



## **Rationale and Goals**

The purpose of this unit is to introduce students to Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, which led to the founding of modern Israel in 1948. The Zionist movement has been called one of the most successful national movements of the modern era. To understand this movement and why this unit's title is the "rebirth" of a nation, it is important to know about the Jews' ancient origins in the land, their continuous presence in it, and how their 2,000-year longing to return was transformed into an effective, modern political movement that united Jews around the world and was endorsed by the international community.

The unit's specific goals are:

- To introduce students to Zionism, giving them a brief overview of its origins, its challenges, its achievements, and how it was viewed by the international community.
- To give students an understanding of the ancient and modern roots of Zionism; to emphasize (especially with the pictures) that the Jews were indigenous to and maintained a continuing presence in and connection to the land; and to explain why the founding of modern Israel was called the "rebirth" of a nation.
- To give students an awareness of how the ideals of the Zionist movement fit into modern notions of nationalism, liberty, and human and civil rights.
- To give students an awareness of the "push and pull" that created modern Zionism. The push was continuing anti-Semitism: the pogroms against Jews in Russia and the continuing prejudice against Jews even in liberal countries like France. The pulls were the rise of nationalism in Europe, the desire to preserve Jewish identity, and the millennia-old longing to return that has been central to Judaism.
- To emphasize that Jews began resettling the land even before the rise of modern Zionism and the international community's endorsement of Zionism in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. (This is a critical theme throughout the booklet. For example, there was a Jewish majority in Jerusalem by 1864.) In addition, the Zionist movement started, and the land was settled, decades before the Holocaust.
- To give students a sense of the different ideologies, political views, and national backgrounds of those who united to form the Zionist movement.
- To emphasize (especially with the quotes on the left-most column) that non-Jews also understood the Jews' continuing connection to the land and that Zionists got international recognition and support with the Balfour Declaration (1917) and the League of Nations Mandate (1920-45) and from the United Nations (1945-present).

## Discussion Questions

The following are some discussion questions for students along with helpful hints for teachers.

- What does the name Zionism mean? What were the main goals of Zionism, and how did Zionists hope to achieve them?
- How unique was the founding of Israel? What other nations were also founded or established independence in the past two-and-a-half centuries? (Teachers: the majority of modern nation-states were founded or established independence just in this period. Some examples students may know: United States (declared 1776; established 1787), Haiti (1791), Mexico (1822), Italy and Germany (1871), modern India, and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) were, like Israel, established in 1948. Also see p. 6 of *Israel 101* for dates of founding of Middle Eastern countries and north African countries.)
- Theodore Herzl started modern Zionism because he saw that Jews were not fully accepted even in modern liberal democracies like France, because of the anti-Jewish pogroms in the Russian Empire and because this persecution had been a central characteristic of Jewish history since the Roman conquest. What other options do you think Jews should have pursued at the time?
- Why is the founding of modern Israel referred to as the “rebirth of a nation?” (Teachers: students should look at the pictures on the right side of the page to help formulate their answers.)
- When the word “Zionism” is mentioned, what association, does it raise? What did it mean to previous generations, such as your parents’, grandparents’ or other relatives’? Do you think it has meant different things to different generations?
- What was new about modern Zionism, and what was ancient about it? (For example, the idea of returning to the land and restoring Jewish national independence was ancient; turning this idea into a modern, pragmatic, political movement and using up-to-date technology to restore the land were modern.)
- What nations or international leaders endorsed Zionism? Why did they endorse it? (Teachers: the quotes on the left side of the page will help students explore this question.)
- How was Zionism similar to or different from other nationalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries? (Teachers: if students are studying world, European or American history, they can bring in what they’ve learned about the rise of cultural and political nationalism, the movements for national independence from imperial or colonial control, and the ideals of self-determination. Two useful entries are on Wikipedia: on nationalism, see [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rise\\_of\\_nationalism\\_in\\_Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rise_of_nationalism_in_Europe); on post-colonial national liberation movements, see [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_liberation\\_movements](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_liberation_movements).)
- Zionists came from a wide range of national, political and ideological backgrounds. How were they able to overcome them to form a united movement? From your own personal experience in organizations and student groups, what are the obstacles in forming a united organization with a clear agenda and program for carrying it out?
- Zionist leader and first Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion reportedly once said, “If you do not believe in miracles, you are not a realist.” What do you think he meant? How do you think this applies to the Zionist movement and the establishment of modern Israel?
- Now that Jews have a state, what is the role of Zionism?

# Activities

## Activity 1

*Brief Overview of Jewish history and the History of Modern Israel  
through Film and Timelines*

**Preparation:**

**Estimated Time:** one-half class period • **Materials:** Internet access and video projector

**Background:** Steven Spielberg’s Jewish Film Archive is an extraordinary resource with some online videos that bring alive the history of Jews and the rebirth of Israel. The introduction to his archive gives an excellent overview of the themes discussed in this unit.

**Activity:**

Show the 15-minute introductory video from the Spielberg Jewish Film Archive available at [w3.castup.net/jfa/filmsscreen.asp?ai=148&ar=CMID23331](http://w3.castup.net/jfa/filmsscreen.asp?ai=148&ar=CMID23331). Also download and print out the StandWithUs timeline at [www.standwithuscampus.com/signs/timeline2.indd.pdf](http://www.standwithuscampus.com/signs/timeline2.indd.pdf).

**Discussion:** Have a general class discussion addressing the following questions:

1. What were your reactions to the film? What insights did it give you about Jewish history and the founding of modern Israel?
2. What are your reactions to the timeline? What did you learn from it? How did it fit in with Spielberg’s film?
3. What themes and facts on page 3 of *Israel 101* did you see in the film and on the timeline?
4. What topics in the Spielberg Film Archive or on the timeline would you like to pursue further?
5. How did Spielberg’s film portray the Jewish connection to the land and the Zionist movement? How does the timeline add to what you learned from the film?
6. How useful is film footage as a historical source? What do you learn from film that you cannot learn from written documents? How can you be misled by films?
7. How useful is a timeline? How does it help you understand the history of modern Israel?

**Wrap-up:** Spielberg’s film and the timeline encapsulate the main themes of this unit and the highlights of the reestablishment of Israel: the Jews’ ancient history in the land, how they preserved their cultural identity over the centuries, the birth of the Zionist movement, international support for reestablishing the Jewish state, and its actual founding.

**Note to teachers:** One of the best films about the reestablishment of Israel is the Israel Broadcasting Association’s “Pillar of Fire.” The seven-part series has excellent documentary footage and is very balanced. It is much longer than the Spielberg video, but if you have time, you may want to show it. Many college libraries have it. It can also be purchased from Amazon at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_ss\\_gw/103-8534874-0527858?url=search-alias%3Ddvd&field-keywords=%22Pillar+of+Fire%22&x=16&y=13](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_ss_gw/103-8534874-0527858?url=search-alias%3Ddvd&field-keywords=%22Pillar+of+Fire%22&x=16&y=13).

# Activities

## Activity 2

### *Exploring Zionism*

#### **Preparation:**

**Estimated time:** 1 class period • **Materials:** *Israel 101*

#### **Activity:**

Conduct a class discussion that draws out some of the main highlights about Zionism as explained in *Israel 101*. The following questions (with answers provided for teachers) will draw out these issues.

1. What is Zionism? What is the meaning of the word “Zion”?

*Answer:* As stated in the text, Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people to establish a Jewish state in their ancestral homeland. “Zion” is used in the Hebrew Bible to mean Jerusalem and the land of Israel. Point out that Jews were a majority in Jerusalem by the 1870s, long before the Balfour Declaration (1917) gave formal legitimacy to the Zionist call for a Jewish state.

2. How did the Zionist dream relate to Jewish history?

*Answer:* The Zionist movement was founded by Theodore Herzl, during the period shortly after many modern nation-states were founded in Europe. The catalyst to Herzl’s work was French anti-Semitism (the Dreyfus Affair), which convinced Herzl that the Jews needed a state of their own. But this dream was based on Jewish history. Jews had been a nation for more than 1,000 years, and Jews had been living in the land of Israel continuously and still regarded it as their homeland.

3. Read the quotes on the left-hand side of the page. What do all of these quotes have in common?

*Hint:* Think of who said them and what they actually said.

*Answer:* All of the people quoted were non-Jews. Each quote supports the right of the Jewish people to reestablish their national homeland in what was then called Palestine. The quotes illustrate that non-Jews recognized the Jewish connection to the land, and they show that Zionists received international recognition and support years before Israel was established as a state in 1948.

4. What do the photographs in the right-hand column of page 4 have in common?

*Answer:* They are a sample of the evidence that Jews have always lived in the land of Israel. All three – Gamla, the Western Wall and the Arch of Titus – relate in one way or another to the period around 70 CE, when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, signaling the end of the Jewish State and the beginning of Jewish dispersion to other countries – the dispersion of the Jewish people from its homeland which lasted until the Zionist movement began in the late 19th century.

**Wrap-up:** The pictures and text on these pages give an overview of the ancient roots of Zionism, the modern development of Zionism, and the international support for reestablishment of the Jewish homeland, all of which led to the establishment of modern Israel in 1948.

# Activities

## Activity 3

*An Exercise in Archeology: Uncovering Israel's Ancient Past*

**Preparation:**

**Estimated time:** 1-2 class periods • **Materials:** Internet access, *Israel 101*

**Background:** Since the late 19th century, archeologists have excavated in what is today Israel and the Territories. Often inspired by a desire to verify the Old and New Testaments, they led the way for modern archeology of the region. Today, Israel's Antiquities Authority and archeologists from around the world continue to excavate and discover remarkable evidence of Canaanite civilization, the ancient Jewish state, the Jews' continuing presence in the land (such as synagogues dating throughout the region's history), and other civilizations and groups that ruled and populated the land. In this exercise, students will examine some of the archeological record about the Jewish past.

**Activity:**

This exercise will also introduce students to archeology and to some of the issues involved in interpreting archeological evidence.

Divide the class into groups. Give each group a choice between two sites to investigate. Explain that each group will present their findings to the class, according to the following outline (a student worksheet is on the next page):

- a. *Name of the archeological site*
- b. *Date/era of Jewish settlement*
- c. *Name of the area's location today*
- d. *Name of archeologist(s) and excavation date(s)*
- e. *What was actually excavated?*
- f. *What does this evidence show? Are there competing interpretations of the evidence?*
- g. *Interesting facts*
- h. *Web links (Who produced the sites?)*

- List of some archeological sites to investigate:

Masada  
Gamla  
Western Wall (Wailing Wall)  
City of David  
Hebron  
Tiberias  
Nablus (Shechem)  
Zippori

- Have each group make a presentation of its findings in class.
- Conduct a general class discussion about the findings. How does the evidence they've investigated relate to the Zionist movement, which began in the 19th Century? What does the evidence suggest about the Jewish presence in the land?

**Example:** Gamla existed during the Roman period. The city, also called “The Masada of the North,” was destroyed by the Romans in 67 CE during the Great Revolt (just before the destruction of the Second Temple). Gamla is located in what is today the northern Golan Heights. Excavations were started by Itzhak Gal and Shemaryahu Gutmann in 1967; they have continued to the present. The remains of the wall from the time of the Great Revolt as well as those of a synagogue located near the city entrance, a mikva, and some magnificent buildings have been uncovered. Ballista stones and arrowheads were found in the synagogue, showing that the battle was also fought here. These interpretations are straightforward and well accepted. Controversies do exist about the role played by the Roman-Jewish historian Josephus, who was the commander of Galilee and Gamla at the time. It’s interesting that Josephus records the final battle in his classic, *Antiquities of the Jews*, and that his description of Gamla helped the archeologists find the actual site; their excavations are completely consistent with what Josephus wrote. Web links include: [www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Early%20History%20-%20Archaeology/Archaeological%20Sites%20in%20Israel%20-%20Gamala-%20Jewish%20Ci](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Early%20History%20-%20Archaeology/Archaeological%20Sites%20in%20Israel%20-%20Gamala-%20Jewish%20Ci) (produced by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

**Wrap-up:** Archeological research confirms that Jews have been present in Israel since 1000 BCE, and continuing research will shed more light on the early history of the region.

# Israel's Ancient Past

## Activity Sheet

### *Uncovering the Evidence*

**Instructions:** As a team, explore your chosen archeological site. Record your findings (as outlined below) and be prepared to present them to the class.

a. Name of the archeological site \_\_\_\_\_

b. Date/era of Jewish settlement \_\_\_\_\_

c. Name of the area where it is located today \_\_\_\_\_

d. Name of archeologist(s) and excavation date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

e. What was actually excavated? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

f. What does this evidence demonstrate? Are there competing interpretations of the evidence?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

g. Interesting Facts \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

h. Web links (Include who produced the sites.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Activities

## Activity 4

*International Support for the Jewish Homeland in the Palestine Mandate and for the Establishment of Israel:  
Studying Some Primary Documents*

**Preparation:**

**Estimated time:** 1-2 class periods • **Materials:** Internet access or printouts of the suggested documents, *Israel 101*.

**Background:** A review of some key historical documents can bring alive the reasons, ideas and conditions that prompted the international community to support reestablishing the Jewish homeland in Palestine and the reestablishment of the State of Israel. Students reviewing these key documents will also gain experience in working with primary sources.

**Activity:**

1. Divide students into groups of four and have them review the following short documents, or have each group responsible for one or two of the documents.

- Balfour Declaration, 1917, at [www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/balfour.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/balfour.htm)
- Emir Feisal and Felix Frankfurter Correspondence, March 3-5, 1919, at [www.zionism-israel.com/hdoc/Feisal-Frankfurter-Correspondence.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/hdoc/Feisal-Frankfurter-Correspondence.htm)
- Winston Churchill statement reported in the *New York Times*, April 2, 1921, at [query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?\\_r=1&res=9402EEDE103FEE3ABC4A53DFB266838A639EDE&oref=slogin](http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=1&res=9402EEDE103FEE3ABC4A53DFB266838A639EDE&oref=slogin)
- Lord A.J. Balfour, “Defense of the Palestinian Mandate,” 1922, at [www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1922balfour.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1922balfour.html)
- British (or Churchill) White Paper, 1922, at [www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/brwh1922.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/brwh1922.htm)
- Recommendation by UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee on Palestine) at [www.mideastweb.org/unscom1947.html](http://www.mideastweb.org/unscom1947.html) (scroll down to Part I, “Plan of Partition with Economic Union Justification”)
- Israel’s “Declaration of Establishment of State of Israel” at [www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Establishment+of+State+of+Israel.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Establishment+of+State+of+Israel.htm)

2. Have students choose a spokesperson of each group to report on the documents they read.

3. Begin a general class discussion to compare and contrast the documents.

The main themes that should be highlighted:

- The Jews are indigenous to the land.
- The Jews have the right to restore their homeland.
- The scattered Jews should be brought together again in Palestine.
- The Jews developed the land and established a national culture in Palestine.  
(The Declaration is particularly good on this point.)

**Wrap-Up:** These documents indicate that the international community recognized the Jews as indigenous to the land, that the Jews had already begun settling and improving the land and redeveloping their national culture even before the Mandate was established, that the Jews continued to improve the land and bring prosperity to the region, and that the hope was the two national movements—Arab and Jewish—would complement one another.

# Activities

## Activity 5

Creating Unity from Diversity: The Competing Ideologies in the Zionist Movement

**Preparation:**

**Estimated Time:** 1 class period • **Materials:** Internet access and *Israel 101*

**Background:** The Zionist movement included people from a wide range of backgrounds. They came from multiple countries and had different ideologies, from Socialism to Liberalism, from religious to secular. Creating unity out of this diversity was a challenge. To understand the ideals of Zionism and the political and economic system that Israel set up, it is helpful for students to know the different ideologies that inspired Israel's founders and to learn how they overcame these differences. In addition, students will learn about the differing ideas and ideals that prevailed in the western world in the late 19th and 20th centuries.

**Activity**

1. Divide students into groups, and have them choose which of the “Zionisms” they would like to research. (Good brief summaries of these Zionist philosophies are available at [www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern+History/Centenary+of+Zionism/Zionist+Philosophies.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern+History/Centenary+of+Zionism/Zionist+Philosophies.htm). A more thorough, sophisticated account is available at [www.zionism-israel.com/zionism\\_history.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/zionism_history.htm).

*Practical Zionism*

*Political Zionism*

*Socialist Zionism*

*Synthetic Zionism*

*Revisionist Zionism*

*Religious Zionism*

*General Zionism*

*Spiritual Zionism*

2. Have students report their findings, and then raise some general questions:

- What were the differences between these views?
- How did events that occurred at the time affect the rise or fall of these different views?
- What were the common beliefs of all these different Zionisms; how did each philosophy help the founding of modern Israel; and how did the Zionists unite?

**Wrap up:** Early Zionists represented a wide range of ideologies, yet managed to unite on their common goals and create a state that combined many of these ideologies.

# Resources

## Internet

*History of Zionism* – [www.zionism-israel.com/zionism\\_history.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/zionism_history.htm) and [www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/history](http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/facts%20about%20israel/history)

*Theodore Herzl and Zionism* – [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Herzl.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/Herzl.html)

Excerpts from Herzl's *The Jewish State* – [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/herzlex.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/herzlex.html)

*The Balfour Declaration* – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour\\_Declaration\\_of\\_1917](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour_Declaration_of_1917)

*The White Paper* – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churchill\\_White\\_Paper%2C\\_1922](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churchill_White_Paper%2C_1922)

*Jewish Virtual Library (general source)* – [www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org)

## Early organizations in Israel

*Jewish National Fund* – [www.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=history](http://www.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=history)

*Hagganah* – [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagganah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagganah)

## Books

### Nonfiction

Ben-Haim, Ruth (Ed., 2004). *Facts About Israel*. (Ahva Press: Jerusalem, 2004).

*The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* by Arthur Hertzberg

Eban, Abba (1984). *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*. (NY: Summit Books).

Collins, Larry and Lapierre, Dominique. *O Jerusalem!* (Simon and Schuster: 1972).

Kurzman, Dan (1970). *Genesis 1948: The First Arab-Israeli* (New American Library, Inc.: 1970).

### Historical Fiction

Halter, Marek (1990). *The Children of Abraham*. (Arcade Publishing).

Uris, Leon (1958). *Exodus*. (NY: Doubleday).

Wouk, Herman (1993). *The Hope*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.).

Michener, James (1965, 2002). *The Source*. (Random House, Fawcett).

### Film

*Exodus*. Directed by Otto Preminger, 1960. (You can also compare the film version with the documentary on the Exodus available at [www.exodus1947.com/synopsis.php](http://www.exodus1947.com/synopsis.php).)

### Video/DVD

Eban, Abba, et al. *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*. (DVD videos of the landmark PBS series and interactive multimedia DVD-ROM.) [www.thirteen.org/heritagedvd](http://www.thirteen.org/heritagedvd)

*Palestine National Appeal Fund film of establishment of Israel and 1948 War*, from Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive at [w3.castup.net/jfa/filmsscreen.asp?ai=148&ar=CMID23220](http://w3.castup.net/jfa/filmsscreen.asp?ai=148&ar=CMID23220)

*Pillar of Fire*, Israel Broadcasting Association film of the history of modern Israel from Zionism to 1948, with original footage. In libraries, or the DVDs can be purchased from Amazon at [www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_ss\\_gw/103-8534874-0527858?url=search-alias%3Ddvd&field-keywords=%22Pillar+of+Fire%22&x=16&y=13](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_ss_gw/103-8534874-0527858?url=search-alias%3Ddvd&field-keywords=%22Pillar+of+Fire%22&x=16&y=13).