

Belonging to Israel- Yesterday and Today

Teacher's Guide

A curriculum for Israel Engagement

Written by Belrose Maram

In collaboration with Gila Ansell Brauner

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Introduction

The overarching goal of the curriculum below is to deepen engagement with Israel among the participating students. As such, the rationale behind the work is that by imbuing knowledge and thinking strategies, and creating experiences that elicit emotions and attitudes, the students will come to gain a meaningful understanding of the place of Israel in Jewish life. We believe that if you combine this meaningful understanding with a personally implicated worldview of their role in Israel engagement (both in the present as well as the future), the deepened Israel engagement we set out to achieve will be attainable.

Target Population

The present program was designed with North American Junior High School students (grades 6-8) in mind. The curriculum can be used at either Day Schools or Hebrew Schools.

Curriculum Structure

The curriculum combines both formal classroom lessons to be guided by the teacher, as well as a strong emphasis on independent study.

The Fundamental Ideas

Jewish educators in the United States are challenged with the task of creating a meaningful learning process that will serve to strengthen the Jewish identities of their students. It is our belief that a deep connection to Israel plays an important role in the development of the student's Jewish identity. It is important to emphasize that this kind of connection to Israel can only be created if students are able to deeply understand the content they are being taught. In other words, **the knowledge they acquire needs to be applicable and relevant to their own lives.**

The "Belonging to Israel- Yesterday and Today" curriculum encourages students to think for themselves, and come to their own conclusions about the connection of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, using examples from the past and comparing them with examples from the present.

The students will begin a historical and geographical journey in understanding how Israel has developed in the past 60+ years. They will search different periods and places, while confronting the dilemmas of the people from those times. They will also have to confront real-life, contemporary dilemmas and find creative solutions that will require them to work in partnership with young Jews like themselves in Israel.

The General Goals of the curriculum are

Affective

- To develop an awareness of the centrality of Israel to the Jewish people.
- To develop a feeling of belonging toward Israel.
- To promote the involvement of the students in Israeli society.
- To develop a desire to learn and work together with Israeli youth.

Cognitive

- To deepen the students' knowledge about the roots of the connection between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.
- To understand Israel as the home of the Jewish people. (Every Jew has a right to choose to live there and become an Israeli citizen).
- To see Israel as the fulfillment of the prayers and dreams of generations of Jews.
- To understand how the geographical uniqueness of the Land of Israel has influenced the lives of the Israelis how through the past 60+ years.
- To understand how the different aspects of Israeli lived there over society have developed over the last 60+ years.
- To understand how Jewish artists have expressed their connection to the Land of Israel over the last 60+ years.

The Learning Skills the program seeks to enhance

1. Students will have discussions that are based on real-life Jewish/Israeli dilemmas; realizing that the Jewish people have different points of view, and different ways of thinking.
2. Students will explore historical events using a variety of mediums and critical thinking strategies, such as analyzing maps, documents, pictures, etc.
3. Students will see their knowledge come to life, as the curriculum encourages them to apply the content to their own lives.
4. Students will be able to express and present their own ideas through a variety of avenues, including problems solving, written reports, discussions, etc.

Methodolgy

A. Central Spectrum

The curriculum is based on the central spectrum: "Belonging and Longing for Israel: past, present, and future". The students will come to understand how the Jewish people have been connected to Israel from the time of the Bible until today, and how this deep connection has helped in the development of the State of Israel over the last century. The students will understand that the feeling of belonging toward Israel is experienced in correlation with meaningful actions that individual Jews do relating to Israel (whether living in Israel or in the Diaspora). These important actions help the Jewish people be involved and develop the feeling of belonging toward Israel.

B. Structure

The curriculum consists of 4 distinct units:

Unit 1:

Bedrock and Foundation, in which the students will explore the various historical connections to the Land of Israel, with a focus on the Bible and Herzl.

Unit 2:

Rise and Walk the Land, in which the students will study the geography of Israel over time, and learn about the early Israeli kibbutzim, as well as the main cities in modern Israel.

Unit 3:

Toward a Better World, in which the students will learn about the fabric of Israeli society, as well as some of the pressing social issues that affect it.

Unit 4:

Songs of Belonging: Jewish/Israeli Songs, in which students will study both classical and contemporary poetry/music that uses art to express connection to Israel.

The duration of each lesson is approximately 90 minutes. The teachers can decide how they want to manage the time and content of each lesson, and are free to change the content or activities as they see fit.

C. *Israel Contest:*

At the completion of the units is the Israel Contest, an event we recommend showcasing as part of your school's or community's Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations. The contests gives the students the opportunity to showcase their accumulated knowledge and connection to Israel. Some suggested questions for the contest are presented after the last unit in this curriculum.

Assignments and Projects

In each unit of the curriculum, students will be asked to submit a homework assignment. At the end of the curriculum they will get to showcase their projects in an "Israel Fair". One of the most important homework assignments is the one for Unit 3, in which the students are asked to write a proposal for a solution to a real-life social problem in Israel. We recommend that the winner of the competition be given the opportunity to implement their solution on the ground.

It is important to emphasize that teachers are encouraged to change or adjust the assignments. We understand that each student and school has unique needs and goals. The content we've provided is merely a recommended format.

The Israel Contest (Yom Ha'atzmaut Event)

We recommend working the curriculum towards Yom Ha'atzmaut, and holding the contest on Yom Ha'atzmaut. The teacher should select about 10 students to be the contestants in the event. The students chosen to compete should be those that worked seriously throughout the curriculum and submitted top quality assignments consistently.

At the beginning of the contest **all the students** will be presenting their assignments in an "**Israel Fair**". During the main contest event, the top/winning assignments are going to be presented, one for each unit covered in the curriculum.

1. Plays/skits with Herzl and the Biblical characters
2. Advertisements to come to the Israeli city of choice
3. Proposals for how to solve a problem in Israeli Society
4. An artistic interpretation/adaptation of a selected poem

In between each presentation, the top 10 students will be asked trivia questions about Israel, based on the body of information studied throughout the course of all four units.

The winner of the contest is determined by the student who received the highest combined score for: points earned for correct answers during the quizzes and top ranking scores for assignments presented.

Suggested Prize: *The student will travel to Israel to put into effect their proposal for addressing their social problem in Israel (based on Unit 3).*

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The Belonging to Israel curriculum presents an innovative approach to the traditional "Israel Chiddon", or Israel quiz. Whereas former models emphasized memorization and accumulated knowledge, educators today recognize that the learner is not impacted by rote memorization in a world where the same information is accessible with the simple click of a button. **This curriculum is about connection; engaging the learner by promoting belonging to, and relationship-building with, the Land of Israel.**

The curriculum combines both formal classroom lessons to be guided by the teacher, as well as a strong emphasis on independent learning. The curriculum consists of 4 distinct units:

1. **Bedrock and Foundation**, in which the students will explore the various historical connections to the Land of Israel, with a focus on the Bible and Herzl.
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Israel Contest: At the completion of the units is the culminating Israel Contest, a grand event which we recommend showcasing as part of your school or community's Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations.

The theory behind this curriculum is founded in big ideas about Jewish peoplehood and Israel engagement, and was written with a hand on the pulse of contemporary educational theory on critical thinking. As such, the Makom educational team is currently in the process of revamping the question-asking across the entire curriculum to reflect the wisdom and insight of the critical questioning theory, and bring the curriculum to the highest educational standards.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Belie for the hours of work, and tireless commitment to bringing genuine Israel engagement to Jewish students worldwide. Additionally, many thanks to Gila, for her patience and perseverance through the sifting and sorting countless texts and educational materials. Thanks also to Elisheva, for her commitment to a quality finished product - thanks for her hours of editing and re-editing.

Please enjoy this draft of the curriculum, and let us know how it goes!

Sincerely,

Esti Moskovitz-Kalman

Education Director - Makom