

INTRODUCTION

כל ישראל ערבים זה בזה

Kol Yisrael aravim zeh b-zeh

All of Israel is responsible for each other (Talmud Bavli Sh'vuot 39a)

This oft-quoted and key phrase in Jewish life prompts us to ask, who is “*all of Israel?*” and what does it mean to be “*responsible?*” This curriculum seeks to support learners in developing their sense of belonging and connection to *Israel* - the people and the place. Our hope is that they will emerge from the learning encountered in this curriculum with not only a sense of belonging but also a growing perception that they have a role to play as members of the *am* (people) and as those who engage with Israel with a loving and critical eye.

This curriculum seeks to support learners in developing their sense of belonging and connection to *Israel* - the people and the place. Our hope is that they will emerge from these lessons with not only a sense of belonging but also a growing perception that they have a role to play as members of the *am* (people) who are connected to the State and Land of Israel.

STRAND 1 - Shared Space

This first strand for grades 4-5 seeks to introduce learners to the notion that Israel is a multicultural, diverse place shared by many different groups in a very small place. These groups include different kinds of Jews (people from different cultures and parts of the world) and people of other backgrounds (Druze, Palestinian Israeli, Bedouin). Each group has its own unique experience of what it means to be Israeli.

Session 1: Introduction to Shared Space

This lesson will introduce Grade 4-6 learners to the concept of “Shared Space” or what it means to share a relatively small space. They will begin with the people and places they share in their immediate world followed by increasingly larger spaces/areas that they share, noting the benefits and challenges of sharing. Using the national symbols of Canada, learners will be introduced to the idea that national symbols are a way of feeling part of a shared space, Canada being a space they share with all residents of Canada. (Note: American programs can bring in their own national symbols.)

Session 2: Introduction to Israel as a Multicultural Shared Space

This lesson will introduce learners to the different groups of people and the diversity of cultural and religious life in Israel. Using photographs learners will gain a visual sense of what different groups look like and how they express themselves. This is an introduction to the diversity of Israel. Sessions #3 and 4 will provide a more in-depth exploration of Jewish groups (session #3) and groups other than Jews (session #4).

Session 3: Israel as a Shared Space Among Different Jewish Cultures

This session will introduce learners to Israel as the shared space of Jews of different backgrounds and cultures. Learners will encounter four groups of Jewish Israelis who are representative of a range of possible groups. The four groups are: Ethiopian Jews, Mizrahi Jews, Russian Jews and European/Western Jews. Learners will engage with one of four groups through three lenses: story of their arrival in Israel, food and music. Learners will engage in three activities for each of the four groups: a gallery walk, listening to music and studying lyrics and food tasting.

Session 4: Sharing with Other Communities

This session will introduce learners to Israel as the shared space that includes groups that are other than Jewish. Learners will encounter three groups that are representative of a range of possible groups. The three groups are: Israeli Palestinian Arabs, Druze and Bedouin. These groups live in different parts of Israel hence this session is a good opportunity for learners to engage with the map of Israel including Israel's cities and different climates.

NOTE: We use the term "other-than-Jewish" as opposed to "non-Jewish" as we prefer not to define any group by something they are not.

Sessions 5 & 6: Israel as the Shared Space of the Jewish People & Me

Throughout time and space, Jews have expressed our connection to the Land of Israel in our liturgy, texts and the use of the arts. It is through one type of art, the *mizrach*, that Jews have historically declared and continue to declare today our belonging to the shared space that is Israel and Jerusalem.

These sessions are the culminating sessions for this series. In the first session learners will explore the unique and enduring art form of the *mizrach* as a symbol of Israel as the shared space of the Jewish people. In the sixth and final session, learners will create an individual *mizrach* as an expression of their insights into Israel as a shared space for both its current inhabitants and themselves as part of the Jewish people no matter where they live. The goal is for learners to create a **high-quality** piece of art that they can be proud of and will want to display. (This is not an arts and crafts project.)

STRAND 2 - Maps as Narrative

This second strand, for grades 5-7, is deeply informed by our changed world. While the topic of Maps as Narrative was chosen prior to October 7th, the content has been significantly adapted to address issues that have emerged since that fateful day. For example, the issue of who is indigenous to the land and how one determines indigeneity is now at the center of one of the sessions along with the reality of multiple narratives. Space has also been made for questions about betrayal and injustice and colonization to name a couple (at an age appropriate level).

These are difficult and challenging times. Learners are likely keenly aware of the situation in the region. These sessions are designed to enable learners to ask questions and receive answers that are respectful and thoughtful. Some questions may be straightforward with readily available responses, while others will not have clear answers.

Session 1: Introduction to Maps as Narrative

It introduces learners to the concept that maps tell the stories of the cartographers who create them, are not objective and change over time. In this introductory session, learners will begin by creating their own sketched maps of the space they are in at the time of the session, noticing that everyone in the group might have drawn a map of the same place very differently. In the second part of the session they will zoom out to maps of Canada (US) and, finally, to maps of the world, noting that the same place can look quite different depending on which map is used.

The ultimate goal of this session is to challenge the assumption that maps can be trusted to accurately portray a particular place and to sensitize learners to the elements of which to be aware when examining and evaluating the validity of a map.

Session 2: Introducing the Map of Israel Over Time and Space

This session introduces learners to the map of Israel over time and space, underscoring the idea that maps, for the most part, reflect not only the time period and context in which they emerge but also the vision of the map maker, the cartographer. Learners will be introduced to several maps of Israel, created at different times in history and for different purposes. They will have the opportunity to learn more about a specific map with the goal of convincing their classmates of the significance of their map and the value of ensuring that others get to see it hanging in a public place

Session 3: The Many Inhabitants of the Land

This session opens up the complex and often contested question of who is indigenous to the land on which the modern State of Israel sits. In the current milieu, the matter of indigeneity arises with increasing frequency. While it is non-contestable that the Jewish presence in the Land of Israel has endured over millennia, there are those who seek to challenge this, claiming

that other peoples have resided there for longer. Through timelines of the ever-changing names and inhabitants of the land, learners will inquire into and explore the place of the Jewish people in the region throughout history. At the same time, they will encounter other groups who also have deep and abiding roots in the land.

Session 4: Dividing Up the Land in the Modern Period

This session opens up two issues that are particularly salient for the post-October 7th reality. We use maps emerging from three primary documents from the World War I period. The three documents used, McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration each underscores the notion that everyone is a little right in their anger over the division of the land. The primary goal in this session is to introduce learners to the concept of multiple narratives about a single historical time period that can reverberate for decades if not centuries.

Session 5: Mapping the Map: Who Goes Where?

The goal of this session is to delve into the current map of Israel, how it got to be what it is today and what might be done to bring about a region in which its inhabitants can live together in peace. Learners should emerge from this session with questions, comments and ideas generated by them through their engagement with the geographic areas that make up the current State of Israel (and a little beyond) and unique circumstances and people of these areas.

Session 6: Looking Towards Shalom/Salaam

This culminating session is a natural corollary to the culminating session in the first strand in which learners created a *mizrach* to demonstrate their sense of connection to Israel, how they share space even though they do not live in Israel. In this session learners will create a “Peace *Tefilla* Shadow Box”, a piece of art that can be hung in a public place and used to guide the community as it prays for the well-being of the State of Israel. This is potentially a long session. Either devote two hours to it or do it over two sessions, if necessary. The goal is to end on an aspirational, even hopeful, note.

STRAND 3 - My Zion-ism

This strand, aimed at teens (Grades 8-12), is in a format designed to meet the realities of post-B-Mitzvah age learners, many of whom no longer come to a weekly or bi-weekly class at the synagogue.

The term “Zionism” has become a lightning rod in recent years, both provocative and controversial. It is for this reason that we introduce the concept of a Jewish homeland using the term “Jewish self-determination.” The goal is not to shy away from the term Zionism. Rather, due to what might be teens’ preconceived notions of Zionism as a negative force (nationalism, settler colonialism), we seek to first bring them into the milieu that spawned the desire for Jewish self-determination in the 19th century (even before the term “Zionism” was coined in 1890 by Nathan Birnbaum).

While the main focus in this strand is on the Jewish narrative around Zionism - the Jewish quest for self-determination, the expectation is that other perspectives will arise. As with any setting in which multiple narratives come into play, multiple truths can exist simultaneously. At times these truths will be uncomfortable for facilitators and teens alike. These “truths” also shift as we gain new and expanded perspectives on history, often contextualized by what is happening in the present. There are four 90 minute programs, but there is an outline provided for those wishing to break it into 60 minute lessons.

Program 1: Zion and the Jewish People Through Time

The goal of this program is to frame the enduring connection of the Jewish people to the land that is now the State of Israel from biblical times through the 18th century, before the rise of nationalism.

Program 2: The Quest for Jewish Self-Determination: Pre-1948

This program examines the Jewish response to the emergence of nationalism on the world stage in the 19th and early 20th centuries, tempered by the rise of antisemitism in Europe and Russia. The term Zionism is introduced at the end of the program. Until then, the phenomenon under consideration is referred to as the quest for a Jewish home or Jewish self-determination.

Program 3: Jewish Self-Determination in Real Time: Post-1948

The program looks at the realities of living into the dream, of having a Jewish state based on the principles of Zionism. What are the successes? What are the challenges? How might Zionism be reshaped based on this? Using a range of mediums (music, poetry, images, children’s literature), participants will delve into the ups and downs of living the dream.

Program 4: My Zion-ism

This summative program includes some new material in response to October 7th and the war in Gaza. Teens are encouraged to find their own expression of Zionism by designing and annotating a meme. The hope is that they will find some way to connect with the concept of a place in the world for Jews, with all the complexity this entails.

PARENT EDUCATION

Thus far in the development of this curriculum, three parent sessions have been created with more in progress.

Three suggested sessions of 60-90 minutes

Session 1: Introduction to Shared Space and Maps as Narrative

The goal of this session is to provide parents with the basic framework of “who lives in Israel” and how we understand the role of narrative when engaging with the map of Israel. Essentially, we are seeking to create a common language and knowledge base. Some of the historical pieces/timelines will come in the next two sessions.

Session 2: The Many Inhabitants of the Land

The issue of indigeneity (to whom does the land belong) is front and center in conversations about the current conflict. Canadians are especially aware of this issue due to the work done on indigenous Canadian populations in the recent past. This session will take participants on an historic journey of who lived in the land when and how one determines what makes a particular population indigenous (or not).

Session 3: Divvying up the land: Broken Promises

This session is designed to unpack the roots of the current conflict beginning with World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire. Parents will engage with primary sources from the period (Balfour, McMahon-Hussein, and Sykes-Picot) to gain insight into the narratives of the multiple groups involved. We can then trace the impact of this period on the ensuing 30 years, up to the UN Partition Plan and end of the British Mandate.