



Evolution of US-Israel Relations



Israel 101, Pages 16-17

Rationale and Goals

- To emphasize that the US did not automatically support Israel. The relationship evolved and grew close only after the 1967 and 1973 wars. Israel's earlier closest allies had been the (former) USSR and France.
- To emphasize that US policy was to ally with and help fund Israel AND friendly Arab regimes. The US refused an either/or policy in the Middle East, although Arab countries kept trying to impose that dichotomy on US policy.
- To emphasize the enormous benefits, including financial savings, that the US has derived from its close alliance with Israel.
- To emphasize the remarkable similarities in values, history, foundational texts, culture, and ideals between the US and Israel, which makes them natural allies and explains the close affinity between them.
- To put US aid to Israel in the larger context of US aid to friendly Arab countries and other allies.

Discussion Questions

- When and why did the US develop a closer and closer relationship with Israel? How has this relationship benefited the US? How has it benefited Israel?
- What has the US relationship been with Arab states? How has the US relationship with Israel affected its relationships with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, the Gulf States, Lebanon and Syria?
- The Pilgrims and the US Founding Fathers were deeply affected by the Old Testament and by Jewish history. Discuss the many ways we see that affiliation in place names in the New World, concepts of government the Founding Fathers developed, and their views of what the New World could be. (See "References" for articles for this discussion and Michael Oren's new book *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East: 1776 to the Present.*)
- What are some of the main similarities between modern Israel and the US historically and in the values they have today (for example: taming a wilderness, pioneer experience, common man laboring on the land, welcoming refugees, establishing/settling a country, democracy vs. aristocracy, etc.)?

Activities

Activity 1

How does a country choose its allies?

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 1 class period • **Materials:** (optional) poster board, felt markers, construction paper, scissors and tape

Background: Today, America is Israel's strongest ally. It wasn't always this way. How does a country choose its allies? How did America and Israel choose each other as allies? This activity explores these questions. After a brief introduction, students will work in small groups with *Israel 101* to uncover and analyze different aspects of the relationship between the United States and Israel. A summary ("How Israel Benefits the United States") is included for the teacher.

Activity:

1. Ask students: How does America choose its allies? What US interests should they serve? If you were president, how would you choose allies? What criteria would you use? Who are America's closest allies, and how do they meet these criteria? How does Israel choose its allies? What Israeli interests should they serve? If you were the prime minister of Israel, how would you choose allies—and what criteria would you use?

Give students about 20 minutes to work in pairs and write down their answers as a basis for a short class discussion. During the discussion, the teacher can summarize the main criteria that were suggested on the blackboard. (In *Israel 101*, these criteria have been summarized as follows: (1) military support, (2) agreement with US foreign policy, (3) technological and military research contributions, (4) commercial trade, (5) joint research in biomedical and technological fields, (6) support and popularity among the people, and (7) shared cultural and historical values). As an option, students can read the following article: Martin Kramer, "The American Interest," *Azure*, Autumn at: www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=331.

2. Compare the two countries. Ask students to estimate how much larger the US is in terms of population and geographical area.

- The US has about 303 million people and is 3.5 million square miles. Israel has 7.1 million people and is about 8,000 square miles. There are 43 times more Americans than Israelis, and America has 437 times more land than Israel.
- Roughly speaking, the US is about 50 times bigger in population and nearly 450 times bigger in geographical size. These facts highlight the question: What can a superpower like the United State receive from a much smaller country, such as Israel?

3. Brainstorm: Before they read the booklet, ask students to suggest how the criteria they discussed above can be applied to the relationship between Israel and the United States. What types of benefits might Israel provide the United States?

4. Group Work: In pairs, have the students read pages 18-19 of the booklet. Have them make lists of at least six different ways in which the United States has benefited from its close relationship with Israel. See "Summary of Israeli Benefits to America" below. Students can be encouraged to apply the above-mentioned criteria for choosing an ally.

5. Classroom Discussion: Each group should choose to present one benefit that the United States has gained from Israel. If desired, each group can expand its research work to include other sources, leading to a larger classroom project on the topic.

Wrap-Up: The United States and Israel have developed strong ties, based on common values and history. In this relationship, Israel provides support, which is strategic (acting in America's political interest in the Middle East), technological (e.g., sharing technological and biomedical breakthroughs, products and knowledge), economic (e.g., being an active and major trading partner by importing American products into Israel) and ideological (supporting and upholding common values, such as liberty and democracy).

Optional Follow-Ups:

- For comparison, students can research other allies of the US (e.g., South Korea, NATO, Europe, Japan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia). What does America gain from these allies? (Again, the above-mentioned list of criteria can be used for comparison.) How much American money is spent on these allies in foreign and military aid?
- Students can research why the US was not a more important ally for Israel before 1967. How did the 1967 War and the 1973 War change American perceptions? See Dore Gold, "Understanding the US-Israel Alliance," Sept. 2007, at: www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=2&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=376&PID=0&IID=1795&TTL=Understanding_the_U.S.-Israel_Alliance:_An_Israeli_Response_to_the_Walt-Mearsheimer_Claim.

Summary: How Israel Benefits the United States

For the Teacher: The benefits below have been summarized from pages 18-19 in the booklet. In the activity, these benefits can be identified and discussed by the students.

- Israel imports goods from America. It is second only to Canada in per capita imports of US products.
- US aid to Israel translates into new jobs created for American citizens, since about 75 percent of this aid is spent in the US. This represents billions of dollars of contracts.
- Israel shares information and expertise regarding the war on terrorism (p. 19).
- Israel provides important military information. (See “Israel Proves Its Strategic Value by Capturing...” [Operation Rooster 53] on p. 18.)
- In 1970, Israel supported the US to prevent Syria from invading Jordan (p. 18).
- Israel has sold advanced weapons it has developed to the United States.
- Israel acts to advance American interests in the Middle East. (See “US regards Israel as an ally in the Middle East” on p. 18.)
- Israel’s technological development saves the US funds and time needed for research and development. (See “Israel and US Researchers Cooperate in Technological and Biomedical Breakthroughs” on p. 19.)
- In 1991, Israel did not launch counterattacks to defend itself in the Gulf War at the request of the United States (p. 19).
- Israel has been a firm ally of the US in the United Nations, where it votes on the same side as the US over 90 percent of the time.
- Israelis overwhelmingly like Americans and American culture, while the populations of many other US allies do not (e.g., Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan). According to a PEW Research Poll, Israel has the highest percentage of people (79 percent) who view Americans favorably, followed by Britain at 70 percent. See pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/185.pdf, p. 19.

Wrap up: Israel provides support, which is strategic (acting in America’s political interest in the Middle East), technological (e.g., sharing technological and biomedical breakthroughs, products and knowledge), economic (e.g., being an active and major trading partner by importing American products into Israel) and ideological (supporting and upholding common values, such as liberty and democracy).

Activities

Activity 2

Exploring the Historic Links between Israel and America

Preparation:

Estimated time: 1-2 class periods • **Materials:** Internet access or printouts of articles by Michael Oren (www.aipac.org/Publications/Oren-PC-2007.pdf) and Rabbi Ken Spiro (www.simpletoremember.com/vitals/jewsamerica.htm)

Background: This activity will give students insights into American and Israeli history. The American Pilgrims were deeply influenced by the Old Testament and its narrative of the Israelites' history (especially about the Exodus and Promised Land). As the selected articles show, in subsequent centuries as well, these Old Testament stories continued to shape Americans' identity, and many prominent Americans were ardent Christian Zionists in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since its modern birth in 1948, Israel has had strong and close ties with the United States. To what extent does this connection reflect America's founding principles and the shared values of the U.S. and Israel?

Activity:

Have students read the Michael Oren and Rabbi Ken Spiro articles. Either have students write answers to the following questions, or break them into groups of four to analyze some or all of the following questions.

1. Why did the Pilgrims find the Old Testament story of the Jews so similar to their own situation? Which Old Testament stories most influenced them? (Students may also look at the Mayflower Compact for ideas at www.allabouthistory.org/mayflower-compact.htm.)
2. In what ways did the Pilgrims and later Americans believe that the founding of America was similar to the Exodus story? How did they reflect that connection? (For example, in place names, and in the imagery, language and ideas they wanted to use when the US was founded as a nation and also in their conception of creating a new nation as Moses helped created a new nation and a law for the new nation.)
3. Why would colonial Americans view ancient Israel as a model to follow?
4. What do these articles suggest about the importance of religion, and specifically the Bible, to colonial Americans and to the Founding Fathers?
5. Many early Americans supported the idea of restoring Israel. Why? What did they think the Holy Land was like? (After 1799, more and more Europeans and Americans visited the Holy Land.) Why did they think Jews belonged there?
6. Why did Americans think it was possible to resettle and reestablish Israel? How does this echo the ideas in Unit 4, "Early Settlement of the Land"?
7. How would these founding traditions and ideas in America influence American attitudes toward Israel? How much would it create a sense of shared values?

Activities

Activity 3

Comparing the American Declaration of Independence and Israel's Declaration of Independence

Preparation:

Estimated time: 1 class periods • **Materials:** Copies of the Israeli Declaration of Independence and the American Declaration of Independence. (Find the Israeli Declaration of Independence at: www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace%20Process/Guide%20to%20the%20Peace%20Process/Declaration%20of%20Establishment%20of%20State%20of%20Israel. See the American Declaration of Independence at: www.ushistory.org/declaration/document.)

Activity:

Have students compare Israel's Declaration of Independence and the American Declaration of Independence. Divide your students into groups of four. Have two students in each group read the Israeli Declaration and two students read the American Declaration. After each pair discusses and summarizes the main points, each group of four will compare these two documents addressing the following themes: (Teacher answer sheet is on the following page.)

1. What do they have in common? What are some differences?
2. Does each document relate to human rights, and if so, how?
3. What principle or law gives each the right to establish its own nation and its independence from Great Britain? (Both were declaring independence from Britain.)
4. How does an analysis of these two documents shed light on common values that these two countries share?

Wrap-Up:

After completing the above activity, students should participate in a class discussion about the above questions.

Teacher Answer Sheet, Unit 8, Activity 2

1) What do they have in common?

- Both documents declare political independence from Britain.
- Both documents assert the existence of universal human rights, and declare their people's right to political independence based on "natural law" or "self-evident" "truths."
- Both documents address how their declarations fit into the grand sweep of history: "When in the course of human events" and "Eretz-Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people."
- Both documents assert the existence of universal human rights and present an argument for why British rule infringes upon those rights. They appeal to the conscience of readers by describing injustices committed against their nation or people.
- Both documents claim those for whom they speak have been denied rights that have been extended to other peoples.
- Both documents mention military actions against them and the threat of imminent war.
- Both documents are essentially secular but also refer to God as a fundamental source. The American Declaration refers to "Nature's God," the "Supreme Judge," and "Divine Providence." The Israeli Declaration of Independence concludes with "placing our trust in the Almighty."

What are some differences?

- The American Declaration of Independence primarily lists political and economic injustices committed by the British government against the American colonists, such as levying unfair taxes and preventing democratic decision making. The Israeli Declaration of Independence, on the other hand, emphasizes social injustices committed throughout history against the Jewish people, namely anti-Semitism.
- The American document does not mention why the colonists have a right to independence in a particular geographical place, while the Israeli document opens by explaining the historical connection between the land of Israel and the Jewish people and the fact that the Jewish people have a national identity tied to a geographic place.
- The American document does not list any international consensus supporting their claims, while the Israeli Declaration of Independence cites the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the 1947 U.N. resolution, which confirm the Jewish people's right to independent nationhood in Israel.
- The injustices listed in the American document have a short history, while the injustices and suffering described by the Israeli document extend over 2,000 years.

- The American Declaration only indirectly sets up principles for the new government that will emerge. (They are in the Constitution.) In contrast, the Israeli Declaration of Independence lays out basic principles for the government it is creating.
- The Israeli Declaration of Independence details Jewish rights to nationhood based on their labor in restoring the land and creating a distinctive nation by reviving Hebrew and creating a unique culture.

Summary: While both documents declare political independence from Britain, the American Declaration of Independence justifies its argument based on political and economic injustices, while the Israeli Declaration of Independence emphasizes the social injustice of anti-Semitism, the connection between land and identity, and previous documents that affirm its argument for independence.

3) Does each document relate to human rights, and if so, how?

- Both documents refer explicitly to human rights. They each assert the existence of such universal rights and argue that political independence from British rule is required for their people to enjoy them. In this way, both documents are based on the concept of human rights.
- However, the American Declaration of Independence argues that independence from Britain is needed to ensure the individual rights of the American colonists, while the Israeli Declaration of Independence, in addition to promoting individual rights, argues for the collective right of the Jewish People to a sovereign, national land.

4) How does an analysis of these two documents shed light on common values that these two countries share?

- A reading of both documents highlights the extraordinary value that both countries place on human rights. While each document may emphasize different types of human rights (economic vs. social; individual vs. collective) that reflect the unique histories and circumstances of each country, they both represent a commitment to freedom, justice and equality.
- Furthermore, while the arguments in both documents are clearly secular, they both conclude with a reference to a sacred power – “Divine Providence” in the case of the American Declaration of Independence and “The Rock of Israel” in the case of the Israeli Declaration of Independence. This similarity may reflect a shared respect for the loftier sentiments and ambitions of humankind and the Judeo-Christian roots of both peoples.

Resources

Internet

Quotes of U.S. presidents on relationship with Israel—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/presquote.html

Early roots of the U.S.-Israel relationship (1776–1948)—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/roots_of_US-Israel.html

Overview of U.S.-Israel relationship (1948– 1970)—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/phantom.html

Overview of U.S.-Israel relationship (1948-1990s); includes overview of economic and academic ties and shared values initiatives (e.g., security, environment, energy, space), commonalities between Israel and U.S.

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/special.html

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths2/USpolicy.html#r6

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths/mf21.html#t

U.S. aid to Israel—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/foreign_aid.html

CAMERA article: “Wall St. Journalist Columnist Overestimates U.S. Aid to Israel by Almost \$1 Trillion”

www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=2&x_outlet=54&x_article=596

Overview of U.S.-Israel relationship: early 1960s-present (rebuttal to charges made by Walt and Mearsheimer in March 2006)

www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRIT=2&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=376&PID=0&IID=1795&TTL=Understanding_the_U.S.-Israel_Alliance:_An_Israeli_Response_to_the_Walt-Mearsheimer_Claim

U.S.-Israel relationship: rebuttal to charges made by Walt and Mearsheimer in March 2006

www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=331

U.S. policy toward Arab states—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/US_policy_toward_Arabs.html

www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths2/USpolicy.html#r8

U.S. policy of evenhandedness in Middle East (1960s-1980s)—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/myths2/USpolicy.html#r7

Recent media articles on relationship between Israel and U.S. (2004-2007)—www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=7&x_issue=41

Bibliography of U.S.-Israel relations—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/bibusisrael.html

Christian Zionists in the U.S.—www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Zionism/christianzionism.html

Overview of relationships between U.S. and its allies—en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foreign_relations_of_the_United_States

The relationship between Israel and the US—www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=331

Books

The affinity between the U.S. and Israel in values and history

Oren, Michael (2007). *Power, Faith and Fantasy: America in the Middle East 1776 to the Present* (W. W. Norton).

Christian Zionism—Brog, David (2006). *Standing with Israel* (Strang Communications Company).

On Christian Zionism in Britain:

Barbara Tuchman (1956). *Bible and Sword* (Ballantine).

Video

The following videos are available at no charge (except for shipping) from: www.israelupclose.org/stories.html

Vol. 8: *American Football Alive in Israel*—Super Bowl fever hits Israel... Yes, football mania has indeed reached the Holy Land. Kraft stadium, dedicated by the owner of the New England Patriots, offers a first-class stadium that launched the Israeli American football league.

Resources

Vol. 13: Baseball in Israel

There is a new initiative underway to bring professional baseball to Israel. That's right, real professional baseball, with major-league players brought in from the United States. The man behind the initiative is American entrepreneur Larry Barras, and the commissioner of the new league is former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Daniel Kurtzer.

Volume 16: U.S. Law Enforcement Learns Israeli Security

Focuses on training of FBI and other U.S. law enforcement agents who receive anti-terrorist training in Israel.