



TIES THAT BIND

Jews Connecting Through The Centuries



Israel 101 Page 5

Rationale and Goals

To understand Zionism and the founding of present-day Israel, it is important to know about the Jews as a national/ethnic group that has preserved its identity since ancient times and to understand that their homeland remained central to their beliefs and identity for thousands of years.

Jewish civilization, about 3,500 years old, produced its own religion, Judaism, and an unbroken connection between the people of Israel and the land of Israel. The purpose of this unit is for students to understand how the Jews kept their unique identity alive and maintained this connection although they were dispersed throughout the world. Religious texts and liturgy and Jewish holidays and life-cycle rituals bound them together. Specific goals of the unit are:

- To give students an understanding of the Jews as a people—a nation—that has survived since ancient times and to give them an understanding that Zion has always been central to their identity.
- To give students a sense of how and why Jews maintained a common identity as a people throughout the world and throughout the centuries through Judaism, rituals, cultural customs, language and a shared history.

Discussion Questions

- Why have Jews been able to retain their identity as a people, despite the fact that millions of them were dispersed from their homeland for millennia?
- How can a people's identity survive when they are not in their own country? What do you think are the most important elements for this survival?
- Imagine you are moving to a new country with a different language and customs. What aspects of your old identity would you want to preserve? How would you do it? Which things would you miss the most and how would you try to recreate or preserve them? How much do immigrants to America preserve their identification with their countries of origin? What factors shape how much they preserve their original identities? (In American schools, these are important issues since so many students are immigrants or the children of immigrants.)
- From which countries of origin did your parents and grandparents come? Did they maintain their ties with that country when they came to America? If so, how did they do so?
- How and why has Israel remained so central to Judaism and to Jews for thousands of years? (As the unit and first activity demonstrate, many of the Jewish rituals, prayers and holidays focus on and reinforce the Jewish people's connection to Israel.)

Activities

Activity 1

How Jews Maintained Their Identity as a People: Jewish Life in the Diaspora

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 2 class periods

Introduction: When people leave their country of origin and move to a new country, sometimes they lose their connections with the former at the expense of developing stronger connections with the latter. But sometimes they maintain strong connections with both countries. The activity will explore this issue.

Materials: Access to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, a Jewish library and/or the Internet. Photocopies of short biographies (or chapters of biographies) of Jews living in the diaspora in different periods. Suggested biographies include:

Maimonides at home.aol.com/lazera/rambam.html

Glickl of Hamburg in Natalie Zemon Davis' *Women on the Margins*, (1995), Chapter 1.

Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai at www.zionism-israel.com/bio/alkalai_biography.htm

Moses Montefiore at www.answers.com/topic/moses-montefiore

Philip Drachman on the Arizona frontier at www.ajhs.org/publications/chapters/chapter.cfm?documentID=206

Isaac Leeser at www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/loc/Leeser.html

Informational Web sites about Jewish communities from different times and places include:

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/babylonian1.html–

Babylonian Jewish community (6th century BCE – 5th century CE)

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/iranjews.html–The Persian Jewish community up through today

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Ashkenazim.html– Life of Ashkenazi Jews in Europe

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/spain1.html– History of the Jewish people in Spain

Lesson Plan: Explain to students that for the past 2,000 years, Jews have lived all over the world but still maintained their sense of identity and peoplehood. The five short biographies are from different periods of history (13th, 17th, 18th and 19th centuries) and from widely different geographic regions, yet there are certain common themes that show how and why this sense of identity and community continued. Similarly, the Jewish communities mentioned above span different periods (second, 12th, 15th and 20th centuries). Students will examine the biographies and/or descriptions of Jewish communities and identify the practices and beliefs discussed in this unit.

Activity:

Investigation: Have students divide into six groups. Assign three of the groups a different biography to read. Tell the students in each group to note the place and dates their person lived, and what he or she did for a living. Then have students make a list of the aspects of the person's life that tied him to Jews and Judaism. Assign the other three groups a different historical Jewish community to research. Have the students make a list of influences that kept that community tied to Judaism. Each group should select a spokesperson before the class reassembles together. Each spokesperson should describe his group's person or community and the ties that bound him or it to

Judaism. Students can then compare and contrast the people's and communities' lives and identify the common themes.

Discussion

Many elements described in the unit should become apparent, particularly the following:

- Intermarriage
- An organized Jewish community led by a rabbi
- Regular communication between Jewish communities throughout the world
- International business relationships
- Schooling, shared rituals (even among the very assimilated)
- Parents passing the traditions on to their children, family cohesion
- A sense of responsibility for the well-being of other Jews
- Adaptation: found ways to maintain Jewish identity while contributing to the host country

Ask students to think about how these ties that bind are similar to or different from those of other immigrant groups.

Wrap-Up: Jewish continuity was assured through the ties that bind and through the Jews' communal efforts to preserve and transmit their heritage.



Activities

Activity 2

How Jewish Ritual, Prayer and Holidays Maintained Connections between Jews and between Jews and Israel

Preparation:

Time Frame: 1 class period • **Materials:** Activity cards (see below) and the *Israel 101* booklet

Lesson Plan: Give students an overview of Jewish ritual, prayer and the holidays (see “Background” below). Have students engage in an investigative activity revolving around these topics as a way to learn about how Jews have always been connected to the land of Israel.

Background: The guiding question for this activity is: “In the rituals, prayers and holidays of the Jewish people, how was a strong connection maintained between the Jewish people and the land of Israel?” In order to understand the connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, it is important to know that (1) Jews lived as an ancient nation in the land of Israel (as a series of tribes, as a people ruled by judges, as a monarchy ruled by kings, etc.) until the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., (2) after this traumatic event, the Jews continued to survive as a people based on the rituals, prayers and holidays of the Jewish religion, and (3) these rituals, prayers and holidays explicitly connected Jews to the land of Israel and the hope of returning to reestablish a Jewish nation again in this land.

The origins of the Jewish religion are documented in the Five Books of Moses, called the “Torah” in Hebrew. It is part of the Jewish Bible, which is called the “Tanach” in Hebrew. The origin of many Jewish holidays – such as the three pilgrimage holidays of Passover, Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks) and Sukkot – are also described in the Torah. Other Jewish holidays – such as Purim, Chanukah and the fast day of the Ninth of Av (which commemorates the destruction of the Second Temple) – are described elsewhere.

Before the destruction of the Second Temple, Jewish worship was focused around animal sacrifices in the Temple; these activities are documented in the Book of Leviticus in the Torah. According to the Talmud (an ancient work of Jewish law), the major Jewish prayers were composed by the Men of the Great Assembly (fifth century BCE). After the destruction of the Second Temple and the beginning of the dispersion of the Jewish people, these prayers were crystallized. The first written Jewish prayerbook (siddur) can be traced to the ninth century BCE. The siddur has accompanied the Jewish people since.

Activity:

• **Introductory Discussion:** With your students, discuss the following conjecture: One might assume that after the Jews were exiled from Jerusalem in 70 CE and were forced to move elsewhere over the next centuries, they lost their connection with their homeland. In fact, the Jews maintained a close connection with the land of Israel throughout the almost 2,000-year diaspora. What are the sources of this connection?

Divide the class into 6-8 different groups of students. Give each group a different activity card (see below); each card analyzes a different prayer or holiday. For the first 15 minutes, each group will investigate how the above question relates to the information on their card. Then have each group present its findings to the class.

• **Discussion:** After the activity, ask for the students to speculate about how Jewish rituals, prayers and holidays served as a mechanism for maintaining and strengthening the connection between Jews and Israel throughout the centuries. It is important to note that until roughly the French Revolution (late 18th century), one’s Jewish

Activities

Activity 2

identity was tightly connected with one's religious identity as a Jew (i.e., there were no “secular Jews” as there are today). Ever since the emancipation (late 18th century on), other forms of Jewish identification have emerged (e.g., many varieties of nonreligious Jews who still identify as Jews).

Wrap-Up: Despite the fact that Jews were exiled from their homeland after living there for over 1,000 years, they maintained a strong connection with it for the nearly 2,000 years of the diaspora up to the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948.



Activity Cards

An Introduction to Jewish Ritual, Prayer and Holidays

Instructions to the Teacher: Print the following pages and prepare these separate activity cards to distribute to different groups of students. See Activity 2 for details of the lesson plan.

Card 1

Instructions for Students: How does the following practice (ritual, prayer or holiday) reinforce a connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel?

From the Amida (silent prayer, central to each of the three daily prayer services): “Have mercy, O Lord, and return to Jerusalem, Your City; May Your Presence dwell there as you Promised. Rebuild it now, in our days and for all time. Reestablish there the majesty of David, your servant. Praised are You, O Lord, who rebuilds Jerusalem....May our eyes witness Your return in mercy to Zion. Praised are You, O Lord, whose Presence returns to Zion.”

From the Torah Service (conducted during morning services every Monday and Thursday as well as during the Shabbat service every week): “When the ark was carried onward, Moses exclaimed: Arise, O Lord, that Your enemies be scattered and those who would deny You be put to flight. For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem.” (Note: The word “Zion” refers to Jerusalem in specific and Israel in general.)

Card 2

Instructions for Students: How might the following practice (ritual, prayer or holiday) reinforce a connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel?

From the daily blessings after meals (Birkat Hamazon):

“We thank you, Lord our God, for having given us a beautiful, good, and spacious land; for having taken us out of Egypt and redeemed us from the house of slavery; for your covenant which You sealed in our flesh; for your Torah which You have taught us; for the life, grace and kindness You have granted us; and for the food which sustains us at all times....Have mercy, Lord our God, on Israel your people, on Jerusalem your city, on Zion Your dwelling place, on the house of David your anointed messiah, and on the holy Temple that bears your name....Rebuild Jerusalem the holy city quickly in our days. Blessed are You, Lord, who rebuilds Jerusalem in mercy. Amen.”

Card 3

Instructions for Students: How might the following practice (ritual, prayer or holiday) reinforce a connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel?

From the Jewish wedding ceremony (part of the “seven blessings” said during the Jewish marriage ceremony): “Let the barren city be jubilantly happy and joyful at her joyous reunion with her children. You are blessed, Lord, who makes Zion rejoice with her children....You are blessed, Lord our G-d, the sovereign of the world, who created joy and celebration, bridegroom and bride, rejoicing, jubilation, pleasure and delight, love and brotherhood, peace and friendship. May there soon be heard, Lord our G-d, in the cities of Judea and in the streets of Jerusalem, the sound of joy and the sound of celebration, the voice of a bridegroom and the voice of a bride, the happy shouting of bridegrooms from their weddings and of young men from their feasts of song. You are blessed, Lord, who makes the bridegroom and the bride rejoice together.”

At the very end of the wedding ceremony, the new husband recites the verse: “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its cunning, may tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I forget thee and do not place Jerusalem as my highest joy.” He then breaks a glass, in memory of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.

Card 4

Instructions for Students: How might the following practice (ritual, prayer or holiday) reinforce a connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel?

The First Fruits Ceremony and the Passover Haggadah

There is a very interesting connection between the first fruits ceremony (conducted before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E.) and the Haggadah that is used during the festival of Passover (which evolved after 70 C.E.).

During the time when Jews were living in the ancient land of Israel, every year they observed the “first fruits ceremony,” as described in Deuteronomy, Chapter 26, verses 1-11. Read these verses. They describe a ceremony in which the Jewish farmer (the typical Israelite) expressed his gratitude for living in the land of Israel.

In summary, the verses command the ancient Jewish farmer to bring a basket of his first fruits to the Temple in Jerusalem and say to the priest: “I acknowledge this day before the Lord your God that I have entered the land that the Lord swore to our fathers to assign us.” The priest then took the basket and set it down in front of the altar in the Temple. Then the Jewish farmer would recite a subpassage that was later incorporated in the Passover Haggadah. This subpassage begins with the words: “My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and lived there.” It continues to tell the story of the Jewish people’s slavery in Egypt and the redemption from Egypt. It ends with the words: “He (God) brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, O Lord, have given me.” The verses continue to command the farmer to “bow before the Lord your God” and ends with the following words: “And you shall enjoy, together with the Levite and the stranger in your midst, all the bounty that the Lord your God has bestowed upon you and your household.”

After the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., the Passover Haggadah as we know it began to develop. The central commandment on Passover is “to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.” In the Haggadah, the rabbis chose the same verses quoted above (starting with “My father was a fugitive Aramean” but ending before the words: “He (God) brought us to this place”). What might be the significance of choosing these words, the same words used in the first fruits ceremony to express the typical Israelite’s gratitude for living in Israel, at a time when Jews were exiled from their homeland?

At the close of the Passover Haggadah, Jews say: “Next Year in Jerusalem!”

Card 5

Instructions for Students: How might the following practice (ritual, prayer or holiday) reinforce a connection between the Jewish people and the land of Israel?

The Ninth Day of Av (fast day for the destruction of the Second Temple):

Each year, Jews fast on the ninth day of the month of Av, in memory of the destruction of the First Temple and Second Temple, which were located on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. To find out more about this observance, enter “Tisha B’Av” at Google.com

Today, the Temple site is occupied by two Muslim mosques: El-Aksa and the Dome of the Rock.

Other possibilities: The teacher can prepare other activity cards regarding other Jewish holy days such as Chanukah, Shavuot, Sukkot and Tu B’Shvat.

Note to Teacher: Your students will probably discover that some holidays (e.g., Tu B’Shvat, which celebrates the fruits of the land of Israel) are more connected to the land of Israel than others (e.g., the Jewish Sabbath, which celebrates the creation, God’s resting on the seventh day as a model for human behavior, and the Exodus from Egypt). The three central holidays (Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot) all have names and significance that focus on Israel’s agricultural cycle. Also, most fast days (e.g., the Ninth of Av, when the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed) are strongly connected with the city of Jerusalem. Thus, throughout Jewish history, the holidays and fast days have acted to connect the land of Israel to Jews, even when they lived outside Israel.

Resources

Overview

“How Did the Jews Maintain Their Attachment to Zion (Israel) Throughout the Centuries of Exile?”
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/biblejew.html

“The Jewish Claim to the Land of Israel”
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/The_Jewish_Claim_To_The_Land_Of_Israel.html

Centrality of Jerusalem and Zion to Judaism throughout the centuries—www.zionism-israel.com/his/Jerusalem_history.htm

Repeated Jewish immigration to the Holy Land, 1240-1840 at Arie Morgenstern, “Dispersion and the Longing for Zion, 1240-1840,” Azure, Winter 5762 / 2002 –www.azure.org.il/12-mor.htm

“Heritage: Civilization and the Jews” (Web resources based on Abba Eban’s PBS TV series, book and the interactive DVD-ROM)—
www.pbs.org/wnet/heritage/resources.html

Timeline from Heritage—www.pbs.org/wnet/heritage/timeline.html

Prayers and Ritual

Birkat HaMazon (English translation of complete text of Grace After Meals)—
www.lookstein.org/lessonplans_output.php?id=322433&existing=%3Ci%3EBirkat%20Hamazon%3C/i%3E

Amidah (prayer of silent devotion)—
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/amidah.html. (See “Laws and Customs,” paragraph one.)

Jewish marriage ceremony—www.chabad.org/library/howto/wizard.asp?AID=476772. (See paragraph five.)

Resources

Holidays

Shalosh regalim (three pilgrimage holidays: Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot)—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Festivals_in_Israel.html (See sections on Sukkot, Passover, Shavuot.)

www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/People/Jewish+Festivals+in+Israel.htm
(See sections on Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot.)

Tisha B'Av (holiday commemorating the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem)—
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holidayd.html

Chanukah—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/holiday7.html

Maps

Map of the land of Israel made in first century C.E.—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/israelbce.html

Map of dispersal of Jews from Israel to surrounding countries after destruction of Second Temple—
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/exilemap.html

Map of Israel from 17th century Dutch Haggadah—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/1695map.html

Early 19th-century map of Israel attributed to the Vilna Gaon, a revered Jewish scholar—
www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/1802map.html

Map of Israel drawn by Rabbi Pinta of Zefat in 1875—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/oldjer2.html

Map of Jerusalem made in 1883. (Note the Jewish Quarter.)—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/jermap1883.html

Museums (Many resources available on the Web.)

Beth Hatefutsoth: Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora (Ramat Aviv)
Museum of the Jewish People Online: www.bh.org.il/index.html

Israel Museum (Jerusalem): www.imj.org.il

Jewish Museum in Prague (Czech Republic): www.jewishmuseum.cz/aindex.htm

National Museum of American Jewish History: www.nmajh.org/links/links1.htm
(Many communities around the U.S. and all over the world have local/regional Jewish museums. Check out the Jewish museums in your community and on the Web; the above list includes an index and links to most of the Jewish museums in the U.S.)

Books—Nonfiction

Barnavi, Eli (1992). *A Historic Atlas of the Jewish People* (NY: Schocken Books).

Ben-Haim, Ruth, ed. (2004). *Facts About Israel* (Ahva Press: Jerusalem), pp. 7-32, 47-49.

Biale, David (2002). *Cultures of the Jews* (NY: Schocken Books). 1196 pages.

Dimont, Max (1962). *Jews, God and History* (NY: Simon and Schuster).

Eban, Abba (1984). *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (NY: Summit Books). Book accompanying PBS series. (Also available on video (VHS) and DVD as well as a comprehensive interactive DVD-ROM.)

Potok, Chaim (1978, 1983). *Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf).

Siddur

Tanakh

Resources

Historical Novels–Fiction

Halter, Marek (1987, 2003). *The Book of Abraham*. (The Toby Press).

Michener, James A. (1965, 1992). *The Source*. (NY: Fawcett Books).

Video (VHS or DVD)

Eban, Abba. *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews*. Available as a complete set of the original PBS series. Also available with a comprehensive interactive DVD-ROM.

Volume 2: City of David. (Shows how this ancient Jewish city is being transformed into a peaceful community of Arabs and Jews.) Available at no charge (except for shipping) from www.israelupclose.org/stories.html.

