schools, precincts and jurisdictions around the world as part of the research that you have been conducting, which you feel might interest us as a committee insofar as best practice around gifted and talented education is concerned. We might then have some questions to ask you to elaborate on some of what we hear from you. I will now hand over to you.

Rabbi SAMSON — Thank you, David. I will begin by thanking you for the invitation. It says in the book of Isaiah that in the end of days the word of God will emanate from Zion, and people around the world will want to know what is happening in Zion. It could be that this parliamentary hearing is part of that greater vision of knowing the educational methodology that the Jewish people have been using for the last 3000 to 3500 years.

Allow me to go back a few thousand years shortly, because what is happening today in Israel is predicated upon an educational system that has been vibrant and constant and attending the gifted for thousands of years. In the Bible, Moses had an assembly of 70 elders who were not elected but were chosen because they were exceptionally talented and wise. This assembly was known as the Sanhedrin. This Sanhedrin had 70 — and with Moses 71 — members, and they had three rows of students, which was another 23, and another Sanhedrin of 23, which together brought it to 117. One person in charge of each one brought the entire number to 120. The Israeli parliament today has 120 members, modelled after the format that was given by Ezra the Sofer roughly 2500 years ago, and this is the format that includes these bodies of law, which were not elected.

How did it work? If a person was assessed as gifted, he would be offered the bottom seat of the 120. They would talk and see, and if he merited that seat he would stay there. Then if the seat was empty he would move up, but again not necessarily automatically. Everything was rated, and the 120 members of Parliament were not necessary equal in any way. There was no. 1, no. 2, no. 3 and no. 120, and only based on capability were these students chosen and allowed to go from the group of 23 to the next group of 23 and from that group to the body of 71 until the most gifted and talented would be no. 1 of the 71 at the head. This was like Moses in the desert and the leader of the Jewish people.

This system carried through till the end of the second temple, and then the yeshiva world took over once the machinations of the state no longer allowed and facilitated this state process. In the yeshiva world there were yeshiva that were aimed at the gifted, and the gifted were always upheld and always granted extra means. I will give you an extreme example which exists today. The entire social economic fabric of the Haredi community is based on excellence in education. If you are good, you will be able to get a rich girl who will support you, and then you will be able to study for the rest of your life. The smarter you are, the wealthier the girl you will have.

This system still works today in the Haredi community, where gifted is given all of the support systems available.

Let us go now to mainstream Israel. Israel is predicated on this thousands of years of supporting the gifted ideology and tradition, and from the beginning of the state of Israel — Israel was initiated as a socialist state — there were very big differences, and a lot of funds were given for special needs. At the time special needs were primarily for those who had learning disabilities. It came to an extent where 20 000 shekels a year, which is roughly A\$5000 a year, were given for those of special needs, and those with gifted and talented needs were given only \$1000 — just a small one-fifth. It was because of the socialist ideology. Together with this, the socialists who established the state of Israel saw themselves as elitists. They were the ones who were gifted with the pioneering spirit, and they wanted to bestow this upon everybody else. They saw themselves as responsible for the rest of the population, and they wanted to instil this philosophy: those who were gifted should be responsible.

Slowly it changed. In 2003 a hearing was held, a committee was formed and in 2004 they gave their final resolutions. Obviously they said that an entire department of the Ministry of Education should be established, just like there is the department of the Ministry of Education that deals with special needs. It should not be a subsection of special needs, but there should be a unique department within the Ministry of Education that deals with the gifted. This was indeed established a year later, and over the last seven years in Israel there have been major changes and strides because the Ministry of Education has allocated funds and developed an entire department. What is this department supposed to do?

Some of the forms of working with the gifted were already in hand before the committee gave their thoughts. They were helping kids who were in heterogeneous classrooms and helping them by partial acceleration, partial extension and partial enrichment. There were also evening or afternoon classes and once-a-week things in the afternoons. They decided to leave these in place, but in addition they decided to make classes which were selective. They decided that these classes that would be selective would be in three different formats. They divided them into gifted, highly gifted and profoundly gifted. They divided them by 5 per cent, 1 per cent and anybody who could get more than 155 on an IQ test.

The 5 per cent are not necessarily considered gifted, but they are talented, and the general idea is that these people in the 5 per cent should remain in the school system, help in a heterogeneous classroom and their studies should be properly balanced. They should be afforded the capability of afternoons and once-a-week classes, and also their curriculum should be enriched with acceleration, extension and enrichment. However, the 1 per cent of the population that received very high scores should be taken out of the schools and seen as more an elite group, and classrooms should be made specifically for them that depend on general areas. They will choose one school in an entire area, and all of the kids from the entire area will go to this one classroom that will be in one school.

Another recommendation is that three schools should be established in Israel — Israel is a small country — and they suggested that one should be established in the north, one in the south and one in the middle. Generally Israel is perceived in such a format. When either the army or the government is deciding to do something they usually decide to implement it in three regions, the north, south and the middle. So three schools should be established. The truth is I do not know if these schools were established, because there are schools that are established and exist, and I am not sure that the schools that I know of are the schools that the government established or if the schools that I know of are private schools. But there are schools in Israel that cater specifically — they are selective — to this high elite, 1 per cent of the population.

There are also, we said, the profoundly gifted. Usually someone who is profoundly gifted is understood to be someone who has a high IQ and in addition to his high IQ has a specific talent. Here we are talking about a different definition. We are talking about someone who is profoundly gifted. Just by having more than a 155 IQ you are in that list. Usually they have between 10 and 20 students every year in all of Israel. We are not talking about a lot. These people will receive a private mentor who will teach them privately, and they will be worked with specifically.

This is more or less the plan that has been put into place. It includes five pieces, which are: working with the top kids in heterogeneous classrooms; also working with these kids outside of the classroom and afternoons once a week, or afternoons a few times a week; once a week taking them out, which are the three programs I

mentioned within the classroom of heterogeneous kids, afterwards in the afternoons and once a week; and then there are another two programs, which are classrooms for these students and schools for these students. This is not including the profoundly gifted who have special programs with an individual teacher who will teach them. The age that this begins is the age where they are able to identify.

There is a lot of investment in assessment and early assessment so that the gifted children will be recognised and treated with what they need as early as possible. In kindergartens assessments begin. The assessments are based on both parents' and teachers' appraisals. Anybody who is aware of a student who shows ability is immediately invited to the Ministry of Education. There a professional assessment is done. Once they conclude that the child indeed has an IQ above his age level they are invited to join one of these programs.

Maybe I will stop at this point and allow you to ask questions.

The CHAIR — Thank you for that. That has been very insightful. I wonder whether you might elaborate on some of the work done with *Start-up Nation*, in particular how Israel takes some of the kids and really works on them, also the army in terms of some of the programs and opportunities for some of those young people once they finish in the army and are identified, and if there is a career mapped out on that basis.

Rabbi SAMSON — I will tell you a story. I have a child in my school I do not know how to categorise. He is definitely gifted; I do not know if he is profoundly gifted or not. He is a hacker, and I got him off the streets. If he was not in my school, he would be breaking into computers and who knows what. He is a very talented hacker.

We have a password and a code system in our yeshiva, and sometimes I want to show YouTube. Our yeshiva does not allow it; YouTube is blocked. Instead of getting the password from the office downstairs I just ask him, 'Can you do me a favour and just hack in?'. He does it faster than it would take me to get the password. When he hacks, you see what he is doing, but I cannot read the screens as fast as he goes from one screen to another. I think he is only held up by physically clicking the button. It is astounding to see what he does.

The person in charge of the password once came in and saw that I was showing YouTube. He said, 'How did you get the password?'. I said, 'He just hacked it'. He asked him to give the company the methodology so that they could prevent it, and he gave the company the methodology he used. The next time I asked him to hack it, he said, 'You know, now it is going to take me twice as long', so now instead of 30 seconds it takes him about a minute to hack through the system because he gave them the way he did it, so now he does it a new way.

This person is in 11th grade. He has another two years before he goes into the army. A special unit of the army which is involved in computers — without saying any more — approached him. I have no idea how this unit in the army knows or how they found out about him or how they approached him. He is not registered in any gifted program. He is not officially a hacker for the government. The government has no official knowledge of him, but apparently people who are exceptionally gifted are found out about, and he received a special invitation from this special unit in the army to join them. This immediately had a very positive effect on him. It is a very prestigious unit with very few people.

I will give you another example. My daughter finished computers, and I wanted her to get a job at Microsoft in Israel. They told me very bluntly that she could be great, but if she was not in this unit in the army, they were just not going to accept her. The only entrance into Microsoft in Israel is through this unit in the army. If you do not have that on your resume, you are just not talented.

What do they do in this unit, or what is the general thought process — —

Hearing suspended due to audio issue.

The CHAIR — We might pick up where we left off, which was talking about *Start-up Nation*, the technology and in particular some of the young people who are going through the army program that is gearing them up with skills to then work with Microsoft and so on.

Rabbi SAMSON — Here they add a fourth element to the three elements which are recognised generally that the gifted need. In addition to depth, breadth and acceleration there is also an added interdisciplinary concept and imaginative skills. Someone is accepted to these programs only if they have imagination and if they

have individual initiative and motivation. It is highly recognised and highly supported in these systems, as opposed to a regular system. This is something which is mentioned in the book *Start-up Nation*. In many classical systems and even in Microsoft and big companies generally you do not go against the boss. The boss thinks one way, and you go up the ladder as long as you think the way the boss thinks. You do not rock the boat.

Someone who is going to be an anarchist or an individualist, he is not going to go far — ‘Oh, he’s a nice guy, but he’s not in my company’. In Israel there is a different air and a different philosophy in that it is very non-judgemental and the distance between the head of the company and those who are supposed to work is less. The head of the company says, ‘Well, I want to go this way’ and another guy says, ‘Yes, but I think you’re wrong, and I want to go the other way’. That is very much empowered and allowed. The programs for the gifted children, specifically within the documentation — you can see it on the Ministry of Education website — support and want to enhance the originality, the motivation and the capability of these talented people to be able to act and do on their own, so that these talented people will not be the ones who do whatever who is in charge of them do but will be able to think of new formats, even at the level of a paradigm, and bring to Israel new concepts. That is why Israel is the ‘start-up nation’; that is the educational mechanism behind what you are seeing today.

Mr ELASMAR — Rabbi, thanks very much for coming today. My understanding is that you are visiting the top 10 schools around the world. Can you tell us which are the 10 schools?

Rabbi SAMSON — First of all, I wish somebody would tell me. It is one of the questions that I am asked. I would love to really be able to have some kind of objective survey and know. It is interesting. There are different criteria which are given for good schools. There is not a global criterion. One of the criteria is the level of endowment; however, I disagree with that criterion because I have seen very good schools with a very low budget. Another criterion is the level of teachers to student; I very much believe in that criterion. The facilities that the students have is another criterion. A simple criterion: the amount of students who pass their matriculation exams, at what level and what the scores are. One of the criteria used here in Australia is: how many students have received awards in the last 25 years from this school? I understand there is a presidential award which is given, so how many students received this award from this school in the last few years?

I visit the schools based on reputation, and there seems to be value in that reputation. Even though it is not something which is scientifically found with a survey which is the same for all schools all over the world, the schools that have the best reputation are truly good schools, and you can see that; you can perceive it. They are not only good schools because people say, ‘Oh, they have this instead of that’; I would say as a paradigm they are on a different level. The language that is spoken is a language of education which is on a higher level — the management, the students and everyone. It is a different level of thought. I mention the American school in Singapore that we saw; I believe that is definitely one of the top schools in the world.

The CHAIR — Do you have the name of that school?

Rabbi SAMSON — It is called SAS, the Singapore American School. It is boasted to be the best school in the world or one of the best schools in the world. It is definitely a good school. They have 4000 students, the cost is \$46 000 per student a year, so they have a sizeable budget of about \$150 million a year that they can deal with. They have a state-of-the-art campus — and just being in Singapore adds so much. I can tell you on a personal note that I asked, ‘What percentage of the students are involved in alcohol and drugs and smoking?’, and they looked at me like, ‘What are you asking? What do you mean? Why should there be a percentage of the students?’. I said, ‘What, zero?’, and then they told me that their educational challenge is that they have kids who chew gum, which is illegal in Singapore. I am thinking, ‘Wow, their educational challenge is very different’.

I do not know if it is punishable by death if you chew gum, but the culture and laws of Singapore are very different from those of Israel or Australia, and I think that without that in place it is very hard to achieve zero alcoholism. Even here in Australia I went to the Ruse agricultural school in Sydney. It is boasted to be the best school in Australia. Again, there are a few schools. There is one in Melbourne that is also offered as a good school that we did not get to see; I wanted to see it.

When I went to this school I talked to some of the students there. It is a selective school, and I asked them about drugs, alcohol and smoking. The students looked and said, 'What? I heard that in public schools there might be a problem'. They are not even aware; they do not even have friends who are. It is totally out of their realm of thought.

At the Ruse agricultural school it is predominantly of Asian population. Again, I think that there is a cultural manner there that also is a little bit more held back as a result, and they are not involved in the western 'Do your own thing', alcohol, drugs and smoking. Also premarital sex, they giggled about the idea. There was just no such thing.

Mr ELASMAR — If I can ask just one more question. Do teachers receive any special training or is there any way that you help them to teach gifted students in mainstream classes?

Rabbi SAMSON — Yes, definitely. One of the jobs of the department of education in Israel, this new department that was established in 2004–05, was to teach teachers and to teach parents to work together with both the teachers and the parents to utilise the talents of the child. The underlying theorem of handling these gifted children is having them engaged properly intellectually, which means that they have to be challenged and they have to have in the curriculum both acceleration and expansion — and everything we talked about — together with interdisciplinary thought.

However, this has to be together with social behaviours, moral behaviours and behaviours that will help them use their talents and feel a self-esteem that will allow them to empower others with what they have. One of the problems with gifted children is that they can sometimes feel odd socially. As a result they will lose their self-esteem, and as a result they will lose their capability of wanting to give to society because they will feel, 'Well, I'm a little bit odd. I don't know if I can give to society'.

This entire program is bolstered by a program that the teachers will know how to empower the students with a constant sense of self, bolstering their self-esteem, as opposed to making them odd, so that their self-esteem will be mitigated, and working with the parents at the same time so that the family unit is in no way mitigated.

The CHAIR — On that, do you know if there is specific teacher training and education at university that focuses on gifted and talented kids and dealing with gifted and talented kids?

Rabbi SAMSON — I know there is; I do not know any details about it.

The CHAIR — Okay. That is fine. Extending from some of the evidence you gave earlier, there are three classifications that you mentioned where the kids sort of line up around the gifted area. How are those kids identified in the first place; what role does the school play; what role do the parents play; and other than the IQ test are there any testing forms that are used, particularly in the early years?

Rabbi SAMSON — First of all, the IQ test is the backbone of the testing; that is predominantly the main test. There are other tests that bolster the main part of this test. The tests are: motivation — the student has to be motivated in order to enter one of these programs for the gifted. A child who, for instance, comes with a very high IQ score and together with this is very unmotivated will not enter the program. Another factor that is gauged is his social behaviour. Another aspect which is gauged is his imagination and his capability to innovate. These are the different parts of the formula that are in the assessment.

The assessments are done in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers are asked by the government to identify gifted children in the kindergarten — in the first grade already. Parents are asked, and it is something which is a privilege. Every Jewish parent is sure that 'My child is a genius'.

The CHAIR — It is not just Jewish.

Rabbi SAMSON — They all apply, and they say, 'Of course my son'. It is something that parents are very on top of and aware of, and they are interested in applying. So between the parents and the teachers in the kindergarten and the first grade there is very early assessment. The Ministry of Education gives applications, takes in these children and does assessments already in the first grade. Not all the children are really noticed in the first grade. Some of the children do not even show signs of very high IQ and being exceptionally gifted until

later on. It is a process that continues from kindergarten right to the end of high school, but whenever a child is identified he is streamed and chartered in that direction.

The CHAIR — Thank you for that. I want to touch further on the start-up information and couple that with the relatively new unit that was established some four years ago. Would you suggest that the Israeli government see gifted kids and the investment that they make in supporting gifted kids — and if you couple the department with the special units in the army that get special career progression and all those sorts of things — as ultimately a return to their economy, and would you suggest that there is a link between the success that Israel has had in business, information technology and research and development largely because of the investment in education that Israel has made over the years?

Rabbi SAMSON — First of all, the report that was given to the Ministry of Education specifies that the idea is to identify these gifted children so that they will be the leaders and supporters of society will bring society to a higher level. They will be the ones who will have the responsibility of contributing their talents to society. That is the philosophy behind it. I do not think that *Start-up Nation* is a result of this program, but I do believe that both this program and *Start-up Nation* are the results of the underlying philosophy that began with the socialists who established the state of Israel and saw themselves as an elite and that it was their job to contribute to society sometimes even in a very hearty way. They say, 'We are the elite; you are not. We are going to do this whether or not you like it'.

Today it is much more calm, and the different factions of society have learnt to live together in a much healthier fashion, but there is this underlying idea that there has to be an elite that is going to help those who are needy and that we have to empower these people with the capabilities to do it, together with the importance of being innovative, imaginative and true to yourself, not necessarily lining up with authority and if you have a good idea, going ahead with it and empowering people who have this initiative to just go out on their own and do it. This philosophy and underlying culture gave birth to both this educational system and to this start-up nation.

The CHAIR — Fantastic. I am going to shift the conversation now in that we are going to take advantage of having you here and also of introducing Bezalel into the conversation. The Education and Training Committee is also investigating ways to encourage more young people around agricultural education and training and career options in the agricultural area and ways of advancing that. Could you share with us some of the learnings that are happening in Israel given that Israel also has a great reputation in the agricultural area, particularly the way it encourages and attracts young people around associated technology and advancements for innovation in the agricultural area? Do you want to start, Bezalel?

Mr GLEISER — Maybe I will start. If it is okay, maybe just one word about the previous topic?

The CHAIR — Yes.

Mr GLEISER — I grew up and went through the mainstream Israeli educational system, but I went to a selective high school that I had to be accepted into. Post-high school I went into a selective one-year program prior to my service. In my service I served in one of the special forces units, which had a long selection and screening period before I was accepted into the unit for very extensive training. Looking back, I think in some ways my army experience, being in the special forces and going through a very intensive and unique training period and then also an operational period gave me that confidence of a no-border, no-barrier kind of concept.

Later on in life when I continued with my academic studies I did an undergraduate degree and then an MBA at university, I was part of the Israeli entrepreneurial world and set up several companies overseas in e-commerce, and I was involved with renewable energy. I think that way of thinking and the responsibility that young Israelis take upon themselves, especially during their army service, is what gives a lot of the boost for that confidence afterwards to be able to go out there, as we say in Hebrew, with a bit of 'chutzpah', to really feel you can conquer the world and that there are really no borders and no barriers.

I always tell people that when you actually do things, it is simpler than it seems, and when you are in it, it happens much more easily than you think, but you have to have that willingness to try. Obviously Israel's situation with the need for compulsory army service as a cause is something different from many countries, and every country has to build its own model. But if they could find a way to give that confidence to their students or create that platform for them to really grow and enrich themselves and get their self-confidence, that could be something that would boost their internal entrepreneurship experience and make them want to go out and

conquer the world. In that sense Australia is small, and I think Australian entrepreneurs really see the world as their market — not just Australia. If you are able, and some of these potential gifted programs that you are thinking of setting up can create that environment, then it could be a major thing that can contribute to that. That is just to mention the previous topic.

Regarding the agricultural area, first of all I am not an educator and do not come from the educational field, but I happen to live on what used to be, or still is, a communal moshav, which is quite similar to a kibbutz, which might be a name that some of you have heard. Essentially the kibbutzim or the communal moshavim were for many years the main platform where Israeli agricultural and farm industries were developed. This has really turned into a science, and it has been very interesting to see how science and technology have really integrated fully with the agriculture and farming sector. Today to run a milk farm you really need to be much more of a technology scientist than just someone who knows how to milk cows, because it is all done automatically by robots, machines and whatever to make it more efficient.

One of the problems — and we were talking about this previously — is that it is unfortunate that in the early days when Israel was more of a socialist country, many children and many of whom were considered to be talented or elite children were going to the agriculture schools. I think definitely in the last 10, 20 and even 30 years that has gone down a lot. It is much harder now to get children into the initial agricultural education system. I am not sure that Israel has really come up with a good solution to that. I think what is happening is that people are going through the regular schooling system, getting their regular skills and then shifting back into agriculture and farming as an industry. I think there is a place for high-level agriculture and farming schools, which will integrate the modern technology and science and really prepare people in the early stages to be involved in those industries.

I think this is also the same problem that we are seeing with professional schools, which here might be considered to be TAFE certificates. Everyone wants to be a lawyer and in business management, which has its advantages, but when you really look at the economy as a whole these things such as the agricultural industry are really contributing in many ways much more to the economy than just general studies. I do not know — maybe Rabbi Samson knows more about this than me — if Israel has really come up with solutions as to how to get kids re-engaged in these kinds of schools and bring them up to date and up to speed with very high-level learning together with the specialty in agriculture. I can just say that in this world of the communal moshav and the kibbutz and where these are major industries it has developed and become very modernised, very technology-orientated and very scientific. There is definitely a need to have good educated people in these areas, just from what I have seen.

Rabbi SAMSON — Allow me again to go back 6000 years in history. I would like to begin with first man. It says in the Bible that when God created first man he put him in a garden. He said, ‘Your job in this garden is to toil the garden and to watch over the garden’. I see it as a basic predicate of mankind. The word for ‘man’ in Hebrew is ‘adam’, and the word for land is ‘adama’. It says in the original Hebrew text of the Bible, ‘Your name is “Man” because you were taken from the ground, because the words “man” and “ground” are the same’. If you add one letter to the word for man, ‘adam’, it becomes ‘adama’. Man was taken from the ground and his body was formulated from the ground, and his mission is to work the ground. It is interesting that according to the tradition of the Jewish people the ground that his body was taken from was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Throughout history Avraham Avinu, Abraham, was promised, ‘Go to Israel’. They were the first words that God spoke to him. The Jewish people have a gamut of precepts that are agricultural. The precept of being frugal, not wasting material and being ecologically good is predicated on the precept that says, ‘When you go to war, do not destroy the trees. The trees are not your enemies’. This is instilling a love for the land — even the land of an enemy that you are fighting against.

We know that Titus when he came to Israel destroyed all of the trees. He wanted to demoralise the Jewish people because he knew that the Jewish people had a love for the land and a love for agriculture. As a result he destroyed all of the trees. Today one of the jobs of the Jewish people is to reinvent the forests that once covered Israel. Polinius, who was a historian who lived at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, wrote that the Jewish people fought over every balsam bush. There was a special plantation in Engeddi of balsam. He said that there was a battle over every single bush. This was the love that the Jewish people had for agriculture that is predicated first to man, and then it goes by way of Abraham through the precepts in the Torah.

The Jewish people had this vision of love of Israel and love of agriculture, and very often the Jewish people had a default for agriculture. If they were not allowed to be landowners, they were forced to be money lenders, and the other positions that were generally assumed by Jewish people were because they just were not allowed to have land. The natural position of the Jewish people, for instance, in Eastern Europe, where the Jewish people were allowed to have land was that for hundreds of years they were just farmers.

If I can interject, I just had a discussion with a Rabbi in Singapore. He said he has to bring Kosher milk from outside of Singapore. I said, 'Isn't there a cow in Singapore?', and he said very clearly no. It was so odd for there to be a Jew and no cow because they go together. As a result, if there is a Jew without a cow, then you have to bring the milk from someplace else.

Throughout history the Jewish people were agricultural. The Torah has many precepts which are agricultural, and in the re-establishment of the state of Israel the first pioneers were crazy. They were families of 5 or 10 children who would die of malaria just so that they would be able to cultivate the land. The original redemption and recultivation of Israel was done with unbelievable desire; this goes together with the desire of youth today to be involved with agriculture. It is an idealism.

I am part of the national religious movement, and within the national religious movement there is a wide variety of people who are interested in agriculture. Again, as Bezalel mentioned, agriculture is a little different today; it is not simply milking a cow. Today Israel is a leader, and there are many inventions that Third World countries have benefited from, especially with the conservation of energy. Israel is a leader in the conservation of energy and the conservation of water, and they use this so that with the small amount of land and the small amount of water that we have, we will be able to develop agriculture.

What I am saying from everything is that if you want to bolster an agricultural educational front, you have to have a moral basis that goes with it, that this is what mankind is about. It is healthy. It is normal. This is what we are here for. We are here in the garden to keep the garden, to grow it and to make sure it stays.

The CHAIR — Terrific. We might have to leave it there. I want to thank you, Rabbi, for coming to present to the committee. Bezalel, thank you for your contribution as well. I finish by also thanking the Zionist Council of Victoria and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria for bringing you out. I know that you have had an extensive itinerary while you have been here, and we thank you for finding time to appear before the committee today.

Rabbi SAMSON — Thank you very much.

Mr GLEISER — Thank you.

Committee adjourned.