

ISRAEL:

DRAMAS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND



makōm מקום

Israel. In Real Life



הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
Jewish Agency for Israel

ISRAEL: DRAMAS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

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ISRAEL: Exploring Biblical Dramas Between the People and the Land

Written by by Rabbi David Harbater

This curriculum, written entirely by Rabbi David Harbater, traces the relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel from the time the Land was first promised to Abraham until the time of their exile from it, a period of roughly 1,200 years.

The relationship between the Jewish people and Israel is, on the one hand an organic relationship, and on the other hand, one that is filled with dramas, tensions, and questions. In designing this material, we felt that it would be un-authentic and one-dimensional to teach about this relationship without addressing these dramas and engaging the big questions that underpin them.

When we collaborated with Rabbi Harbater, we asked him to identify the major junctions in the relationship between the Jews and the Land which capture the essence of the timeless relationship dynamics. We sought to pinpoint the dilemmas that recur throughout history as they are characterized by biblical stories.

The nine lessons/topics covered in this curriculum go chronologically through the First Temple Period. In addition to these, Makōm is also offering two additional (distinct, yet related) chapters which can be used as continuations, addressing the relationship between the Jewish People to their land in the post-First Temple period of Jewish history. These two additional chapters, titled "The Centrality and Importance of Israel for the Diaspora in Second Temple Times ", were written by the same author under the guidance of Rachel Korazim.

Because the Israel-relationship questions are so fundamental to Judaism, they repeat themselves over time. The answers that the biblical stories provide to the questions need to be attended to and learned from, both to learn from the model used in addressing the question, as well as to draw inspiration from. But the processing requires us to attend to the realities that surround us in our ever-changing world. We say on Pesach, " כל דור ודור חייב אדם " , "לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים", "In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt". We are asked to put ourselves and our own contexts into the frames of the timeless questions.

This curriculum emphasizes the importance and centrality of the Land of Israel in biblical history and in biblical thought, and seeks to encourage educators to take on the challenge of bringing these issues to the fore.

Be'hatzlacha!

Esti Moskovitz-Kalman

Education Director - Makōm

"ISRAEL: THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND"

I. What is this curriculum?

This curriculum attempts to tell, through the study of the biblical text, one of the central stories of our collective past and one which has helped shape our identity as a people. "Israel: The People and the Land" traces the relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel from the time the Land was first promised to our forefather Abraham until the time of our exile from it, a period of roughly 1,200 years. The curriculum will try to explain the critical importance of the Land to the fulfillment of our goals as a People, the obstacles that stood in the way to our entry into the Land, the difficulties and challenges we faced as a People in our Land, and the ways in which we dealt with exile from the Land where we had developed and established our religious and national identities.

II. Aims

Given the fact that the study of Bible is the core of the curriculum of virtually all Jewish day-schools it is surprising that a great number of graduates from these schools have little understanding of the importance and centrality of the Land of Israel in biblical history and in biblical thought. Three explanations come to mind: 1. That many of the sections that relate to the Land are taught without the appropriate emphasis on its importance, 2. That the Land is viewed as something other than what it is, namely, a particular geographic reality, and not a metaphor or an abstract concept, or, 3. That many of the sections that relate to the Land are avoided altogether.

This curriculum wishes to correct this problem by providing a series of lessons on certain key questions regarding the relationship between the People and the Land as they arise in the Bible. These questions are organized in a logical and chronological order in an effort to create a narrative flow. The narrative as told in this curriculum endeavors to provide an important lens through which the Bible can be read, but does not claim to be the *only* lens through which the Bible can be understood.

III. Structure of the Lessons

Each lesson begins with an explanation of the aim and the importance of the question to be addressed in that lesson. A series of texts is then provided through which the question of each lesson can be answered followed by a detailed analysis of each of the texts. A lesson plan is then suggested in order to help facilitate the teaching of the texts and the ideas of each lesson in a Jewish day high-school setting. Finally, each lesson includes a series of questions for further study and references for further reading.

IV. For whom?

Since this curriculum addresses an important issue that is often overlooked or avoided in the teaching of Bible, it is primarily geared toward teachers of Bible in Jewish day high-school settings. However, since the curriculum deals with the conceptual basis of the relationship between the People and the Land and traces it through a historic continuum, it should be helpful to teachers of Jewish thought and Jewish history and Jewish educators generally. Furthermore, since the curriculum does not adopt a particular position on the authorship of the biblical text and tries to avoid other controversial theological issues that do not flow directly from the text, it is suitable to Jewish educators of all religious denominations.

V. How should the curriculum be used?

Although the curriculum is comprised of 9 distinct units and each unit can be studied independently, its central message will likely be lost and its impact diminished if it is not studied in its entirety, much as the impact of any story or narrative is limited if it is only read in part. After the curriculum is studied and its central message understood, it is hoped that teachers will incorporate many of the units into existing curricula in Bible, Jewish thought or Jewish history. If for example, the story of Abraham is being taught in the context of the book of Genesis, this curriculum will hopefully provide an important framework through which that story can be understood; if the Book of Numbers, then the lessons on the scouts, and the story of the tribes of Reuven and Gad, and so on. Since, as we mentioned, the curriculum addresses key questions in the relationship between the People and the Land but does not purport to tell the whole story of that relationship, it is hoped that teachers will refer to the curriculum when they encounter other texts that touch upon this theme and will utilize it to help them teach those texts more effectively.