

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TEACHERS' SALARIES IN ISRAEL: *A Teachers' Guide*

A teacher's salary slip should be the easiest thing in the world to read. Teacher worked 120 hours this month; the official rate is 35 shekels per hour, $120 \times 35 = 2500$ shekels, right?

Not at all. A teacher's pay slip in Israel is a maze of lines and numbers that looks something like the New York Times Crossword puzzle caught in the Matrix. Most Israeli teachers don't really understand the lines and columns of tiny numbers that make up their monthly salary. Non-teachers don't really care, unless they are married to, parent of, child of -- one or all of the above, creating a situation of: "Tsarrat Rabbim Hazi Nahama" (which roughly means, my daughter Naama at teacher's college makes half of what she needs to live on.) In addition, there are some homeless people who are indirectly involved in teachers and their salaries. These often find themselves facing off a teacher on their turf as they compete for refundable beer bottles and 'blu' soft drink cans.

Whereas once everybody had a vague idea of what teachers make (see "what teachers make", Taylor Mali), (also see "Bupkiss" in the OYD Oxford Yiddish Dictionary,) in recent years so many education ministers have left their bootprints on the groin of education, that people, especially teachers, are confused Fiddler on a roof in Hurricane Irene. With this in mind, I have decided to present a guide, as it were to the perplexed. (or in Yiddish, the Tsebumblte.)

So for teachers, laymen and layladies, here is a brief teacher's guide to salaries.

Once upon a time there was the teacher's union (Histadroot: sounds like something you take for a drippy nose). This was a subsidiary of the big Histadrut, the ones who ran the country with their little red books from 1948 until it turned right on Begin in 1979.

In those days there was rampant inflation. You'd get your salary of 300,000 lirot, and you had to spend it fast because by the end of the month it was worth about 80% of what it was before. I know you young 'uns don't believe this, but it's true. So all the unions would strike, and the government would give in and give them something to shut them up. It couldn't be a raise cause then everybody would want one. Instead, you got an increase related to your job. For example, teachers need books, so they got a book increase. You have to get to school, so you can get a travel allowance. You can't come to school naked, (even in fringe Kibbutz schools) so you get so much for clothing. You get a special add-on for phoning students, getting your glasses fixed, your beard trimmed and your teeth flossed. A line is added to your salary for going to shows, clipping your toes, fighting your foes, listening to woes, wiping your nose. Teach too many classes: you are compensated by a 'gmool peetsul' – a multiple class compensation. Teach too few, there's a 'gmool bdeedoot' - loneliness subsidy. Did you serve in the army? Add fictitious years of army; a good way to screw over people who didn't do army. Didn't do army? Add an anti discrimination subsidy; a good way to screw over people who did army. And so on. Words without end Amen. Some teachers wait till their sabbatical year just to get their salary slips straightened out.

Even after all these additions, teachers found it tough even buying the smooth brand of toilet paper (not included in their salaries), but so did most people.

The Live-not Era:

The Licud post millennium government felt that education was the manhole that the country's money was pouring out through. The prime minister brought in a dynamic young lady with the unlikely name of Lemore Live-not as minister of education. She promised results. She set up a committee and the committee put together a Report.

Millions were spent on this State of the Art Report . Its conclusions were so shocking and its recommendations so far reaching that I've forgotten its name. I think it had an 'r' in it. Anyway, then- PM Ariel Sharon boldly announced, (see Ha'aretz, Jan 8 2005 **) "This report will be implemented," dismissing predictions that it would gather dust like other reports that had preceded it. "The subject of education is in our souls; there is no subject more important."

Then- Finance Minister Netanyahu felt the report gave too much money to the teachers, seriously depleting the countries Chocolate coin reserves so soon after Hanukah. Moreover, some teachers were not thrilled with the decision to dismiss up to 30,000 teachers, especially if they were on the list. But Sharon had other things on his plate, such as pulling up all the vegetables in Gush Katif and then becoming one himself, and the crown went to Olmert. The watchamacallit report was buried and forgotten. By now, a lot of Israelis were driving new Japanese cars and travelling abroad once in a while. Reports showed that teachers in Israel made much less than their peers in developing countries.

Somewhere in this history is Ora Namir, who, like Begin, lives on as a highway. The two of them never met up (this was before Kvish Shesh). Olmert's choice was Yuli Tamir. Yuli Tamir was the only Minister of Education whose name was the first month of summer vacation. Her basic policy of education dealt with the frightening statistics on alcohol abuse among schoolchildren.

** When I say, See Ha'aretz, Jan 8, 2005 I obviously don't expect you to fish the paper out of your socks drawer: but here is the URL: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/pm-dovrat-report-on-education-reform-will-be-implemented-1.146515>

Reacting to damning reports of wild parties on the Kineret with plastic bags containing vodka bottles, Tamir set a new high in student /teacher rapport by switching the bags to paper. She was also the reigning Ed minister during the huge 2 month teacher's strike; where teachers chanted, Yuli, Kvar November! and she went into depression at the thought that she may have to change her name.

OFEK HADASH AND OTHER CHILDREN'S BOOKS:

Ofek Hadash (=Means, Can you spare a dime?) was based on a simple principal, but I've forgotten if his name was Ofek or Hadash. No, I'm just kidding. It really means, 'New Horizon.' If teachers work 30 hours a week and prepare (etc..) 20 hours a week, then you can draft them for those 20 hours, give them a bigger salary, pay them less per hour, and then use all that man powered (woman power, of course) instead of hiring new teachers. Just dress it up in a lot of words that only Literature teachers know and don't show it to any math teachers until everyone else has been forced to sign.

Ofek Hadash had immediate effects. The Head of the Teachers association had a new Toyota Ulmerto X-6000 within 24 hours and a bid on a 9 room villa in Ramat Yishai the following noon.

Nobody is quite sure where the agreement was signed, but hisstadroot teachers know was somewhere down the river. Thus the terms, 'current salary,' 'up the creek' and 'drowning in debt." Newspapers loved printing stories about teachers forced to wait on tables (or worse) to pay for the baby's formula. Their clients were invariably their students, leading to situations like:

Customer: This steak is rare! Take it back!

Waiter: I'll decide what's rare and what isn't. Leave this room immediately!

Meanwhile, tons of pressure was being applied to Ronn Errez, the head of the upper school teachers' union, Ear-Goon Morreem. To his credit, he resisted pressure like penicillin resists syphilis! His appearance at the grand rally in Kikar Malchei Israel before a crowd of 120,000 was inspiring, although some of the teachers thought he was one of the rock stars and stole his underpants.

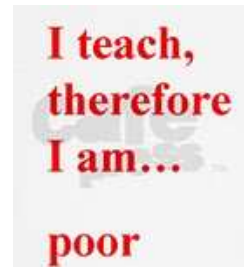
Three years later, Ronn signed an agreement that followed the trail of 'New Horizon,' but without its obvious faults. This one was named **Oz Letmura**, which means, "I'll give you twenty shekels for those speakers." Or is that, 'sneakers?' Anyway, Under Oz Letmura, young teachers get paid for all the things they were supposed to have been doing for free the last 20 years except some of them weren't born yet.

Older teachers were given 30\$ in golden Hannuka coins and a boot so they could kick themselves for not joining when they were younger. Once again, the plan was kept secret from math teachers, who, as soon as they did the math, started saying, HEY What?!

What the future holds:

While some schools have actually begun to implement the new reforms, there is no need to rush into things. Governments come and governments go, and their Plans and Reforms sink below the New Horizon, giving nothing in Tmura (= exchange). In fact, as you read this a major party who I will not name, is preparing "Silent Trumpet," a program which promises to erase the name of Israel from the list of countries with third world education systems.

Unfortunately, it will do this by putting it on the list of countries with fourth world education systems. Teachers will be paid for a 25 hour day, which means they will be getting three times their current salary. Of course they will be putting in four times the hours. They will get up early in the morning, half an hour before they go to sleep in their schools, teach 4 shifts of classes, meet with all the parents and mark papers. Activities previously done at home, such as washing and shaving, will be done at school. Salary levels will be based on age and experience, so that young teachers will get a ton of money until they sign permanent contracts, while teachers over 45 will get doodly squat or pushed off a cliff into the Mediterranean. They can also choose to die and be reborn as young teachers. The new teachers being paid for 25 hours can now handle 4 times as many classes as before, so 75% of the remaining teachers can be let go. Now that the social justice protest is off, there are lots of cheap tents around. By the way, if you're a teacher and you need money, I hear that there's still a reward out for Ron Errez's underpants.



[Barry Silverberg, Kiriat Shmona, September 5, 2011](#)

Postscript: Where is Oz LetMura coming from? Watch this anagram flowchart to find out:

Oz letmura

Oza letmur

Zoa Uletmr

Zoa Ulmetr

Azo Ulmert

O M G!!!!!!!