THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

INTEGRAL TO JEWISH IDENTITY
Israel education is a vital component of the overall identity development and education of our young as Jews and as human beings.

LEARNER CENTERED
Israel education is both child centered and Israel centered. In an ever-changing world, Israel education is based around what we currently know about the young, their development, their interests, and their world.

MEDINAT YISRAEL, ERETZ YISRAEL & AM YISRAEL
Israel education encompasses both the contemporary State of Israel and its people, the historic and religious connection to the Land, and the ongoing link between the Land, the State and *Am Yisrael*.

THEMATIC CURRICULUM
Israel education is presented through a thoughtful selection of themes, subjects and values reflecting a meaningful curricular scope and sequence.

DIVERSE NARRATIVES
Israel education integrates contemporary, historic and religious narratives, as a means to support the development of personal narratives.

ISRAELI ARTS & CULTURE
Israel education highlights contemporary arts and culture because both of these reflect the heart, soul and vibrancy of Israeli society and have the power to influence and meaningfully engage people.



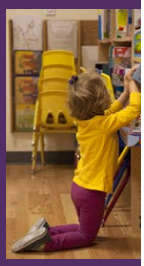


THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION





The iCenter's Aleph-Bet of Israel Education is a collection of eleven values, ideas, and practices forming the foundation for excellence in Israel education.



MODERN HEBREW
For Israel education, the Hebrew language is an important dimension of Jewish identity development and connection with the modern State of Israel.

IMMERSIVE & INTEGRATED
Israel education takes place as part of a comprehensive 'culture' that encompasses all aspects of the Jewish educational settings in which it takes place.

AN EXPERIENCE IN ISRAEL
The personal experiencing of Israel is an indispensible component of a comprehensive Israel education.

MIFGASHIM
Israel education fosters authentic experiences with Israeli peers to deepen both the individual and collective Jewish identities of young people.

KNOWLEDGEABLE & PASSIONATE EDUCATORS
Israel education requires educators who possess a deep commitment to and love for Israel and are able to engender the same love and commitment in their students through broad knowledge and well-honed pedagogic skills.

the iCenter
FOR ISRAEL EDUCATION
www.theicenter.org

האלף-בית של חינוך ישראל

א חיוני לזהות יהודית

חינוך ישראל הוא מרכיב הכרחי בפיתוח הזהות של הדור הצעיר כיהודים וכבני אדם.

א מרכזיות הצעיר הלומד

חינוך ישראל מתמקד בצעיר הלומד ובזיקתו המורכבת לישראל. בעולם שמשתנה באופן תמידי, הבסיס של חינוך ישראל הוא הידע שצברנו לגבי הדור הצעיר, התפתחותו, האינטרסים שלו ועולמו.

א מדינת ישראל, ארץ ישראל ועם ישראל

חינוך ישראל כולל את מדינת ישראל בת זמננו, את אזרחיה, הקשר ההיסטורי והדתי לארץ, והחיבור המתמשך בין ארץ, מדינה ועם ישראל (עמיות יהודית).

א תוכנית לימודים נושאית

חינוך ישראל מתבטא בבחירה של נושאי-על וערכים המשקפים תוכנית לימודים המשכית והיקפית רבת משמעות.

א נרטיבים מגוונים

חינוך ישראל משלב נרטיבים דתיים, רעיוניים, היסטוריים ובני זמננו, על מנת לתמוך בהתפתחותו של הנרטיב האישי מתוך ההקשר הרחב יותר.

א תרבות ואומנות ישראלית

חינוך ישראל משלב בתוכו היכרות עם תרבות ואומנות ישראלית בת זמננו, משום שנדבך זה מייצג את פניה המורכבות וחיותה של החברה הישראלית, והינו בעל ערך רב ביכולת להשפיע ולשלב אנשים באופן משמעותי בהווי החיים הישראלי.











האלף-בית של חינוך ישראל הינו אסופה של אחד-עשר ערכים, רעיונות וגישות המהווים את בסיס החתירה למצויינות בנושא לימוד ישראל במסגרות החינוך היהודי בעולם.



א עברית כשפה חיה

השפה העברית הינה מימד מהותי בהבנת התפתחותה ההסטורית של ההוויה היהודית-ישראלית, כמו גם בהתפתחות הזהות היהודית והקשר עם מדינת ישראל בת זמננו.

א הטמעה ושילוב

חינוך ישראל הינו חלק מ'תרבות' כוללת המשלבת באופן מובנה ויצירתי את מגוון מרכיבי החינוך היהודי בכללו.

א חוויה ישראלית

החוויה האישית של ישראל הינה מרכיב הכרחי בחינוך ישראל באופן מקיף.

א מפגשים

חינוך ישראל מעודד התנסויות אותנטיות עם עמיתים ישראלים על מנת להעמיק את הזהות היהודית, האישית והקולקטיבית של אנשים צעירים.

א מחנך אומן

חינוך ישראל מצריך מחנכים בעלי זיקה ומחייבות לישראל, ובעלי יכולת לפתח את אותה זיקה ומחייבות אצל תלמידיהם בעזרת ידע ויצירתיות.

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THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

WELCOME TO ISRAEL EDUCATION!

BY ANNE LANSKI



A Blocked Cave

According to Shmuel Yoseph Agnon's "The Story of the Goat," there was once a secret cave that led directly to the holy city of Safed in the Land of Israel. But because of the foolishness of human beings, an enormous rock came to rest at the cave's entrance, obstructing passage to the Holy Land. Ever since that time, according to the story, access to Israel has been blocked.

That rock should have been rolled away in 1948 when the new State of Israel was created. But, alas, Israel remains an inaccessible place for many involved in Jewish life and education. The pamphlets in the new series known as the "Aleph Bet of Israel Education" are part of a concentrated effort to help displace the rock so that children and teens in twenty-first century North America can come to learn and love the site of many remarkable chapters in the history of the Jewish people – the contemporary State of Israel. IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

What makes us so hopeful that we can now move the stone? What is different about the second decade of the 21st century that promises better luck than the many well-intentioned past efforts to make Israel a an integral component of the Jewish education of the young in the elementary and secondary years?

Sometimes it takes time to make sense of monumental events. It took until the Eichmann Trial in 1960 for world Jewry to wake up to the fact of the Holocaust and even longer for serious curricular work to take place. It took hundreds of years after the destruction of the second Temple and the Exile for Jews to reformulate the meaning of Israel in their lives. After over six decades of Israel's existence, we need to "push the envelope" and find its rightful place in Jewish education.

Creating a comprehensive Israel education requires people, ideas, resources, and "stick-to-it-iveness." There are increasing signs of a new generation of educators, academics, and philanthropists who are serious about this subject and ready to be in it for the long haul.

The cave has been opened in terms of travel to Israel. In the past decade, a revolution has taken place whereby unprecedented numbers of young Jews up to the age of 26 now actually go to Israel. The Israel trip has arrived as a seminal experience in Jewish life.

The subject of Israel is too important for us to continue to allow FOX News, USA Today, YouTube, and Facebook to be the "classroom" for Israel education. It is time for Jewish education to reclaim its mission in this arena. We shouldn't wait until the crucial young adult years; educating the heart begins the day a child is born, and we must care for Israel in the hearts and heads of our young.

Revolutionary new concepts about learning, the mind, and education are emerging in our era, and these new ideas portend a whole new approach to what "Israel education" means.

These developments all point to the conclusion that now is the time to make the supreme effort to move the rock.

"It's Aleph Bet – ABC!"

The phrase aleph bet in Hebrew means 'alphabet' and also is used to refer to "obvious," common sense, and basic core ideas, much like in English. The group of educators, thinkers, and practitioners associated with the iCenter devoted time, thought, discussion, and writing to create a series of core ideas which reflect its understandings of a 21st-century approach to Israel education. These are ideas, not rules; insights, not dogma. The phrase *aleph bet* is used because these ideas seem fundamental and basic; but, in truth, the constellation of ideas is best visually represented as either a circle or a puzzle – and not a list – that together represents the magic called "education."

The puzzle begins with the belief that Israel can significantly relate to the emergence of the Jewish being and character of the young, as they engage in the journey called life. Israel education is as much

about shaping character, personality, mind and social connectedness, as it is about "furnishing an empty room with facts." It's actually a part of what our tradition, thousands of years ago, asked us to love "with all your heart, soul, and might!" We examine this new direction of viewing Israel education as related to Jewish identity development.

READ DR. LEONARD SAXE'S
JEWISH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

This aleph bet series reflect a learner-centered approach, which in no way minimizes the importance of Israel but, at the same time, maximizes the importance of the individual. The subject of our Israel education is the person, and our aim is to have contemporary Israel speak to the needs, interests, and future of that person. We examine various dimensions of the nature of today's youth, including the ways in which they make connections.

READ DR. DAVID BRYFMAN'S
AN I-CENTERED APPROACH TO
JEWISH GENERATION ME

One of the "stones" that has blocked Israel education has been confusion about the terms *Eretz Yisrael*, *Medinat Yisrael*, and *Am Yisrael*. Is Israel *Eretz Yisrael* ("the Holy Land") of the *Siddur* and the *Tanach*? Is it *Medinat Yisrael*, a contemporary state of malls and high tech? Or is it not even a place but a peoplehood (*Am Yisrael*)? These three terms are defined, analyzed and then put together as an organic whole to enable us to know what we want to teach.

READ DR. ZOHAR RAVIV'S
ERETZ YISRAEL, MEDINAT
YISRAEL, AM YISRAEL:
Negotiating Multiple Landscapes

Another hindrance in Israel education has undoubtedly been not with students, but with narrators and narratives. The core text does not consist of just one Israel story, or just one photograph. There are diverse narratives – most of which revolve around politics – both within Jewish life and between Jewish and non-Jewish perspectives. Indeed, for many educators, clergy, and community leaders, the dilemma of the narratives has often been the paralyzing factor in Israel education. We discuss the issue of narratives, propose five core narratives, and suggest an approach to teaching for narrative diversity.

READ DR. BARRY CHAZAN'S
LENSES & NARRATIVES
FOR TEACHING ISRAEL

One of the important teachings of the "new education" is an awareness of the diversity of learning styles, teaching styles, and accessibility of knowledge. Learning about "learning" tells us that people come to know, connect, feel, and internalize in diverse ways. No subject is more conducive to these new notions than contemporary Israel. Israel is best experienced in a multitude of ways: seeing, touching, hearing, tasting, feeling, reading, dancing and thinking. It even has a unique language which, if taught creatively, can be an entry point into the soul of a people and of a country. We discuss some diverse pathways into Israel – through arts, culture, and Hebrew language.

READ VAVI TORAN'S
CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI
ARTS & CULTURE: The Power
To Engage

READ LORI SAGARIN'S
MODERN HEBREW IN PERSONAL
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Israel education involves some core educational issues. But it ultimately is the art of the practical; it's about teachers, materials, contents, settings, activities, benchmarks, measurement, and being ready for tomorrow's classes. Educators need – and deserve – topics, subjects, and themes. They need curriculum and pedagogy. We discuss core curricular themes and pedagogic methodologies.

READ DR. JAN KATZEW'S
CURRICULUM & ISRAEL:
Principles & Themes

Israel education has one huge advantage that few of the other "subjects" of Jewish education have: it has Israel! There is a real, live, breathing place with buildings, streets, sites, history, cafes, parks, and most of all, people. Of all the research done about Jewish education, none is more conclusive or unanimous than the vast body of knowledge which unequivocally confirms the power, magic, and significance of a visit to Israel. Moreover, central to the experience of visiting Israel is the *mifgash* with Israeli peers. The DNA of a person seems to be significantly altered by breathing the oxygen of Jerusalem on *erev Shabbat*, eating *artikim* (popsicles) with Israeli peers on a hike in the Galilee and seeing even the dogs and cats understanding Hebrew! The nature and components of the actual trip to Israel are explored.

READ ADAM STEWART'S
MIFGASH: Creating
the Authentic Relationship

READ CLARE GOLDWATER
& MICHAEL SOBERMAN'S
THE ISRAEL EXPERIENCE

Finally, all education deserves and requires exceptional people. The role of the teacher, the educator, the youth leader who knows Israelis, loves Israel, and breathes Israel, is crucial to make the diverse pieces of the puzzle come together. Israel education requires very special educators who, in Parker Palmer's words, "reach from within" their souls to ignite the spiritual flame of Israel in everyone. Thoughts on this kind of person are explored.

READ LESLEY LITMAN'S
THE EDUCATOR &
ISRAEL EDUCATION

I the Dreamer

These pamphlets are not "how to" books. They are not "grilling for dummies" manuals. But they are only "pamphlets" and are inert until you hold them, talk to them, turn them over and over, agree, disagree – and enter into the dialogue.

May we together open the way through the cave to the hills of Safed, flowing with milk and honey.

All the generations before me contributed me
That I might be erected
Here in Jerusalem
That is our privilege!

"All the Generations Before Me"
- Yehuda Amichai



Anne Lanski currently serves as the Executive Director of the iCenter. Anne is the Founder and former Executive Director of Shorashim. She is regarded as the seminal figure in the establishment of *mifgashim* as a central component of Israel experiences, and is the recipient of numerous grants and awards for her pioneering work in this field. Anne received her M.A from the Steinhardt School of Education at NYU, and is a graduate of the Senior Educator Program at the Melton Centre of Hebrew University. She served as Director of Education at Congregation Hakafa in Glencoe, Illinois and taught Hebrew at New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, where she developed new methodologies of Hebrew language and culture instruction. Anne also has experience in the world of Jewish youth group and camp settings.

About the iCenter

The iCenter is dedicated to developing and enhancing the field of pre-collegiate Israel Education in North America.

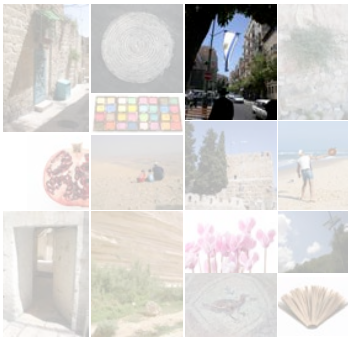
Serving as a national address and advocate for high-quality and meaningful Israel Education, the iCenter works in collaboration with teachers, parents, camp counselors and administrators who are on the front lines of educating Jewish youth. Together we strive to make Israel a stronger and more integrated component of Jewish education in North America.

The iCenter was founded through the generous support of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the Jim Joseph Foundation.

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

JEWISH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT: The Israel Dimension

BY DR. LEONARD SAXE



All education – whether formal or informal, Jewish or secular, pre-school or graduate school – is iterative and builds new understandings in the context of prior knowledge. In some cases, it simply adds knowledge; in other situations, it is transformative and provides new and more complex understanding of existing knowledge. The extent to which attaining new knowledge or more nuanced understanding of what is already known affects the self, however, depends on the way knowledge is developed. Does it promote an aspect of the self that is particularly valued by the learner? Does it confirm the learner's most deeply-held values, attitudes, and beliefs? Does it evoke meaning? The

challenge of Israel education, to borrow Einstein's phrase, is to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge and channel that joy into *ahavat Yisrael* – both the country and the Jewish people.

Perhaps the challenge is easy to meet for Jews living in Israel, but the majority of contemporary Jews live in the Diaspora. How can Israel, and the study of Israel, help to develop the Jewish identity of those living in Diasporic communities? Pedagogy aside, insights from sociology and social psychology suggest the specific mechanisms by which exposure to Israel can affect Jewish identity, and they tell us that the Israel experience is a powerful tool to turn Judaism from an abstract collection of values into a concrete, salient identity.

Jewish Cultural Capital

For some, the joy in creative expression and knowledge of Israel is awakened through formal education. Jewish cultural capital development – the accumulation of general cultural knowledge, skills, and background pertaining to Jewish life – has depended on this investment. Typically, the more time one spends in a formal Jewish educational setting, developing the general knowledge and skills that are particular to Jewish life, the easier it will become to engage in and relate to any and every aspect of the culture, be it language, literature, music, cuisine, history, or ritual. And Jewish cultural fluency operates as a feedback loop – the more fluency one develops, the easier it is to engage in Jewish life; the more one engages in Jewish life, the more likely one becomes to identify strongly and positively with it; and the more one identifies strongly and positively with Jewish life, the more driven one tends to be to develop greater and greater levels of cultural fluency.

But formal educational settings are not the only Jewish educational settings available, and in any case they do not always promote strong, positive associations with Jewish life. As Rabbi Eric Yoffie, former President of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ),

> "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."
> – Albert Einstein

noted in a sermon on his organization's 2001 Biennial, "Many of our parents look upon religious school as a punishment for being young. Too often in their eyes it is the castor oil of Jewish life, a burden passed from parent to child with the following admonition: 'I hated it, you'll hate it, and after your Bar Mitzvah, you can quit.'" Formal education is not joyful for all participants, and even when it is, it needs to be reinforced to be effective. Thus, informal educational programs, such as camps, youth groups, and Israel experiences, are extremely important. If formal educational settings are "the castor oil of Jewish life" for some, informal educational programs are the honey, substituting a sweet taste to accompany the efforts to transmit the same cultural knowledge and skills. By using a fun setting to model the same history, culture, traditions, and rituals as are taught in formal educational settings while encouraging participants to try on new practices and behaviors, teachers can help participants learn by focusing on what they enjoy about the subject matter rather than the chore-like frame Rabbi Yoffie described. Perhaps more importantly, they encourage participants to engage in Jewish culture and to consider what it means to them to be Jewish. Whichever route one takes in Jewish education, the effect of building cultural capital remains clear: the more Jewish cultural capital one accumulates – the more salient one's Jewish identity is likely to be.

Personal & Social Identity

Identity salience, in social psychological parlance, is the probability that a particular identity will be invoked in a specific context. Each of us has multiple personal identities that consist of a series of meanings attached to the roles they enact in the course of our day-to-day lives. These identities can be arranged hierarchically, with more salient identities more likely to be enacted. The salience of any given identity is determined not only by one's investment in constructing the identity but also by the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards offered by enacting it and the degree to which one's self-esteem depends on enacting the identity well.[1] Similarly, every individual also has multiple social identities, each consisting of a series of meanings attached to their membership in the specific groups or social categories to which they

The challenge of Israel education… is to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge and channel that joy into *ahavat Yisrael*– both the country and the Jewish people.



→ Exposure to Israel, along with the Israel experience, can affect Jewish identity, …[turning] "Judaism from an abstract collection of values into a concrete, salient identity."

→ Cultivating Jewish cultural capital is key to enhancing the salience and evaluation of an individual's Jewish identity.

belong. A strong, positive evaluation of one's group typically leads to higher self-esteem and self-efficacy, in turn reinforcing the self-concept.[2]

Cultivating Jewish cultural capital is key to enhancing the salience and evaluation of an individual's Jewish identity. It is difficult to imagine intrinsic or extrinsic rewards of Jewish identity outside of the context of Jewish cultural capital that makes Jewish history, culture, and peoplehood meaningful to the individual. Within this context, however, the rewards become clear. Time and resources expended in accruing Jewish cultural capital create social networks that are more densely Jewish. The creation of numerous social connections with other Jews who are substantially similar to oneself in ways one deems particularly important tends to increase commitment to one's Jewish identity.[3] In order to maintain and reinforce the social network, one becomes more likely to engage in Jewish activities, increasing the salience of Jewish identity by promoting greater engagement in Jewish activities[4] as well as making commitment to such activities more consistent over time.[5] In turn, in order to maintain a positive self-concept and a strong, positive evaluation of the group, opportunities available outside the group are increasingly judged as less beneficial or congruent with one's own goals and desires. Indeed, as Jewish identity becomes more salient, one will more actively seek out and even create social situations that support decisions to focus increasingly on Jewish social contacts and activities.[6]

An individual for whom Jewish identity becomes highly salient views the world through a Jewish lens. Where one lives becomes a question not merely of the general affordability of necessary goods and services, proximity to work and/or school, and social networks, but also of the availability of Jewish goods and services and social networks. Interest in social activities and organizations increasingly becomes in part a function of the Jewish content of the activities and the Jewish character of the participants. How one behaves is influenced increasingly by Jewish values, traditions, ethics, and even laws.

> "When [the tour guide] mentioned that Abraham and Isaac and David were part of the history of the city," one person said during a visit to Jerusalem, "it felt like it was everything I was taught as a kid coming to life. This is where Judaism really happened–beyond any textbook."

As with cultural capital, theories of personal and social identity rely on an iterative and interactive process to strengthen Jewish identity. The more time, effort, and resources are invested in Jewish identity, and the more opportunities for the identity to be tested, the stronger it becomes. By unifying abstract learning, social and ritual behavior, and ethnic history into something tangible, Israel can increase the effects of cultural capital and the mechanisms of identity development exponentially.

Why Israel Experiences are Powerful

The Land of Israel is historically both a central literal and figurative space of Jewish identity. Jewish children, even those with limited education, learn to recognize Israel as the land of their ancestry and heritage. It is the place where most of the stories they learn from Jewish history took place and it is reinforced by the prominent role that Zion and Jerusalem play in the liturgy they are taught. Israel is a central focal point in the process by which children acquire the shared meanings by which their community defines Jewish life and culture.[7]

But the benefit of purely cognitive knowledge is limited. For Jews who live in modern-day Israel, this is no obstacle. Tangible, visceral connections to Jewish history are so ubiquitous that even mundane tasks– eating, breathing, and speaking – become infused with Jewish meaning, and specifically Jewish acts are elevated. Diaspora Jews have no such connection in their daily lives, but upon experiencing Israel for themselves, they develop a concrete understanding of what was previously only an abstract impression of the special Jewish quality of Israel. Shaul Kelner, observing the effects of Israel tourism on Taglit-Birthright Israel participants, notes:

> Taglit's tourists commonly spoke of Israel in terms that highlighted its uniqueness as a site of ancient Jewish roots: "When [the tour guide] mentioned that Abraham and Isaac and David were part of the history of the city," one person said during a visit to Jerusalem, "it felt like it was everything I was taught as a kid coming to life. This is where Judaism really happened – beyond any textbook."[8]

What matters most is not the content per se. Neither the past history of the Jewish people nor the general components of Jewish rites and traditions change based on one's current geographic location; rather, the place itself is the key feature because it changes the way people think about Jewish history, rites, and traditions. In any Jewish educational setting, the degree to which participants' Jewish identity is affected depends on the strength and internal coherence of the messages they absorb in context and the degree to which those messages are consistent with their previous knowledge and attitudes.[9] But in the Diaspora, the backdrop for the messages is an abstract location, and so the messages are not evaluated as stringently. Israel, by contrast, provides a concrete setting against which to evaluate the messages – the very setting in which Jewish history occurred and from which Jewish traditions were originally derived. By reifying participants' connection to Israel, the Israel experience draws upon their Jewish cultural capital, provides a powerful new context to elaborate upon it, demands that they consider the implications of their previously accumulated knowledge in fine detail, and makes their Jewish identities more salient.

Perhaps more importantly, an Israel experience provides an opportunity to develop first-hand impressions of the modern State of Israel, rather than relying on often faulty anecdotal reports, stereotypes,



→ First-hand exposure to both the triumphs and challenges of Israel not only corrects mistaken impressions... but also encourages [a] more detailed examination of every aspect of one's prior knowledge.

The great power of Israel to develop Jewish identity remains only abstract without personal experience.

and generalizations. Authentic experience helps one distinguish between simplistic depictions of Israel in the media and old narratives of Israel as a survivalist enclave for Jews escaping the Holocaust and anti-Semitism around the world and more nuanced, accurate descriptions of a thriving, multicultural society at the forefront of advances in science and technology. If done well, such experience will allow individuals to understand the vibrancy of Israeli society, as well as the ways in which Israelis confront universal as well as Israel-specific issues of inequality, conflict, and sustainability. First-hand exposure to both the triumphs and challenges of Israel not only corrects mistaken impressions and promotes expertise with respect to Israel, but also encourages more detailed examination of every aspect of one's prior knowledge. In turn, this heightened scrutiny tends to increase the salience of Israel and Judaism in the construction of one's personal and social identities.

But of course we cannot exclusively rely on the actual experience of Israel. It is delimited in time and space. But we can co-opt Israel education in many ways to strengthen the Israel dimensions of identity development. One important dimension of this process is the inter-personal relationship between young Israelis and overseas peers. Identity is strongly affected by peer relations and contemporary patterns of social networking enable maximizing this process. As one of the other pamphlets in this series emphasizes, language plays a shaping role in identity development. Language as linked to Israel experience and Israel education are a force of great potential. In addition, arts, culture, and immersive networks offer additional arenas for an identity development that draws upon and strengthens a Jewish and Israel identity. The ability to make this happen in practice is the artistry of the Israel pedagogue; the theoretical potential for Israel education as a force in identity development is a lesson strongly suggested by thinking and research in the social psychology of identity.

Epilogue

The ineffable quality of Israel – the sense that even mundane tasks are infused with Jewish meaning when performed in Israel – is summarized in a widely unrecognized axiom of Jewish life: where one is Jewish affects how one is Jewish. Identity is affected in myriad ways by changing social contexts, and the effects of exposure to a context other than that to which one is accustomed can, and often do, have long-lasting effects.[10]

Jewish identity is no different. Given the unique context of Israel as the only Jewish-majority country in the world, the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people, the location of much of the foundational history of Jewish culture, and the most important area of common cultural ground shared by Jews of all cultures and walks of life around the world, exposure to Israel the place and the reality should be expected to have profound effects on Jewish identity.

Theoretical exposure, however, is not sufficient to overcome the abstractness that second- and third-hand exposure to Israel provides. The great power of Israel to develop Jewish identity remains only abstract without personal experience. The Israel visit and the ancillary personal, cultural, and linguistic ties provide the greater detail and concrete connection necessary to stimulate deeper consideration of prior knowledge, more nuanced understanding of learned concepts, and greater salience of Jewish personal and social identities. It draws upon one's prior learning and experience and expands upon in ways that would not be possible in any other context, and is therefore a powerful tool to turn Judaism from an abstract collection of values into a concrete, salient identity.

Notes

1 Stryker, S., and R. Serpe. 1981. "Commitment, Identity Salience and Role Behavior: Theory and Research Example." In W. Ickes and E. Knowles (eds.), *Personality Roles and Social Behavior*. New York: Springer-Verlag.

2 See, for instance: Tajfel, H. 1982. *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Tajfel, H., and J.C. Turner. 1986. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior." In S. Worchel and W.G. Austin (eds.), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (2nd edition, pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

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8 Kelner, S. 2010. *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism*. New York and London: NYU Press.

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THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

AN I-CENTERED APPROACH TO JEWISH GENERATION ME

BY DR. DAVID BRYFMAN



The children, youth and young adults of the early 21st century often get a bad rap. Often accused of being concerned only with themselves, the children born in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s have disparagingly been referred to as Generation Me. This broad categorization of a generation is a gross generalization and one which doesn't tell the full story. When looking specifically at the so-called Jewish Generation Me, a more complete picture shows that although some characteristics are constant with the broad stereotype, there are many more characteristics which we as a Jewish community need to embrace.

A better understanding of the Jewish Generation Me also represents a great opportunity for many educators who have long espoused a learner-centered approach to education. Many proponents of a learner-centered approach to education would perhaps agree with Generation Me's demands, inasmuch as all good education should, first and foremost, relate to the individual learner. Literally the I is at the center of the experience – what may be called an I-Centered approach to Jewish education.

In this pamphlet, an I-Centered approach to Jewish education is deliberately infused with double meaning. Not only is it true that all good education should be learner-centered, but it is also valuable for us as Jewish educators to embrace the notion that Israel education can transform Jewish Generation Me into a population of strongly identified Jews.

This pamphlet will pose three questions that move us to a better understanding of why and how an I-Centered approach to education is necessary for today's Jewish Generation Me.

- What is an I-Centered Education?
- What are some of the features of today's Jewish Generation Me?
- How does an I-Centered Education transform Jewish Generation Me into a population with strong Jewish identities who see Israel as core to whom they are and who they will become?

What is an I-Centered Education?

An I-Centered approach to education, as it relates to child-centered learning, is not new. It is a philosophical approach to education that builds upon the works of many who have long argued that the most meaningful and enduring education is that by which the learner experiences something for her/himself. From Romantic philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau to the modern pragmatist John Dewey, who stated that "education is not a preparation for life; education is life itself," theorists have long stressed the importance of experiential learner-based education. This does not mean that experience alone is enough for education to take place. For experiences to become educative we need to reflect upon them in order that they become the building blocks by which we grow and are ultimately transformed. Therefore in an experiential learning model, even in an I-Centered approach to Generation Me, a teacher is not only present, but central in facilitating the learning experience and reflecting upon these experiences so that the learners can grow.

Not without its critics, this child-centered approach to education argues that the learner, rather than the content, should be the primary focus of all learning experiences. The educator's role is very different to the teachers in a traditional educational environment, who deposit knowledge and content into their students waiting minds. As Jewish educators we can learn tremendously from Janusz Korczak, who believed strongly that such educators could only exist if they held their learners with the respect that they were entitled to. For Korczak, learners were not empty vessels, but valued partners in any human interaction. For proponents of experiential and child-centered learning, the relationships between educator and learner are critical, because it is upon these layers of trust and respect that learning can take place.

Ultimately, when talking about an I-Centered approach to Jewish education we are talking about the development of strong relationships. When Martin Buber writes about the I-Thou (*Ich-Du*) relationship, he stresses the mutual, holistic existence of two beings. In the student-teacher relationship, this mutual respect is paramount. In terms of one's relationship with Israel, we must also consider how to transform the relationship between the learner and Israel from an I-It (*Ich-Es*) relationship, where Israel and the learner encounter one another as objects but do not really meet, into an I-Thou relationship where both the learner and Israel deeply connect with one another.

What are Some of the Features of Today's Jewish Generation Me?

As educators we need to understand both the content of Israel and the many I's who learn within the experiences we facilitate. What characteristics
encapsulate today's generation of Jewish children, youth and young adults? And most importantly, how can we, by better understanding who these learners are, create and facilitate learning experiences that touch every I? These characteristics are also important because not only do they enable us to better understand a key segment of our population but because they also give us a better understanding of some of the characteristics that will define the Jewish community in the future.

> Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people today. They are entitled to be taken seriously. …They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be.
>
> - Janusz Korczak

Six Core Characteristics of Jewish Generation Me

1 They Care. This generation of youth has often been categorized as narcissistic, self-absorbed and largely disinterested in their collective being; however, the search for identity which all people experience also involves a process of collective self-discovery. As part of the quest to better understand who they are and how they fit into this world, young Jews are asking questions about their history, people, religion and culture.

2 Multiple Selves. As much as being Jewish is important, it is only one piece of who the youth of today are. In many cases their Jewish identity is no more or less important than any other of their identities. What makes this generation different is the relative ease with which they can move between their various identities depending on the specific context and who they surround themselves with. We need to ensure that the experiences we offer our youth speak to all aspects of who they are and not just their isolated Jewish component. This has long been referred to as a holistic approach to education.

3 Safe and Secure. Most young Jews in America feel safe, secure and proud of their heritage. Despite what their parents or grandparents might tell them, Jewish youth today do not feel any existential threat to the survival of the Jewish people. For them, the Holocaust is an important episode in history, the State of Israel has always and will always be there, and threats from Iran or media reports of anti-Semitism in France are just that – media reports among the many in a continuous 24-7 news cycle. This should not be interpreted as naïve or ignorant, because they also know more and have greater access to information than any generation in history. In many ways, Jewish youth today are evidence of the fulfillment of the American dream: they have arrived and do not perceive themselves as being distinct from any other ethno-religious American group.

4 Creative Generation. Today's youth have the capacity to express themselves and share their talents with more people than ever before. In a Web 2.0 world, best symbolized by Wikipedia, all information has value, and anyone delivering that information is a resource (especially if it is constructed by the masses). Today's youth have grown up in this

reality and they expect and demand to be fully involved in both the creation and implementation of anything that is important to them. A Jewish text and a traditional authority are valuable only after their respect has been earned – something that can only be established when learners are given the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with them. Likewise, rituals are only as meaningful as the sovereign selves who help construct and develop them. This rejection of tradition has been interpreted by some as disrespectful – but instead needs to be re-framed within the passion and dedication of those many young Jews who strive to be interpreters and creators and not merely passive recipients of a tradition.

5 Universal Judaism. Whereas being Jewish once was seen as important because it was "good for the Jews," for today's youth being Jewish is often seen as important insomuch as it can affect the world. The trend towards Jewish social action and *tikkun olam* is not a fad, but is representative of a belief that enables Jewish youth to contribute to making the world a better place through a Jewish lens. This also means that one can be Jewish in very positive ways within non-Jewish frameworks and with non-Jewish contemporaries – facts that mainstream Jewish organizations are reluctant to accept.

6 Challenging Jews. On the whole Jewish youth are intelligent and must be treated that way at every level of interaction. They deserve our respect as learners and as human beings. In all spheres of life, today's youth are taught to question and to be critical – and Jewish life, and specifically Jewish education, must adapt accordingly.

An I-Centered Education for Jewish Generation Me

In an ever-changing world, Israel education should be based around what we currently know about Jewish children, youth and young adults. This means that contemporary Israel education must reflect both how our learners learn and who they are as part of Generation Me. In this sense it truly is a double meaning I-Centered education.

1 Connected Israel: A connection with Israel is seen as part of a young person's journey to discover who they are and where they belong in the world. For them it will often be the connection with people and places that resonate most because they fulfill a psychological need to build an attachment and understanding of one's heritage and one's people.

2 Attractive Israel: Israel must be presented in a way that is attractive, dynamic and engaging given that it is competing in a marketplace of opportunities designed to attract the attention of discerning consumers.

In an ever-changing world, Israel education should be based around what we currently know about Jewish children, youth and young adults. This means that contemporary Israel education must reflect both how our learners learn and who they are as part of Generation Me.

3 Sophisticated Israel: As learners mature they must be presented a sophisticated and nuanced Israel, because it is through understanding these complexities that they will struggle and develop their own personal relationship with Israel.

4 Global Israel: Israel must be presented in a way that speaks to youth and young adults who see themselves both as Members of the Tribe and Global Citizens. In this regard educators must strive to relate to both the uniqueness of Israel as well as its role as a normal country among the other nations of the world.

5 Diverse Israel: Israel must be presented in a myriad of ways because what is meaningful for one person is not so for all. This diversity must reflect both varied pedagogic techniques as well as the diversity of lenses through which Israel can be presented, including but not restricted to technology, arts and culture, sports, politics, environment, social action, pop culture, technology, health, science, and business.

6 Action-Oriented Israel: Israel education should inspire learners to do. It should empower them to create projects, develop personal relationships, want to visit Israel, and get to know Israel better. Most importantly, good Israel education will succeed when Jewish learners include Israel as part of their own personal narrative.

An I-Centered approach to Israel education and engagement allows us to embrace the totality of Jewish Generation Me. On one hand, this approach should allow us to cater to the individual needs and desires of all of our individual learners. For the student who loves art, sports, technology, the environment, social justice issues etc., Israel offers a landscape which can embrace all of these and many more niche interest areas that can be attractive and meaningful to individuals. And on the other hand, an I-Centered approach also offers the opportunity to those aspects of Jewish Generation Me which speak to their collective purpose and responsibility.

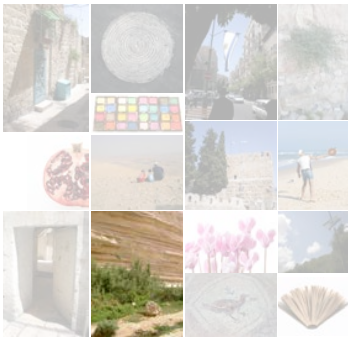
At the end of the day there are two questions that guide the actions of most youth and young adults – who am I and where do I fit in this world? An I-Centered approach to Israel engagement offers answers to both of these questions.



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THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

ERETZ YISRAEL, MEDINAT YISRAEL, AM YISRAEL: Negotiating Multiple Landscapes



BY DR. ZOHAR RAVIV

The word “Israel” in the phrase “Israel Education” is a complicating term. It connotes multiple and, at times, disparate meanings which often add confusion rather than consistency to the field.

"Israel" is on one hand a *Land* of old (*Eretz Yisrael*) whose presence and position in the Jewish narrative plays a central role in the biblical Exodus generations. That "Israel" was an *Imagined Land* of which the Hebrews in Egypt had only heard, without experiencing it firsthand. To the twelve settling tribes, known as "*Bnai Yisrael*," the People of Israel, "Israel" was a *Covenantal Land* which embodied their pact with the Holy One at Sinai and whose precise borders had fluctuated during various monarchies and eras.

To the exiled and post-exilic generations, "Israel" became a *Remembered Land* which forced an ongoing dialogue between the ancient "Homeland" and the lands in which they lived and which had now become home. It became a semi-mythic entity whose immediate physical absence was replaced by diverse forms of memory, ritual, poetry, and even pilgrimage. For contemporary generations, "Israel" is both a *Lived Land* and an *Envisioned Land*: a Jewish, sovereign and democratic State (*Medinat Yisrael*) which continues to evolve among the family of nations since 1948.

Indeed, as many experienced educators of Judaism know, general perceptions of Israel usually traverse all these landscapes – *Lived Land*; *Imagined Land*; *Contemporary State*; and *Peoplehood* – albeit with varying emphases. Contemporary Jews living throughout the world and native Israelis, for example, see Israel in very different ways. Diaspora Jews often view Israel through romantic, religious or political lenses (often reflective of an *Imagined* and *Remembered Land*), whereas for native Israelis, Israel is the *Lived Land*, a modern and national country of their residence.

This country made us a people; our people made this country.

- David Ben-Gurion

This somewhat simplistic depiction does little to realize the fuller complexity of Israel. At the same time, it does point to the need for greater clarity on this issue – particularly to enable a systematic conversation among educators for the benefit of Israel Education. One of the most interesting –yet neglected– documents for engaging in such a conversation is the document known as *Megillat Ha'Atzmaut*, literally "The Scroll of Independence" but generally translated as "The Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel." It will be instructive for us to look at this document for both conceptual and pedagogic reasons as a way into elaborating the conceptual complexity of several linked but not identical terms.

This historic document, read by David Ben-Gurion on Friday afternoon, May 14, 1948 in what is today known as Independence Hall in Tel Aviv, begins as follows:



ERETZ-ISRAEL [the Land of Israel] was the birthplace of the Jewish people. Here their spiritual, religious and political identity was shaped. Here they first attained to statehood, created cultural values of national and universal significance and gave to the world the eternal Book of Books.

The Declaration of Independence of the *State* of Israel, interestingly, starts by emphasizing the *Land* of Israel. A modern declaration of statehood (very much influenced by the American Declaration of Independence) begins with a conceptual-historical connection with an ancient historical and religious contextualization ("For the land, *whither thou go in to possess it*, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out; … [It is] a land which the Lord thy God cares for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." Deuteronomy 11:10).

Not only does this modern Declaration link the State with *Eretz Yisrael* as "the birthplace of the Jewish people," but it also associates it with the concept of *Am Yisrael* – the People of Israel, a nation that left Egypt, wandered in the deserts of Sinai and Zion, and reached the Land as a cohesive nation after four decades of anticipation. This sense of imagination and anticipation has ever since been an integral component in the Jewish longing for Israel – and may well be an important aim of contemporary Israel education.

Covenantal Land

The distinguished historian Arthur Hertzberg once wrote, "The land of Israel is a central point in the Covenant between the people of Israel and God; [a land] which had been set aside for the authentic encounter between the seed of Abraham and the God who founded their community […]. This land was fashioned by God for a particular service to Him, that its very landscape should help mold the character and spirit of His beloved people."[1] The traditional Jewish standpoint perceives the *Land* of Israel as a *Covenantal Landscape*, an active statement of the binding relationship which is at the heart of Jewish life and discourse. This Covenantal theme pervades biblical texts, Jewish ritual (e.g. circumcision, the *Brit*); the Sabbath (*Shabbat*); social justice (*Tzdaka*); and halakhic rulings. *Eretz Yisrael* is thus seen as an indispensable and inseparable part of the eternal contract between Land, People, and God. While contem-

porary life would seem to be light years and millennia away from such a conception, the contemporary educator is somehow faced with the challenge of dealing with this original and significantly powerful motif in Jewish experience.

A Remembered Land

The lengthy prologue of the Declaration of Independence continues by stating:

> **Impelled by this historic and traditional attachment, Jews strove in every successive generation to re-establish themselves in their ancient homeland.**

Beginning with the first Babylonian Exile (586 BCE), and continuing through the destruction of the Holy Temple (70 CE), a failed Jewish revolt in 132-135 CE and subsequent banishments from the Land, Israel became transformed into a *Remembered Land* for the majority of Jews. Like the Hebrews in Egypt, Jews in Diaspora communities throughout the world related to Israel as an *Imagined Land*: a place they had never actually seen. The difference was that Israel now became both *Imagined* and also *Remembered*. Jewish law, lore, poetry, and life now created a cross-generational romantic "desire" to return to the *Remembered Land*. Some Jews did indeed journey to the land, but for most, the perpetuation of Zion as the Jewish Homeland became a powerful motif that informed Jewish texts and reshaped its institutions, architecture, customs, liturgy and rituals. This *Remembering* assumed a distinctively religious overtone, often expressing itself in the language of *Eretz Hakodesh* (the Holy Land) and *Galut* (Exile).

This motif was to be central for centuries until the late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century national movement reshaped the lexicon and the impetus from a *Remembered Land* to an actual land in which Jews would aspire to live, build, create, and inhabit.

A Lived Land

In the following section of the Declaration, the tone changes dramatically and *Imagined* and *Remembered* and *Covenant* and *Spiritual* become translated into contemporary civil, legal, political, and existential terms:

> **This right is the natural right of the Jewish people to be masters of their own fate, like all other nations, in their own sovereign State. […] Accordingly we, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of *Eretz-Israel* […], by virtue of our natural and historic right […] hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in *Eretz-Israel*, to be known as the State of Israel [*Medinat-Israel*].**

At this point, while rooted in *Eretz* Israel, the Declaration of Independence ultimately aims to legitimize the sovereignty of the *State* of Israel and to secure its standing as a modern, Jewish and democratic State. Three issues are of significance in this context.



"We hereby declare the establishment of a Jewish state in *Eretz-Israel*"

Given its deep reliance on the idea of *Eretz Yisrael*, the State is now called "a Jewish State" rather than "a State for the Jews." This suggests a notion of a state that is somehow related to certain Jewish values, legal rulings and national symbols implied by the ancient theological narrative of the *Land*. The intricate associations between the Land and the State are at the backbone of the Zionist idea, although their nature varied dramatically from one Zionist branch to another.



"To be known as the State of Israel [*Medinat-Israel*]."

At the same time, the new entity will be a contemporary state reflective of norms consistent with democratic liberal Western standards of statehood. This central dimension obviously raises important challenges for such subjects as the Jewish nature of Medinat Israel, the concept of separation of Church and State, and issues of civil law and religious law. It poses the challenge of being a Jewish and a modern democratic state.



"Accordingly we, members of the people's council, representatives of the Jewish community of *Eretz-Israel*"

Whereas authority in ancient Israel was rooted in either the Covenant or monarchies or rabbinic rule, the contemporary State is rooted in a "people's council" – a political forum of men and women assuming responsibility for establishing and navigating the State. How does this new form of authority inform Israel›s path, and how does it correspond with Israel›s vision of being a "Jewish State?"

An Envisioned Land



THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The last part of the Declaration of Independence is a vision of what a modern Jewish State will look like and aspire to. It postulates lofty and laudable principles rooted in the highest values of Jewish tradition and Western culture. The Declaration tries to merge all the aforementioned landscapes into a coherent Jewish narrative. It must negotiate the old with new; here, it envisions an edifice whose set of values echo both the Hebrew prophets and contemporary liberal democracies. The ideas of freedom, justice and equality traverse both landscapes and allow an important dialogue between a respected past and a viable future. The vision, however, is only as worthy as the willingness of each generation to see it to fruition – the desire of a people (old and young!) to partake in an evolving story and to assume responsibility for the path.

The Educator's Challenge

This brief journey clearly highlights the challenge of Jewish educators in Israel education. They must deal with a long legacy of meanings of "Israel," help explicate them in their diverse and respective contexts, and find coherence amongst them in the contemporary context for the young twenty-first-century Jew. This is an educational task of great importance for the practice of Israel Education – and it is surely a holy task.

Note

1 Arthur Hertzberg, editor. *The Zionist Idea* (New York: Atheneum, 1982)

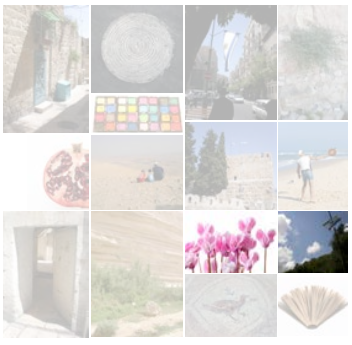


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THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

CURRICULUM & ISRAEL: PRINCIPLES & THEMES

BY RABBI JAN KATZEW



You may already know why to teach Israel – because Israel is a vital organ in the Jewish body, integral to Jewish memory, Jewish identity and Jewish destiny. Once we have agreement that teaching Israel is vital, the central question is what to teach and how to teach. All of us engaged in Jewish education are often bewildered by what "we should" teach about Israel, whether our setting be the classroom, camp, a youth movement, etc.

If you see a student who finds it as hard as iron to study, it is because his studies are without system.

- Talmud, Ta'anit

What Is "Curriculum"?

The word "curriculum" is a central term in contemporary American and Jewish education. In the words of the American educator Elliot Eisner, "the field of curriculum resides at the very core of education." However, it is an elusive field whose parameters we need to define before we enter it generally and the field of Israel education particularly.

Our operating assumptions include:

1 A "curriculum" is a document predicated upon subjective values that represent world views and make claims about what is worth knowing. Therefore, it is critical to understand and state the presuppositions and guiding perspectives that animate the curriculum.

2 A "curriculum" is not just a document. It encompasses the totality of ideas, topics, themes and values presented to learners in an educational setting.



This vision of education sees curriculum as:

- Explicit core values and ideas
- Derivative learning themes
- Sequenced topics
- Instructional resources
- Desired learning experiences
- Proposed outcomes
- Intended impacts

3 The "hidden" or unstated messages, values, and ideas that a teacher, a classroom, a setting, and an environment convey are also parts of the curriculum.

In attempting to "curricularize," one needs to be sensitive to books, maps, websites, and smart boards and also to teacher moods and modes, aesthetics of the learning space, group dynamics, body language, and many other intangible, yet palpable factors.

4 Like a vector, a curriculum has both magnitude and direction or, in educational terms, scope and sequence. Scope determines curricular bandwidth, and sequence articulates the curricular trajectory. Together, scope and sequence define a course of study.

These perspectives inform any attempt to develop a curriculum, especially an Israel curriculum. Our curricular aim is to nurture subjectivity, passion and connection: a lifelong, meaningful relationship between a learner and a place that is both timely and timeless.

Curricularizing Israel

There are many ways to look at Israel; small as it is, there are diverse "Israels." Even a simple thing like a map of Israel lends itself to different perspectives. Therefore, every Israel curriculum is partial, in both senses of the word: it reflects the biases and perspectives of the authors, and tells only part of the mosaic-like narrative. This complexity makes "curricularizing" Israel one of the most challenging (yet exciting) of Jewish educational tasks!

In this spirit, we propose to 1) present the core components of an Israel curriculum, 2) propose values and themes we regard as essential in teaching about Israel, and 3) make suggestions about sequencing the subject matter over diverse developmental stages and settings.

The starting point of our curriculum is the framing of Israel as a part of our long Jewish legacy and an historic political, social and military achievement whose potential is not yet fulfilled. We choose to begin what will hopefully be a lifelong romance with Israel. We hope this curricular process will lead to respecting different, even divergent perspectives on Israel. There will be time for thinking, debating, reflecting, challenging, and criticizing Israel. Nevertheless, our Israel curricular point of departure is *shehecheyanu,* and we hope you will join us in that pursuit.



The Israel curriculum should encompass:

- The core values about Israel that we want young people initially to internalize
- Israel themes that we regard as essential to conveying those values
- Experiences related to Israel that we see as integral to making these values real
- Educational resources that are effective in conveying the values we believe students should internalize
- Behaviors we hope will emerge as a result of this curricular process
- Opportunities for learners to interact with role models (ancient, medieval and modern) that exemplify the values worth preserving and growing
- Texts that are foundational to appreciating the evolving, dynamic relationship of Jews and Judaism to Israel

The overall purpose of any scope or sequence is to nurture a personal, emotional and reflective relationship with Israel, a connection that is affective as much as cognitive, and psychological as much as logical.

The Israel curriculum should be a combination of education and experience, addressing the mind and the heart. We strive to connect learners to Israel through intimate knowledge, deep feeling, and active, responsible behavior. The Israel curriculum should be part of each of the years of the young person's Jewish education so that a connection to Israel can grow over time with the learner's increasingly nuanced understanding. The Israel curriculum should permeate the totality of the institution, i.e., its aesthetics, its ethics, its staff, and its budget. The Israel curriculum should be intentionally embedded in the context of the larger Jewish educational experience of our learners of all ages and stages.

The road to that actual education moment has several steps. It encompasses: core values; framing questions; over-arching rubrics; specific topics; and lesson plans. Curricular values are necessary, but they are not sufficient. They justify a curriculum, but they do not articulate it. They provide the foundation upon which the curriculum will be built. The curricular design must take into account the overall experience we want people to have of Israel. We are challenged to achieve a dynamic, lifelong relationship to Israel. In order to create, sustain and grow a relationship between a Jew and Israel, i.e., to achieve our overarching curricular aim, the following questions and themes constitute an essential element.

The Educational Road Has Several Steps:

1. Core Values
2. Framing Questions
3. Overarching Rubrics & Specific Topics
4. Lesson Plans

1 Core Values & Ideas of Teaching Israel

We regard the following list of core values as suggestive rather than exhaustive:

- The Land of Israel is the birthplace of Jewish people. It is the site and setting of many core Jewish texts and values.
- The Land and the idea of Israel have been an enduring sacred shared value and a centripetal force for Jews throughout Jewish history in the many lands and eras in which Jews have lived.
- The Zionist Movement and the establishment of the modern State of Israel reflect the great commitment of the Jewish people to renew the connection with an ancient birthplace, create a home for Jews after the Holocaust, and create a center for Jewish creativity and innovation.
- The State of Israel is a modern society and a democratic state which at the same time has deep links to a long, varied religious and cultural past. It is a physical home to more than seven million Jews, making Israel the one country in which Jews constitute a majority and thereby

presenting the challenge of being both powerful and moral. Contemporary Israel is an exciting laboratory for an ancient religious civilization learning to live in a modern world and culture.

- The physical existence of the contemporary State has been threatened since its creation, causing profound challenges.
- The Land of Israel is a spiritual and cultural home for all Jews. A link with contemporary Israel can enrich the lives of all Jews.
- Ultimately, the most exciting and fruitful way to know Israel is through multiple experiences in Israel. One of the centerpieces of such Israel educational experiences should be the *mifgash* – the encounter with Israeli peers.

«Our curricular aim is to nurture subjectivity, passion and connection: a lifelong, meaningful relationship between a learner and a place that is both timely and timeless.»

2 Framing Questions

Here are a few framing questions that we believe, over the years, should be the backdrop of the curriculum:

- What does Israel mean to me?
- Why is Israel so important to Jews, Judaism, and Jewish life?
- How can knowledge of Israel enrich my Jewish beliefs and behavior?
- What is the nature of the relationships with Israel I can have and will have as I grow?

Our recommended strategy is interdisciplinary – a weave of geography, history, and literature in an attempt to develop a personal, biographical narrative of Israel as a basic element of a Jewish self.

3 Overarching Rubrics & Specific Topics

We suggest the following six overarching rubrics, which together, encompass a series of topics that seem important for a meaningful core Israel education:

- Roots
- Rebirth
- The New Land
- A Contemporary Society
- Issues,
- My Israel.

Please refer to Addendum 1: Overarching Rubrics and Specific Topics (page 8) to see topics for each category.

Don't be frightened! We are not suggesting you need to "cover" all these topics or to do so in this order. We are suggesting that these are specific topics of relevance and interest that you should consider. The list of topics may be related to the "nuts and bolts" of education; how you put them together is the core of the wonderful act of creative teaching!

4 Scope & Sequence

Finally comes the actual task of teaching Israel! There are various ways to create actual "lessons" out of this evolving process of Israel education. We have found value in a curricular design described as "understanding by design" in the book of the same name by Grant P. Wiggins and Jay McTighe, which aims to go beyond specific classroom activities or lessons as the goal and instead focuses on enduring understanding – which will then be the basis for later learning and living. Rather than proffer a formula for Israel education, we are advocating an intentional strategy: teachers and students should work together to develop appropriate "modularized" units woven from the values and topics we have suggested.

Our recommended strategy is interdisciplinary – a weave of geography, history, and literature in an attempt to develop a personal, biographical narrative of Israel as a basic element of a Jewish self.

There are numerous possible permutations, and you will determine which trajectory will be most effective in your community. To give a point of departure, Addendum 2 is one possible sequence.

Summing Up

The overall purpose of any scope or sequence is to nurture a personal, emotional and reflective relationship with Israel, a connection that is affective as much as cognitive, and psychological as much as logical. There is only one theme that we urge be repeated in all settings, at all ages and stages: finding the "I" in Israel, i.e., seeing oneself in direct relationship to Israel, since that is the constant rationale for Israel education. Disciplines such as geography, history, literature, music, theology and politics are added in consonance with secular education in order to be age-appropriate and to support and complement the general education curriculum. This scope and sequence is intended to integrate multiple settings: home, school, and camp, as well as visits to Israel with family and peers.

This is a pamphlet on "curricularizing" Israel; but as you have seen, it is not your usual "curriculum." Our approach to curriculum differs from the classic "if it's Tuesday, teach Chapter 3" approach. We regard curriculum as a gateway rather than a rubric, an adventure rather than a sealed box. Educators ultimately need and deserve "curricula" – but they deserve something greater – the courage and joy of teaching!



Jan Katzew serves as a lead specialist at the Union for Reform Judaism, where his primary focus is Jewish learning. Jan is a rabbi and he earned his doctorate at Hebrew University in Jewish Thought and Education. His relationship to Israel is more personal than professional and more emotional than intellectual. Nevertheless, he has a deep and longstanding commitment to Israel engagement for Jews at all ages, stages, and settings.

Addendum 1 - Overarching Rubrics & Specific Topics

ROOTS

- Discovering the Jewish People's Relationships to Israel through Texts (Sacred and Secular)
- The Promise of the Land: The Biblical Covenant
- Appreciating Israel's Spiritual Inheritance
- Israel in Prayer – Then and Now

REBIRTH

- Renewing the Promise: Zionism
- *Yehudi Daber Ivrit*! – Reviving the Hebrew Language
- A New *Megilla*: *Megillat HaAtzmaut* – The Israeli Declaration of Independence
- *Eretz Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael* – The Land and the State of Israel – Where the Real and the Ideal Meet

THE NEW LAND

- *Yama v'Keidma, Tzafona v'Negba* – Learning about Israel's Borders: Making the Maps Ours – What Do I Want to Know about the Land and Landscape of Israel?
- Israel in the Middle East – A Challenging Neighborhood
- *Adama Adama* – Land, Water, Nature and Returning to the Soil
- Go to the Desert: The Desert in *Eretz Yisrael* Then and Now
- Jerusalem and Tel Aviv – A Tale of Two Cities and Two Israeli Personalities

A CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

- Kibbutz Galuyot: Ingathering from Around the World – The Many Faces that Make Up Israel
- Living with a Jewish Calendar and a Jewish Clock: Holidays, Shabbat, and New Occasions in Israel
- Israeli Sights and Sounds – The Art and Music of Israel and Its People
- Inventing Israel – High-Tech Israel
- Israel – Jewish and Democratic – Inspiration, Aspiration, and Perspiration
- Israel Through the Eyes of Its Poets – From Yehuda (Halevi) to Yehuda (Amichai)
- Israel in the News
- *Giburim* – Israeli Heroes

ISSUES

- Arabs and Jews: Two Peoples, One Land
- *Ameich Ami* – Jewish Peoplehood
- *Elohaiyikh Elohai* – Jewish Religion in a Jewish State: Issues and Challenges
- Israel Advocacy – Defending Israel
- *Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof* – The Israeli System of Justice
- The Knesset – In Pursuit of Democracy
- Learning in Israel

MY ISRAEL

- Israel and Jewish Identity – There and Here
- Finding the "I" in Israel
- Going to Israel

Addendum 2: Scope & Sequence - Ages 3-6

ROOTS	■ Israel in Prayer
REBIRTH	
THE NEW LAND	■ *Yama v'Keidma, Tzafona v'Negba* – Learning about Israel's Borders: Making the Maps Ours – What Do I Want to Know about the Land & Landscape of Israel?
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	■ Israeli Sights and Sounds– The Art & Music of Israel and Its People ■ *Giburim*: Israeli Heroes
ISSUES	
MY ISRAEL	■ Finding the "I" in Israel

Addendum 2: Scope & Sequence - Ages 7-10

ROOTS	■ Discovering the Jewish People's Relationships to Israel through Texts (Sacred & Secular) ■ The Promise of the Land: The Biblical Covenant ■ Israel in Prayer
REBIRTH	■ *Yehudi Daber Ivrit!* – Reviving the Hebrew Language
THE NEW LAND	■ *Yama v'Keidma, Tzafona v'Negba* – Learning about Israel's Borders: Making the Maps Ours – What Do I Want to Know about the Land & Landscape of Israel? ■ *Adama Adama* – Land, Water, Nature and Returning to the Soil ■ Go to the Desert: The Desert in *Eretz Yisrael* Then and Now
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	■ *Kibbutz Galuyot*: Ingathering from Around the World – The Many Faces that Make Up Israel ■ Living with a Jewish Calendar and a Jewish Clock – Holidays, Shabbat, and New Occasions in Israel ■ Israeli Sights and Sounds– The Art & Music of Israel and Its People ■ Israel in the News ■ *Giburim*: Israeli Heroes
ISSUES	■ *Ameich Ami* – Jewish Peoplehood ■ The Knesset – In Pursuit of Democracy
MY ISRAEL	■ Finding the "I" in Israel

Addendum 2: Scope & Sequence - Ages 11-14

ROOTS	■ Discovering the Jewish People's Relationships to Israel through Texts (Sacred & Secular) ■ Appreciating Israel's Spiritual Inheritance ■ Israel in Prayer: Then & Now
REBIRTH	■ Renewing the Promise: Zionism ■ A New *Megilla*: *Megillat HaAtzmaut:* The Israeli Declaration of Independence
THE NEW LAND	■ *Yama v'Keidma, Tzafona v'Negba* – Learning about Israel's Borders: Making the Maps Ours – What Do I Want to Know about the Land & Landscape of Israel? ■ Israel in the Middle East – A Challenging Neighborhood ■ Jerusalem & Tel Aviv – A Tale of Two Cities & Two Israeli Personalities
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	■ *Kibbutz Galuyot*: Ingathering from Around the World – The Many Faces that Make Up Israel ■ Israeli Sights and Sounds– The Art & Music of Israel and Its People ■ Israel – Jewish & Democratic: Inspiration, Aspiration, & Perspiration ■ Israel through the Eyes of Its Poets – From Yehuda (Halevi) to Yehuda (Amichai) ■ *Giburim*: Israeli Heroes
ISSUES	■ *Ameich Ami* – Jewish Peoplehood ■ *Elohaiyikh Elohai* – Jewish Rin a Jewish State: Issues & Challenges ■ Israel Advocacy: Defending Israel ■ Learning in Israel
MY ISRAEL	■ Israel and Jewish Identity – There and Here ■ Finding the "I" in Israel

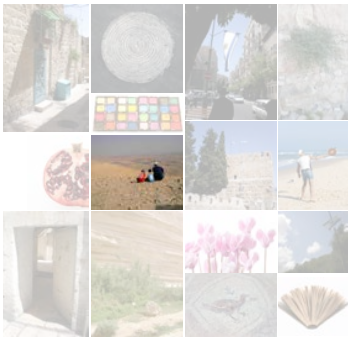
Addendum 2: Scope & Sequence - Ages 15-18

ROOTS	■ Discovering the Jewish People's Relationships to Israel through Texts (Sacred & Secular)
REBIRTH	■ *Eretz Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael* – The Land and the State of Israel – Where the Real and the Ideal Meet
THE NEW LAND	■ *Yama v'Keidma, Tzafona v'Negba* – Learning about Israel's Borders: Making the Maps Ours – What Do I Want to Know about the Land & Landscape of Israel? ■ Israel in the Middle East – A Challenging Neighborhood
CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY	■ *Kibbutz Galuyot*: Ingathering from Around the World – The Many Faces that Make Up Israel ■ Israeli Sights and Sounds– The Art & Music of Israel and Its People ■ Inventing Israel – High-tech Israel ■ Israel through the Eyes of Its Poets – From Yehuda (Halevi) to Yehuda (Amichai) ■ Israel in the News
ISSUES	■ Arabs and Jews: Two Peoples, One Land ■ Israel Advocacy: Defending Israel ■ *Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof* – The Israeli System of Justice ■ Learning in Israel
MY ISRAEL	■ Finding the "I" in Israel ■ Going to Israel

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

LENSES & NARRATIVES FOR TEACHING ISRAEL

BY DR. BARRY CHAZAN



Cameras

The invention that has intrigued me most is the camera. To this day, I do not understand how it works, but I think it is a magical invention. Things are "out there" – in space, on the street, or in the house – and by pushing a button on a once rather bulky, now svelte black or silver "box," that "thing" can be transferred onto a piece of paper or computer screen. Tooth fairies and superheroes may be stretches of the imagination, but a camera with its lenses seems to be the ultimate miracle.

> The camera makes everyone a tourist in other people's reality, and eventually in one's own.
>
> - Susan Sontag

I once met the remarkable photographer, essayist, and teacher Susan Sontag, who explained that photography is as much about the person taking the picture as the picture itself. A photograph depends not so much on the "thing" out there, but rather on the person holding the camera, the spot where he or she is standing, and the angle from which he or she is shooting.

The educationist Parker Palmer has said, "We cannot see what is out there by simply looking around. Everything depends on the lenses through which we see the world. By putting on new lenses, we see things that otherwise would be invisible."[1]

Narratives

The lenses paradigm is related to what is today popularly called 'narratives.' Narratives are ways of looking at the world, and according to this approach, in 'education' we don't teach facts, knowledge, history or geography but rather diverse versions (narratives) of how facts, history, or geography happen. Narratives are not falsehoods; they are rooted in empirical facts, observation, and reflective research by scholars, and are organized and presented to help us as individuals find meaning in our past and present.



Diverse narratives: [Israel] education today is not about "facts, knowledge, history or geography but rather diverse versions (narratives) of how facts, history, or geography happen."

Lenses, Narratives & Israel Education

There are few subjects that are more camera – and narrative – related than Israel. There are few ideas, sites, and things that invite more diverse photographs than Israel. One photographer could take a picture of the Western Wall in Jerusalem and have it emerge as an other-worldly journey in spirituality. Another person, standing at a different spot, could produce a snapshot of elderly men in garb from several prior centuries, mumbling strange incantations – with nary a woman in sight – and have it emerge as an outdated relic of a yesteryear religion.

The camera story and the narrative theory are critical for Israel education. There are diverse narratives about the Zionist movement, the establishment of Israel, and contemporary Israel. The most dramatic conflicting narrative versions are clearly between Israel and her neighbors, but within the Jewish world too there are conflicting narratives. (Remember the Western Wall? The two pictures just described were taken by two Jews who see the Wall in dramatically different ways.)

Israel today lends itself to diverse vantage points, perspectives, and "tellings" of the story. Indeed, the diverse pictures of Israel are in some ways the essence of life in Israel. The richness of Israel is that everyone is a narrator and everyone is a photographer – and how do we teach that?

Three Goals of Lenses & Narration in Jewish Education

We have three tasks concerning lenses and narratives in Israel education.

1 Our first task is to help our young learn the core narratives that Jewish history and life have promulgated and accepted – rooted in both objective realities and research by historians.

2 Our second task is – over time – to teach that one wonderful aspect of Jewish life has been its openness to diverse narrations and narrators – to a tradition of commentary, debate, and discourse which, when effected properly, is regarded as *l'shem shamayim* – "in the name of Heaven" (i.e. a praiseworthy activity).

3 Our third task is to help our young learn to become narrators and photographers on their own – to give them the tools to see alternative pictures and hear diverse narratives and, hopefully through their own pictures and stories, to understand a Jewish narrative that speaks to them.

It is not good to start Israel education as "first aid" in the young adult years. We would be better served by a developmental educational process beginning in the early years through high school so that by young adulthood our young people are well-equipped photographers on their own.

Teaching Five Core Israel Narratives

There are five core Israel narratives that our young should have the opportunity to meet and learn in their formative years. Understanding these core narratives during their early years will enable our young to deal with conflicting narratives as they grow older. If they do not begin with core narratives as

part of their youthful legacy, it will be difficult for them to intelligently deal with complex narratives as young adults. It is our educational mandate and responsibility as Jewish educators to teach (not indoctrinate) some core narratives about Israel and the Jewish people.

The teaching of these narratives should reflect the best of Jewish scholarship and research. It should be based as much as possible in primary Jewish sources, and it should be pedagogically accessible and interesting.[2]

Narrative I: *Eretz Yisrael* & The Covenant

The first core narrative is the origin of the Jewish people and its ethos in *Eretz Yisrael* – Land of Israel. According to this narrative, the Jews as a people originated in the ancient Land of Israel; its early history is almost exclusively related to Israel; and the evolution of its core heroes and values is in *Eretz Yisrael*. The sagas of the Patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt, the vision of the Prophets and their religious-ethical creeds, the monarchies, and the Temple culture are all *Eretz Yisrael*-based. This entire narrative is wrapped in a grand narrative often denoted as "the Covenant."

This narrative is best studied with original Biblical texts such as Genesis 17:8, Genesis 35:12, Exodus 20:12, Amos 9:14-15, Psalm 137: 5-6, and others.

Narrative 2: Memory & Hope

The second narrative is the transformation of a land- and cult-centered Israelite religion into rabbinic Judaism. This narrative is the remarkable saga of Jewish teachers and leaders over the ages and across diverse lands transforming *Am Yisrael* into the Jewish religion. In this narrative, Jews become part of a religious community existing, in varying degrees of accommodation, in diverse host countries while preserving core values, behaviors, and texts of former days. Central to this story is the ongoing remembrance, citation, and longing to return to Zion. While out of Israel, the Jewish people used ritual (breaking a glass at weddings, using the words "Next Year in Jerusalem" at the end of the Passover Seder), prayer, poetry (Yehuda Halevi), and law (diverse rabbinic and Talmudic statements) to keep *Eretz Yisrael* and the value of *Shivat Zion* (returning to Zion) as a lynchpin of Jewish existence. When *Bnai Yisrael* were forced out of the Land of Israel, they retained *Eretz Yisrael* as a powerful spiritual force in the re-engineering of a Jewish life.

The key documents here are Talmudic and rabbinic literature, the prayer book, literary and philosophic writings (e.g. Babylonian Talmud, *Ketubot* 110b, and *Baba Batra* 60b and 158b, *Vayikra Rabba* 34:7, *Midrash Tehillim* 105:1, Rashi on Genesis 1:1, the *Shema*, the *Amidah*, and *Birkat HaMazon* from the *siddur*). Many of these sources are collected in Tuvia Book's *For the Sake of Zion: Pride and Strength through Knowledge: An Educator's Guide*[3].

Narrative 3: *Shivat Zion* – Returning To Zion

The third narrative is the emergence of a modern movement in the late 19th to early 20th century for physical return of the Jewish people to its 'homeland.' The pre-Zionists (Hess, Kalischer) and the Zionists (Herzl, Ben-Gurion, Jabotinsky, A.D. Gordon, and Rav Kook) weaved a narrative that proposed that Jews could only find haven, creativity, sustainability, and dignity by physically returning to their ancestral homeland. The phrase was always "to return" and the methods were political, economic, and practical. This movement regarded the Jewish people not as a group of outsiders invading foreign territory but as an indigenous people returning to its original home. The pinnacle of this narrative is the establishment of a Jewish State, recognized by the world community on May 5, 1948.

The most effective statement of this narrative is the Israel Declaration of Independence (*Megilat Haatzmaut*). This document is a rich resource that should be studied on its many levels by young Jews. The original writings of Zionist thinkers presented in Arthur Hertzberg's *The Zionist Idea*[4] (Hess, Pinsker, Herzl, Achad Ha'Am, Bialik, A.D. Gordon, Ben-Gurion, Weizmann, and Jabotinsky) are also useful texts for this narrative.

Narrative 4: *Medinat Yisrael*

The fourth narrative is the story of a modern Jewish state engaged in the saga of building a contemporary society for millions of Jews from all over the world as well as several minority populations, while at the same time living in a "neighborhood" of perpetual confrontation and conflict. This narrative unfolds in art, music, industry, pop culture, government, politics, education and all those elements which comprise modern societies. It is about the challenge of being contemporary and being 'Jewish;' about what being 'Jewish' means, about being 'Jewish' and also being inclusive of minorities that comprise the society. This narrative is a love story, an adventure story, a drama, a comedy, and at moments a tragedy. It is a story new to the Jewish experience and as such is characterized by all the excitement and complexity of new ventures and experiences.



→ Tools for understanding: Give our young people "the tools to see alternative pictures and hear diverse narratives and...to understand a Jewish narrative that speaks to them."

→ Begin the educational process "in the early years through high school so that by young adult-hood our young people are well-equipped photographers on their own."

The best "text" for this narrative is clearly the visit to Israel. The more than half-million young people between the ages of 13 and 26 who have visited Israel since statehood and have experienced the narrative and photographed it with their own eyes bear testimony to the richness of this text. Unfortunately, this number constitutes a minority of world Jewry. In lieu of the visit – or in preparation for it – the task of Israel education is to create the best live, dynamic, attractive resources to make contemporary Israel come alive.

The richness of Israel is that everyone is a narrator and everyone is a photographer – and how do we teach that?

In this context, it is useful to co-opt Howard Gardner's notion of multiple intelligences and to suggest that a diversity of "cameras" should be used. Some young people will be ignited by music and others by literature; some by architecture and others by food; some by heroes and others by events; some by politics and others by people. Beyond the trip – which is unquestionably the pedagogic technique par excellence – a host of diverse resources now exist or can be created.

Narrative 5: *Clal Yisrael*

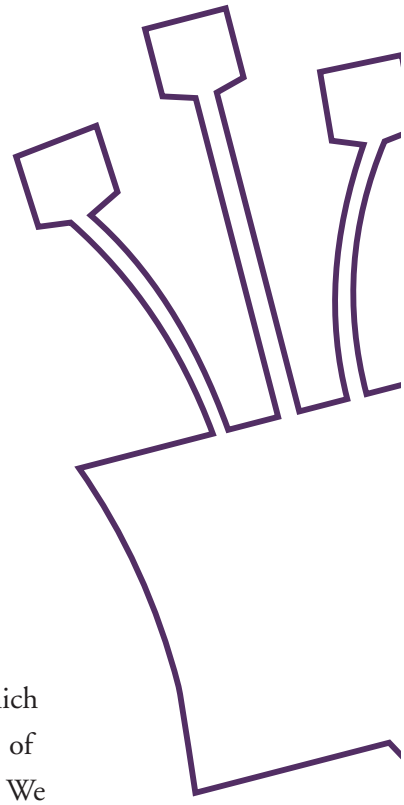
Above all else, for our children to develop a personally resonating relationship with Israel, it will be through the diversity of voices that represent the Jewish people. These voices will represent the narratives of the Jewish people of yesterday, today and tomorrow. These stories will not just be grounded in the existential dimensions of philosophical, religious or political life, but exist on the beaches of Tel-Aviv, the forests of the Galil and the hills of Judaea. They will also be found in the cities of New York, Buenos Aires and Melbourne – because together these constitute the entirety of *Clal Yisrael* and the relationships of Jews worldwide regardless of their physical geography.

The best "texts" for this narrative span multiple generations, locations, and formats. They will be found in a Yehuda Amichai poem, a *Hadag Nachash* song, and in a random café where Jews sip coffee, talk and play *shesh besh*.

Most importantly, the story of *Clal Yisrael* has yet to be completed and the most important text might yet to be articulated. It is probably resting somewhere in your classroom, summer camp or Egged bus, waiting for you to offer the opportunity to release the narrative and include it our perpetual and ongoing story.

Alternative Narratives

The five narratives sketched here are not the only narratives. As noted, there are alternative political narratives. The issue of alternative narratives is not only between Israel and its neighbors. Within Israel and Jewish life, there are diverse opinions and discussions about elements of the core narrative.



How do we deal with alternative narratives?

Our responsibility as Jewish educators is to teach a core consensus Jewish narrative which will be a basis of the "tool kit" of young Jews from an early age. We do our young adults a disservice by not equipping them at an early age with some appropriate "tools" (narratives). At the same time – and over time – it is important to indicate that there are alternative narratives. Gradually, we should familiarize our young with some of the differences. As part of this process, it is legitimate to indicate why we believe

in the Jewish narrative and what we regard as the inaccuracies of the other narratives. Our mission need not be teaching other narratives, but it certainly is our place to show how our narrative differs.

The idea of different perspectives is not foreign to children – even young children. They grow up in a multi-cultured, multi-religion, multi-country world. They know from an early age that there are different ways of being Jewish, and they know there are different races, cultures, political parties, and sports teams. We do ourselves a disservice by not indicating there are other perspectives: young people often feel cheated or deceived when they learn about them in their later years. Again, it is not our job to engage in a full-fledged comparative political science seminar in conflicting narratives. We have a narrative that we accept as reasonable, compelling, and legitimate; it is our role to present it in as open and engaging a way as possible.

In teaching the core narrative, we have a unique opportunity to teach something important both about Judaism and about critical thinking. Judaism is a religion, culture, and civilization that has encompassed and encouraged diverse views on many matters. It is a culture that, on the whole, has encouraged critical thinking and discussion. Critical thinking is not a skill reserved for math, science, and general studies. Our ancestors were among the creators of critical thinking.

It is important that Israel educators be comfortable "in their own skin" with the core beliefs in a Jewish narrative. Like all narratives, parts are very convincing and compelling, and others make us uncomfortable. (The American narrative too encompasses both grand and problematic chapters.) Belief in the grandeur of the Bible does not mitigate some difficult passages for us and for the rabbis throughout the ages.

As our young approach adolescence and young adulthood, we should be teaching them how to become "photographers" and "narrators." We should be transmitting to them the critical, analytic, and reflective skills to read, discuss, debate, and consider alternative narratives so that, ultimately, they have the ability to create their own narrative.

Notes:

1 Parker Palmer, The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life (Jossey-Bass: 2007) p. 27

2 A useful resource for explicating these narratives is the volume The Land of Israel: Jewish Perspectives (edited by Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 1986)

3 Tuvia Book. For The Sake of Zion: Pride and Strength through Knowledge: An Educator's Guide (New York: BJE of New York, 2004)

4 Arthur Hertzberg, editor. The Zionist Idea (New York: Atheneum, 1982)



Dr. Barry Chazan is an internationally acclaimed Jewish educator and pioneer in the field of Israel Education, currently serving as Professor of Education and the Director of the Masters in Arts for Jewish Professional Studies at Spertus Institute. Barry is the Founding International Director of Education for Taglit:Birthright Israel. His books and articles deal with moral development and education; philosophy of Jewish education; informal education and Israel and Jewish education. Barry is the recipient of numerous prizes and awards for his pioneering work in the field of Jewish Education.

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI ARTS & CULTURE: The Power to Engage

BY VAVI TORAN



Today's Israel is a vibrant kaleidoscope of sights, sounds, tastes, ideas, peoples and cultures. Often when teaching Israel, we focus on facts and events, ignoring the dynamic and intense "life" that is lived. By engaging with the world of arts and culture, however, we are presented with an ideal vehicle for exploring a vibrant vision of Israel.

Arts and culture provide a reflection on the heart of the people and the pulse of society; they bring to the surface themes and ideas that may not find expression in other ways. They frequently serve as commentary on a particular culture by showing an x-ray of life under certain circumstances at a given time and place.

The artists who comment on Israeli culture and society through visual art, literature, poetry, film, dance, music, theater and other artistic expressions provide the educator with material to delve into Israeli society in a way that speaks not only to the minds of students, but also to their hearts and souls. It is through the common language of art – a language not always verbal – that one gets a hands-on appreciation of a society in the deepest sense.

As a result of the subjectivity in their exploration of a theme and the multiplicity of interpretations they offer, arts and culture provide students with a nuanced experience and unique understanding of Israel. There is no black or white when examining a piece of art, reading a poem, or listening to music; this kind of exploration allows multifaceted beliefs, approaches, opinions, and feelings on the subject of Israel. Just as life exists beyond the scientific and intellectual realm, so do our students, who react with curiosity and excitement when presented with the world of arts and culture.



Music can name the un-nameable and communicate the unknowable.

- Leonard Bernstein

The arts bring the classroom environment alive, creating stimulating experiences by engaging students with learning that suits various learning styles and expressions, thus motivating and inspiring each student.

The philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey noted that art expresses the life of a community. By exploring Israeli art – art that expresses the life of the community that makes up Israel – we open for our students a world of wealth and allow them a taste of Israeli society at a particular time and place, as well as a taste of the past. While culture evolves over time, certain traditions within a culture remain over many years, and as such, the culture of a community says much about its people, their beliefs, and their aspirations.

Growing up in the United States and studying its history and culture, students are often presented with works of art that illustrate the visual and intellectual flavors of different eras. They might encounter the poem "I Hear America Singing" by Walt Whitman, which celebrates American workers; "The Robie House" by Frank Lloyd Wright; the painting "Portrait of the Artist's Mother" by James McNeill Whistler; illustrations of idyllic small-town America by Norman Rockwell; the anthem of the U.S. civil rights movement, "We Shall Overcome" sung by Joan Baez; pop art by Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol; and present-day hip-hop music and graffiti art. These iconic examples paint a picture of American societal history as observed through artistic prisms.

How will we create similar experiences for our students around Israeli history and society? How will we touch their hearts and minds?

How We Put the "I" in Identity

To illustrate the potential of Israeli arts and culture as a means to engage and affect our students, we must explore a theme that is universal, personal, and relevant to their lives. Through Israeli artistic prisms, we can examine the concept of identity and ask questions that are the core of Jewish education:

- What is Israel's place in the identity of Jewish American students?
- How do these students connect to Israel, its people, and its culture?
- Do these students see themselves as members of a larger community?
- How might these students come to view Israel as their home?

As we examine oral and visual texts, we will explore ways in which individual writers, musicians, and visual artists have asked about their own complex identity, sense of belonging (or alienation), and what, for them, constitutes "home." Through their art, we learn that the many factors that inform their answers – factors such as religion, gender, history and ethnicity – also inform our answers to these questions.

POETRY

"OREN" ("PINE")
by Leah Goldberg

כאן לא אשמע את קול הקוקיה.
כאן לא יחבוש העץ מצנפת שלג,
אבל בצל האורנים האלה
כל ילדותי שקמה לתחיה.

צלצול המחטים: היה היה - -
אקרא מולדת למרחב השלג,
לקרח ירקרק כובל הפלג,
ללשון השיר בארץ נוכריה.

אולי רק ציפורי-מסע יודעות -
כשהן תלויות בין ארץ ושמיים -
את זה הכאב של שתי המולדות.

אתכם אני נשתלתי פעמיים,
אתכם אני צמחתי, אורנים,
ושורשיי בשני נופים שונים.

Here I will not hear the voice of the cuckoo.
Here the tree will not wear a cape of snow.
But it is here in the shade of these pines
my whole childhood reawakens.

The chime of the needles: Once upon a time –
I called the snow-space homeland,
and the green ice at the river's edge –
was the poem's grammar in a foreign place.

Perhaps only migrating birds know –
suspended between earth and sky –
the heartache of two homelands.

With you I was transplanted twice,
with you, pine trees, I grew –
roots in two disparate landscapes.

In her poem "Pine," written shortly after her arrival in pre-state Israel in 1935, Leah Goldberg expresses homesickness and longing for her native Russia while residing in a new homeland. With metaphors from nature, Goldberg conveys the pain of being uprooted and planted in the new soil of a different landscape, and of hovering between two beloved homelands, forever unsettled. At the time the poem was written, such a sentiment was not at all popular; the national Zionist ethos of homecoming expected Jewish immigrants to Israel to shed their Diaspora mentality and memories, immerse themselves in their new society and embrace a new identity as a new Jew in a new land.

PAINTING



THE ENGAGED
by Reuven Rubin

In this 1929 self-portrait of Rubin with his soon-to-be bride, we observe a visual duality of East meets West and urban meets rural. The couple is situated on a balcony overlooking the urban landscape of early Tel Aviv. Dressed in European attire with native or oriental hints portrayed in a flowery scarf around his shoulder, the connection to the land and the settling of *Eretz Yisrael* is portrayed by the lamb sharing their tight sitting space.

POETRY

"SHIR KNIYA BE'DIZENGOFF" ("A Shop on Dizengoff")
by Erez Biton

קניתי חנות בדיזינגוף
כדי להכות שורש
כדי לקנות שורש
כדי למצוא מקום ברוול
אבל
האנשים ברוול
אני שואל את עצמי
מי הם האנשים ברוול
מה יש באנשים ברוול
מה הולך באנשים ברוול
אני לא פונה לאנשים ברוול
כשהאנשים ברוול פונים אלי
אני שולף את השפה
מלים נקיות,
כן אדוני,
בבקשה אדוני,
עברית מעודכנת מאוד,
והבתים עומדים כאן עלי,
גבוהים כאן עלי,
והפתחים הפתוחים כאן
בלתי חדירים לי כאן

בשעה אפלולית
בחנות בדיזינגוף
אני אורז חפצים
לחזור לפרוורים
ולעברית האחרת

I bought a store on Dizengoff
In order to strike roots
In order to buy roots
In order to find a place at Roval's
But
The people at Roval
I ask myself
Who are the people at Roval
What have the people at Roval
What goes with the people of Roval
I do not address the people of Roval
When the people at Roval address me
I pull out my speech
Clean words,
Yes sir,
Please sir,
A very up-to-date Hebrew
The buildings which stand over me here
Tower over me here
And the doors that are open to me here
Are impenetrable to me here.

At a dark hour
In a store on Dizengoff
I pack belongings
To return to the outskirts
And the other Hebrew

Erez Biton, who immigrated to Israel as a child from Morocco and grew up in the development town of Lod, conveys another kind of ambivalence towards his place in Israeli society. In this poem, he is torn between the reality of his childhood home in rundown housing projects in Lod and Tel Aviv's Café Roval, known for its bohemian, intellectual, and celebrity clientele. His attempt to fit in and become a "true Israeli"– by buying a shop on Dizengoff Street in order to strike a root and belong to the predominantly Ashkenazi mainstream society – proves futile. He feels alienated not only by the elitist, pretentious in-crowd that sits in Roval, but also by his own language, one that betrays him by revealing his roots and exposing him as an outsider in his own land.

PAINTING



FORTUNA 1
by Ronit Chernika

In a series of paintings entitled "Family" (2001-2005), artist Ronit Chernika presents mainly female figures that lack facial features and therefore lack an individual identity. Other elements of identification are used to create representations of different sectors of Israeli society.

In Fortuna 1, it is the artist's mother who serves as model and inspiration for the piece. Painted on simple plywood, her faceless portrait is still recognizable as a middle-aged, heavyset woman wearing a simple dress and head kerchief, suggesting she is *masortit*, possibly Sephardic. The word "Israel," written in the same manner and similar font as on the Emblem of the State of Israel, connotes that this, among many others, is a representation of Israeli identity. It could be the case that in her creative work, Chernika is observing the official collective Israeli identity, and tries to present alternative identities that make up this multicultural nation.

SONG

"ELOHAY" ("THE LORD MY GOD")
by Kobi Oz

... I have so much to tell you
yet you know everything
I have so many requests of you
but you anyway want the best for me
I give you a little smile
for everything of beauty I notice
impressive or delicate...

While we, as Jewish educators, are wondering about the place of Israel in North American Jewish identity, many Israelis are exploring the place of Judaism in their Israeli identity. For decades, there was a clear line of separation between the religiously observant and the secular, with non-observant Jews mostly refraining from embracing more than just the basic Jewish rituals and being resistant to the study of traditional text. In the past few years, there has been a renewed interest in Judaism among secular Israelis, who are rediscovering and embracing Jewish heritage and learning.

Artists are no exception to this phenomenon, and they express this search for Jewish meaning in all media. Musician Kobi Oz recently released a disc *Psalms for the Perplexed* – a result of explorations of his relationship with Jewish texts, beliefs, and family traditions in conjunction with contemporary life in Israel. In his song "Elohay," he pays tribute to his late grandfather, Rabbi Nissim Messika, who was a *paytan* and a rabbi in his congregation in Tunisia. Not long after his grandfather's death, Oz discovered old cassettes that Messika had recorded, and he integrates them seamlessly into this song.

APPLIED ART



NATALA (*netilat yadayim* cup, container for washing hands)
by Roie Elbaz

An exhibition at Beth Hatefutzot entitled "Judaica Twist" reveals how product designers and other artists of applied art deal with similar questions regarding their connection to Judaism. As part of this exhibition, artist Roie Elbaz designed a container for the ritual hand-washing which mimics a military jerrycan used primarily for carrying fuel. The jerrycan is beautifully carved with traditional Hebrew lettering spelling natala, declaring its purpose, and army dog tags hanging from one of its two handles. By sanctifying an object associated with the military, Elbaz is commenting on the central role of the military in Israel and how it filters into all parts of Israeli culture and society, religion being no exception. The colors of blue and khaki that he uses symbolize the combining of kodesh and chol (sacred and mundane), Judaism and militarism, religion and secularism.

PHOTOGRAPHY



(UNTITLED) THE LAST SUPPER
by Adi Nes

Israeli photographer Adi Nes deals directly with the issues of identity in many of his works, tackling difficult subjects like homelessness, homosexuality, life in the army and soldiers. In one of his most famous pieces "Untitled (Last Supper)," he re-imagines Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper with Israeli soldiers taking the roles of the twelve Apostles and Jesus. For Nes, every detail is carefully staged to the last detail, so when he inserts an additional soldier in this scene famous for having precisely thirteen people in it – it is deliberate. The additional soldier is watching the scene, causing us to wonder: Who is he? Who does he represent? There is an uneasy feeling lingering in this scene of fraternal camaraderie so typical of the macho Israeli army where 18 year olds face the knowledge that they may never see their next birthday. "I wanted to express the idea that in Israel, death lingers," says Nes[1].

CARTOONS



SRULIK
by Dosh



SRULIK
by Dudu Geva



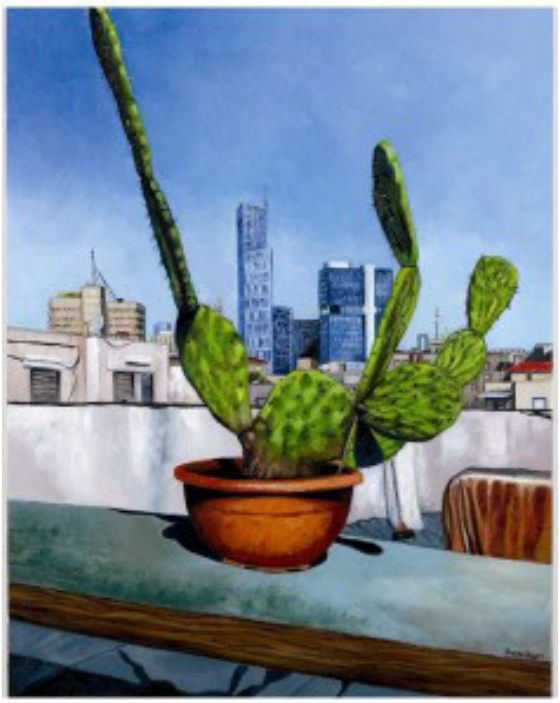
TYPICAL ISRAELI
by Eli Kameli

In order to examine what was believed to be typical Israeli identity, we turn to the mythical Israeli-born Sabra. The first native Israelis in a new land saw themselves as a new breed of Jew: free, young, direct, innocent, and patriotic. The best-known artistic and symbolic representation of the Sabra was published in the daily Ma'ariv in 1956, when Srulik ("little Israel") was born. Illustrator and caricaturist Dosh (Kariel Gardosh) gave him several items characteristic of the Sabra: shorts, biblical sandals, and a "Tembel hat" (dunce's cap). For the next forty-four years, until his death in 2000, Dosh continued to comment on Israeli life, society and politics through Srulik, who remained forever young.

Several decades later cartoonist Dudu Geva, known for creating characters that are the antithesis of the innocent and sweet Srulik, gave his rendition of this mythic Sabra in a tribute to Dosh. In this cartoon, Srulik is depicted as an overweight, middle-aged couch potato, losing his eternal youthfulness.

In 2008, the postal service announced a competition for a 60th-anniversary postal stamp featuring a representation of the "typical Israeli." The competition, won by illustrator Eli Kameli, drew much criticism for promoting a redesign of the irreplaceable Srulik and the very idea that there even exists a "typical Israeli."

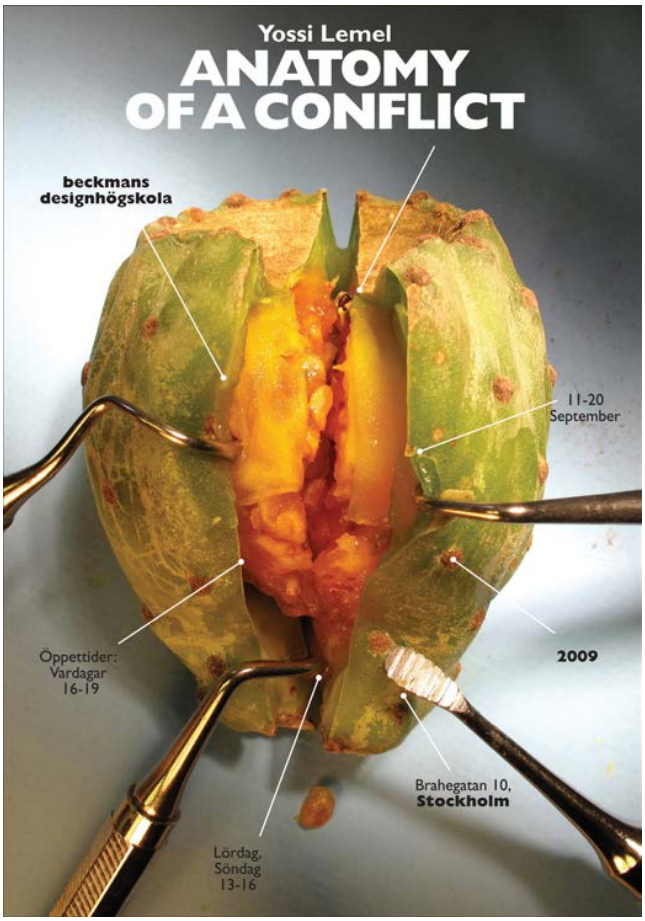
PAINTING



CACTUS
by Durar Bacri

Bacri, an Israeli Arab born in Acco, depicts his landscape as a busy, somewhat ugly urban area which he observes from his rooftop. In this piece, he paints the view from his apartment in South Tel Aviv, a neighborhood which is home to mostly foreign workers. Ironically, the metaphor for Israeli-born Jews, the Sabra (cactus pear in Arabic) – prickly on the outside, sweet on the inside – is also an Arab symbol of resilience and tenacity, and is a natural fence that keeps in livestock and marks the boundaries of family lands. In many of his paintings, Bacri situates the cactus on the boundary or ledge of the roof. This may symbolize boundaries, but in his case, the cactus might also stress the fact that this is his home – albeit a temporary one – just like a portable plant. Bacri states "My paintings are made by melting ideology, politics, biology, geography all together and translating them into a new reality that can exist only in my works."[2]

POSTER



ANATOMY OF A CONFLICT
by Yossi Lemel

Yossi Lemel, Israel's foremost graphic artist and poster designer, nails this dichotomy of narratives by dissecting the symbolic cactus pear on the surgeon's table. An open-heart surgery, if you will. Lemel sees himself as an X-ray technician, someone who reflects on the condition or situation of a patient. In his case, Lemel diagnoses the condition of a society, in order to create awareness and hopefully inspire action.

SONG

"KAN" ("HERE")
by Uzi Chitman

...Here I was born,
here my children were born
Here I built my home with my own two hands
Here you are also with me
and here are all of my thousand friends
And after two thousand years,
an end to my wandering...

We will conclude our case study by examining the song "Kan" ("Here") by Uzi Chitman, which won third place at the 1991 Eurovision Song Contest. It starts with the same word as Leah Goldberg's poem "Pine," and therefore closes a circle. *Shirey Moledet* (Songs for the Homeland), once the staple of *Zemer Ivri* (Hebrew song), are no longer being written. Today, any love songs for the homeland have an element of protest or lament for lost innocence. Uzi Chitman's song brilliantly leads us from the personal to the national and to *Klal Israel* (the Jewish People), and serves as a reminder of who we were and what we could still become. "Here" is where we still are, and "there's no other place in the world" for us – whether we reside in it or hold it in our hearts.

Soon after the song was written, Berry Sakharof and Rami Fortis – two of Israel's foremost rock stars, reinterpreted the song in a style that was anything but nostalgic or romantic. More recently, DAM – an Arab/Palestinian hip hop group, based in Lod, released a single called "Born Here" in Arabic and Hebrew. The song was released with a videoclip produced by SHATIL, the New Israel Fund's empowerment and training center. The song derives its lyrics and music from the song "Kan" (Here), using it to protest inequality and frustration of being second-class citizens in their hometowns.

These two examples serve to highlight the role Israeli artists play in keeping us in check and in diagnosing the state of the nation and its people in creative and engaging ways. What can these examples teach us? What kinds of conversations and reflections can they prompt? How can we make them relevant to our students? How can we encourage our students to creatively express their own relationship with Israel? As the case study demonstrates, exploration of themes and values through the arts creates an engaging, interactive classroom and encourages dialogue and interpretation.

The Power to Engage

The arts bring the classroom environment alive, creating stimulating experiences by engaging students with learning that suits various learning styles and expressions, thus motivating and inspiring each student. Depending on the construction of the lesson or unit, students can interact with the material on many levels, gaining aesthetic appreciation, engaging in critical thinking, analysis and interpretation, drawing meaning, understanding historical and cultural context, and actively participating in creative work.

While recognizing the importance of the integration of arts and culture in Israel education, it is unfortunate that little has been written on the subject; there are but a handful of curricular units in existence. The Internet, however, is an incredibly rich resource.

In fact, all the examples used here– from poems and video clips to visual art – were purposefully lifted from the Internet to demonstrate its potential as an accessible research tool.

In summary, bringing arts and culture into Israel education provides depth and context for students, helping them bridge the knowledge they have acquired on both the intellectual and experiential levels. History, geography, archaeology and other fields are all invaluable in studying and making Israel real for students, but without the arts, Israel remains one-dimensional and distant. Infusing the curriculum with arts and culture brings Israel to life, making it relevant to today's students, who experience life through their own culture and art. Our students connect to society through music, literature, dance, theater, visual art, and film – all of which show them to be parts of a larger whole. As teachers, we have the capacity to engage our students in artistic exploration and creative expression. Imagine them gaining an appreciation of Israel and strengthening connections with their homeland while doing so. Go forth and unleash the power of art!

Notes:

1 Adi Nes as quoted in "His photos are lovely, erotic, even a bit disturbing" by Jesse Hamlin, *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 22, 2004.

2 Durar Bacri, CV and Exhibitions, http://www.durarbacri.com/durar-bacri-cv-and-exhibitions/

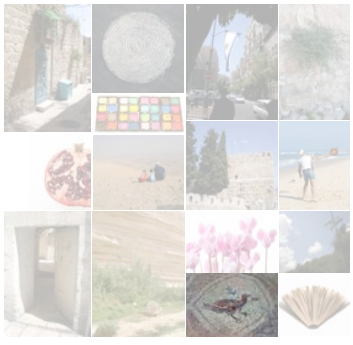


Vavi Toran was raised in Tel Aviv by a theatrical and artistic family and studied English Literature and Art History at the Hebrew University, and Painting and Drawing at the Bezalel Art Institute in Jerusalem. Vavi joined the Israel Center of the San Francisco-based Jewish Federation in 1996. As the Director of Cultural and Educational Resources of the organization, she helped fashion the Arts and Culture programs that have since become a model locally and nationally. In 2003 she was assigned the position of Director of the Israel Education Initiative, a joint project of the San Francisco-based BJE and the Israel Center. Today, Vavi is an independent consultant, writer, and speaker on Israeli arts, culture and education.

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

MODERN HEBREW IN PERSONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

BY LORI SAGARIN



I can remember the exact moment I knew that I had come to "own" the Hebrew language. I was sitting in my childhood synagogue shortly after returning from a year in Israel when I looked up to the ארון הקודש (ark) to see the words דע לפני מי אתה עומד emblazoned above. I read it, immediately understood what the words meant, and realized in a quick second that Hebrew was now second nature to me.

Since that day in the synagogue, I have taken great pride in my Hebrew fluency. I have come to naturally link my knowledge of the language with my love of Israel, deepening my inherent sense of the inextricable link between the Hebrew on my lips and the Israel in my heart. My Hebrew experience connected me to Israel and Israelis in a profound way that has continued to provide meaning and joy to my life.

Language is a primary factor that binds people to people and people to places. It is used every day, enabling us to navigate and make meaning of our lives. It is the purveyor of culture through musical lyrics, theater, newspapers, literature and more. Hebrew is more than the language of Israel – it is in many ways one of the core threads of Jewish peoplehood, connecting the Jewish people through time and space. In today's world, which can feel at one and the same time very intimate and very isolating, connection has become essential, something eagerly sought after. If some of the deepest human connections are forged through language, then it follows that if we want to create a strong sense of Jewish belonging and peoplehood, Jews must own our shared language, Hebrew.

Visiting Israel has been assuming increased importance on the Jewish community's agenda in recent years. With the success of Birthright Israel, an unprecedented number of young people have visited Israel. At the same time, small numbers "hear" and "talk to" Israel from within because of the language barrier. The Hebrew that is prominent in contemporary Jewish life is generally linked to sacred texts or prayer, and not to real people and daily life. Despite the hours spent in "Hebrew school," our young have no capacity to communicate, to connect in the language of the land.

> The golden key to Jewish education is the Hebrew language. - Chaim Nachman Bialik

שאלות ותשובות:
Questions & Answers

The role of Hebrew in Jewish identity development remains neglected terrain in Jewish education, despite what we know about the centrality of language to identity and cognitive development. We believe that a significant commitment to modern Hebrew language instruction in North America is critical to the future of the Jewish people and their link with the State of Israel.

In presenting this position, we shall examine four questions:

1. How can knowledge of Hebrew reinforce positive Jewish identity in North American Jews?
2. Why is the teaching of modern Hebrew in supplementary schools an exception rather than the norm?
3. What is the role of Jewish educators and other professionals in making the case for the teaching and learning of modern Hebrew?
4. Why is now a good time for Hebrew language learning?

How Can Knowledge of Hebrew Reinforce Positive Jewish Identity in North American Jews?

Culture is the lifeblood of a people and a nation. Culture is most readily transmitted through language. Today, Jewish culture the world over is deeply influenced by Israeli culture. It is, therefore, impossible to fully embrace JEWISH culture and JEWISH identity without the capacity to engage with Israeli culture in its native tongue. It would be like listening to music without the notes.

As noted, the predominant approach to Hebrew in the United States has emphasized the teaching of liturgical Hebrew and, more specifically, "teaching towards Bar and Bat Mitzvah." It is both a holy and, at the same time, frustrating task. Imagine sitting in a classroom in any school, year after year, trying to learn English and emerging five years later barely able to decode and doing so without comprehension. Not only is one's motivation to learn severely diminished, one's attitude towards Hebrew is irreparably damaged. Students who are products of our religious schools (and many day schools) visit Israel and quickly realize that they are unable to engage with Israelis on their own terms. The Israel experience, most commonly described as life-altering, finds our young people ill-prepared to engage with the country and its culture on its own terms, in its own language. Learning even a small amount of modern Hebrew tears down cultural and interpersonal barriers.

> Hebrew is more than the language of Israel – it is in many ways one of the core threads of Jewish peoplehood, connecting the Jewish people through time and space.

Elana Shohamy of Tel Aviv University notes that the precise nature of the relationship between language and identity is not clear. Drawing on second language acquisition research, Shohamy[1] suggests that language plays the following roles in identity formation:

- Boundary maintenance: Knowing the language means the speaker is a member of the club and naturally allied with other speakers of the language.[2]

- Language as a socializer and conveyer of values and norms: Language is rife with nuance and provides a mode for expressing societal dos and don'ts. Values are named and explained in the language. Although actions also model values, it is the description of the motivation for the act that places it fully in the values domain.
- Language as an emotional act: Emotions are expressed through language, and language evokes emotion in the speaker. As with values, language evokes memories and enables the speaker to name the power of those memories.

Surprisingly, an individual's life is enhanced in diverse ways when one "owns" Hebrew: one feels a sense of belonging, possesses a deep and visceral understanding of Jewish values that can only be conveyed through language, and builds emotional bonds with Jewish culture and people in Israel and throughout the world.

Why is the Teaching of Modern Hebrew in Supplementary Schools an Exception Rather than the Norm?

Modern Hebrew has the capacity, in a sublimely inductive way, to bring children into Jewish life and to enable them feel intellectually and emotionally connected to our rich, ever-evolving and unique community. Hebrew is more than a prayer or a value word here and there. Hebrew is a key gateway into a deep, empowering, engaging modern/ancient culture. However, most Jews are willing to engage in Jewish life without knowing Hebrew, praying words that they can barely decode and that are devoid of meaning for them.

Students who are products of our religious schools (and many day schools) visit Israel and quickly realize that they are unable to engage with Israelis on their own terms. The Israel experience, most commonly described as life-altering, finds our young people ill-prepared to engage with the country and its culture on its own terms, in its own language. Learning even a small amount of Modern Hebrew tears down cultural and interpersonal barriers.

Many diaspora Jews will even claim that it is possible to be an engaged and committed Jew without the benefit of knowing Hebrew. One can learn the "language" and "symbols" of Jewish life, and read the major texts, including modern Hebrew literature and poetry, in the vernacular and feel very much in the mainstream of Jewish life – all without having a significant grasp of modern Hebrew. However, doing so is like kissing your beloved through a veil: one is a part of but, in subtle ways, apart from. Nevertheless, as long as Jews believe they can live a rich Jewish life without Hebrew, making the case for spending time teaching modern Hebrew in congregational schools will remain a challenge. Indeed, in 1904, Solomon Schechter, the central figure in the emergence of

Conservative Judaism, said that "a Jewish community that is not bilingual is a doomed community!"

As the hours that students spend in the complementary school Jewish classroom have dramatically decreased, educators have given up on the goal of Hebrew language fluency. Instead, the current wisdom says that decoding the prayers in Hebrew without real understanding and reading their Bar/Bat Mitzvah Torah portion in Hebrew, again without understanding, constitutes success in Jewish elementary and middle school complementary education. Bar and Bat Mitzvah continues to serve as the golden carrot luring parents through the synagogue door. In some cases, if there is time, some modern language learning is offered in Grade 7 in approximately 40% of schools. This and other factors mentioned support Leonard Fein's assertion that "Hebrew school is remembered by most Jews as the place they failed to learn Hebrew," leading to a broad sense that Hebrew school (and by association, Jewish education) is a failed enterprise.

What is the Role of Jewish Educators and Other Professionals in Making the Case for the Teaching & Learning of Modern Hebrew?

All of the above notwithstanding, we contend that not only is it possible for children in all educational settings to succeed in learning Modern Hebrew, it is imperative that we succeed in this area. Success will mean that we can demonstrate rigor and seriousness of purpose in the work of Jewish education. Success will mean that students will feel a sense of deep accomplishment in their ability to master a new language. Success will mean that Jewish life and learning become an open book for students to engage in with confidence and a sense of competence. And, most importantly, success will mean that students will be intimately connected not only to the land of Israel but to the people and culture of Israel (and consequently Jewish life) on their own terms and in their own language.

What can Jewish educators do to ensure this kind of success for our learners? First and foremost, we must believe in our capacity to succeed in this area. Success might not mean complete Hebrew fluency by high school, but it does mean that teens, for example, are able to engage with their Israeli peers in simple conversations and feel pride in their accomplishments. It will also mean that they will think they are "cool" because they know and understand popular Israeli



→ Proficiency and knowledge of modern Hebrew can create a more meaningful connection to Israel and Israelis.

→ Prayerbook Hebrew is not connected to everyday conversation and daily life. …"our young have no capacity to communicate, to connect in the language of the land."

music or understand what is written on their Israeli T-shirts or can bang out a few words in Hebrew on Facebook.

As Jewish educators, we can ensure that our educators (classroom teachers, camp personnel, youth workers, etc.) who are able to teach modern Hebrew are able to take advantage of the requisite professional development opportunities to become proficient Hebrew language educators and to learn to adapt materials for the needs of their learners.

We can also provide multiple frameworks for Hebrew learning in our settings. For example, at the very least, modern Hebrew should be offered as an option in the complementary school setting for eager language learners. In areas where it is possible, synagogues might be able to team up to provide this additional option. Every youth group activity and all camp settings can include modern Hebrew on a regular basis. In order to do this, teachers, youth workers and camp personnel can be incentivized to take advantage of online Hebrew learning opportunities or other Hebrew language classes. With advances in technology and the increased value attached to second language learning in the world of general education, the time is ripe to implement the abovementioned ideas.

Why is now a good time for Hebrew language learning? As Americans have embraced the notion that second language learning is not only possible but valuable for themselves and for their children, and with the advent of everything from the Rosetta Stone language learning system to online language learning such as eTeacher to language inclusion elementary schools, Jewish parents may now possess an openness to the idea of their children learning Hebrew as a second language. The world has gotten smaller with the advent of technology, and all of our children have friends who come from homes where a native language other than English is spoken. For North American Jews, Hebrew could be a kind of "native language," albeit for many a language they have not yet learned.

We need to embrace the notion that Hebrew can be learned, and those who must promote that agenda are the educators, parents, rabbis and Jewish professionals who understand what Hebrew language learning can provide.

One interesting example of achievement in this field is in several suburban high schools in the greater Chicago area which offer Hebrew as one of the languages students can learn for credit. One student described her public school Hebrew class as an oasis in the non-Jewish desert of a typical American high school. She learned a lot of Hebrew, but she was also part of a Jewish community that met together once a day, five days a week. Hebrew for her and her classmates provided identity enhancement every day of their high school career.

Jews around the world have known this for decades. The Jews of Mexico, France, South America, Great Britain and South Africa, among others, have successfully taught Modern Hebrew language to generations of students. The professionals in these countries made a commitment to Modern Hebrew language learning and worked to provide professional development for the faculty, provide materials, and create a culture that supports and celebrates Hebrew learning.

In recent years there has been a renaissance of programs exposing North Americans to modern Hebrew. Whether you are a student of pointillism or pixels, the dots are beginning to form a growing positive picture of modern Hebrew language learning.

So the case can indeed be made that Hebrew should be a significant part of a holistic Israel education curriculum. It is through language that we can most coherently understand a society. For most North American Jews, this significant piece of our connection to Israel is "lost in translation." We are doomed to look at Israel from the outside until we possess the secret code. In this case, the code is our birthright, our heritage and our language. We live in a polarized Jewish world, where every topic is up for debate. Hebrew can be a common symbol of commitment in a time of polarization. We as Jewish educators are responsible for making decisions that determine what our students are exposed to and where they receive their learning. We must seize this day – *carpe diem* – *Ivri Daber Ivrit*!

Notes

1 Shohamy, Elana "Language and the Identity of Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora," from Zisenwine, D. and Schers, D. *Present and Future: Jewish Culture, Identity and Language*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University School of Education, 1999

2 Waxman, Chaim "Language and Identity Among America's Jews", from Zisenwine, D. and Schers, D. *Present and Future: Jewish Culture, Identity and Language*, Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University School of Education, 1999

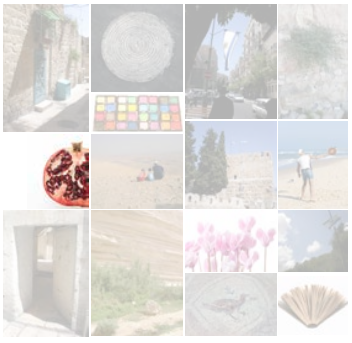


Lori B. Sagarin has served as the Director of Congregational Learning at Temple Beth Israel in Skokie, Illinois for fifteen years. She is the former president of the National Association of Temple Educators (NATE), and is also past president of the Chicago Association of Temple Educators. Lori and her husband, Rabbi James Sagarin, are co-authors of Oseh Shalom, *published by the URJ press. She completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin and received a Masters degree in Jewish Education with the designation of Reform Jewish Educator (RJE) from Hebrew Union College.*

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

WHERE TO DO ISRAEL EDUCATION?

BY DR. ALEX POMSON & DR. BARRY CHAZAN



This certainly seems like a strange title for a pamphlet about Israel education! One might even think it a misprint.

The usual questions about Israel education are:

- What is Israel education?
- How do we do Israel education?
- What are the contents of Israel education?

But this title is no mistake. Our intention in this pamphlet is indeed to discuss "where should we do Israel education?"

Why Ask "Where"?

In one sense, the question is misleading. Obviously, we should do Israel education wherever young Jews (or Jews of any age) are: in day schools, complementary schools, camps, JCCs, youth programming, Israel trips, retreats – in the many venues where Jewish education is implemented.

But the "where question" we are asking is not geographical; it is not about venue. It is ecological; it is about the environment. What we are really asking is: "where does Israel education live in the ecosystem of an educational institution or framework?"

> And you shall teach them to your children When you sit at home And when you walk on the way When you lie down And when you rise up
>
> - Deuteronomy 6:7-9

To answer that question we are required (of course!) to refer to a prior question cited above: what is Israel education? As many of the pamphlets in this series have made clear, either implicitly or explicitly, Israel education is a multi-dimensional activity concerned with the development of knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. It involves the nurturing of (1) an understanding of the origins of the State of Israel and its contemporary experience; (2) an emotive, affective appreciation of Israel›s central place in Judaism and Jewish life; and (3) meaningful lifelong relationships with the State and people of Israel. With such a full agenda of goals, it is no wonder that the question of how to do Israel education well "never seems to go away," as one of us put it more than twenty years ago. Educators have rarely managed to give sufficient attention to all of these goals.

What would it take to achieve these multiple outcomes ascribed to Israel education? Implicit in our characterization of this work›s multidimensional nature are intimations of a way forward. It requires seeing Israel not as a distinct subject, such as history

or science, but rather conceiving of Israel education, more fully, as an integral dimension of all aspects of the educational settings in which it takes place. To make the same point differently: no matter how powerful the Israel curriculum we write, it is likely to fall short unless we expand our notion of the "venues of Israel education." Israel education should live everywhere in the life of an educational framework. It should be part of an immersive environment.

Immersive Environments

Consider how children ordinarily learn the ideas and commitments that are most valued by their parents and their communities. Such learning takes place over time; it isn›t achieved through a course of instruction of prescribed length. It occurs through interaction with significant others who embody and are committed to such values. It occurs in a variety of settings and locations. It is advanced through formative experiences that enable young people to feel and see for themselves what such ideas and commitments mean, and it is finally realized through young people having opportunities to ask and answer questions that make it possible better to understand the content and texture of those things that have value. Indeed, it occurs "when we sit in the house, when we walk by the way...When we lie down, when we rise up!"

Learning about the most important things in life is not, in these terms, simply the outcome of "instruction." Such learning occurs through being immersed in certain kinds of educative environments, through experiencing a certain kind of life. Thus, historically, it has generally been families, local communities, and enveloping cultures that have had the capacity to make such learning possible. These institutions are at the heart of immersive environments where learning is advanced through conversation, practice, ritual, and relationships.

The educational institutions that have come close to achieving such outcomes are those that possess many characteristics of what twentieth-century sociologist Erving Goffman called "total institutions."[1] They are settings – such as boarding schools, army cadet programs or long-term retreats – that supplant the roles and functions of the family in an environment where there are few purveyors of competing ideas. The chief characteristics of "total institutions" are:

- All aspects of life are conducted in a similar place and under the same authority
- Each phase of a member's life is carried on in the company of others
- All phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled and sequenced
- The various activities are brought together in a single plan aimed to fulfill the goals of the institution[2]

For Goffman, the paradigmatic total institutions were (ironically) prisons and mental hospitals, places that obviously don›t offer the most desirable template for Jewish education.

However, it is no coincidence, as Jack Wertheimer has recently argued, that over the last 25 years, the educational forms that have provided the Jewish community with the greatest hope for increased vitality are those that tend to be the most immersive, or to put it more provocatively, those that come closest to possessing the more educative qualities of total institutions.[3] Camps, Jewish day schools and Israel experiences seem to be the educational forms that share a readiness to immerse participants in intensive educational settings, minimally for entire school days, or else for weeks at a time, round the clock.[4] And they seem to have demonstrated a track record of success



→ The 'extras' in Israel education -- a song, a story, a person, a fable, a recipe, or a picture -- may be educational essence.

→ Think immersively -- be aware of conditions, intensifiers and vehicles -- that help create the framework, environment and forces that upgrade the Israel immersion.

that has attracted great community support in recent years.

To be clear: the educational power of these programs derives not only from the amount of time devoted to them (although that often helps), but rather from their immersiveness, from their capacity to submerge young people in a "total" experience. It suggests that, if we are to do better at achieving the multidimensional outcomes of Israel education, we need to utilize more effectively the full immersive capacity of our educational institutions.

It is for this reason that we have introduced a new question which we believe is of central importance for Israel education: where does it live? Our answer is that Israel education lives in the totality of the framework in which it exists. It needs to exist in the school mission – and not simply in the written credo. The institutional leaders and owners of the framework must believe in it. Educational leaders are indispensable to the Israel mission. If the Israel mission does not live in their hearts, the enterprise is threatened or even doomed from the outset. The curriculum, program, or itinerary – the format contents of the institution – must breathe the Israel mission. The non-human artifacts that inhabit the venue – walls, halls, trees, busses, music, holiday foods – must all radiate this mission. Remember Goffman: his belief was that the non-verbal, non-cognitive, non-discursive elements of a culture are as important, or more so, for conveying cultural norms than the written word or the "classroom lesson." Numerous studies of unique schools, from Bettelheim's Orthogenic School in Chicago to Redl and Wineman's Pioneer House in Detroit to Peshkin's Bethany Baptist Academy echo this point.[5]

When "Extras" Are Essence

There is a tradition that has developed in education whereby there are core contents and "subjects" and then there are "extras." Thus, in general education, the notion has developed of the "curriculum" as what schools focus on, with "extracurricular" activities being supplementary activities (clubs, sports, hobbies, arts and culture) that enrich and embellish. Extracurricular activities add, enrich and broaden, but they are "extra." Moreover, in times of financial or personnel turmoil, it is usually the extra that is regarded as dispensable. Indeed, such activities are sometimes denoted as "fluff" ("soft," "downy," "moss like,") also the name of a popular marshmallow topping for a cake).

In Israel education, it is these "extras" that may be educational essence. Sometimes a song, a story, a person, a fable, a recipe, or a picture connected to Israel touches those thousands of neurons in the mind which lead to feeling, thinking, and doing. The immersive approach to Israel education argues that the distinction between extra and intra is not clear, since people learn and are affected in diverse ways. Don't regard the fluff as extra trim; for some it may be the entryway into the heart of the matter.

Thinking Immersively

Thinking immersively[6] involves a sophisticated approach to education which calls upon educators to engage a totality of foci. First, educators must be cognizant of the conditions that constitute the framework (age level, any particular ideological or denominational affiliation, size of institution). Second, educators should utilize intensifers – designated personnel, clear mission statements, leadership – that would highlight and upgrade the Israel immersion of the institution. Third, there are a host of vehicles in an educational framework that are potentially educative forces. The "curriculum" is the most obvious, but it is only one of many. Other important vehicles include: the flow and timing of a program; venue; décor; food; attire; music; aesthetics of a venue; mix of participants; weather; group dynamics; constellation of staff; interaction of staff. When searching for vehicles, the art of the educator is to consider the most unlikely factor that could affect the educative moment – and harness it!

Educators must be, as it were, master conductors of a symphony or designers of a buffet or hosts of a massive party of diverse guests. The ideal situation occurs when all the pieces of an immersion experience integrate; but that doesn't always or even often happen. Educators are the hosts of a smorgasbord that sometimes can look messy and strange or of a cocktail party of an oddly diffuse type. They are maestros of an orchestra that has never practiced together. The immersive experience can be many seemingly diverse – even contradictory – elements which come together and lead to Israel ignition.

What Will It Take?

No doubt, it might be argued that we have painted an unrealistic picture of what it will take to do Israel education well. Nurturing an immersive culture can seem like an overwhelmingly complex task. We don›t think it is. If the concept of the "intensifiers and vehicles of Israel education" is used as an heuristic tool – a cognitive and organizational device – it is possible to give order to something amorphous and complex that has challenged most institutions until now. Taking up this tool, and focusing on the different parts that contribute to the whole, it is possible to start the work of institutional and cultural change. It is possible to think with precision about

No matter how powerful the Israel curriculum we write, it is likely to fall short unless we expand our notion of the "venues of Israel education."

how we have impact on knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. Cultures, we believe, can and do change in ways that are neither all nor nothing – if we pay attention to their particulars.

Immersive Jewish educational settings – such as day schools and camps – have the potential to achieve the multidimensional outcomes of Israel education. Teaching and learning can occur in these places in intensive fashion and can also evolve over time in ways that are developmentally appropriate. If we act with careful planning, Jewish learning can occur – powerfully – in nested communities of the young, adults, near-peers and additional significant others. Because of these special conditions, Jewish education in its diverse forms has the capacity to transform the relationships to Israel of the next generation of American Jews. Together, the vehicles of Israel education can take us to places we might otherwise never reach.

Notes:

1 Goffman, E. (1961) *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

2 Ibid,p.6

3 Jack Wetheimer (2011) *American Jewish Education in an Age of Choice and Pluralism*. In H. Miller, L. Grant & A. Pomson (eds.) *International Handbook of Jewish Education*. 1087-1104.

4 Ibid. p.1093

5 Bettelheim, B. (1950) *Love Is Not Enough: The Treatment of Emotionally Disturbed Children*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press

Redl F. and Wineman D. (1957) *The Aggressive Child*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press

Peshkin, A. (1986) *God's Choice: The Total World of a Fundamentalist Christian School*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

6 To support this argument, see research conducted over the last few years by a research team at The Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University with the support of the AVI CHAI Foundation, and the Jim Joseph and Schusterman Family Foundations through the iCenter. This research concentrated on some 300 liberal and modern-Orthodox North American day schools, but its findings have relevance for camps and for supplementary schools, as well as for all institutional providers of Israel education.



Dr. Alex Pomson is a senior researcher at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University. He was founding head of Jewish studies at the King Solomon High School in London. He is co-author of Back to School: Jewish Day School as a Source of Meaning in the Lives of Adult Jews, and co-editor of Jewish Schools, Jewish Communities: a Reconsideration and of the soon to be published International Handbook of Jewish Education. He has just launched a longitudinal study funded by the Canadian government to study the transitions from Jewish elementary school to high school.

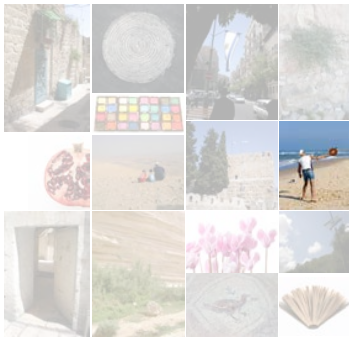


Dr. Barry Chazan is an internationally acclaimed Jewish educator and pioneer in the field of Israel Education, currently serving as Professor of Education and the Director of the Masters in Arts for Jewish Professional Studies at Spertus Institute. Barry is the Founding International Director of Education for Taglit: Birthright Israel. His books and articles deal with moral development and education; philosophy of Jewish education; informal education and Israel and Jewish education. Barry is the recipient of numerous prizes and awards for his pioneering work in the field of Jewish Education.

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

THE ISRAEL EXPERIENCE

BY CLARE GOLDWATER & MICHAEL SOBERMAN



Introduction

Israel Education has something about which most other kinds of education can only dream.

It has the "real thing" – it has the Israel Experience.

In this third millennium, we have e-tickets, airplanes, tour buses, hotels, youth hostels, dogs and cats that understand Hebrew, walls and hills that tell ancient stories, and real people living in a thriving modern Jewish country.

א The air over Jerusalem is saturated with prayers and dreams.

- Yehuda Amichai

It is inconceivable to imagine an effective and thoughtful Israel Education process that does not contain, or at least aspire towards, a direct experience of Israel itself – a visit to the place in which a young person can see, feel, hear, taste and touch the reality that is the State of Israel. And if there is one facet of Israel Education that has achieved consensus, it is that the power of an effective Israel Experience is unmatched and irreplaceable.

Over the past generation, organized travel to Israel for children, teens and young adults has developed into a well-established, sophisticated and highly effective field known as The Israel Experience. Hundreds of thousands of young Jews have had the privilege and pleasure that their parents and grandparents never knew, and through their visit to Israel they have been enriched, educated and transformed in ways that will undoubtedly affect them and, through them, the broader Jewish (and maybe non-Jewish) world in the coming generation.

It is this power and value of the trip to Israel that we address in this paper – what is an Israel Experience of the most effective kind? Why is it so crucial to Israel education? And what do we imagine it could be in the future?

What is an Effective Israel Experience?

Over the past generation, educators and trip organizers have collectively implemented multitudes of Israel experiences in trips of different types, lengths, styles and foci. Researchers and educational thinkers have considered them and noted the impact that an effective trip can have. In his summary article in the recent "What we NOW know about Jewish Education," Barry Chazan has enumerated nine characteristics of an effective Israel Experience trip. These characteristics are based on the assumption that a good Israel Experience is planned and implemented with purpose and careful deliberation; it does not just "happen" through the arrival of a group of young people at Ben Gurion airport, followed by 10 or more days traveling together on a bus.

A Good Israel Experience is:

Experiential	It is a living example of the educational philosophy, based on John Dewey's work that postulates that learning and growth come from direct experience of the learner's environment.
Learner-Centered	It starts and ends the educational process with the learner and his or her motivations and interests, rather than a set body of knowledge or an external set of standards for the process.
Interactive	It is an interactive dialogue between students, educator, and the environment. It is the antithesis of being "talked at" by an expert.
Mifgash	It includes a *mifgash* – an experience with Israeli peers, as a key component of the curriculum. The *mifgash* creates potential for deep intercultural understanding and growth of a sense of Jewish Peoplehood.
Journey as Curriculum	It reflects the approach that the trip's curriculum is not information contained in various sites to be visited, but is the physical and spiritual personal journey of each participant.
Core Themes & Values	It is a meeting between participants and the concrete expression of key Jewish values and ideas, such as the values of Jewish Peoplehood, Jewish sovereignty, and the centuries-old connection between Jews, the Land of Israel and Biblical texts.
People, Places & Events as Texts	In contrast to most classroom-based learning, it uses people, places and events that are encountered along the way as the key texts for students to study.
Teacher as *Moreh Derech*	Its educator is a powerful combination of guide, mentor, facilitator, role model and dispenser of knowledge. Literally, the teacher is the "one who shows the way" in a broad sense of the phrase.
The Social Context	It maximizes the substantial power of the group context in which the trip takes place. As a result, the group itself is a powerful force in identity development and growth.

Why is an Israel Experience So Crucial to Israel Education?

In addition to the anecdotal experiences of practitioners who have seen first-hand the power of an Israel Experience to transform the lives of participants, we offer two additional theoretical reasons that explain and describe why an Israel Experience is so important.

Experience as Education

This approach is indebted to the seminal work of John Dewey (1859-1952), whose ideas about "educative" educational experiences have provided the foundation on which experiential education is built. Dewey reminds us that the process of learning is about far more than the inculcation of knowledge and facts. He considers learning to take place through the interaction of the learner with experiences that take place in his or her environment. If an experience is "educative," it will spur the learner to want to experience more, and if it isn't, it will shut down the learning process. Dewey's theories are highly applicable to learning that takes place in any environment. His approach inspires educators to use any and all environments as places for learning and growth.

When we consider the value of a trip to Israel through the lens of Dewey's theories about education, we see that the physical environment of Israel and the experiences that can be facilitated and enjoyed in it have enormous potential for education and growth. Effective educators maximize the potential of the environment by creating experiences that stimulate the learner's senses (focusing on the smells, tastes, sounds and varied sights that are available), creating direct interaction with the environment – through hiking and physical challenge, meeting the people, touching the landscape and more – to create powerful educative experiences.

Theories of Place

Over the past twenty years, various social scientists, geographers and philosophers have considered the importance of place in the lives of individuals and communities. What gives places their power and role in our lives? How do we experience different places and what do we learn from them? How does Jewish tradition and culture understand the power of Place, whether it is Israel as a Holy Place or other places where Jews live? While answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this document, thinking about the power of Place will enrich any discussion about Israel travel education.

Drawing from some of these theories, we learn that the physical surroundings of Israel function as a powerful educational tool, because the subject matter (Israeli history, geography, culture etc.) matches

the setting in which the learning is happening. We can refer to this as "placed learning:" the learning that happens in place and of that place, so that the student learns about Masada at Masada. And when combined with Dewey's (and others') ideas about education and experience, we begin to recognize the added power of Israel Education in Israel.

What Do We Know About the Israel Experience?

All of the claims made until now are based on our own experience as Israel Experience practitioners as well as our theoretical assumptions about good education. In addition, we recommend examination of some of the considerable research that has been done about the Israel Experience. This research, both qualitative and quantitative, describes the educational processes and impacts of a trip to Israel. A full bibliography and references are included at the end of this article.

As a summary of some of the broad research findings, here are the key facts we know to be true about the Israel Experience:

Impact. There is a correlation between participating in an Israel trip and strengthened indicators of Jewish identity. There is an impact on the lives of participants, although the nature of that impact is debatable and difficult to determine. Still, it is clear from the data that the more people who get to Israel, the more people will connect to their Jewish identity and to Israel.

Community Context. More Jews have not gone to Israel than have, and changing this fact alone will have enormous impact on the Jewish community. It has taken a mammoth effort to begin to change the paradigm; as a result, more than 250,000 people have been on Taglit-Birthright Israel, and the field has been expanded and strengthened.

Purpose & Planning. A good Israel Experience does not happen by virtue of a trip taking place. Not all Israel Experiences are the same, and there is a diversity of qualitative educational components that matter.

> The physical surroundings of Israel function as a powerful educational tool, because the subject matter (Israeli history, geography, culture etc.) matches the setting in which the learning is happening.

Program. Trips need to be adapted to ages and developmental needs. In addition, the *mifgash* is often cited as the most meaningful and impactful part of any Israel experience and that it is often the most neglected component of any program. Finally, the experiential nature of the program and group dynamics are key factors for the aforementioned power of the Israel experience and, therefore, affinity group programs tend to yield more positive and lasting impact.

Staffing. The staff is instrumental in the overall effectiveness of the experience. The individuals we choose and how we train them are key elements of the program.

There is still a great deal that we do not know about the Israel Experience, particularly about the interaction of all the characteristics, the role that educators play, and the significance of pre- and post-trip learning. We look to the research community to consider these questions.

What Does This Mean for Practitioners of Israel Experiences?

If you are involved in the planning and implementation of Israel Experiences for your school, Hillel, camp, congregation or any other Jewish institution, we offer the following examples and questions for consideration before, during and after the trip.

Experiential	What do you wish to be the key experiences for participants? What experiences might they have that are serendipitous? What opportunities will there be for reflection on these experiences?
Learner-Centered	What do you know about your participants, their interests, motivations and backgrounds? How will this information be incorporated into plans for a trip?
Interactive	What type of dialogue is integral to your goals for the trip? What spaces for dialogue (both physical and metaphysical) will be present during and after the trip? Who will the participants be most in dialogue with?
Mifgash	What do you want Israeli and non-Israeli participants to learn about one another and about themselves as a result of their *mifgash*? What values about Jewish Peoplehood will be explicit or implicit? How do we insure authentic inter-action? How do we make *mifgash* an ongoing part of Jewish life before, during, and after the stay in Israel?
Journey as Curriculum	Where does the journey of each participant begin and end, in terms of your involvement with them? What way-stations on their journey will this trip include? How do you want your participants to speak about their Jewish and Israel journeys after the trip? How can they continue their journey when they return home?
Core Themes & Values	What are the foundational values about Jewish life, Israel and the Jewish People that underpin your Israel Experience? How will the participants encounter these values and enter into dialogue with them?
People, Places & Events as Texts	Who and what are the most important people, places and events that you will study? How will participants encounter these text-people and text-places?
Teacher as *Moreh Derech*	In what ways do all staff, including Israelis, fill the varied and significant roles of *morei derech*? Are they ready and prepared to be active role models, and how have they been trained in this role?
The Social Context	What kind of mini-Jewish community are you planning on building for the Israel Experience trip? How will you do this, and how can the participants learn from this experience and take the lessons into their future Jewish communities? How can your group support and strengthen, the individual learning that will happen?

A Vision for the Future

The Israel Experience field has grown and developed through various stages. It had modest beginnings, in which just a few thousand of the most engaged "elite" youngsters visited Israel, usually at the age of sixteen, on six-week summer trips organized by youth movements and camps. The field then expanded to include day-schools, supplementary schools and congregations which offered a wider variety of ages and lengths of stay. But the majority was still untouched by an Israel Experience, and those with big imaginations had always dreamed of a time when every young Jew would be able to visit Israel. Those dreamers revolutionized the field with the creation of Taglit-Birthright Israel, which has now taken more than 250,000 young adults on trips to Israel since its inception in 1999. And now, the MASA Israel Journey initiative seeks to expand on this success by making a long-term (5 months or more) Israel Experience accessible to anyone who wants one. This development of the field, has shown that in the arena of Israel travel there is always room to dream and grow.



The development of the Israel Experience field, "has shown that in the arena of Israel travel there is always room to dream and grow."

We wish to add our own imaginings to this dreaming, as we consider what is still to be achieved in this field, and what the impact might be on individuals and whole communities if the Israel Experience moves to a new phase:

New Contexts – Currently, Israel experiences take place in a relatively small number of communal contexts. If one doesn't belong to a particular school, youth movement or congregation, or is beyond college age, there are very few opportunities to visit Israel in an organized framework. Imagine new contexts for traveling to Israel, in the framework of JCCs, early childhood centers, Jewish workplaces, or with all congregations and community organizations. Consider the possibility of virtual communities that currently exist through various social media, becoming realized in actuality for the purposes of a trip to Israel.

New Populations – The overwhelming majority of Israel Experience participants are between the ages of 16 and 26. There are enormous possibilities for expanding the age demographic to include participants at other ages and life stages. A few ideas include: massive expansion of the Israel Experience as a multi-generational family experience, perhaps connected to bar/bat mitzvah; pre-teen experiences; trips for retirees, school groups, newly married couples, and young professionals.

New Programmatic Elements – Although Israel is an incredibly multifaceted and complex country, Israel Experiences tend to have a fairly standard program and set of programmatic elements. We suggest that it is time to think much more broadly about the possibilities of what can be done during a trip to Israel. There are so many ways to connect Israel Experiences to professional and other niche interests for lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs, and those interested in sports, Hebrew language, Jewish text, politics, music and literature, food and much more.

Conclusion

As distinguished sociologist Adam Gamoran indicates, more research has been done on the impact of an Israel experience on adult Jewish identity than any other form of Jewish education – and the results are

remarkable. It may still be argued that the field, especially in the pre-collegiate years, is in a nascent stage. Programmatic options need to be expanded; financial resources are unstable; and in some circles, the case still needs to be made.

A wise investment strategy is to invest in what is known to succeed. If the success we desire is a stronger Jewish community that is connected to Israel and the Jewish People, then any strategy aimed at increasing the numbers of people participating in quality programs needs to be embraced today. And all practitioners of Jewish education, in whatever framework, will see the benefits when they deliberately include an Israel Experience as a key element in their work.

Clare Goldwater is a British-born Jewish educational consultant and coach with expertise in experiential education. She lived for many years in Israel, where she worked as a tour educator and freelance educator, and developed an academic interest in Jewish educational travel as a developing mode of informal Jewish education. She has developed educational experiences for young adults on the periphery of Jewish life, and has started an innovative model for senior Jewish educators. Clare is also a licensed coach with a focus on leadership development.



Michael Soberman is the Director of National Initiatives for the Next Generation at the UIA Federations of Canada. Trained both as a lawyer and a teacher, Michael chose to pursue a career in the Jewish world. He previously served as Director of Community Development for the Regional Jewish Communities of Ontario and has fourteen years of experience in the Jewish professional world. Previously, Michael was the Director of CIE, the Federations' Israel Experience arm, committed to maximizing the number of teens and young adults traveling to Israel on program such as Taglit:Birthright Israel, the March of the Living and high school/youth movement programs. Michael is also the lead educator for the RJCO Holocaust Education Teacher Training program that is offered to faculties of education and school boards across the country.

Further Reading

Barry Chazan, "Veulai – and Perhaps: Israel as a Place for Jewish Education" in *What we NOW Know About Jewish Education*, eds. Paul Flexner, Roberta Louis Goodman, Linda Dale Bloomberg, 2008

Leonard Saxe and Barry Chazan, *Ten Days in Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity*, Torah Aura Productions, 2008

Shaul Kelner, *Tours that Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage and Israeli Birthright Tourism*, 2010

John Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Touchstone Press, 1938

Zali Gurevitch, "The Double Site of Israel", in Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu, eds., *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience*, State University of NY Press

Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997

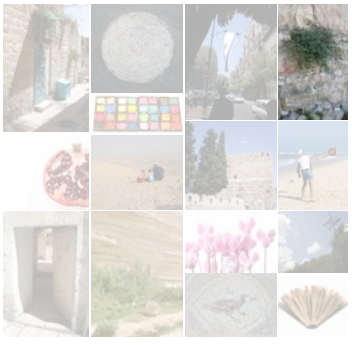
For all of the research on Taglit-Birthright Israel, and more, see the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis University, www.cmjs.org

For a good collection, and links to research on Israel and Israel Experience education, see www.jewishfederations.org/page.aspx?id=175401

THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

MIFGASH: Creating the Authentic Relationship

BY ADAM STEWART



The Human Dimension

The twenty-first century development of social networking – Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and who knows what is next – is truly amazing, radically changing the way we interact with each other, and how we share information. What I find most exciting about it is that it sparks in me something that was first seeded over 20 years ago.

When I was sixteen years old, I traveled in Israel for six weeks with Israeli peers. I remember each of these teenagers by name, and if it weren't for the passage of time and human aging, I would recognize them like it was yesterday if they walked into the room. My experience in Israel – the things I saw, the places I visited, and the ideas that I encountered – are forever shaped by those people and they continue to impact the way in which I experience Israel. Like any cohort of friends, as time goes on, I am no longer in touch with many on a regular basis, but the connection lives in my soul and will forever serve as part of the collective, authentic voices that make up "my Israel."

When something momentous happens in the world today, I go to Facebook to see what my friends think. My friends from high school, from college, and from my professional life all form some real and authentic collective of my past and inform how I digest the news of the day. But this is not new for me. Long before the development of social media – when the Internet was still an unleashed dream – I had this same authentic collective on Israel. When something happened in Israel – good, bad, ugly or beautiful – I always contextualized it against the feelings and experience of the Israelis I knew. A phone call, a letter, or even an imagined conversation formed the basis of a continuing authentic relationship with Israel.

In the last 20-30 years, the field of the Israel Experience practically stumbled across an idea – a platform for Jewish learning – that shaped how trips, Israel teen trips, especially, would be formulated over the next decades. *Mifgash*, the people-to-people encounter between Jews in Israel and from other parts of the world provided a new way for young people to experience Israel.

This concept has emerged from a program element to a foundation for a "good" Israel experience, and can be used as a guiding principle in Israel education, wherever it occurs.

What is most instructive about *Mifgash*, what gives it the most potential as a tool to transform Israel education, and what ultimately puts it among the *Alef-Bet* of Israel education is that person-to-person encounter is one of the few methods we have that make an educational experience authentic. Our students – participants, campers, congregants, and on-line learners – are discerning consumers of information and experiences. When we provide both content and experience, we must seek ways to give educational projects authentic voices, so that they – like the experience of traveling Israel with Israelis peers – can form the collective understanding of our students' relationship with Israel.

> "When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them."
> - Martin Buber

In the Beginning: A Revolution in Seeing Israel & Experiencing Jewish People

Anne Lanski, current director of the iCenter and the pioneering force of *Mifgash* in its infancy over a quarter-century ago, has said, "I didn't find *Mifgash*… it found me." Having been brought up in Zionist youth movements and camps, Lanski was – as a result – bilingual and her identity was bi-national, but in her words, "When I experienced Israel with Israelis, is when I became bi-cultural." As a *madricha* on a community-based teen program which had included Israel participants as an afterthought, she and fellow *madrich* Yossi Nameri understood the power of this encounter and began to forge a relationship that would forever change the face of the Israel experience. Lanski and Nameri went on to establish Shorashim, a first-of-its-kind organization dedicated to implementing *Mifgashim* programs for teens in Israel and from the Chicago Jewish community.

Other teen programs, such as Nesiya (initially a project of the JCC of Cleveland) and Chetz V'Keshet (of the Israeli Scouts, Gadna, and the Jewish Agency) followed suit and built programs – different in scope and intent – but with the *mifgash* between American and Israeli peers as their foundation. The work of these early pioneers was given further credence by the establishment of The Charles R. Bronfman Centre for the Israel Experience: *Mifgashim*, a major philanthropic enterprise which sought to reinvigorate the world of Israel experience as it entered its second generation, and which recognized the intrinsic value of the encounter between Jews from around the world and their Israeli peers.

The endorsement from the Bronfman Centre led to the proliferation of thought, scholarly articles, including at least one dissertation, and the establishment of communities of practice.[1] The longer-term effect was that this practice of "encounter with Israeli peers," which at that time was coined as *mifgash*, was well established in the field of the Israel experience. From the mid-1990s until today, most teen programs have added mifgash as an element to their program, and seek value in the interaction between young Jews from abroad and native Israelis.

Mifgash must be built upon authentic relationships between Israeli and North American peers, educators and families.

A difference, however, emerged between the programs that had *mifgash* as a core and defining value, and those that began to adapt their programs with a discrete *mifgash* component.

Erik Cohen recognizes and articulates this in a 2000 study of Jewish Agency Israel Experience programs that had a *mifgash* element of anywhere between several days and two weeks. He argues that where *mifgashim* fall short of their potential is through "the objectification of Israeli participants by program planners" and "the widespread perception that *mifgashim* are conducted primarily for the benefit of Diaspora youth."[2] In other words, when *mifagsh* becomes the "program," and the Israeli participants become the "materials," we are not creating authentic learning experiences.

Given the Bronfman Foundation's role in the establishment Taglit-Birthright Israel in 1999, it is no surprise that it has become the most comprehensive experiment in *mifgashim* ever. Hundreds of thou-

Where Taglit-Birthright Israel got it right, and others did not...was in establishing the relationship between Israeli participants and their peers from abroad. Israeli participants enter the program not as ambassadors, nor with an agenda; but rather as individual Israeli Jews.

sands of students and young adults have seen Israel alongside Israeli peers, as Taglit-Birthright Israel has established it's own *Mifgashim* department, which works side-by-side with the IDF to recruit and orientate Israeli participants for the ten-day programs. Additionally, the Taglit-Birthright Israel program has stimulated creative approaches to *mifgash* – mostly around subject-interest areas – by offering grants for implementation. The result is a generation of young Jews around the world and Israeli peers who have meaningful personal relationships based on mutual experience in Israel.

One of the things that we have learned from this massive undertaking – and what most who placed *mifgash* at the center of their agenda already knew to some extent – was that young Jews from abroad visiting Israel, were not the only ones impacted by the experience. Studies conducted by the IDF and the Cohen Center at Brandeis University found that Israeli soldiers returning from *mifgash* were "more committed to military service, more committed to their future in Israel, and more committed to learning about their role in maintaining Jewish survival than they had been prior to their *mifgash*." In the same study, ninety-six percent of Israeli participants said the *mifgash* made them proud to be Israelis and to serve in the Israeli army, and a similarly high percentage felt the experience deepened their personal Jewish identity.[3]

Where Taglit-Birthright Israel got it right, and others did not – regardless of the length of time that the *mifgash* took place – was in establishing the relationship between Israeli participants and their peers from abroad. Israeli participants enter the program not as ambassadors, nor with an agenda; but rather as individual Israeli Jews.[4] Israelis and participants from around the world embarked on a journey together each shaping one another's journey through Israel, and together creating for each other authentic voices that began to create, or re-shape, their collective understanding of Israel and Jewish peoplehood.

Taking a Look Again: Redefining What is Mifgash

For *mifgash* to assume its place as a key component of Israel education, we need to redefine how we talk about it and how we can use it as *madrichim*, Sunday school teachers, day school educators, and camp counselors. Two areas relating to *mifgash* in which our emerging field of Israel education needs to do some work:

- *Mifgash* must be built upon authentic relationships between Israeli and North American peers, educators and families.
- *Mifgash* must (and is indeed built to) move beyond the world of Israel experience.

What is an authentic relationship? How do we create that surge of electricity between people that Buber describes as God? When I think back to some of the authentic experiences that I have had as a *mifgash* participant and facilitator, there is one which is particularly etched on my memory. In a group of Americans and Israelis, we discussed in the cool shade of a Jerusalem courtyard how this emerging relationship between us – Israeli Jews and Jewish Americans (we even discussed where we would put the adjective in those labels) – would affect they way in which we continued in our own relationship with Israel and Judaism. At one point, a thoughtful and well-liked American participant remarked that she would never feel the same when hearing news of a tragedy in Israel. Her connection to Israeli friends would make that catastrophe so much more personal. "Yeah," said Danny, the strong, but mostly-silent Israeli participant, "But the difference is: you will cry, but I could die." That poignant remark settled upon the group without pretense and without insult, in a way that only two peoples engaged in an authentic relationship could permit.

As an educator, I found my own authentic voice through *mifgash*. In my early years as a *madrich* on teen programs, I scrambled to accumulate as much information as I could about Israel, Israelis, sites, history, and politics. That collection of information and the passion to learn serves me still to this day, but what defined me – as an educator – was the realization of the limitation of my own voice. It struck me one day in the Old City of Jerusalem, as I listened to one of my co-staff. He told the story of growing up in the Old City, as a secular Jew, at a time when many secular Jews lived side-by-side religious Jews in the Jewish Quarter. He talked about playing hide and seek in the alleys, and recalled the time that "Kippi Ben Kipod", the giant porcupine character from the children's show "Shalom Sesame" came to film an episode. I realized that I could never tell this story.

It was not a disappointing discovery; rather it relieved a burden. It wasn't important how much he (or I) knew about this place, but instead how we knew it. *How* we related this information to participants on the program in the end became more of a function of how we related to the places and to the participants themselves rather than the knowledge presented. Moreover, the complement of both of our voices – American and Israeli – created a far better Israel experience than could have either our voices alone.

How We Move Forward

How do we extend *mifgashim* beyond the world of Israel experience? How is it possible to build a relationship with Israeli peers outside of the immersive experience in Israel, perhaps even not in each other's physical presence? Fundamentally, as Israel educators, I believe that if we don't formulate

an answer to this question, we may be doomed for failure. As critical as providing an Israel experience should be to any Jewish education, and despite Taglit-Birthright Israel making the experience universally available, many Jewish young people will not go to Israel. Building *Mifgash* as a core component of Israel education cannot be relegated then to the Israel experience alone.

In many ways the Jewish Agency has for years tackled this issue through their program of *Shlichut* to communities, youth movements, campuses, and summer camps. The work there is monumental and must be built upon, but at its core is not seen as authentic relationship building. The name itself – *shlichut* – implies a one-way relationship in which Israelis become "tools" for transference of information, culture, or ideas. What we need in our schools, synagogues, and camps is more *shutfut*, partnership between Israelis and Americans in building our Israel education goals.

The excellent news is that the time is ripe for this sort of authentic relationship building. Technological tools are making possible what we could only have imagined even several years ago. Organizations such as the iCenter have arisen to facilitate the development of a field around core principles for the field – The Alef- Bet of Israel Education – such as *mifgash*. Because of programs like Taglit-Birtrhight Israel, more young adults have visited Israel than in the previous decade. Despite consistent detraction, and seemingly insurmountable odds, the connection between Jews and Israel persists in very real and meaningful ways.

How we move forward is as varied and diverse as the people who are coming together to form the field of Israel education. In an age, where authenticity is no longer determined by the supposed "gatekeepers" of knowledge, *mifgash* provides a way for young people to explore and connect with Israel – to make it a "central component of their Jewish identity" in a way that is authentic to them.

- We should be constantly looking for ways to authenticate themes and ideas with *mifgash*.
- Widening the scope of *mifgashim* beyond the Israel experiences will provide us with new ways for our students to have "authentic" Israel experience.
- Our programs should be guided toward a real need to keep alive – and in some cases – rekindle a didactic relationship between young Israeli and North American Jews.

Notes:

1 Minna Wolf, *Adjusting the Boundary: Exploring Identities during Israel Experience Mifgashim*. PhD Dissertation, Melton Centre for Jewish Education, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, 2007.

2 Cohen, Erik H. *MIFGASHIM: A Meeting of Minds and Hearts*, Journal of Jewish Education, 66:1, 23 – 37, 2000.

3 Sasson, Mittelberg, Hecht, and Saxe, Maurice and Marilyn Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, *Encountering the Other, Finding Oneself: The Taglit-Birthright Israel Mifgash*, December 2008.

4 Saxe, Leonard and Chazan, Barry, *Ten Days in Birthright Israel: A Journey in Young Adult Identity*, Torah Aura Productions, 2008



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THE ALEPH-BET OF ISRAEL EDUCATION

THE EDUCATOR & ISRAEL EDUCATION

BY LESLEY LITTMAN



The Power of Teaching, The Power of Learning

Think of a powerful learning moment in your life. Where were you? Who guided you through this moment? What made it a learning moment and, more importantly, what made it so powerful? Powerful learning can occur anywhere; however, turning a given moment into an important learning experience demands a specific set of skills that include recognizing the potential in the moment and knowing how to capitalize upon it for maximum impact. This piece will explore the characteristics and actions necessary to foster and nurture these powerful learning moments as they relate to Israel learning and engagement.

In considering the potential impact of Israel in educational settings, we need only go back to our own experiences of Israel inspiration – whether on our first tiyul, meeting our first Israeli and hearing his or her stories, or encountering Israel at camp through music and play – in order to understand the power inherent in each of us to create deep connections to Israel and our Jewish selves.

Who is an Educator & What is Considered Educational Activity?

The moment we are in a position to affect another human being's perspectives, we enter into the role of "educator." Educators can range from youth group leaders, camp counselors and classroom teachers to Israel trip leaders and rabbis, among others.

Educational activity occurs in a broad array of settings – the classroom, a living room, a patch of grass, a beach and more. Essentially, anywhere learners and educators gather to engage in the work of learning and teaching is considered an educational setting. At the same time, certain venues bring an added dimension of significance to a learning moment, in particular those venues that might be considered "authentic," in other words, where the learning is lived out in real time and real space.

In his seminal work The Courage to Teach, Parker Palmer poses four questions for educators to consider as they go about their work:

a. "What:" What subjects or topics shall I teach?
b. "How:" What methods and techniques are required to teach well?
c. "Why:" For what purpose and to what ends do I teach?
d. "Who:" Who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form…the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, and my world?[1]

Palmer's last two questions, unfortunately, often drop off the radar screen for many educators, especially as they engage their students with Israel.

> Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.
>
> -Parker Palmer

"What are we teaching [today, tomorrow, next week, next year]?" is generally followed by, "Okay, how can we do this? What will really "grab" the kids?" Rarely is there time or space for an educator to ask, "Why am I teaching this? What is it about this particular issue or subject that compels me to share it with my students?" Even less time is devoted to what is perhaps the most critical question for educators: "What does this topic mean to me? How do I understand this topic or issue in my own life?"

As teachers, whether sitting on the grass at camp or standing in front of a lecture hall of a thousand students, we must address these latter questions. Just as children know how to ferret out inconsistencies in their parents' thinking, so, too, do students (of all ages, but particularly children and teens) immediately intuit when the educator is feeling some inadequacy or discomfort with the subject at hand, when he or she has failed to address Palmer's final two questions.

What Is Unique About an Israel Educator?

The Israel educator is subject to everything Palmer says – and more. The Israel educator must:

- Know the subject of Israel well, including its ancient history, its place in Jewish life throughout the ages, the birth of the Zionist movement, the rise of the modern State, and life in contemporary Israel.
- Be cutting-edge in communicative techniques that can help present such a multi-dimensional topic.
- Have a vision of Why Israel? Why does it matter? Why are we educating for it?

But perhaps most importantly, Israel educators must be able to teach from within. They must be able to teach from their own selfhood. They must have "become" Israel and it must be part of their DNA. Like being a Jewish educator in general, teaching Israel must be with "all the heart, soul, and might" of the educator. It is a total act, one which can only happen successfully with the courage to teach from within.



In order to consider the impact of Israel in educational settings, [we need to] "go back to our own experiences of Israel inspiration... [and] understand the power inherent in each of us to create deep connections to Israel and our Jewish selves.

Challenges for the Israel Educator

The challenges facing the Israel educator can feel, and many times are, significant.

1 First, learning the subject matter and staying abreast of new developments can feel overwhelming. The subject is diverse and multi-dimensional, necessitating that we always be in a learning stance. We have to "know "Israel in its totality – from past to present, from culture to foods.

2 Second, as Barry Chazan suggests in his pamphlet in this series, we need to be familiar with the multiple narratives that have been developed within Israel and by those around the world who are engaged with Israel. For example, what may seem like a simple fact may not be simple at all. Every story has its tellers, and raconteurs of these stories have their own way of interpreting and "telling." "Facts" are everywhere and, at the same time, are elusive. A

textbook, a newspaper article or even a video clip from the daily news may look and feel "factual" or "true" but, on examination, may raise questions more than portray actual events.

The implications for those engaged in Israel education are myriad and serious: when we teach about Israel, we must carefully check and recheck our sources (and ourselves), not only for accuracy but, also, in order to understand the underlying narrative of the writer or teller. We must have clarity on the narrative(s) we bring to the learners. Given the wide range of potential narratives, choosing one may seem daunting. One way to address this is to carefully examine the stance of the educational setting. Such an examination might involve looking at the literature of the institution (school, camp, synagogue, etc.) for mention of Israel, or speaking with the director of the program, a supervisor or fellow educators. The bottom line: intentionality and care in determining what is meant by "knowledge" and into which narrative that knowledge is embedded are key.



→ The educator must "resolve their own personal Israel "biography,"... engagement with, and questions about Israel.

→ Know your end goal. Is the focus a relationship with Israel, Israel as a part of their Jewish identity or understanding "how Israel impacts their lives as Americans?"

3 A third challenge is to expand the repertoire of topics and perspectives on Israel that are presented to students. Teaching Israel includes teaching Bible, but it's not just about Bible. Hebrew is central, but does not in itself exhaust Israel Education. Israel Education shares some similarities with social studies, but Israel is more than "the longitude and latitude" or "main products of England or Venezuela." It's not a "subject" like any other subject.

Israel is rich in arts and culture (music, dance, literature, theater, visual arts and more) and is a world leader in science and technology (Intel, Motorola, ecology, etc.). The people of Israel are multi-faceted and deeply engaging. The goal isn't to know all there is to know; the key is to develop the capacity to access the resources and people who can support you in your work. Resources such as www.theicenter.org; www.israel21c.com; www.toldotyisrael.org and www.bjesf.org (among others) provide rich, varied and authentic perspectives into Israel for all ages. They bring people, ideas and places together in unique ways that draw learners into a vibrant, exciting and cutting-edge Israel. It is only after this context has been established for the learner that we can begin to broach more complex topics such as war or the current political and societal issues facing Israel.

As educators, we hold great power to shape and nurture lifelong relationships between our students and Israel. Our own broad perspectives and openness to new learning and insights and our own capacity to draw on a wide range of resources in multi-media are instrumental in determining the depth and endurance of those relationships.

The Israel in Me

Unquestionably, the most important factor in Israel education (and in many other Jewish religious and communal arenas) is… THE EDUCATOR.

Israel, in addition to its wide-ranging and seemingly endless subject matter, also raises deep emotions in educators. In a teacher education class on the topic of "Teaching Israel," the aspiring teachers were asked about their own relationship with Israel. While several students gleefully described their love of Israel and the exciting and engaging visits they had made there, one usually vocal and articulate student was particularly quiet. With some prodding, she described her ongoing sense of conflict around her personal relationship with Israel as well as her ensuing difficulty in projecting an enthusiasm about and love for Israel to her students. In short, she described feeling "like a fraud."

Israel, even for the most committed Jew, is a complex topic. While it is unreasonable to require educators to have worked out all the questions and concerns they harbor about Israel, it is certainly reasonable to ask educators, before engaging with students on this important topic, to reflect on our own personal Israel "biography," on our own relationships and engagement with and questions about Israel. Only then can we begin to determine how these affect our work as Israel educators. We all want our students to challenge our thinking but, at the same time, we also want to challenge ourselves BEFORE students challenge us on what we consider core issues of Jewish identity, of which Israel is one.

Palmer describes what he calls "two of the most difficult truths about teaching." The first is that what we teach will never "take" unless it connects with the inward, living core of our students' lives, with our students' inward teachers. The second truth is even more daunting: "We can speak to the teacher within our students only when we are on speaking terms with the teacher within ourselves."[2] It doesn't necessarily take a complicated professional development program to help teachers connect to their inner selves, according to

Authenticity in Israel Education can only be achieved when the deliverer of that education is authentically connected with his or her own feelings and passions about Israel.

> As educators, we hold great power to shape and nurture lifelong relationships between our students and Israel.

Palmer. Sometimes it only takes time, solitude, journaling and/or the opportunity to talk with colleagues. Authenticity in Israel Education can only be achieved when the deliverer of that education is authentically connected with his or her own feelings and passions about Israel. This authenticity will then naturally lead one to answer the "why" of Israel Education: Why does this matter to me? Why should it matter to my students?

Israel Education: Skill & Artistry

Educational skill and artistry refer to the capacity of the educator to craft learning experiences that will move the learner, potentially transform the learner. Artistry is the capacity in each one of us to see what is in front of us and weave a unique web for our students and ourselves through which we open possibilities and insights for and with them.

Of the fours questions posed by Palmer, the third question – Why this topic? Why is it important to my students? Why is it important to include in our learning? – is the precursor to skill and artistry. What considerations can guide us as we attempt to answer these questions and to use the answers to create extraordinary and authentic learning experiences for the learner? In artistry terms, if we don't know the general design of the web we want to weave, we'll end up with a lot of messy knots. Thus, the first skill is the ability to have a clear understanding of why the learning is important in the lives of the students.[3] So, first and foremost, we have to know our end goal: is it for students to develop an ongoing and deep relationship with Israel? Do we want students to integrate Israel into their Jewish identity? Do we want students to understand how Israel impacts their lives as Americans? All of these are valid goals, and some even overlap. By choosing one, it is then possible to sculpt the learning in such a way as to build toward the ends we have in mind. For example, if the focus is on relationship, we might look to create partnerships with Israeli schools, or use media to introduce students to the lives of their Israeli peers. Or if Israel in Jewish identity is the core goal, one might look to introduce students to the Jewish rhythms of life in Israel and to the impact Israel has on their daily lives here in North America, whether through technology, religious texts or arts and media, for example.

A second skill, also an art, is to know one's students. Age, developmental needs, geography, the educational setting, current interests and the immediate surrounding community all contribute to decisions about why and how. In looking around at your students, the first question is: why is this important to them (not FOR them, rather TO them)? In other words, why would they care about what we are learning? It is here that the role of authenticity is so critical. Israel must connect to the real-life concerns and interests of the learner.

Knowledge and information must be used to create meaning and to embed that meaning in the lives of the learners. All of this will gather more power when it is well calibrated to the setting in which it is taught. Lis-

tening to music on the grass on a sunny day at camp demands a different set-up than listening to music in a classroom on a cold January day. The art of the educator is to understand that the setting matters and to take advantage of the uniqueness of every setting.

As Israel educators we have been given an extraordinary gift. There is no more exciting time for teachers and learners alike to be engaging with Israel. Yes, there are complex issues, yes we can be disappointed by some contemporary policies and behavior, but we still live in a time of "wonder and miracles." Israel, the country and the people, is visceral proof that:

- Dreams can come true
- Human beings can change the world
- Jewish life has responded to its darkest chapter
- We are part of a living, modern Jewish society, culture, and people shaped by diversity, creativity, complexity, and passion.

Perhaps the best model for the Israel educator is not the great "teacher" – but rather the great *moreh derech* (literally "show-er of the way" in common Hebrew usage "tour guide"). Israeli tour guides are characterized by several qualities: they know the country; they know its history; they are in love with every drop of sand, holy rabbi's tomb, and ancient arch; and they exude pride, passion, and joy.

Maybe we should be a little like "tour guides." It is incumbent upon us as Israel educators to remain deeply connected to Israel. It is incumbent upon us to continually update ourselves and seek out resources and people that can provide us with the newest and best of Israel engagement materials. It is incumbent upon us to be keenly aware of who our students are and of the natural connection points between them and Israel and to infuse those connection points with relevant and meaningful knowledge and insights.

It is most incumbent on us to speak, teach, live, and show from within that Israel matters. In the end, it is you, the educator, who has the power and capacity to ensure that the next generation is deeply connected to and enamored with Israel. Start with yourself; keep your love of Israel fresh and based in reality and your knowledge and understanding current. *B'hatzlacha!*

Notes

1 Palmer, P. (1998), *The Courage to Teach*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

2 Palmer, p. 32.

3 For more insights in this area (big ideas, understanding, questioning), see Wiggins, G. and McTighe, J. (2005) *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.



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